

November 2018

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
sharonradley@tribeuk.com

VAYISHLACH 5779

Parsha Summary:

- After decades away, Yaakov returns home to his father Yitzchak.
- On the way, Yaakov prepares to face his brother Esav for the first time in thirty four years. Esav is heading towards Yaakov with four hundred soldiers. Yaakov sends messengers and presents. He prays to God and divides his family and possessions into two groups so that one group would be able to escape even if the other had to fight.
- At the River Yabok, Yaakov has an encounter with a 'man' during the night. They wrestle until dawn when Yaakov won. During the fight the man dislocates Yaakov's hip. Our Rabbis explain that this man was an angel and before Yaakov let him go, he asked the angel for a blessing. The angel blesses him that he will no longer be called Yaakov but Yisrael. The angel hit Yaakov on the hip joint and because of this the Torah prohibits a Jew from eating the sciatic nerve of an animal.
- Yaakov and Esav meet. Esav embraces Yaakov and they both weep. Esav departs for Seir and Yaakov travels to Shechem.
- Yaakov's daughter Dina is abducted by the Prince of Shechem. Shimon and Levi destroy the city and liberate Dina. Yaakov rebukes them.

- On the road to Bet Lechem, Rachel gives birth to Binyamin and then passes away. Yaakov marks the place with a monument known as Kever (the Tomb of) Rachel. To this day Jews visit this very spot to pray to God.
- Yaakov reaches his father in Chevron and is reunited with him.
- Yitzchak dies at the age of one hundred and eighty.
- Esav's descendants are 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.

Yaakov and Esav meet

In the parsha this week Yaakov and his family continue on their journey to see Yitzchak before he dies. They come near to the land of Edom where Yaakov's brother Esav lived. Yaakov remembers how angry Esav had been with him before he went away and was afraid that Esav would still be angry. He decided to send messengers ahead to tell Esav that Yaakov, all his family and many animals were coming his way. The messengers reported back that Esav was heading toward Yaakov with 400 hundred soldiers!

Yaakov then planned a three pronged strategy for their confrontation. He split his camp into two so that one group could escape even if the other had to fight. Next Yaakov prays to God for help and finally he sends valuable presents of precious stones, jewels, over two hundred goats, camels, cows, bulls and donkeys to Esav. Yaakov instructs his servants to keep a distance between the various gifts so that when Esav saw them approaching from across the horizon he would think that the gift was even larger and more impressive.

When Yaakov eventually sees Esav coming towards him he bows seven times. Esav ran towards Yaakov, embraces him and kisses him. They then both weep.

Activity:

Role play: Yaakov's preparations when he is on his way to Esav and the meeting between Yaakov and his family with Esav and his four hundred soldiers.

Discuss:

- How would you make up with someone with whom you have had an argument?
- Why did Yaakov send animals as presents?
- What present would you like to receive?

Back by popular demand ...

Song: to the tune of 'Polly Put the Kettle on.'

Ya-a-kov met Esav
Ya-a-kov met Esav
Ya-a-kov met Esav
And they made friends

Ya-a- kov gave him presents
Ya-a -kov gave him presents
Ya-a -kov gave him presents
And they were friends

Yaakov had 12 children
Yaakov had 12 children
Yaakov had 12 children
Who bought him joy.

New Name

While he was travelling Yaakov crossed the River Yabok with his family. When on the other side he realized that he had left some earthenware jugs there and he took the trouble of going back to retrieve them rather than let them become ruined or wasted. (Rashi)

When Yaakov returns to fetch his pitchers he wrestles with a man until dawn. The rabbis tell us that this 'man' was in fact an angel. The angel blesses Yaakov and says to him that he will no longer be called Yaakov but Yisrael as he had prevailed over the angel. (The word Yisrael in Hebrew comes from the two words, to prevail and the Divine.)

Discuss:

- The name Yaakov was given to him at birth and it comes from the word, 'ekev' which means 'heel'. Yaakov was holding on to the heel of his brother when he was born. The name Yisrael describes how successfully Yaakov overcame the powers that attempted to destroy him. We are known as the Bnei Yisrael – the Children of Israel.
- Are you like your name?
- If you could choose a new name for yourself what would it be and why?
- Compliments game: Sit the children in a circle and give one child a bean bag or other safe suitable object for throwing such as a sponge ball. The child holding the bean bag should say a compliment such as, "She is very kind." The other children sit there quietly. The person who said the compliment should now throw the bean bag at the person who they said the compliment about and say their name.

The person who was given the compliment should now do the same to someone else. Each person receives and gives one compliment. Play this game throughout your service to break it up and so that no one child is sitting there waiting until the very end to receive a compliment. Link it to Yaakov being given a new name.

Yaakov was left alone:

From the actions of Yaakov who went back across the river to retrieve his jugs we learn to appreciate everything that we have, to treat our belongings with care and not to waste anything. Yaakov made the effort to go all the way back rather than let his possessions become ruined or wasted.

Discuss:

- Recycling and reusing are ways of making sure we don't waste. What examples do your participants have where they are recycling or reusing or could be? (Examples: Using the other side of a piece of paper, using the recycling bins at home, turning off lights when they leave a room, turning off water when brushing teeth, giving unwanted items to a charity shop...)
- Give an example of something you have seen or bought that has been recycled.

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.
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Activity 1:

Explain the main points of the parsha to the children. (See summary above and more information below for details.) When they have understood the narrative split the children into groups and ask each group to practise a role play of the story which they will then show to the other groups. Secretly give each group a random word to insert in their role play, for example: lawnmower. When the groups act out their role play to the other groups they should insert their random words. At the end the other groups need to guess what the random words were.

Yaakov and Esav meet:

In the parsha this week Yaakov and his family continue on their journey back to Eretz Yisrael to see Yitzchak before he dies. They come near to the land of Edom where Yaakov's brother Esav lived. Yaakov remembers how angry Esav had been with him before he went away and was afraid that Esav would still be angry. He decided to send messengers ahead to tell Esav that Yaakov, all his family and many animals were coming his way. The messengers reported back that Esav was heading toward Yaakov with 400 hundred soldiers!

Yaakov then planned a three pronged strategy for their confrontation. He split his camp into two so that one group could escape even if the other had to fight. Next Yaakov prays to God for help and finally he sends valuable presents of precious stones, jewels, over two hundred goats, camels, cows, bulls and donkeys to Esav. Yaakov instructs his servants to keep a distance between the various gifts so that when Esav saw them approaching from across the horizon he would think that the gift was even larger and more impressive.

When Yaakov eventually sees Esav coming towards him he bows seven times. Esav ran towards Yaakov, embraces him and kisses him. They then both weep.

Activity:

Divide the children into two teams and play 'Catch the Flag'

- Each team should be lined up against two walls of the room, and each team member is given a number. Both teams should have the same numbers as each other. For example, if there are 12 children, each team will be numbered from 1 to 6.
- An item such as a flag is placed on the floor, exactly half way between the two teams.
- The leader calls out a number, (there will be someone with that number from both teams), and they both have to try and pick up the flag and get back to their team, without being touched by their opposing team member.
- If the child manages to get back to their team with the flag, without being touched, then they win a point for their team. If they are touched by their opponent, then the point is awarded to the other team.

Discuss:

- What tactics did you use in the 'catch the flag' game?
- What tactics did Yaakov use before meeting Esav?
- What would you do to make up with someone with whom you have had an argument?
- What lengths would you go to for peace?
- Why did Yaakov send animals as presents?
- What present would you like to receive?

The Struggle with the Angel

In Vayishlach, Rashi (Gen 32:25) tells us that while he was travelling Yaakov crossed the River Yabok with his family. When on the other side he realized that he had left some earthenware jugs there and he took the trouble of going back to retrieve them rather than let them become ruined or wasted.

From the actions of Yaakov we learn to appreciate everything that we have, to treat our belongings with care and not to waste anything.

Discuss:

- Recycling and reusing are ways of making sure we don't waste. What examples do your participants have where they are recycling or reusing or could be? (Examples: Using the other side of a piece of paper, using the recycling bins at home, turning off lights when they leave a room, turning off water when brushing teeth, giving unwanted items to a charity shop...)
- Give an example of something you have seen or bought that has been recycled.

Activity

You will need an old jug or plastic bottle.

- Everyone stands on a chair on one side of the room, and the jug is on the other side of the room. The kids have to get the jug from the other side of the water without touching the floor. They can move chairs, work together, and do whatever they need to do without touching the floor. Once they get it, make them bring it back to side they started on.

New name:

When Yaakov returns to fetch his pitchers he wrestles with a man until dawn. The rabbis tell us that this 'man' was in fact an angel. The angel blesses Yaakov and says to him that he will no longer be called Yaakov but Yisrael as he had prevailed over the angel. (The word Yisrael in Hebrew comes from the two words, to prevail and the Divine.)

Discuss:

- The name Yaakov was given to him at birth and it comes from the word, 'ekev' which means 'heel'. Yaakov was holding on to the heel of his brother when he was born. The name Yisrael describes how successfully Yaakov overcame the powers that attempted to destroy him. We are known as the Bnei Yisrael – the Children of Israel.

In Judaism it is believed that your Hebrew name is your essence. It embodies your unique character traits and gifts.

For example, Leah named her fourth son Yehudah. This comes from the same root as the word "thanks." The letters can also be rearranged to spell out the Name of God. The

significance is that Leah wanted to particularly express her "thanks to God."

In the Purim story, Esther, is a name which comes from the word "hidden." Esther was known to be a very beautiful woman but whatever her external appearances, her hidden internal qualities were even more beautiful.

Another example is the popular name "Ari," Hebrew for lion. In Jewish literature, the lion is a symbol of a go-getter, someone who sees the opportunity to do a mitzvah, and pounces on it.

Are you like your name?

- If you could choose a new name for yourself what would it be and why?

Activity:

Name game: Shabbat Shalom

Stand children in a circle. The facilitator should stand in the middle. The aim of the game is to be the last one standing. The facilitator calls out a name of a child, for example: David. David needs to duck down when his name is called. The children on either side of David have to turn toward David, clap their hands twice and call out, "Shabbat Shalom". Whichever of the children do that last is out and moves out the circle. If David ducks before the children clap he stays in the game but if he forgets to duck or only ducks down after they have clapped then David is out and also steps out of the circle. All the children now left in the circle take a step in to close the circle up more and the facilitator calls out a new name.

When you have two remaining children they should stand in the middle back to back and when the facilitator calls out the numbers one to five they should take five steps away from each other. One step on each number. They should then turn around, clap twice and call out each other's name. The one who does this first is the winner.

Rachel is buried in Beit Lechem:

Activity:

Part One: Give the group a quick quiz – it can be based on the parsha and also include any general knowledge questions. The game should be played as individuals and not in teams. Ensure that the quiz has mixed ability questions so that everyone gets points. It's really important that you do this in order for this activity to work. Each time someone gains a point give them a counter or piece of card. The person with the most counters at the end is the winner.

Part Two: Now play a quiz again but this each time someone gets an answer correct they have to give their counter to the person on their left.

Part Three: When both quizzes are over ask your participants:

- Which quiz did you enjoy the most?
- Why?
- Have you ever had a time in your life when you had to give something up for someone else?
- How did it feel?

- What did it feel like in the quiz when someone gave you their points?
- Is it harder to give something up if it's more important to you or less important? (The answer here should be that the more important something is to you the harder it is to give it up.)

Explain:

In the parsha this week we see that Rachel was buried in Beit Lechem and not in Maarat Hamachpela with her husband and the other Avot and Imahot. Why was this the case?

If we look at Rachel's life we see what a strong and selfless woman Rachel was. She grew up in a home of a deceitful man and gave up (link to the two quizzes and giving something up) her own husband to her sister, Leah so as not to embarrass Leah. Rachel didn't have children for a long time whilst Yaakov's other wives did. When she finally did have children she died giving birth to the second one – Binyamin.

Yaakov knew that his descendants would pass Beit Lechem on the way to the Babylonian exile. He buried Rachel there so that the Jewish people would stop and pray there as they were led into captivity. He hoped that in the merit of Rachel, God would listen to their prayers.

In fact, to this very day Rachel's tomb is a place where men and women go to pray and ask Rachel Imeinu (Rachel our Mother) to intercede with God on our behalf.

Tip: Print out a picture of Rachel's Tomb to show to your participants.