



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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Please note: There is a double parsha this week.

Mattot

Parsha Summary:

- The parsha begins with the laws concerning verbal oaths. Anyone who obligates himself with a promise must fulfil that promise. In some cases a husband or father are able to annul vows made by their wife or daughter.
- There is a war with Midian. The spoils are divided up and the Jewish people are told how to make 'kosher' the food utensils which were among the spoils. From here we learn the laws of 'Tevillat Kelim' - making food utensils 'Kosher' by immersing them in a special mikve.
- The tribes of Reuben and Gad request and receive territory outside the mainland of Israel. They say they will still help their brothers conquer Eretz Yisrael.
- This parsha is often a double parsha, with Parshat Masei.

Masei

Parsha Summary:

- The parsha begins by recounting the route and its 42 stops, taken by the Jewish People from when they left Egypt until they were by the River Jordan, ready to enter Eretz Yisrael.
- God tells the Jewish people what they should do when they enter the Land, for example, destroy all idols.
- Moshe is told the precise boundaries of Eretz Yisrael by God.
- The leaders of the tribes are commanded to set aside forty eight cities for the Levites as their tribe would not receive a regular portion of Eretz Yisrael.
- We learn about the 'Cities of Refuge'.
- The Jewish People are explained the laws of marrying within their own tribe in order to retain their land and inheritances.
- This parsha ends the fourth book of the Torah, Bamidbar

Children's Service: Tot's – Year 2

Parshat Mattot talks about the laws of making a promise. We are told that we must never break a promise.

Discuss with the children what kind of promises they may make and why it is important to keep a promise. It is very important to be careful how we speak, not only so that we shouldn't make promises we can't keep, but also so that we don't hurt people with our words. We should use our speech to be kind to each other.

Sing the song below to reinforce the concept of keeping a promise. To the tune of '*London Bridge is falling down*':

"Always do what we say, what we say, what we say,
Always do what we say, what we say.
Clear the toys when we say etc.
Take our turn when we say etc."

Activity 1:

Play 'Chinese Whispers' with the children.

Sit in a circle and ask one child to whisper a short phrase or sentence into the ear of the child seated on their right. That child should then pass it on to the child on their right and so on until the phrase has been whispered into the ear of every child in the circle. The very last child, who should be the one on the left of the child who whispered the original sentence, should say aloud what they heard. Obviously the original phrase will be distorted.

Activity 2:

Using our voices kindly.

The children should stand in a circle, spread out, so that there is a space between each child.

Explain that you will be throwing a ball of wool (or string) and whoever catches it has to say something he likes about the person who threw him the ball, or something kind that the person who threw him the ball has done to / for him.

Take the wool and throw it to someone in the circle but keep hold of the end so that the wool unwinds. The person who catches the ball should make a statement and then whilst still holding onto the wool they will throw the ball of wool to someone else in the circle.

That person will also make one of the statements about the person who threw them the wool. Keep this going until everyone has had at least one turn.

Eventually a spider web pattern will form and you should explain that the chance to share such positive words with each other has created a beautiful 'web' that holds us all together as a group and strengthens our bond.

Now ask two children to drop their wool. Immediately the web will start to disintegrate.

Explain, that if we support each other and are kind to each other we will be strong like the web was. We will have good relationships with one another and get on well. If, however some of us stop being supportive and are unkind, our group will start to fall apart just like our web did.

We are now in the Jewish month of Av. During this month we think about the destruction of our beautiful temple, the Bet Hamikdash. We are told that at the time of the second Bet Hamikdash people were not speaking kindly to each other. Both of the games we played today link to being careful with our words.

Children's Service: Years 3-6

Activity 1:

'Speech':

Sit the children in a circle and place one child, blindfolded in the middle. Choose a child to go up to the person in the middle, tap them gently on the shoulder and say in a disguised voice, "Hello, how are you? "

The blindfolded child should guess who it is.

In the parsha this week there are two places where the power of speech is mentioned. The first is at the start of the parsha where we are told to be careful not to break any vows that we have made.

The second is later in the parsha. In Chapter: 32, V: 16, the tribes of Reuven and Gad come to Moshe and request that they settle on the east bank of the Jordan and not cross the Jordan with their brothers to settle in Eretz Yisrael. The tribes say, "Pens for our flock shall we build here for our livestock and cities for our small children."

Moshe responds to them that they must help their brothers in conquering Eretz Yisrael and when they have done so they can settle in the land east of the Jordan. When Moshe responds to them he says, "Build for yourself cities for your small children and pens for your flock." (Chap: 32, V: 24).

When looking at these two quotes carefully one will find that when Moshe replies to the tribes he reverses the order of their request. The tribes first ask to build pens for their flock and then homes for their children. Moshe replies and says they can first build homes for their children and then pens for their flock.

This shows us the greatness of a leader like Moshe. He was not impressed with their priorities. They were concerned first with their livelihood, their flock and then their children. He felt he needed to rebuke them on their attitude and did so in the most subtle way, by merely altering a few words. This was an implicit criticism for being focused on the wrong things.

We see that this minor alteration of words did have the desired effect, as when the tribes once again reply to Moshe they say, “You servants shall do as our master has spoken. Our small children, our wives, our livestock and all our animals will be there in the cities of Gilad. (32:25)

On the 9th of Av we mourn the destruction of our Bet Hamkidash. We are told that one of the reasons that the second Bet Hamkidash was destroyed was because of sinat chinam – baseless hatred. The Jewish people were not being kind to one another.

The link between our activity, the parsha this week and the time of the year is obvious. We should use speech carefully. It is a powerful tool that can be used in both a negative, destructive way or a in a very positive and uplifting way.

Activity 2:

Dvar Torah/discussion to reinforce the concept of the importance of speech and the significance of words:

The parsha this week talks in great detail about the forty year journey of the Jewish people through the desert, from them leaving Egypt until

they reach Eretz Yisrael. Why does the Torah need to mention in detail each of the times that the Jewish people travelled? Could not the Torah have said that the Jewish people left Egypt and journeyed for forty years until they reached Eretz Yisrael?

We know that every word in the Torah is significant. In Parshat Masei the Torah is teaching us that in life, it is not only our destination that is important but that the journey is important too. Every 'stop' on our journey through life is crucial and part of God's carefully arranged plan. Sometimes the journey through life is smooth and sometimes, unfortunately, it is difficult and it is hard for us to feel that events are all part of God's plan. It is at times like these that we must have faith and trust that God loves us and cares for us.

Discuss:

- Will realizing that every stop on our journey of life is important, help us? If so, how?
- How can we make the events that happen to us each day, significant?

Activity 3:

Discussion about the Bet Hamikdash/Three Weeks

- Ask the children if they know what Jewish month we are in (Av.)
- Ask them if they know any sad event that happened in Av. (Both the first and the second Bet Hamikdash were destroyed on the 9th of Av.)
- If possible show the children some pictures of the Bet Hamikdash and discuss how beautiful the Bet Hamikdash was and what went on in the Bet Hamikdash on a daily basis.
- Explain that when first the Babylonians and then the Romans destroyed the Bet Hamikdash, the Jewish people were very sad.

That is why the time leading up to the date when they were destroyed is a sad time for us, when we think about their destruction. Isn't it amazing that the Jewish people still remember an event that happened over two thousand years ago?!

- During the three weeks that lead up to the date on which the Batai Mikdash were destroyed, there are no Jewish weddings and we don't have haircuts. This is a sign of sadness.