



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

## METZORA 5779

### Parsha Summary:

- The Torah details the process through which a metzora would be purified after the period of isolation and the healing of the affliction. This involved a Kohen taking two birds, cedar wood, a crimson thread and hyssop grass. The Kohen would slaughter one of the birds and – using the wood, thread and hyssop grass together in a bundle – sprinkle its blood seven times on the metzora.
- The metzora would also bring three animal offerings and three meal offerings.
- A metzora who could not afford three animal offerings could instead bring one animal offering, one meal offering and two birds.
- Tzara'at also affected houses. The house owner would report the suspicious signs to a Kohen. The house would be evacuated before the Kohen's arrival. If the Kohen saw a deep green or deep red 'affliction', he would order the house to be sealed off for a week. He would then reinspect the house. If the affliction had spread, the affected stones would be removed and replaced. If the affliction nevertheless returned, the house would be demolished. However, if replacing the stones solved the problem, the Kohen would declare the house tahor (pure).
- The Torah lists specific discharges that would cause a man to be considered tameh, and details the purification procedure.
- A similar set of laws is listed for a lady who has specific discharges. The laws of Family Purity are also listed.

### 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.

### Song: V'Ahavta L'Reiacha Kamocha

In the parshiot this week we are told about the skin disease known as 'tzaraat'. The Talmud says that one of the reasons a person would be afflicted with *tzaraat* was if he had been gossiping and talking 'Lashon Hara'.

The song below talks about being a friend and ends with the Hebrew words 'Ve'ahavta Lereiacha, Kamocha' 'Loving your neighbor as you love yourself'.

(If you do not know the tune to this song it is on YouTube. Search under the title of the song or under 'Don't Walk In Front of Me'.)

Don't walk in front me I may not follow  
Don't walk behind me I may not lead  
Just walk beside me and be my friend  
And together we will walk in the ways of Hashem  
V'Ahavta L'Reiacha, Kamocha  
Ze Klal Gadol Ba Torah

## **Activity: Hot Potato**

- The children should all sit in a circle. The leader should have a ball and explain to the children that they are going to pretend that the ball is a hot potato and no one wants to hold on to it for too long. The leader then rolls it to one child who then has to pass it on to another child – as fast as possible. The leader should ensure that every child gets at least one turn and that the ball gets passed around as quickly as they can.

Discuss the importance of looking out for one another and being kind. Link this to 'Lashon Hara' and the importance of speaking thoughtfully. We should view Lashon Hara as a hot potato – something we don't want to be part of or hold on to.

## **Story: Feathers everywhere!**

There was once a man who love to talk Lashon Hara! He would talk to the baker about the butcher, he would talk to the butcher about the shoe mender and so on. He would spend his day going about the town telling people bad things about other people. The people of the town became very upset by this and went to talk to the Rabbi. "Rabbi," they said, "How can we stop this nasty man telling tales about everyone?"

The wise Rabbi sent for the man. When he arrived, the Rabbi told him to go back home and bring back a pillow. The man was puzzled but he did so.

The Rabbi told the man to hold the pillow out the window and then rip it open. The feathers from inside went EVERYWHERE!

"Now run and gather the feathers all up and bring them to me" said the wise Rabbi. "But that is impossible," said the man, "some of them have already been blown far away, I cannot collect them all."

*At this point in the story, take out a few handfuls of confetti (have some prepared before Shabbat,) and throw them in the air! Ask the children to run around and*

*pick up every single piece....they will soon see that it is impossible to collect them all.*

“Exactly,” the Rabbi replied, “You cannot pick up all the feathers, just as you cannot take back the cruel and mean words you have said about other people. This is why we must be so careful never to speak badly about others. We never know how far the words will spread and what damage can be done by them.” The man looked down at the floor and was so ashamed of himself. “From now on,” He said to the Rabbi, “I will try and only speak kind words to other people.”

### Game: Telling Stories

Choose four participants and send them out of the room.

Next, work with the rest of your participants to create a VERY detailed story. For example, Bob the policeman went to the store on Thursday afternoon at one o'clock to buy pasteurized skim milk because he is having the police chef over for dinner that night at 7:30....) Make it nice and long, with lots of details. Repeat it once or twice for the group so that they know the story well.

Now bring the first child back in. Tell him the story once, but don't repeat anything for him, even though he will probably ask you to. Once you've told him the story, bring the next child in. Child one should tell child two the story, and if all goes well he will mess it up a little bit, and by the time we get to the last child (who repeats the story for the whole group), it'll be really messed up. Make sure that the other kids don't correct them.

Discuss:

- In the story about the feathers we learn about how far our words reach. What can we learn from the game we played? (Words also get distorted as they travel along their journey.)
- What can we try to do to make sure we don't spread or listen to Lashon Hara?

## Game: Compliments

Sit in a circle and start by calling the name of one of your participants, throwing a bean bag or soft ball at them and at the same time giving them a compliment. They in turn should choose another person and do the same. Continue the game until everyone has received a compliment. (Ensure this happens by saying at the start that you are only allowed to give a compliment to someone who hasn't received one yet and if you would like to give out more compliments you can do so at kiddush or after the service.)

When the game is over ask what it felt like to receive a compliment? This is an example of how we can use words nicely.

## 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.
- 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.

### **Discuss:**

The Torah in the parsha this week talks about the skin disease called '*tzaraat*' which we are told a person would receive if he spoke 'Lashon Hara'. Part of the cure for *tzaraat* was to go outside the camp, all by himself for a while to think about what he had done and perhaps experience some of the feelings that a person who had been spoken badly about might feel. The person with *tzaraat* would realise how powerful words are and how

it is better to use words to do good. Words are a precious gift to us and we should try to use them carefully.

- How do you think a person who has been spoken badly about would feel?
- Have you ever been spoken about behind your back? How did it feel?
- Do you think being sent outside the camp and being all alone was a good way to cure someone of *tzaraat* the 'Lashon hara disease'? Why?
- Our sages teach that gossip harms not only the one spoken about, but also the speaker and listeners. How do you think that could be?
- There is an expression 'sticks and stones can hurt my bones but words will never hurt me.' Do you agree?
- Do you think that, in order to avoid Lashon Hara, it is best not to speak at all? (See Dvar Torah below.)

### **Dvar Torah**

The Torah tells us that the one of the ways in which a person who had *tzaraat* would purify himself would be to have the Kohen take two live, clean birds. One of the birds should be slaughtered and the other should be dipped into the blood of the bird that was slaughtered and sprinkled over the person who was being purified from *tzaraat*. The bird should then be set free. (Vayikra, 14:2-7) Rashi explains that the reason birds were used was because birds chirp and twitter just like a person who speaks Lashon Hara and is afflicted with *tzaraat*.

Rabbi Ganzfried, writes that if only one bird was killed we may think that the Jewish way would be to not speak at all in order to avoid Lashon Hara. This is not the case. A second bird was used and kept alive to demonstrate to us it is not the Jewish way to live in silence. We are meant to use our gift of speech but we are meant to use it in a positive way.

- How can we use our speech in a positive way?
- How far should we go to avoid gossip and negative comments about others?

## Activity: Judge Favourably

We learn in Metzora that in order for the Kohen to pronounce that someone had *tzaraat* they would need to examine the person not once but twice. We can learn from this that a wise person doesn't judge people or things by the way they first appear. It says in 'Pirkei Avot', 'Ethics of our Fathers' Chap 1 Verse 6: 'Judge every man favourably'. Often our first impressions are inaccurate.

Show the participants some optical illusions. See below. (Print them out before Shabbat so that you have enough copies to go round and perhaps enlarge them.)

Ask the participants what they notice. They will hopefully say that there is more than one way of looking at something.

A well-known story about this was written by Frank Koch in the magazine of the Naval Institute. He writes:

Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on manoeuvres in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities. Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported, "Light, bearing on the starboard bow."

"Is it steady or moving Eastern?" the captain called out. The lookout replied, "Steady, captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: We are on a collision course, advise you change course 20 degrees."

Back came a signal, "Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees." "I'm a seaman second class," came the reply. "You had better change course 20 degrees." By that time, the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send, I'm a battleship. Change course 20 degrees." Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."

We changed course.

**Discuss:**

- What life lesson can we learn from this story?
- Why is misjudging someone potentially dangerous?
  
- Here are some common occurrences:
  1. Someone never replied to your email....
  2. Someone ignored you in class.....
  3. They invited your friend to the cinema but not you....
  4. Someone pushed in front of you in the lunch queue....

Instead of judging these situations negatively and jumping to conclusions, how can we ensure that we don't judge?

Ask the participants for their ideas.

Some could be:

1. Perhaps your e-mail went straight into their spam.
2. Maybe she had a fight with another friend this morning and she's consumed by the thought of it.
3. It's possible they thought you'd seen the movie already.
4. Maybe she has low blood sugar and needs to eat immediately.

**Activity: Give Us a Clue**

Split the group into two teams. Choose a child from team one to come up and act out a movie, book, play that you have told them. They are not allowed to talk. Their group has to guess what they are acting out whilst the other group sits and watches. They are allowed a certain amount of time and if by the end of the time they haven't guessed correctly then the other group can guess to receive a bonus point. Play then moves to group two whilst group one watches and so on.

Discuss that in the game sometimes we just called out a guess because we think we knew what was being acted out – that was fine as we were playing a game. In real life however, sometimes we think we know

everything and are very quick to judge other people or situations. We learn in this week's parsha about tzaraat and lashon hara and about how it's not good to talk badly about other people. It's important to always try and be patient and not think we know everything and jump to conclusions. We may think we've heard and seen the entire story, but usually there's a lot more to it.



