



November 2018

Welcome to Spark, the Tribe weekly parsha activity sheet for Children's Service Leaders across the United Synagogue communities.

Thank you for offering to run a service, for all the hard work that you put into it and for making a real difference to so many young people. The US is very proud of the numerous Children's Services that are run every week across the UK and this would not happen without you.

Spark gives you an overview of the weekly parsha, a song, an activity, discussion questions or D'var Torah linked to the parsha or important event that week. Every Children's Service will be different, in terms of how many participants there are, their age range, its length and the varying abilities of the children. Please read through the document and find the activities that will best suit the needs of your group. It is advisable to read it before Shabbat in case there is some preparation that may be needed in advance.

I hope you and the children at your service will benefit from Spark. Please be in touch if you have any queries, feedback or if we can be of any help. Thank you again for your amazing work.

With best wishes,
Sharon Radley
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Parsha Summary:

- After the first seven plagues, Moshe and Aharon again warn Pharaoh to let the nation go, lest Egypt suffer an eighth plague. Pharaoh's advisors encourage him to agree. However, he only agrees to let the men leave temporarily, but not the women or children.
- The 8th Plague: Moshe stretches his staff over Egypt. An easterly wind brings a swarm of locusts over the whole of Egypt, eating any grass and fruit still left over from the plague of hail. Pharaoh admits his sin and asks Moshe and Aharon to pray for an end to the plague. God sends a westerly wind which carries away the locusts. God hardens Pharaoh's heart. The 9th Plague: Moshe raises his hand towards the heavens. Thick darkness descends upon Egypt for three days, with the exception of where the Israelites live. Moshe once again asks Pharaoh to allow the entire nation to leave, to bring offerings in the desert. He adds that they should be allowed to take livestock with them. God hardens Pharaoh's heart and he refuses. God requests that Moshe ask the Israelites to ask for gold and silver vessels from the Egyptians.
- Moshe warns Pharaoh about the plague of the first born, which will only affect the Egyptians. Moshe and Aharon are told by God the laws of Rosh Chodesh and that Nissan is to be the first month of the 'year of months'. They are also told to instruct the nation about the Pesach offering; the lamb must be designated on 10 Nissan and slaughtered on the afternoon of 14 Nissan. Its blood is to be placed on the door frame and the meat eaten, together with matza and maror, on the night of 15 Nissan. This will be commemorated every year with the seven day Pesach festival.

- Moshe relates the laws of the Pesach offering to the elders. The blood on the door frame will 'indicate' to God to 'pass over' the Israelite houses and only smite the Egyptians.
- The 10th Plague: The plague strikes Egypt at midnight, leaving no house without a death. Pharaoh searches frantically for Moshe and Aharon and tells them to leave. The Egyptian people also urge the Israelites to leave, who take their dough with them before it has time to rise. The Egyptians agree to let them take gold and silver items. The nation travels from Ramses to Succot. They bake the unleavened dough, making matzot. Additional laws of the Pesach offering are given.
- God relates to Moshe the mitzvah of redemption of firstborn male children (pidyon ha'ben). Firstborn animals also have a special sanctity. The mitzvah of tefillin is stated twice.

Children's Service: Tot's – Year 3

- Tip: The information in the parsha summary above can be used as the basis of a quiz. Make sure if you do decide to have a quiz that it's inclusive and fair. Think through carefully before your service to decide if a quiz is a suitable activity for the dynamics of your group.

Activity: Rosh Chodesh – First Mitzvah

Ask all the children to stand and put their hands behind their backs (in case they are wearing a watch.) Check to see if there is a clock in the room and if there is, stand the children with their backs towards it. Explain to the children that you are going to see which one of them is able to work out exactly how long a minute is. When you say 'start' you will time a minute. The children should individually try to work out when the minute is finished. When they think it is over they should sit down. You will tell them who was the closest to the actual end of the minute.

Discuss:

In the parsha this week God gives the Jewish people their first mitzvah, that of Rosh Chodesh – determining the new moon and also to establish a lunar calendar.

- How do we know when it's Rosh Chodesh?
- What does the moon look like at the beginning, middle and end of the month?
- What month are we in now?
- When was Rosh Chodesh?
- What should the moon look like at the moment? Encourage the children to take a look at the moon during the week.
- What special activities do we do on Rosh Chodesh?
- Show the children the Blessing for the New Month on page 155 in the green Tribe Siddur for Children and Families.

Song : The months – to the tune of *'Bobby Shafto'*

Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz,
Av, Ellul, Tishrei, Cheshvan,
Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, Adar,
And Adar Sheni.

Activity: The 9th Plague

The ninth plague was darkness. It was different from many of the other plagues, where something unpleasant was added to daily life, e.g. frogs or locusts. Here, something that is a basic part of everyday life, was taken away – the ability to see!

We are told that the darkness was so intense that the Egyptians could not even move.

- Play a game involving blindfolds, to represent the darkness of the plague. An example game is given below.

Divide the group into smaller groups. Every person in the group should sit blindfolded either around a table or in a circle. One person sits out without a blindfold, but must keep their hands behind their back. Spread puzzle pieces across the table in front of the blindfolded group. Use simple puzzles, such as kindergarten age puzzles with large, obvious shapes. The group must try to assemble the pieces into a completed puzzle. The person who can see cannot touch the pieces but they can give advice or directions to the group to help them put the puzzle together completely.

Children's Service: Years 3- 6

- Please check the activities written in the age group above as some of them may be suitable for your service too.
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Activity 1: Rosh Chodesh - how did it work?

Divide your participants up into two teams. . Each team gets split into three groups, the "*see-ers*, the *runners* and the *builders*". Before your service build some kind of crazy design on the floor made up of different materials (construction paper cut into shapes, cups, plates, forks, pipe cleaners, string). The design should be one that is possible to be built on Shabbat.

The participants who are the *see-ers* look at the design and run to another station where the *runners* are waiting. They tell them what they saw (describe a part of it). The *runners* run to another room where the *builders* are waiting with the bag full of the same material that the first design is made of but not put together. The *runner* has to describe to them how to build it. Since they can't describe it all at once they have to keep running back in forth, but the participants have to stick to their own job. *See-ers* cannot run straight to the *builders* they have to go through the *runners*, etc. The first team to rebuild the design wins the race!

Discuss:

In this week's Parsha, God gives the Jewish people their first Mitzvah-Rosh Chodesh, the Mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon. The way it worked was very similar to our game. Two witnesses who saw the tiniest sliver of the new moon would come as quickly as possible to the

Beit Din to testify that it is indeed a new month. Once they are confirmed to have seen the new moon, the Beit Din declares the new month and sends messengers across the land to tell everyone that the new month had begun on this certain day. They, in turn, would pass on the news and light torches on mountains and high spots to spread the news faster. Sometimes it took a while for people to receive confirmation of the day the Beit Din had declared as the beginning of the month. This, by the way, is the main reason why Jews who live outside of Israel keep two days of the holidays, just in case they were wrong about which day was Rosh Chodesh if the information didn't arrive on time.

Activity 2: Rosh Chodesh- Why was it the first mitzvah?

Ask all your participants to stand and put their hands behind their backs (in case they are wearing a watch.) Check to see if there is a clock in the room and if there is, stand the children with their backs towards it. Explain to the children that you are going to see which one of them is able to work out exactly how long a minute is. When you say 'start' you will time a minute. The children should individually try to work out when the minute is finished. When they think it is over they should sit down. You will tell them who was the closest to the actual end of the minute.

Discuss

In the parsha this week God gives the Jewish people their first mitzvah, that of Rosh Chodesh – determining the new moon and establishing a lunar calendar.

- How do we know when it is Rosh Chodesh?
- What does the moon look like at the beginning, middle and end of the month?
- What month are we in now?
- When was Rosh Chodesh?
- What should the moon look like at the moment? Encourage the children to take a look at the moon during the week.

- What special activities do we do on Rosh Chodesh?
- Show the children the Blessing for the New Month on page 155 in the green Tribe Siddur for Children and Families.
- Why did God choose Rosh Chodesh as the first mitzvah for the Jewish people? It seems a bit of a strange first commandment! What was so important about the development of the calendar? Why was the Jewish calendar based on the moon? What was wrong with the solar calendar that everyone else had been using?

Well, determining the new month was done by people. As soon as the new moon was seen a person would run to the Jewish High Court who would need two witnesses, convene a court, declare a new month and send messengers around the land. It was a very 'human' process. God was giving the Jewish people a strong message. Up to this point they had been slaves and not in charge of their own time. Now that the people were being freed from slavery, God is telling them that they are masters of their own time!

A unique feature of the moon is that it waxes and wanes. Whereas the sun stays the same size, the moon appears to us to disappear and reappear, to grow and shrink. The fact that we follow the lunar calendar is a message to us that just when things look their darkest – light shines again. Nothing is set in stone. Situations can change and we can reinvent ourselves and change for the better however hard things seem. The Jewish people had been in slavery for two hundred and ten years yet now the tide was turning and they were being freed. Fifty days after leaving Egypt the Jewish nation would receive the Torah! This is the powerful message behind the giving of the commandment to sanctify the moon each month and determine the lunar calendar. When things seem dark and hopeless – light is around the corner!