



Welcome to Spark2, the Tribe weekly parsha activity sheet for Children's Service Leaders across the United Synagogue communities.

Thank you for offering to run a service. 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.

Spark2 gives you an overview of the weekly parsha, a song, activity or Dvar 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 Spark2. Please be in touch if you have any queries, feedback or if I can be of any help.

With best wishes,
Sharon Radley
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Please note: There is a double parsha this week.

Behar

Parsha Summary:

- The parsha begins by giving us the laws of the Shmita Year which would take place when the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael. Every seventh year was to be a Shabbat, rest year, for the land. For six years one was able to work the land but on the seventh it must be left. At the end of the Shmita year, all loans are forgiven.
- Every fiftieth year would be a Yovel/Jubilee Year. On Yom Kippur of that year the shofar would be blown which would announce that all Jewish servants would now go free. The Yovel year was also a signal that all the land in Eretz Yisrael would go back to its original owners.
- We should try to prevent poverty.
- The parsha ends with the commandment that we should not make idols.

BECHUKOTAI

Parsha Summary:

- The parsha begins with Moshe explaining to the Jewish people that God wants them to keep His mitzvot. If they do this then Hashem will give them many blessings such as rain in Eretz Yisrael at the correct time, an abundance of grain, fruit and peace.
- The parsha then continues with voluntary contributions to the Bet Hamikdash.
- The final mitzvah of Bechukotai is for a farmer to give a tenth of his cattle to God. If a Jewish farmer raised cows, sheep or goats he has a mitzvah to give every tenth new born animal to God. This mitzvah is called "Ma'aser Behaima."
- We have now completed the Book of Vayikra, the third book of the Torah!

Children's Services: Tots – Year 2

Activity 1:

- Ask the children on which day of the week does Shabbat fall?
- Ask the children to name the Hebrew days of the week in order, starting with 'Yom Rishon'. When they reach Shabbat they should clap or mime a special activity that is done on Shabbat. For example, lighting the candles or making Kiddush.
- Explain to the children that every seven years is a special Shabbat for the land in Eretz Yisrael. Every seven years we are forbidden to work the land in Eretz Yisrael.
- This special year is called the Shmita year. Shmita means to 'let go'. When farmers let go of their land for the Shmita year they are showing that they trust God to provide for them, because in the seventh year they can't earn any money from their crops.
- The Shmita year is also a reminder for everyone that God is in charge and it is really Him that feeds us and not the land.

Song

In the Shmita year, as discussed above, farmers and their families need to put their trust in God that He will provide for them. The song below is probably well known to the children and talks about Hashem being everywhere.

(To hear the tune, check it out on 'Youtube'.) The children can insert actions.

'Hashem is here
Hashem is there
Hashem is truly everywhere
Up, up
Down, down
Right, left and all around
Here, there and everywhere
That's where He can be found'

Activity 2:

Play a game linked to trust and then discuss (see points below.) For example, you could buy some snacks such as cupcakes or cookies, in advance. Do not show them to the children. Split the children into pairs and blindfold one person from each pair. Their partner should be given the food to feed to their blindfolded partner who of course will be nervous as they don't know what the food is going to be. Please make sure that there are no allergies in your group (see the synagogue allergy guidelines) and that the food isn't going to stain. When the blindfolds are taken off show the children what they were eating and give everyone a chance to have some!

- What did it feel like to be fed with an unknown food item? (One would need to trust his partner – link these points to Shmita and trust.)
- Did trusting their friend make it easier?

Activity 3:

Explain that the Torah is split into 5 books/sefarim, and each of them, is split up into parshiot. Each week we read one or two of the parshiot in Shul. This week we read 2 parshiot. The second one – Bechukotai, is the last one in the book of Vayikra.

Using a Chumash, turn to the index, where all the parshiot are written and ask the children to sing the song of the parshiot.

- The tune is *'There was an old man named Michael Finnegan'*. You can learn the tune on 'Youtube.'
- Explain to the children that when a Sefer is finished it is customary for the congregation, followed by the reader, to proclaim 'Chazak! Chazak! Venitchazeik!', 'Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!'
- If it is possible arrange to take the children at your service to the main service to hear this.

Children's Service: Year 3 – Year 6

Activity 1:

This game is based on trust. You will need a bag of soft sweets - enough for each child to have one and four cards. (Look at your synagogue allergy guidelines.) Two cards should have 'split' written on them and the other two should have 'steal'.

Split the children into two groups. Each group should choose a representative. Show all the children the sweets and sit the two representatives opposite each other. Their task is to secure a sweet for each member of their group. They have three options. If they both hold up the word 'split' then the bag is split between them to give to their team mates. If they both hold up 'steal' no – one will get anything. If one holds up 'split' and the other

'steal' the one who holds up 'steal' gets all the sweets and the one who holds up 'split' gets nothing.

Obviously this is a game of trust. Ideally they should both hold up 'split' but they will need to trust their partner enough that they don't hold up 'steal' which would mean their partner would get all the sweets. Let them work this out and ask their teammates to help and contribute.

Discussion

- When they have finished you can ask the children what they thought the game was all about. (Trust)
- Explain to the children that every seven years is a special Shabbat for the land in Eretz Yisrael. As written in the parsha this week, every seven years we are forbidden to work the land in Eretz Yisrael.
- This special year is called the Shmita year. Shmita means to 'let go'. When farmers let go of their land for the Shmita year they are showing that they trust God to provide for them, because in the seventh year they can't earn any money from their crops.
- The Shmita year is also a reminder for everyone that God is in charge and it's God that feeds us and not the land. He is the force behind the natural order. The Shmita year strengthens our bitachon (trust in God).
- How is the Shmita year like Shabbat? (One response: On Shabbat we are also reminded that it is Hashem who created the world and controls it.)

- In the Shmita year all debts were to be forgotten. Why do you think debt is linked with the agricultural year? How do you think the economy and agriculture are related?
- If you were a farmer preparing for the arrival of the Shmita year what type of emotions do you think it would arise in you? Would you be concerned about your basic needs being met or would you have faith?
- What would you do if you had a Sabbatical for a year?

Activity 2:

This week we read the last parsha in the book of Vayikra.

Using a Chumash, turn to the index, where all the parshiot are written and ask the children to sing the song of the parshiot. The tune is '*There was an old man named Michael Finnegan*'. You can learn the tune on 'Youtube.'

Explain to the children that when a Sefer is finished it is customary for the congregation, followed by the reader, to proclaim 'Chazak! Chazak! Venitchazeik!', 'Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!'

If it is possible arrange to take the children at your service to the main service to hear this.

Activity 3:

The Omer

Ask the children if they know what the Hebrew date is and what chag is soon going to take place. (Shavuot)

Explain that at the moment we are counting the days until Shavuot. We refer to this as 'Counting the Omer'. The Omer was a measure of grain. On the second day of Pesach in the times of the Bet Hamikdash/Temple, an Omer of barley was harvested and taken to the Bet Hamikdash. Once this offering had been made the rest of the barley harvest could be eaten.

The Torah gives us the mitzvah of counting the 49 days between the second day of Pesach and Shavuot and this is why the counting became known as 'Counting the Omer.'

The Omer is a time to reflect on our actions and because we learn that the students of Rabbi Akiva were not being kind to each other during the time of the Omer, we are going to play a game to promote friendship, communication and working together.

Prepare puzzle pieces in advance, by cutting a sheet of paper in half using a random cutting pattern to make two unique parts that will fit together to form one piece. Each sheet must be cut differently so that no other sheets have the same pattern. Mix the puzzle pieces up and give each participant one half of one of the puzzle pieces. Ask the children to walk around the room and when you tell them to stop they should find their puzzle partner match. Once they find them they must ask each other the 3 questions below and remember their answers:

1. What would you like to be when you are older and why?
2. What is your dream holiday and why?
3. What is your favourite music and why?

When everyone has found their partner and asked all of the questions, they should come and sit in the circle again. They should introduce each other and tell the rest of their group what they discovered about their partner.

Why 1 to 50 and not 50 to 1?

Usually when we count the days to an important event in our lives we don't usually count up, we usually count down. We would say, "Only twenty three more days until my holiday!" Why with the Omer do we count up from one until forty nine?

When the Jewish people left Egypt we are told that they had sunk to a very low level of spirituality. They had been living in one of the most immoral places in the world for over two hundred years and they were not equipped to receive the Torah immediately. They needed the next fifty days to grow in spirituality step by step in order to be able to receive the Torah. Each day they grew a little more and this is why when we count the Omer we count upwards and add a higher number each day.

The Talmud tells us that the Omer is a time in which we should all be reflecting and growing spiritually. Like the Omer, solid growth is characterised by one small step at a time. If we try to conquer everything at once we will fail. By the time we have finished counting the Omer we will have taken steps to increase our spirituality and be ready to receive the Torah.