



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,  
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## Shoftim

### Parsha Summary:

- The parsha begins with the commandment to appoint judges in every city in Israel and the Jewish people are told to follow the rulings of the *Sanhedrin* – The Rabbinic Supreme Court and the Oral Law. Refusal to accept the ruling of the Sanhedrin is a capital offence.
- The people are commanded to coronate a King after entering Eretz Yisrael. A Jewish king may not have an excessive amount of horses, wives or personal wealth. He must write two Torah scrolls for himself. One of these scrolls must remain with him at all times as a constant reminder to follow the laws of God and to remain humble.
- The Torah talks about the Kohanim who were chosen by God to be His servants. They do not receive an inheritance of land in Eretz Yisrael, but are beneficiaries of various priestly gifts, selections of meat from *korbanot* and tithes from crops.
- God assures the Jewish people that He will send them prophets who will transmit God's messages to His people.
- The parsha continues with the repetition of the command to establish cities of refuge for the inadvertent murderer. Moshe commands the people to set up three such cities.
- We are given the laws concerning how Jews should conduct themselves when at war. For example, before waging war we are commanded to make peaceful overtures and we are forbidden to cut down any fruit bearing trees while laying siege on a city.

- The parsha closes with the procedure to follow in the case of an unsolved murder outside the city.

## Children's Service: Tot's – Year 2

In the parsha this week the Jewish people are given the commandment that when they enter Eretz Yisrael they are to appoint a King. Ask the children if they have heard of King Shlomo (Solomon) and King David.

Sing the song '*David Melech Yisrael*' 'David King of Israel.' (The tune can be found on You Tube.)

'David, Melech Yisrael,  
Chai, Chai V'Kayom'  
Repeat...

### **Activity 1:**

Play the game 'Simon Says' but substitute the name to David.

Choose one person to be the leader, David. David should stand opposite all the children and order them to do all sorts of funny things which must only be obeyed when the order begins with, "David says." For example, "David says thumbs up" All children should obey. If David says, "Thumbs down!" This should not be obeyed, because the order did not begin with, "David says". When someone follows an order that does not begin with "David says", he or she is out of the game. Repeat these instructions until only one person is left.

In the parsha this week we also learn the laws concerning how the Jewish people should behave when they are at war with another country. One very interesting commandment given, is that the Jewish people must not cut down any fruit trees belonging to their enemy. Can any of the children suggest why we are given this commandment?

Explain to the children that we can see from here the importance that Judaism places on the environment. Discuss with the children how they look after the environment. Our scholars tell us that one reason we are given the commandment to be careful with fruit trees at a time of war is so that even during this difficult time, we must remember to try to be good.

### **Story and Discussion:**

The Talmud tells us the story of the Jewish sage named Choni Hama'agel.

One day Choni was travelling along the road when he saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked the man, "How long will it take before this tree bears fruit?" The man replied that it would take seventy years. Choni then asked him if he was sure he would live another seventy years? He was already quite an old man! The man replied to him, "I found carob trees in the world (when I was born). Just as my ancestors planted these for me, so too I plant these for my children."

Discuss with the children what they think is the message of this story. (God gave us a world to enjoy. We must look after it in order that the generations after us are able to enjoy it too. Don't just think of today but care about the future! We never know where our actions may lead.)

### **Children's Service: Years 3-6**

In the parsha this week we learn the laws concerning how the Jewish people should behave when they are at war with another country. One very interesting commandment given is that the Jewish people must not cut down any fruit trees belonging to their enemy. Can any of the children suggest why we are given this commandment?

Explain to the children that we can see from here the importance that Judaism places on the environment. Discuss with the children how they look after the environment. Our scholars tell us that one reason we are given the commandment to be careful with fruit trees at a time of war, is so that even during these difficult times, when sometimes we survive on our basest of instincts we must remember to try to be good.

Here are two stories to illustrate this point:

### **Rabbi Schneersohn**

In his memoirs, Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn (1880-1950) writes of how, as a young child he used to walk through the Russian countryside with his father. He once reached up and plucked a leaf off a tree. His father bent down and shook his head. "No my son," he told him in a gentle voice. "At the time of creation God decided this leaf should grow on this particular tree at this very time. Everything in nature is put there to serve God's purpose. We can use this for our needs, but we must be careful not to destroy things unnecessarily."

He was so moved by what his father had told him, that for the rest of his life, he never purposely destroyed anything again.

### **Choni Hama'agel**

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**Discussion points:**

- Do you think it's important to care for the environment? Why?
- Do you try and care for the environment? How?
- There are so many positive ways we could be spending our time, what is the point in doing something that will only come to fruition in seventy years? (God gave us a world to enjoy. We must look after it in order that the generations after us are able to enjoy it too. Don't just think of today but care about the future! We never know where our actions may lead.)
- Ask the children if they can think of anything previous generations have done for them. (Building roads, inventing toilets, curing diseases... the list is endless!)
- Ask the children if there is anything left for us to contribute to future generations? If they could each choose one thing, what would they want their legacy to be?