



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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## SHAVUOT

Chag Sameach and welcome to a special Shavuot edition of Spark.

### **Key Facts about Shavuot:**

Please find below some key facts about Shavuot. You can also use them as the basis for a quiz for the children at your service.

- Shavuot commemorates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai over three thousand years ago.
- It occurs on the 6<sup>th</sup> of Sivan and is the culmination of a seven week period of counting the 'Omer' which began on Pesach.
- Shavuot means 'weeks' in recognition of the weeks of preparation leading up to the giving of the Torah.
- Shavuot is sometimes known as 'Pentecost' which is a Greek word meaning 'the holiday of 50 days.' Shavuot occurs 50 days after the first day of Pesach.
- The entire Jewish nation of three million men, women and children directly experienced God giving the Torah.
- Shavuot is one of the 'Shalosh Regalim – Three Foot Festivals' where the entire nation would gather in Jerusalem for celebration and study. Today, early on Shavuot morning the streets of Jerusalem are filled with thousands of Jews walking to the Western Wall.
- In Israel, Shavuot lasts for one day.
- On Shavuot there is the widespread custom to stay up the entire night learning Torah. Those who study all night then say the morning prayers at the earliest permitted time. This expresses the enthusiasm of the Jewish people to receive the Torah.

- It is a custom to decorate the synagogue with branches and flowers as Mount Sinai blossomed with flowers on the day that the Torah was given.
- The Torah also associates Shavuot with the harvest of the wheat and fruits and marks the bringing of the first fruits to the Bet Hamikdash – the Holy Temple, as an expression of thanksgiving.
- It is traditional to eat dairy food on Shavuot. Various reasons have been suggested for this: The book of The Song of Songs refers to the Torah by saying: “It drips from your lips like honey and MILK under your tongue.” We are also told that upon receiving the Torah the Jews immediately became obligated in the laws of Shchita. As they did not have time to prepare kosher meat, they ate dairy foods instead. The numerical value of milk – *chalav* – is 40. This hints to the 40 days that Moshe spent on Mount Sinai.
- The Book of Ruth is read in the synagogue on Shavuot. Ruth was a non-Jewish woman whose love of God and the Torah led her to convert to Judaism. In addition Ruth was the ancestor of King David who was born and who died on Shavuot. (See below for more details.)

## Summary of Megillat Ruth:

- The Story of Ruth begins with a famine in Eretz Yisrael. Elimelech and his wife Naomi and their two sons, Machlon and Chilion, leave from Bet Lechem in Judah to live in Moav.
- Elimelech fled from Bethlehem not because he was hungry — he had more food than he needed. He was very wealthy. He was afraid that the poor and hungry would come knocking on his door for help. He was more concerned with his fortune than the plight of his people. Responsibility to his fellow Jews came last in his list of priorities, and for that he was punished. Elimelech died in Moav, leaving his righteous wife Naomi a widow.
- His two surviving sons, Machlon and Chilion, stayed in Moav and married Orpah and Ruth, two Moavite princesses. The two men also died and then there were three widows. Having lost her family and her fortune, the righteous Naomi turned her sights back to Bet Lechem where she had belonged all along.
- Both daughters-in-law wanted to accompany her, but Naomi said no.
- Why go to a strange land, to a life of loneliness and poverty? Orpah kissed Naomi good-bye and went back to Moav, but Ruth clung to Naomi with a fierce loyalty and the immortal words:
- *Wherever you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people are my people and your G-d is my G-d; where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried (1:16-17).*
- Naomi and Ruth went back to Bet Lechem where they lived as paupers.
- Young, vigorous Ruth cared for her aged, broken mother-in-law, begging and scrounging in the fields. There she met Boaz, who, according to the Sages, was the Judge Ivtzan

(*Judges 12:8*), who had just lost his wife. His extensive properties were managed and run by his many employees.

- Boaz saw Ruth gathering neglected sheaves in the field, and he admired her honesty and modesty, not to mention her devotion to Naomi, his relative. Boaz recognized his responsibilities, not only to help the two women but to preserve their self-respect while doing so.
- During the harvest, while Ruth spent her time gleaning in Boaz's field and had at least limited access to him, Naomi hoped that Ruth's 'chance encounter' with Boaz was providential and that Boaz would 'redeem' Ruth by marrying her, thus perpetuating Machlon's memory.
- But then the harvest was over and Boaz made no such move. The prospect that Ruth might meet Boaz again was remote, and Naomi feared that since Boaz had not taken the initiative when Ruth was near, he could hardly be expected to respond to more conventional suggestions of marriage when she was out of sight. For all they knew, Boaz might even be offended at the mere suggestion of a marriage to Ruth. After all, Naomi was destitute, Ruth was of Moavite stock, and Boaz was a man of substance, the Judge and leader of the generation. Could Naomi expect simply to ask him to redeem and marry this girl?
- Naomi realized that she had to take a bold initiative. She therefore decided that the best course - however daring and unconventional — was for Ruth herself to approach Boaz very privately and remind him of his responsibility to the family of his dead uncle, Elimelech. In a personal confrontation - convinced that her motives were sincere, his compassion for her bitter plight might be evoked. It was.
- Boaz married Ruth and she conceived on the last day of his life. Their child was Oved, grandfather of King David, first of the royal family of Israel—the House of David. The *Talmud* calls Ruth *Ima Shel Malchut*, (Mother of Royalty), because her progeny included David and Solomon, and the

future *Moshiach* who will end all exiles, return Israel to its greatest glory, and lead all the world to the destiny for which it was created.

Adapted from Torah Tots



## Children's Service: Tots – Year 2

On Shavuot we celebrate the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people by Hashem on the mountain of Sinai. **See above for key facts about Shavuot which you can use as a quiz.**

Below are some songs about Shavuot. All the tunes for them can be found on 'YouTube.'

The first song mentions the words '*Na'aseh V'Nishma*' '*We will do and we will listen!*' Shemot, 24:8.

The Jewish people declared their resolve to do whatever God would command them even before the commandments were issued. Only someone who is totally willing to shape his entire life around Torah observance would be willing to make such a commitment.

### Hashem Gave Us a Present

Hashem gave us a present  
Do you know what it was?  
He gave us the Torah  
And we should keep its laws.  
He asked some other people  
Do you want this gift of Mine?  
But they said, "No thank you, for Torah there's no time!"  
Then to the Bnei Yisrael, Hashem did go, they said Na'aseh  
V'nishma  
Because we love Hashem so.  
Then to the Bnei Yisrael, Hashem did go, they said Na'aseh  
V'nishma  
Because we love Hashem so.

## Hashem is Here Hashem Is There

The children can put actions to the words.

Hashem is here

Hashem is there

Hashem is truly everywhere

*Repeat*

Up, up, down, down,

Right, left and all around

Here there and everywhere

That's where He can be found

On Shavuot we read the Book of Ruth. Ruth was the ancestor of King David who was born and who died on Shavuot. Sing '*David Melech Yisrael*' with the children.

The following is a well-known song about the mountains. The children may know the tune, but if not it also works to the tune of '*Rock-a-bye Baby*.' The children should do actions to show the tall and wide mountains and small and humble Har Sinai.

The story is told that all the mountains boasted about their attributes and thought that they were the best choice for the giving of the Torah. Har Sinai (Mt. Sinai) did not join in and was sure that it was too plain to be chosen - Being modest is best!

## I am a Mountain

I am a mountain so very high

I can reach way up to the sky

The Torah should be given on me

For I am as tall as can be

Oh no, I am much taller than you

And there are so many things I can do



The Torah should be given on me  
For I am as great as can be

But little Har Sinai just stood there and sighed  
I know I'm not tall, I know I'm not wide  
The Torah can't be given on me  
For I am so plain, he said, simply

But from all the mountains Hashem chose Sinai  
Because it did not hold itself so high  
It had such simple and humble ways  
So we learn that humbleness pays

**Ten Commandments** - to the tune of '*There was an old man  
named Michael Finnigan*'

Hashem gave us the 10 commandments  
10 commandments, 10 commandments,  
Hashem gave us the 10 commandments  
And this is what they say

Listen to your Mum and Dad, do what they say  
Have a nice rest on the Shabbat day  
Never take other people's things away  
It's all in the 10 commandments

### **Activity 1:**

This activity is about the foods that we eat on different festivals. On Shavuot we traditionally eat dairy foods. The reason for this is that the Jewish people had not yet learned all the laws for the preparation of kosher meat. Cut out lots of pictures of different dairy foods from magazines or google images, but also add some pictures of foods that we eat on other festivals. Ask the children to pick out the foods that we traditionally eat on Shavuot, whilst

at the same time reinforcing their knowledge of foods for other festivals.

### **Activity 2:**

We are told that the students of Rabbi Akiva were not being kind to each other between Pesach and Shavuot and during this time we try and work on ourselves to improve this character trait. Megilat Ruth that we read on Shavuot (see above) is all about kindness – *chessed*. We read about the kindness that Ruth displayed when she stayed with her mother-in-law and the way Boaz treated Ruth so as not to embarrass her.

Here is a game to foster good relationships and kindness amongst the participants at your service:

Before chag, prepare a slip of paper with the name of each child at your service written on it and have a hat or a box ready, in which to put all of the papers.

At the service give each child their name and ask them to put it in the hat. Sit the children in a circle and ask each one of them to pick out a name from the hat. When each child has a name of another participant, ask them to stand up and say something kind about the child they have picked. (If you can't manage to write their names before Shavuot, ask the children to put an item that belongs to them in the hat.)

### **Activity 3:**

Shavuot also celebrates the time when the first fruits of the Seven Species with which *Eretz Yisrael* is blessed, were harvested. They were brought in elaborately decorated baskets to the Bet Hamikdash where the fruit would be blessed and presented to

the Kohanim. Shavuot is also known as *Chag Ha-Bikkurim* (the Festival of the First Fruits).

Prepare cards with pictures of fruit on them. (see below for pictures you can use). Some of the pictures should be fruit that are the Shivat Haminim (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates) and some should be other fruit. You could either play the memory game with them (see instructions below) or scatter the cards on the floor face down, split the children into two groups and ask them take a basket and fill it with the Shivat Haminim. When time is up see which group has the most Shivat Haminim.

Memory game: Turn all cards face down. Ensure that there are two copies of each card. Split the children into teams. Team A turns over two cards leaving them where they are. If the cards are the same, Team A keeps them and has another go. If they are different they are turned over face down again in the same spot and play moves to Team B. The team that had the most pairs of cards at the end is the winning team!

#### **Activity 4:**

Explain to the children that one of the reasons it is important to know the names of the Shivat Haminim is because there is a special Grace after Meals that we say when we have eaten one of the Seven Species.

Hold up the pictures of the Shivat Haminim again for a minute, ask the children to name the fruits and then put the pictures somewhere out of sight.

Explain to the children that they should run around and when you call out the name of one of the Shivat Haminim they should perform an action such as star jumps or sitting on a chair. If you

call out a fruit which is not one of the Shivat Haminim they should stand still. Any child performing the wrong action is out of the game. Last one standing is the winner.

### **Activity 5:**

Alternatively, print out lots of pictures of fruit and vegetables. Include the Shivat Haminim. You may need to have a few copies of each picture depending on the size of your group. Lay the pictures all around the room on the floor and tell the children that when you call out, "Off you go!" they should run or walk around the room. (This will depend on how large your room is and your decision about safety aspects.) When you call out that the children should stop they must jump onto one of the pictures of the Shivat Haminim. Walk around the room and check to see which children are standing on a picture that is not one of the seven species. Any child doing so would be out. In order to reinforce the names of the species you should say out loud a comment such as, "Oh no Fred! You are standing on a picture of an aubergine! That isn't one of the Shivat Haminim!" When there are only a few children left you should take away some of the pictures of the Shivat Haminim to make the game more challenging – at this point you should only have one child per picture. The last child standing is the winner!

### **Activity 6:**

Explain to the children that on Shavuot we were given the 'Aseret Hadibrot', the Ten Commandments by Hashem.

- Ask the children if they know any of the Ten Commandments.
- Explain that the Ten Commandments are split into two sections. One section is about mitzvot that are to do with people and their relationship with each other and one

section is to do with people and their relationship with God.

- Explain that you are going to divide the room into two. On one side or one wall will be the commandments that are about people and their relationship with each other and the other side will be about the commandments that are between people and God. You are going to call out a commandment and they will need to run to the side of the room to which they think it belongs. (You may need to simplify some of the commandments so that the children are able to understand them at their level.)
- Once they have run to the side you will let them know if they are correct.
- The children may ask why 'Honouring you parents' is in the first section of the Aseret Hadibrot which is all about our relationship with God. You can explain to them that bringing up a child is a partnership between ones parents and God.

### **Teffilah**

On Shavuot we add Hallel to our tefillot.

Sing some verses of Hallel with the children and explain to them that the Hallel is a prayer all about praise and on every chag we recite Hallel.

'Torah tziva' would be a perfect tefilah to include and discuss on Shavuot.

### **Discuss**

- What is your favourite story in the Torah and why?
- What is your favourite mitzvah and why?
- How would you get ready for a big event such as a concert or wedding? How do you think the Jewish people prepared for receiving the Torah? (The Bnei Yisrael had three days

of preparation before receiving the Torah. During this time they washed their clothes, they purified themselves and the Ibn Ezra says they washed themselves in honour of the occasion. Moshe met with the people and taught them.)

### **Kiddush/Snack time**

If you have a Kiddush or snack at your children's service it would be a lovely idea to arrange to have food to eat that links to Shavuot. Obviously dairy food would be suitable (see explanations above). You could also have cupcakes decorated with flowers and explain that tradition has it that Mt Sinai blossomed with flowers on the day the Torah was given. Have a look for suitable snacks on the themes of Shavuot. As always make sure you refer to any allergy guidelines for children at your service.

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

- See above for key facts about Shavuot which you can use as a quiz.
- Some of the activities above may also be suitable for your group.

#### **Activity 1:**

You will need a blindfold, a big bowl, 20 to 30 cotton wool balls (this will depend on the size of your children's service) and a large plastic serving spoon.

Sit the children in a circle and place the bowl on the floor in the middle. Scatter the cotton wool balls randomly around it. Choose one child to be blindfolded and ask him to sit or kneel on the floor in front of the bowl. Hand him the spoon and ask him to put his other arm behind his back. Explain that he has one minute to



scoop up as many cotton wool balls as possible with the spoon and put them in the bowl. After one minute count how many balls are in the bowl.

Repeat the process again with a few children.

The game is not a competition so watch that it doesn't turn into one.

### Discuss

- Sometimes in life we do things that we think are right without always knowing what the results will be. In a way we are 'blind' to the outcome of the act and we simply trust that it will be for our good.
- When one of the participants 'blindly' scooped the cotton wool balls into the bowl he couldn't feel if he was doing any good or not. He didn't know if his efforts would be productive or not. However, he kept on trying, trusting that some of his efforts would be rewarded.
- Even before the Ten Commandments were given the Jewish people said the famous words 'Na'aseh V'Nishma' 'We will do and we will listen!' (Shemot, 24:8) They showed utter faith in Hashem that He would only ask them to do something that was good for them. Only someone who is totally willing to shape his entire life around Torah observance would be willing to make such a commitment.
- Ask the participants when are there times in their life when they need to trust or have faith in other people or God. Some examples could be listening to parents when they say that you can't ride your bike in a certain area, trusting your doctor if he tells you not to go swimming if you have an ear infection, praying to Hashem if someone is not well. We

trust that Hashem will make the outcome be the one that He knows is right.

## Activity 2:

### Trigger:

Split the children into groups. Explain to them that they are stranded on a desert island and they need to come up with 5 rules that they will all need to keep. Give the groups a few minutes to discuss this and decide their rules. When time is up each group should present their rules to the other groups.

Explain to the children that on Shavuot we were given the 'Aseret Hadibrot', the Ten Commandments by Hashem.

- Ask the children if they know any of the Ten Commandments.
- Explain that the Ten Commandments are split into two sections. One section is about mitzvot that are to do with people and their relationship with each other and one section is to do with people and their relationship with God.
- Explain that you are going to divide the room into two. On one side or one wall will be the commandments that are about people and their relationship with each other and the other side will be about the commandments that are between people and God. You are going to call out a commandment and they will need to run to the side of the room to which they think it belongs. (You may need to simplify some of the commandments so that the children are able to understand them at their level.)
- Once they have run to the side you will let them know if they are correct.
- The children may ask why 'Honouring you parents' is in the first section of the Aseret Hadibrot which is all about

our relationship with God. You can explain to them that bringing up a child is a partnership between ones parents and God.

### **Activity 3:**

*'Standing for your convictions.'*

Sit the children in a circle and say that you are about to read some statements. Ask them to stand up if they agree or remain seated if they disagree. Make the following statements:

*I think...*

Chocolate is the best ice cream flavour.

Tottenham is the best football team.

Peanut butter is better than jam.

Kids should not be allowed to eat sugary cereal.

Kids should not be allowed to watch TV on school nights.

Kids should own mobile phones.

It's all right to borrow something without permission.

People must report cheating they see on a test.

Kids should never make fun of other people.

Everyone must work to pick up litter.

Kids should be friends only with people their parents approve of.

Every Jewish person should learn to speak Ivrit.

It's important to support Israel with our words and deeds at all times.

It's important to keep kosher.

(You will notice that some children are swayed by the opinions of their friends and change their mind when they see what their peers have chosen to do.)

For the final round ask your participants to share a belief about which they feel strongly.

- Ask: How did it feel to stand up for the statements with which you agreed?
- How did it feel to stay seated?
- How did it feel to be the only or one of the only ones to be standing?
- How did it feel to be the only one or one of the only ones to be seated?
- Were there times when you felt pressure to stand?
- Where there times when you would have stood but you felt embarrassed to stand?
- What character trait does it take to be the only one sitting or standing?

Introduce the concept of courage. There are two types of courage. One is symbolised by King David who was born and who died on Shavuot. In fact, on Shavuot we read the Story of Ruth as it traces the ancestry of King David. King David was a fearless warrior who killed Goliath against overwhelming odds.

The other type of courage is 'gevura' - inner strength. This is the courage we have been thinking about today. It is the courage to stand up for one's own convictions and belief.

#### **Activity 4:**

We are told that the students of Rabbi Akiva were not being kind to each other between Pesach and Shavuot and during this time we try and work on ourselves to improve this character trait. Megilat Ruth that we read on Shavuot is all about kindness – *chessed*. We read about the kindness that Ruth displayed when she stayed with her mother-in-law and the way Boaz treated Ruth so as not to embarrass her.

Here is a game to foster good relationships and kindness amongst the participants at your service:

Everyone gets a length of string. Each string is the same length as one other person in the room. Students have to match up with their partner. When they find their partner they should interview each other asking each other three questions. When this section is finished the children should get back in a circle again. Go around the circle and each child should say two new things they learned about their partner and one thing they like about them.

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