



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

PURIM 5779

Facts about Purim.....

- Purim is the festival that was proclaimed to thank God for the miracles He performed to save the Jews of Persia from destruction. The account of these events is recorded in Megillat Esther, the Scroll of Esther.
- The origin of the word Purim comes from the verse in the Megillah which states that Haman cast a 'lot' to determine the date on which he would wipe out all the Jews. Purim is the plural of the word 'pur' which means 'lot'.
- The festival of Purim was ordained by the Rabbis.

There are several mitzvot of Purim:

- Hearing the reading of Megillat Esther twice, once in the evening of Purim and once during the day. Every word must be heard clearly. The megillah, must be read from a parchment scroll written by a scribe.
- Sending Mishloach Manot – gifts of food. At least one gift consisting of at least two ready to eat items of food must be sent. One may send to as many people as one wishes!
- Matanot L'Evyonim – giving money to the poor.
- Seudat Purim – a festive meal.
- 'Al Hanissim' – an added prayer which summarizes the events which took place on Purim. It is added to Grace after Meals and the silent *Amidah*
- Kriat Hatorah – there is a special reading from the Torah.

Purim customs:

- It's a custom to dress up on Purim as the mitzvah of Purim was a 'hidden one' and we 'hide' our true identity. God's name is not mentioned in Megillat Esther and He does not reveal himself. The events in the story can be viewed as a series of coincidences (see more about this later) but in reality it was God who was behind all of these events. It is up to us to recognise the hand of God in our everyday lives.
- It's a custom to eat hamantaschen, which are a three cornered cake filled with a poppy- seed mixture. The origin of hamantasch is a bit of a dispute but the word means 'Haman's pocket'. Many people say that the contents of a pocket are usually hidden and the filling in the hamantasch are hidden. This alludes to the hidden miracle of Purim. Other people say that Haman wore a three cornered hat as a symbol of his high office. Finally, some say that hamantaschen allude to Haman's ears as it was a custom in Italy to cut off the ear of a criminal before he was hanged! This may be the origin of the calling of hamantaschen – Haman's ears. Italians eat 'orecchie de' Aman' 'Haman's ears.
- It's a custom to stamp and make a noise when the name of Haman is read out from the megillah.
- It's a tradition for groups of masquerading players to visit Jewish homes on Purim and entertain them in order to collect money for needy causes. These are known as 'shpielers' and they are often welcomed into homes during the Purim festive meal.
- It's a custom that when reading the names of the sons of Haman's in the megillah they are read out in one breath with no break in between. This is because they were all hanged at the same time.

SUMMARY OF THE PURIM STORY

355 BCE - The Jews were in a hard place.

- It was the first time in 850 years that the Jews were in exile. The Temple after standing for 410 years, had been destroyed.
- 1000 years of prophecy came to an end.

The prophet Jeremiah said the exile would only last 70 years and when

Achashverosh saw the Jews weren't redeemed after 70 years, he held a 6-month feast.

- He invited the Jews
- Wore the High priest's garments and served food out of the Temple goblets.
- This was a disgrace to the Jews.

A drunken Achashverosh orders Vashti (his queen) to show up at the party dressed immodestly.

- When she refuses, Achashversoh orders her death.

King Achashverosh then holds a beauty contest to find a new wife. Esther, a beautiful Jewish girl, is chosen to be queen.

- Esther is an orphan, being raised by Mordechai.

During this time, two palace guards (Bigtan and Teresh) plot to assassinate the king.

- Mordechai overhears them outside the palace gates, and gets them eliminated.
- This saves the kings life.

9 years later...

Haman was promoted to become advisor to King Achashverosh.

- He had power to issue any decree.
- He made everyone in the kingdom bow down to him.
- Everyone bowed down to him, except for Mordechai.

Enraged by Mordechai's refusal to bow down, Haman took his rage out on the entire Jewish people.

- Haman convinced Achashverosh that the entire Jewish nation is a threat.
- Haman legislated a pogrom against the Jewish people.
- He cast a lot and chose a day to wipe out the Jews.

The Jews are in a horrible, terrified state.

- They are scared, they pray, rally the troops, protest.
- How can they defend themselves against a kingdom of 127 nations?

Achashverosh can't sleep.

- He calls his advisors to read from the Book of Records.
- The book opens to the part where Mordechai saves the king's life.
- At same time, Haman comes in to say he wants to kill Mordechai.
- Achashverosh says: No way! We should do the exact opposite: Take him on a horse dressed in royal robes and parade him through the streets!

Mordechai tells Esther: "Now is your moment. Go save the Jews!"

- Esther was scared to go speak to King Achashverosh without being specifically called. Anyone who does this is normally put to death.
- Mordechai tells her: "If we are meant to be saved, G-d will save us, a different way... but maybe this is your destiny! Maybe this is why you were chosen to be queen!"
- Mordechai teaches Esther a fundamental lesson in Judaism: *Each of us has our own role to play. We are part of a bigger picture, a piece in a puzzle. We each have a story line. Will we rise to the challenge? We each have a toolbox, family, friends, personalities... take those and discover yourself, discover your role, be the heroine in your story. Be the Esther.*

Esther makes a big banquet and reveals she's a Jew and tells the king about Haman's plot.

- The king is shocked. He hangs Haman.

The day of the planned attack (13 Adar), Achashverosh grants the Jews the right to defend themselves.

- The Jews defeat their enemies.

Jeremiah's prophecy comes true.

Mordechai declares a holiday fostering Jewish unity.

Children's Service: Tot's – Year 3

- Tip: The information in the Purim 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.

Songs:

- **Purim Day - to the tune of 'Chag Purim'** which can be found online

Purim day, Purim day

Holiday of fun and play

Sing your song

Loud and long

Mask and dance all day

Turn your gregger round and round

Let it make a jolly sound

Pass the hamentaschen around

Turn your gregger round

- **Sing a song of Purim**

To the tune of 'Sing a song of Sixpence'

Sing a song of Purim

What a happy time

Boys and Girls enjoy it

Purim cakes and wine

We sing of good Queen Esther
And Mordechai the Jew
Of King Achashverosh
And wicked Haman too.

Discuss:

In the reading of the Megillah we read that in the month of Adar we should be especially happy.

- What makes you happy?
- How do we know when someone is happy?
- How can we make other people happy?

Play some games about laughter:

Sheep Baa

Sit the children in a circle. Ask them all to stretch their upper lip over their top teeth and their lower lip over their bottom teeth. All teeth should be hidden. The aim of the game is to make someone 'out' by getting them to laugh and show their teeth. Person one in the circle turns to the person on their right and says, (whilst still covering their teeth) "sheep". They have to say it in a funny way in order to try and make the person laugh and show their teeth. If the person on the right does not laugh they now have a turn and turn to the person on their right and do the same thing. If a person does laugh they are 'out' and play continues with the next person. If anyone wants to change the direction of the game from right to left they say, "Sheep baa" and they turn suddenly to the person on their left.

'Sausages'

Whatever question anyone asks you, you're only allowed to answer: 'Sausages.' If you laugh, you're out.

Jokes

See if any children have a joke to tell. (Make sure they check it with you first!)

Activity: Drama

The Purim story lends itself naturally to drama activities. Split the children into groups giving each group a section of the story to rehearse and then show to the other groups. You could give each group a random word to insert into their act and ask the other groups to guess what the random word is after watching the performance. The random word should have nothing to do with the Purim story.

[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 Purim 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: Coincidence?

Play some games that involve things being hidden or that use clues. For example:

- Hide small pictures about Purim around the room and ask children to find them or send a child out of the room and hide an object. When the child returns ask the group to help him find the object by calling out 'hotter' or 'colder'.
- If you have any 'Where's Wally?' books take them to shul and ask the children to find Wally.
- Print off some optical illusions. There are many online.
- You could print The Book of Esther in English and give it out different chapters to children. Ask them to find Gods name.

After playing a few games such as these ask the children what the games had in common. Explain that all the games were to do with things being hidden. In the story of the Purim things too are hidden. God's name is not in the Book of Esther and He hides Himself behind what seem like coincidences.

Ask the children to think of some of these 'coincidences'.

Examples could be:

- Esther, the Jewess was the one chosen to be the new queen
- Mordechai was the one who heard Bigtan and Teresh plotting to kill the King.
- Haman was at the royal court when Achashverosh couldn't sleep.
- The gallows that Haman had built for Mordechai were used to hang him and his sons.
- Mordechai is promoted to Viceroy.

- The date designated to destroy the Jewish nation becomes a holiday.

In fact the very word 'Esther' has as its root the word 'haster' which means 'hidden'. Megillat Esther could be renamed 'The Scroll of Hiding'!

During the story of Purim God was like a puppeteer behind the scenes. The events that happened were not coincidences or 'nature'. There is nothing natural about nature! Nature is just God's way of managing the details whilst staying hidden. In reality every little event that happens is part of a grand master plan that has its own goal and logic and yet which responds at the same time to our every move. The fact that these 'hidden' acts of God are more subtle than for example, the sea splitting leaves us with free choice. It is our challenge to find God 'hiding' behind the events in our own lives.

- Ask the children if they have had any event happen to them which at first glance may seem like a coincidence.

Activity: The 4 Mitzvot of Purim

Below are some clues about the 4 mitzvot of Purim. Print them out several times and cut out the sentences. Put each set in an envelope. At your service divide the children into groups and give each group an envelope. Explain that the sentences all relate to one of the four mitzvot of Purim: Megillah, Mishloach Manot, Matanot L'Evyonim and Mishte. (The Book of Esther, Gifts of Food, Charity and a special meal- see above for more details.) Your participants should divide the strips of paper into the four sections. Give them a limited amount of time and when time is up they should feedback and see which team has the most correct.

We should spend more money on these gifts than on the food gifts.

We have to hear every word.

We must eat a proper festive meal like a Shabbat meal.

This mitzvah must be done during the day of Purim, not at night.

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We can make a noise when we hear the name of Haman.

The foods must be ready to eat, e.g. fruit and biscuits.

We do not have to give to more than one person.

We must include 'Al Hanisim' in bentching.

We must answer 'Amen' to each of the brachot said before it is read.

We must give to at least two poor people.

We must send one parcel made of at least two different kinds of food.

We must hear it being read both in the evening and morning of Purim.

We should try to give to whoever asks us for help.