



Welcome to Spark, the Tribe Parasha activity sheet that will help you bring Judaism to life in a varied and exciting way. I'd like these activities to enthuse the children and show them how the Torah given almost 3500 years ago is still as relevant and as exciting in our lives today.

Thank you for offering to run a Children's Service, for all the hard work 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 Parasha, songs, an activity, discussion questions or D'var Torah linked to the Parasha 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 am sure the children at your shul 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 the work you do in enabling so many young Jews to access their heritage and traditions in such an exciting way.

All it takes is a small spark of interest, to ignite a flame of passion for Judaism.

With kindest regards,

Rabbi Nicky (Goldmeier)
Spark Editor and Education Consultant

Welcome

Mishpatim (Shabbat Shekalim) – ‘The Parasha in a Nutshell’:

As well as reading Parashat Mishpatim (The Weekly Torah Portion), we also read the first of the Four Special Torah portions, Parashat Shekalim (The Torah Portion of Shekalim). It occurs, this year, on the last Shabbat of the Hebrew month of Shevat and a special reading, taken from Parashat Ki Tissa (The Torah Portion of Ki Tissa) (Shemot 30:11-16) is read from a second Sefer Torah (Torah Scroll).



The reading describes a count of the Jewish People which was taken while they were in the Midbar (Wilderness), after they had left Egypt. Rather than counting them as one would normally count objects or people, God did not want Moshe (Moses) to count the people like that, but instead, to have each person contribute a Half Shekel (hence the name of the special portion) which was then added to the total count.

Later, the collection of the half shekel was done annually in time for the first day of the month of Nissan; we read this maftir a month before that as a reminder.

The Half Shekel contribution was used in the Mishkan (the portable Temple in the wilderness) and the Half Shekel rather than a Whole Shekel, highlighted the idea of each person being part of a team, a whole nation. The mission of the Jewish people depends on the unity of the whole.

This week's Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) is Mishpatim which means 'laws' and the Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) begins by telling us, 'These are the laws that you, (Moshe - Moses) shall place before them (The Children of Israel).'

Altogether, this week's Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) contains 53 Mitzvot (Commandments); 23 positive commands (You shall do...) and 30 negative commands (You shall not do...)

The first group of laws are about the way we are to treat our servants. A person who had to become a servant, as a way of making restitution for a crime he committed, goes free after 6 years, but if he wishes to remain with his master, his ear is pierced against the doorpost of the house and he remains with his master until the Yovel (Jubilee) year (Fiftieth year).

The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) then lists the consequences for various crimes such as, murder, cursing a parent, practicing witchcraft, kidnapping and idol worship.



Also, among the laws discussed in the Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) are a number of liability laws, ranging from physical injury caused to another, embarrassing someone, someone's animal causing injury to another person or another animal and causing damages through acts of negligence.

The Torah warns that a foreigner is not to be wronged or insulted in any way, as the Jewish people, were themselves foreigners in the land of Egypt. Similar consideration must be shown to the widow and the orphan, for God Himself will exact punishment on anyone who mistreats these people.

Other civil laws mentioned in this week's Parasha include the command not to charge interest on loans, not testifying falsely, a judge should not accept a bribe, returning lost animals to their rightful owner and helping an animal struggling under its heavy load.

The first fruits and produce of land and vineyards are to be offered to God, as it is He who provides people with all their sustenance. Similarly, the first-born child and animals are to be dedicated to God.

Other laws in this week's Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) include the prohibition against eating Tereifah (Non-kosher meat), every seventh year in the Shemitta cycle (Sabbatical) is to be a year of rest for the land, observing Shabbat and the 3 Foot festivals of Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Pentecost) and Succot (Tabernacles) when all Jewish adults make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Beit Mikdash (The Holy Temple). The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) teaches us that one is forbidden to cook a kid in its mother's milk, from which we learn the laws of Kashrut (keeping kosher).

Moshe (Moses) returned from the heights of Mount Sinai and after reading all the laws to the people, they responded, 'All that God has spoken, we will do and we will hear.' Moshe (Moses) then passed into the mists of the cloud and remained on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights.

Parasha Overview – In a Little More Detail

- The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) begins by teaching the laws pertaining to the Jewish servant. He was to be released from his duties after six years of service, and if he insisted on staying with his master, he would have his ear pierced with an awl. The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) continues with the laws of the Jewish maidservant and other laws such as a husband's obligations towards his wife; punishments for murder, manslaughter, kidnapping and abusing parents; and compensation due to be paid to someone who has been injured, resulting in loss of work, medical fees and embarrassment.
- The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) continues by teaching the punishment for someone who kills or injures his servant and for someone who causes a woman to miscarry. The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) then focuses on the compensation that must be paid for damages caused by the things he owns, such as an ox that gores or eats from another person's field or digging a hole and leaving it uncovered, resulting in someone hurting themselves. If a person is attacked, the Torah gives them every right to protect themselves.
- If a person sets fire to property, they are responsible for the damage caused by that fire. The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) then explains about the responsibilities of an individual who agrees to look after someone else's property, or someone who borrows or rents property. Then the Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) lists the consequences for a number of sins; witchcraft, murder, kidnapping and offering an idolatrous sacrifice. Other prohibitions the Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) warns against are harassing a foreigner, widow, or orphan; the mitzvah of lending money to the poor and not charging interest to anyone to whom money has been lent.
- The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) continues with even more laws; against cursing a judge or leader, not eating meat that was not killed in the Jewish way, not offering a sacrifice before the animal is eight days old, not taking bribes from either the defendants or prosecutors in court; the laws to take tithes from produce in their proper order, sanctifying the first-born son, returning a lost animal to its owner, and helping an animal who is struggling under the weight it is carrying.
- The mitzvah of the Shemitta (Sabbatical year) is introduced: for six years the land is to be worked and during the seventh year it must remain fallow. Similarly, the Jewish people shall work for six days and on the seventh day they should rest. The Jewish people are also commanded to celebrate the three-foot festivals of Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Pentecost) and Succot (Tabernacles) and during these occasions, come up to the Beit Mikdash (The Holy Temple). We are also told not to cook a kid in its mother's milk (the Biblical command, from which we learn all the laws of not eating milk and meat together and keeping milk and meat separate).





- The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) then lists some of the blessings the Jewish people will receive if they faithfully serve God. They will live a long life, they will have wide spacious borders in the Land of Israel and God will help them in their quest to conquer the Land of Canaan. The Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) then relates some of the events that occurred in the days immediately prior to the giving of the Torah. Moshe (Moses) went up Mount Sinai and received a message from God which he gave over to the people. The Jewish people committed themselves to following all of God's laws, by saying the words, 'We will do and we will listen'. Moshe (Moses) transcribed the "Book of the Covenant" and read it to the Jewish people. God then summoned Moshe (Moses), after the giving of the Torah, to come up the mountain where he would stay for forty days and forty nights and would then be given the Luchot (Tablets of Stone).

Parasha Overview
- In a Little More Detail!

Children's Service: Tot's – Year 3

Activity 1

Catching Caring Words! (You will need either a beanbag or sponge ball for this game)



Remind the children that in this week's Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) the Torah teaches us the importance of treating everyone as equals rather than inferior to us. We are to show kindness and respect towards others. This game will encourage the children to say only kind things to other people.

Ask the children to sit in a circle either on chairs or on the carpet. Give them a beanbag to pass/throw around to each other in the circle. When a child catches the beanbag, s/he says hello to another child in the circle and then says something nice about that child as s/he passes/throws the beanbag. The game continues until all the children have said hello to someone else and at least one nice thing has been said about everyone.

Activity 2 – 'Which Scenario would You Choose?'

This activity can be played with children of all ages and promotes the character trait of 'Honesty'.

Many of the laws in this week's Parasha – Weekly Torah Portion, help us maintain a just society, with sincerity and honesty.



Ask the children to sit in a circle for this game. At the end of this week's Spark you'll find 2 cards, one with the letter 'A' and one with the letter 'B'. Prepare enough letter 'A's and 'B's for each child to have both letters.

Then, read out the following scenarios to the children and ask them to hold up the letter which represents the way they would deal with that particular scenario.

1) You find the answers to the class test you are due to have on Friday.

Do you:

- a) return the answers to the teacher without looking at them, or
- b) study the answers to get a good score on the test.

2) All your friends think it's funny to call a classmate by a horrible name that the child hates. Do you:

- a) Tell the child that 'it's just a joke' and call the child by the name too to make your friends laugh, or
- b) Tell your friends that you feel it is mean to use nasty names and it is against your values?

3) You are playing a game with your friend and another child. You see your friend cheat so that they can beat the other child. Do you:

- a) Tell your friend that they are not playing fairly, or
- b) Say nothing?

4) Your parent does not allow you to eat chocolate before dinner. Your friend gives you a chocolate bar after school. Do you:

- a) Eat it secretly before dinner so your parent doesn't know, or
- b) Show it to your parent and ask if it is okay if you can eat it later?

5) You break your little sister's toy when you are playing around. Do you:

- a) Tell your parent that you did it, or
- b) Tell your parent that your little sister did it?

Stress to the children, that in many of these scenarios, no one will ever know the truth. Ask the children why they still think it is important to be honest, even though no one will ever know.

Kindness Poem –

‘Can you Learn it by Heart?’ – Poems have been included in the Spark before, but this time, challenge the children by asking them if they can learn this one by heart. You may need to give them a few minutes!

Kind hearts are the gardens,
Kind thoughts are the roots,
Kind words are the blossoms,
Kind deeds are the fruits;
Love is the sweet sunshine
That warms into life,
For only in darkness
Grow hatred and strife.





Children's Service: Years 3- 6

Activity – ‘Mirror, Mirror on the Wall’ – This game will encourage the children to be kind to others. Remind the children that in this week’s Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion), the laws we are taught help us create a society of friendship and kindness to others. It helps us to be responsible towards other people and the society in which we live. By recognising the different emotions, we can empathise with those around us and offer them help and advice.

Start by having the children sitting in a circle. As you go around the circle, take turns to make faces that express different emotions. Facial emotions might include anger, happiness, sadness, fear, shock, shame, surprise, nervousness, upset, silliness, or gratitude. As you get to each child and before they take their turn, they should say;

“Mirror, mirror on the wall,

What’s my feeling?

Make your call.”

Give credit to answers that are close.

Ask the children how they would respond to someone with this particular facial expression



What do Dan and Dina Teach us this Week

In this week's Tribe Scribe, you'll find another great lesson that we can learn from the Parasha (Weekly Torah Portion) of Mishpatim.

'Giving Blood – in Vein'

Give the children copies of the Tribe Scribe (perhaps one between two) and read the story with the children, pointing out the captions and the illustrations.

In this week's Tribe Scribe we are told a story of Talia and Eli who really wanted to donate some blood. Their friend's little brother Jonah had to be given blood transfusions and they were so eager to help. But, Eli is under 17 years old, the age you have to be to give blood. His dad tells him, that while it is really disappointing, it's so important to be honest. Then, as the story moves on, we see the results of Eli's honesty!

1. How did Eli's honesty pay off in the end? How did it save his life!?
2. Have you ever been in a situation when you, like Eli, were torn between doing something really good and being honest?
3. Have you ever been in a situation when your honesty, like Eli's, made a difference to you or someone else?
4. Why do you think it is so important to be honest, after all, who will ever know!?!?

What do Dan and Dina Teach
us this Week?



THE TRIBE SCRIBE

MISHPATIM: GIVING BLOOD - IN VEIN!

Little Jonah Greenberg was sick and regularly needed to receive blood as part of his treatment. His older brother and sister encouraged all their friends and family to donate to their local blood bank.



Talia and Eli heard about the blood drive from their friends. They decided to donate blood with their parents, both to help Jonah and also in appreciation of all the blood he was receiving.



LOOK ELI - IT SAYS OVER 17s ONLY. LOOKS LIKE YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO DONATE BLOOD TODAY.



BUT DAD, I'LL BE 17 NEXT WEEK - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? AND JONAH REALLY NEEDS BLOOD, IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO TO HELP HIM.



HEY ELI, THIS WILL CHEER YOU UP - WHAT DID ONE BLOOD CELL SAY TO ANOTHER?

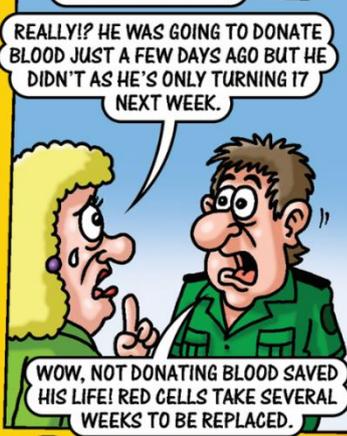


DON'T BE SO NEGATIVE!

4 days later, Eli was involved in a serious car crash.



I'M SORRY ELI BUT THAT'S JUST NOT BEING HONEST. THE TORAH TELLS US MIDVAR SHEKER TIRCHAK - KEEP FAR AWAY FROM DISHONESTY.



REALLY!? HE WAS GOING TO DONATE BLOOD JUST A FEW DAYS AGO BUT HE DIDN'T AS HE'S ONLY TURNING 17 NEXT WEEK.

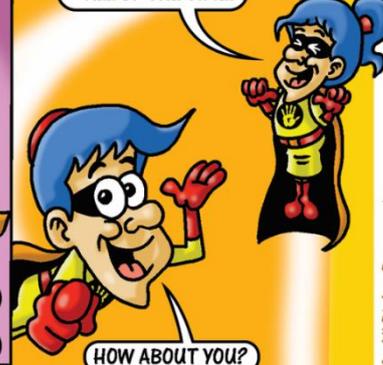
WOW, NOT DONATING BLOOD SAVED HIS LIFE! RED CELLS TAKE SEVERAL WEEKS TO BE REPLACED.

WOAH! SO BEING HONEST REALLY MADE THE DIFFERENCE FOR ELI.



THAT'S RIGHT DINA, THE TORAH IN THIS WEEK'S PARASHA REMINDS US TO STAY FAR AWAY FROM DISHONESTY. AND FOR ELI, STAYING FAR AWAY, SAVED THE DAY!

I'M GOING TO TRY TO BE HONEST ALL OF THE TIME.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

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tribe
www.tribeuk.com

Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.

What do Dan and Dina Teach us this Week?



What does this Story Teach us?

The Cherry Tree



This story takes place almost 300 years ago, when George was about six years old. He was given a small axe as a present and like most little boys in those days, he was extremely fond of it. When he played with his friends in the woods, he went about chopping everything that came his way.

One day, as he wandered about the garden, he found a beautiful, young English cherry tree, of which his father was most proud. He tried the edge of his small axe on the trunk of the tree and gradually took all the bark off, so that the tree eventually died.

Sometime after this, his father discovered what had happened to his favourite tree. He came into the house very angry and demanded to know who the mischievous person was who had cut away the bark. Nobody could tell him anything about it.

Just then George, with his little axe, came into the room.

"George," said his father, "do you know who has killed my beautiful little cherry tree in the garden?"

This was a hard question to answer and for a moment George was staggered by it, but quickly recovering himself he cried:

"I cannot tell a lie, father, you know I cannot tell a lie! I did cut it with my little axe."

The anger disappeared from his father's face, and taking the boy tenderly in his arms, he said:

"My son, that you should not be afraid to tell the truth is more to me than a thousand trees! Even though the tree was so dear to me, telling the truth is even more special"



The little boy in the story was George Washington. Do you know who he became?

Why do you think that might be important to our story?

Why do you think George's father was so happy that his son had told the truth?

What would you have done in this situation if you were George?

What would you have done in this situation if you were George's father?

What does this Story Teach Me?

Song – The link has been included for you to watch before Shabbat and if you so wish, to teach the children this song.

Mishpatim Song

https://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/549279/jewish/Mishpatim.htm

All the laws, the mishpatim
That Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses our teacher) brought
To us from Har Sinai (Mount Sinai)
To Am Yisroel (Jewish people) he taught

Chorus:

Na'a'seh v'nishma (we will do and we will listen), was our cry
We will do and we will hear
Without asking why X 2

When dealing with our friends
Being fair in work or play
These laws taught by Moshe (Moses)
Are with us today
Midvar sheker tirschak
Never tell a lie

To keep away from sheker (Lies)
We must always try

Chorus:

Na'aseh V'nishma, was our cry
We will do and we will hear
Without asking why



