



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 or Chag 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,  
Sharon Radley  
[sharonradley@tribeuk.com](mailto:sharonradley@tribeuk.com)

## Rosh Hashanah

Shana Tova!

Over Rosh Hashanah many synagogues run Children's Services with participants of a wide age range joining together in the same group. Usually Spark2 is divided into age groups, however with the above in mind I have written the Rosh Hashanah edition as one document, not split up into age groups. Please read through the ideas below and select the activities that you feel will be the best fit for your service.

Although there are many facts about Rosh Hashanah contained throughout this booklet, the section headed 'Quiz' includes many more. The information there can also be used to answer children's questions or as a starting point for you to develop your own ideas.

### **Setting the scene for the children...**

On Rosh Hashanah, in many synagogues around the world, Jews observe the custom of having white decorations as a sign of purity. There will be a white *parochet* (curtain in front of the Ark), white mantels on the Torah scrolls and white coverings on the desk of the Chazan and on the Bima. The Chazan and the Rabbi will wear white *kittels* (gowns) and kippot and many synagogues will have men that are similarly dressed. Women too, try to wear white on Rosh Hashanah. This leads to a beautiful effect of a synagogue decked in white.

In order to enhance your children's service perhaps you could set the scene and cover a table in your room with a white cloth and have a white covered mini Sefer Torah on it. Have an apple and some honey, a *machzor*, some Rosh Hashanah cards, a *shofar*, a tzedaka box. When you mention these items during you service

you should point to them. If possible ask a man who is wearing a kittel to visit your service and show it to the children.

Explain to the children that white symbolizes purity and on Rosh Hashanah we are trying to have a fresh start and begin the New Year with a clean slate. Rosh Hashanah is also called 'Yom Hadin' – the Day of Judgement, as God is looking at all of our actions over the past year and deciding our future for the coming year. On Rosh Hashanah we think about our life and our purpose in the world. We talk about God being the Creator and Ruler of the world.

## Story

The Magic Bell (based on a parable by the Dubno Maggid.)

Once upon a time a rich man invited a poor man to have a meal at his house. The poor man could not believe what he saw inside the home of the rich man. There were beautiful paintings, thick carpets and exquisite furniture. The table was laid with sparkling crystal and fragrant flowers filled the vases dotted around the room. Most of all though, the poor man was fascinated by a little bell that the rich man rang from time to time. Each time the bell was rung, servants would appear with elaborate trays of food, drinks and wine.

At the end of the sumptuous meal the poor man asked his friend if he could have a look at the bell. He discovered that it was just an ordinary bell and he decided to go and buy one for himself. Each time he would ring his bell, servants would appear with trays of delicious food and he would never go hungry again!

Sure enough the next morning the poor man went to the market and bought himself a little bell. He proudly took it home and showed it to his family. He asked them to sit around the table and he rang his new bell.

Nothing happened.

He rang it again but still nothing happened.

He rang the bell one last time as loudly as he could but not a single servant appeared.

Furiously the man stormed out of the house and went straight back to the store keeper. "I demand my money back," he shouted. "This bell doesn't work properly!"

"You are a silly man," the shopkeeper explained. "The bell doesn't make the food appear it just signals to the servants that it is time to bring it to the table! The servants and cooks have been working all day to cook and prepare the food!"

### Discuss:

- Ask the children what they can see in the room (see 'Setting the Scene' above) that reminds them of a bell. Hopefully they will point to the shofar.
- Explain that the shofar is like the bell in the story. The shofar is blown to wake us up and to remind us to do teshuvah and say sorry for all the things we may have done wrong over the past year. It is not enough just to listen to the shofar but we must act on it. In the ten days after Rosh Hashanah, that lead up to Yom Kippur, we must try our best to be good, do kind deeds, to give tzedakah and ask people to forgive us if we have hurt them. We hope then that Hashem will grant us a sweet new year.
- Try to arrange for someone to visit your service and blow the shofar for the children. Explain that the Torah tells us that it is a mitzvah to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. The shofar is the horn of a kosher animal, preferably a ram but it can be the horn of a goat, antelope or gazelle. Please see below for a game linked to the shofar and its notes.

## **Tefillah**

Ask the children what else they can see on the table that looks like a book. Hold up the machzor and explain to the children that it is a siddur for Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah we have special teffilot that we add to our davening. All of these teffilot are found in the machzor.

Before you start tefillah tell the children the following story:

### **God is always listening**

Everyone was gathered in the Shul. Their holy Rabbi, Rav Yitzchak of Berdichev was about to blow the shofar. They knew that there was no one more worthy than him to fulfil this special mitzvah on this day of Rosh Hashanah.

The Rabbi walked to the bima in the middle of the shul, looking like an angel in his white kittel. It was absolutely silent. He recited the introductory prayers with utmost concentration, inspiring the entire congregation to do so with him. Now was the time for the blowing of the shofar. The entire congregation stood with anticipation and trepidation, awaiting the blessings and the first sounds of the shofar. But they did not come.

Rav Levi Yitzchak did not recite the blessings. Instead, he placed the shofar back down on the table before him. A few moments passed, and he again picked up the shofar. He readied himself to recite the blessing. He hesitated, and then placed the shofar down once again. After some time had passed, Rav Levi Yitzchak turned to his people and said, "Friends, today in this Shul we have a man who doesn't know how to read Hebrew. He was never sent to school when he was young and he doesn't know how to say any teffilot. He does however know that today is Rosh Hashanah and so he came to shul to join us. When he arrived here

he was sad as everyone around him was davening with great concentration and he couldn't participate. He turned his head towards the heavens and he cried out to God that all he knows are the letters of the Alef Bet. Slowly with real sincerity he said each letter of the Alef Bet. He asked God to take the letters and arrange them so that they form a teffilah." The community was still silent. Their rabbi continued, "This was why I stopped before blowing the shofar," he said. "God is in the middle of arranging all the letters that came from the mouth of this sincere man. We must wait."

### **Discuss:**

We can see from the words of the great Rav of Berditchev that no matter how much you know, even if it is only a few letters of the Alef Bet, God wants us to speak to Him. If you can only speak to Hashem in English that is fine too.

- Sing 'Avinu Malkeinu' with the children. (The Artscroll Rosh Hashana Machzor, Page 384) If you can, print off the prayer before Rosh Hashanah and hand it out at this part of your service. Try to print it out in Hebrew and if possible, a transliterated version so that all children are able to participate.
- Ask the children if they know what 'Avinu' and 'Malkenu' mean. Have a picture of a crown and a parent and hold them up to help the children guess. Explain that 'Avinu' means 'our Father'. We call Hashem this name as He loves us and cares for us like a father. We are his children. 'Malkenu' comes from the word 'Melech' – 'King' and it means 'our King'. God is all powerful and majestic like a king. God is able to grant our requests and in this teffilah we ask God to be kind to us and answer our prayers.

- Explain to the children that God loves the prayers of children and perhaps show them a picture of people praying at the kotel. Ask the children to shut their eyes and think of things that they would like to ask God and how they are going to make this year a special year. Give them thirty seconds and ask them to open their eyes. Suggest something that you would like to pray for or a way in which you would like to make the year ahead special. Now go around the circle or room, asking children to share their thoughts.
- One very important teffilah on Rosh Hashana is called 'Unetaneh Tokef'. (The Artsroll Rosh Hashana Machzor, Page 480) It was written by Rabbi Amnon of Maintz in Germany about a thousand years ago and is said during the mussaf service. The teffilah is one of the most emotional prayers in our machzor and it describes Rosh Hashanah as a time of judgement by God. It ends with the words, 'Teshuva, Teffilah and Tzedakah'. By saying these words we remind ourselves of the importance of giving tzedakah and saying our teffilot with kavanah. Ask the children how they can give tzedakah to others during the Ten days of Repentance that take us from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur. Examples could be donating some of the toys they have grown out of to a charity shop, making a jumble sale in aid of a children's charity or looking up different charities online and seeing how they can be supported.
- Point to the apple and honey on the table and ask the children why they are there. Explain that on Rosh Hashanah there are many special foods that we have the custom to eat to motivate us to focus on teshuvah. We eat

an apple dipped in honey to ask God to give us a sweet and good new year. Ask the children if they have any special foods that they eat on Rosh Hashanah and ask them if they know why.

- If there are no allergies, have ready some cut up apple slices and some honey and give each child a slice of apple dipped in honey. Say the bracha of 'Borei Pri Ha'etz' and then each child should have a bite. Stop the children and recite the prayer. (The Artscroll Rosh Hashana Machzor, Page 96.) Explain the English meaning:

*'May it be Your will, Hashem our God and the God of our forefathers that You renew for us a good and sweet year.'*

The children may now finish their apple slice!

### **Songs:**

(To the tune of 'My Darling Clementine')

Dip the apple in the Honey  
Make a Bracha loud and clear  
L'Shana Tovah U'Metuka  
Have a Happy Sweet New Year

(To the tune of 'The wheels on the bus')

The shofar in the shul  
Goes toot toot toot,  
toot, toot, toot,  
toot, toot, toot,  
The shofar in the shul goes toot, toot, toot,  
on Rosh Hashanah morning.

## **Games:**

### **Notes of the Shofar**

Discuss the notes of the shofar with the children. Put a flashcard (or piece of paper) with each of the notes of the shofar written on it in English, in the various corners of the room. Either prop them up on a chair or if there are parents there – ask them to hold up the card.

All the children should assemble in the middle. When you make one long sound they should all run to 'Tekiah'. The last one there is out. If a child runs to the wrong note they are also out. If you make three shorter sounds they should run to 'Shevarim' and if you make nine very short sounds they should run to 'Teruah'. The same rules apply. The last one in the game is the winner. Please only play this game if you are in a safe environment for running around.

### **Apple, Apple, Honey**

Sit the children in a circle on the floor. Choose one child to stand on the outside of the circle and walk around the circle lightly tapping the shoulder of every child. Each time he taps a shoulder he should say, "Apple," until one time when he should say, "Honey," instead. The honey should get up and chase the apple around the circle. It is the job of the apple to try and sit in the honey's spot.

If the apple gets the honey's spot then the honey becomes the apple. If the apple is caught by the honey before he reaches his place the apple must be the apple again.

### **Rosh Hashanah Shopping**

Before the start of your service hide around the room, lots of pictures of objects and food items. Included in those should be many of them that link to Rosh Hashanah.

Split the children up into groups and give each group a shopping bag. Explain that they are going shopping for Rosh Hashanah. When you say, "Off you go," they should hunt around the room for pictures linked to Rosh Hashanah and put them in their central shopping bag. When you ask them to stop the teams should gather and show you what they 'bought'. Each correct item gains them a point and each item that is incorrect and has no link to Rosh Hashanah loses them a point. The winning group is the one with the most points. You may want to have a few copies of some pictures.

Ideas for 'correct' objects:

Apple, honey, shofar, kittel, machzor, Rosh Hashanah card, scales, pomegranate, round challah, wine, Kiddush cup, candles, head of a fish, crown, scales...

Incorrect items should also include pictures from other chagim such as a lulav or chanukia to make the game more challenging.

### **Tashlich Marbles**

You will need a bag of marbles and a bowl of water.

Explain to the children that on the first day of Rosh Hashanah it is a custom for men, women and children to make their way to some flowing water such as a stream or river in order to recite the Tashlich prayers.

These prayers ask God for forgiveness for our sins and to grant us a year filled with blessings. We are symbolically throwing our sins into the water. If possible show the children a picture of people saying tashlich.

Place a few marbles in the bowl and then give each child their own marble. Talk about how we have all made mistakes this year. Each child should think of a mistake they have made and throw their marble into the water. (You may want to place a towel under the bowl to catch any splashes.) At the end, point out how all the marbles become overwhelmed by the other marbles and it is difficult to see your own 'mistake'. It looks like a clean

slate. You can also stir up the bowl to illustrate the point even better.

### **‘What’s the time Mr Shofar?’**

One player is chosen to be Mr Shofar. Mr Shofar stands at the opposite end of the room from the other players, facing away from them. A call-and-response then takes place: All players except for Mr Shofar chant in unison "What's the time, Mr Shofar?", and Mr Shofar will answer in one of the two ways:

1) Mr Shofar may call: "Tekiya time," where all the children will take one big step towards him, "Shevarim time," where they will all take three smaller steps or "Teruah," time' where the children should take nine tiny steps. When all the children have done this they should all ask the question again.

2) Mr Shofar may call "Honey cake time!" Then Mr Shofar will turn and chase the other players back to their starting point. If Mr Shofar successfully tags a player, that player becomes the new Mr Shofar for the next round.

### **Web of Teshuvah**

Stand in a circle and tie one end of a ball of wool to your hand and share something you would like to work on during the year. (For example, tidying your room or speaking kindly.) Throw or roll the ball of wool to a child keeping carefully hold of your part of the string. Ask the child to wrap it loosely around their hand and to share something that they would like to work on this year. That child should then throw the ball of wool to another child while keeping hold of their section. Once every child has had a turn there will be a web of string resembling a spider's web connecting all the participants. Discuss how good deeds strengthen and connect us together and make the world a better and happier place.

### **Memory Game**

Sit in a circle. Child one will say, "This year I want to...." They should finish the sentence with something they would like to change this year. For example, "Be polite to my parents."

Child two says the same sentence but adds something of their own to the end of it. For example, "This year I want to be polite to my parents and not tease my brother." Play continues and becomes progressively more difficult as the final children need to remember a long list. Children are 'out' if they cannot remember a resolution.

### **New Beginnings (Discussion)**

On the second night of Rosh Hashana we have the custom to eat a new fruit. This is so that we have a reason to say the Shehchianu bracha a second time. Rosh Hashana is all about new – the New Year, new beginnings etc. Go around the circle and ask each child what they would like to do that is new to them in the coming year – learn something new / try a new hobby / meet new people / try new foods etc. Sum up by explaining that sometimes trying out something new can be a little daunting, but it is worth persevering for the benefits that they gain from it!

### **Quiz**

Use the information in this booklet and on the pages below as the basis of questions for a quiz. Split the children into teams and explain your rules. Each time a team scores a point you could give them a small coloured piece of card that you have prepared in advance. At the end see which team has won by counting who has the most pieces of card.

### **All about Rosh Hashanah.....**

- Rosh Hashanah is celebrated on the first and second of Tishrei.

- Rosh Hashanah is the birthday of man as Adam was created on Tishrei 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Each new calendar year is counted from Rosh Hashanah, the birthday of the world.
- Unlike other chagim, Rosh Hashanah is also observed for two days in Eretz Yisrael.
- The first day of Rosh Hashanah cannot fall on a Wednesday, Friday or Sunday.
- The period from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur is known as the 'Aseret Yemai Teshuva'- 'The Ten Days of Repentance.'
- The mazal – astrological sign, of Tishrei is a pair of scales. On Rosh Hashanah God weighs and judges our deeds.
- Rosh Hashanah means Head of the Year. It has a few other names: 'Yom Hadin' – 'The Day of Judgement' and 'Yom Hazikaron' – 'The Day of Remembering', as we pray to God to remember all our good deeds. It is also called 'Yom Teruah' – 'The Day of Sounding the Shofar'. This is the name found in the Torah.
- We light candles at the start of Rosh Hashanah and recite the 'Shehecheyanu' blessing as well.
- On the first day of Rosh Hashanah we read about the birth of Yitzchak from Sefer Bereshit. According to the Talmud, Yitzchak was born on Rosh Hashanah.
- On day two we read the account of the *Akedah* which recalls the sacrifice that Avraham was prepared to make in order to obey God. It describes the substitution of a ram for Yitzchak. The blowing of the shofar recalls this event.
- The word shofar comes from the word '*shefoferet* meaning 'tube', denoting the hollow horn of the shofar.
- We do not use the horn of a cow as a shofar as it recalls the sin of the *Egel Hazahav* – the Golden Calf.
- According to various Midrashim it is the custom to blow one hundred notes of the shofar on each day of the festival.
- The man who blows the shofar is called the 'Baal Tokeiah'.

- The man who calls out each sound is called the 'Baal Makri'.
- The shofar is not blown on Shabbat.
- On Rosh Hashanah the *mussaf teffilah* is the longest of the whole year. It contains the major themes of the day. It is divided into three sections: Malchuyot – proclaiming God as King and ruler of the universe. Zichronot – acknowledging that God remembers all our thoughts and deeds. Shofarot – we affirm our commitment to the Torah which was given to the Jewish people on Mt Sinai to the accompaniment of the blast of the shofar.
- The act of teshuvah is one of our 613 mitzvot. The root of the Hebrew word Teshuvah is 'Shuv' – return. By doing Teshuvah we return to God and the mitzvot in the Torah.
- If we have wronged another person we must apologise personally and ask for forgiveness.
- It is the custom to eat various foods at the Rosh Hashanah meal to signify our hopes for the coming year. We hope these foods will motivate us into action and focus our minds on teshuvah.  
Some of these foods, such as honey, taste sweet and symbolize a sweet year. Others, such as pomegranate seeds, grow abundantly and indicate an abundance of merits.
- Challah – it is customary to have a round one which signifies Gods sovereignty has no beginning and end. It also signifies the cycle of the year.
- Head of a fish/sheep – we eat this to signify our desire to be as the head (high up, achieving) and not as the tail (low down).
- New fruit – since the two days of Rosh Hashanah are considered as one long day, according to halacha, there is some doubt as to whether the 'Shehecheyanu' brachah can be said on the second night of the festival. Therefore during Kiddush on the second night we place a new fruit on the

table so that the shehecheyanu can be recited over one of these. It is customary to use one of the seven species for this.

### **Shana Tova!**

Finally, to end your service, explain to the children that on Rosh Hashanah we have special greetings that we say to each other. Have each child turn to the person sitting next to him and say, "*L'shanah Tovah*".