



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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Vayetzei

Parsha Summary:

- Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and travels to his uncle Lavan's house in Charan.
- On the way Yaakov arranges some stones as a pillow around his head and lies down to sleep. He dreams that there is a ladder going up to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. When he awakes he realizes the holiness of the location and he erects a monument there naming the place Bet El.
- Yaakov continues on his journey and arrives at the outskirts of Charan. There, at a well, he meets a Rachel, Lavan's young daughter. Yaakov single handedly rolls off the heavy stone that is covering the well and gives water to the sheep. Rachel introduces Yaakov to her father.
- Yaakov loves Rachel and agrees with Lavan to work for him for seven years in order to marry Rachel.
- Lavan tricks Yaakov into marrying his older daughter, Leah, instead of Rachel. When Yaakov protests, Lavan agrees to give him Rachel too in exchange for another seven years of service.
- Leah gave birth to four children – Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Judah – but Rachel remained barren. Rachel and Leah both gave their handmaids to Jacob as concubines. Rachel's maid, Bilhah, bore two children, Dan and Naftali. Leah's maid, Zilpah also bore two children, Gad and Asher.
- One spring day, Reuven picks flowers from the field and brings them to his mother. Rachel asks Leah for some of

them, and Leah agrees, provided that Rachel relinquishes her turn with Jacob that night. Leah gave birth to another two sons, Yissachar and Zevulun and one daughter—Dinah. Eventually, Rachel, too, gave birth to a son, whom she names, Yosef.

- Yaakov asks Lavan for permission to take his wives and children and return to Canaan. Wages are agreed and once again Lavan tries to trick Yaakov. After six more years of working for Lavan, Yaakov is commanded by God to return to Canaan.
- Grabbing the opportunity while Lavan is away, Yaakov takes his family and belongings and leaves. Before they depart, Rachel takes one of her father's idols.
- Lavan runs after them but on the night before he reaches them, God appears to him in a dream and warns him not to harm Yaakov or his family.
- Lavan and Jacob made a peace treaty and erect a stone monument. Lavan returns to Charan, and Yaakov continues on his way.

Children's Service: Tots – Year 2

Yaakov's Dream

At the end of the parsha last week, Rivka tells her son Yaakov to run away from his brother Esav and go to her brother Lavan, in Charan. The parsha this week starts with Yaakov's journey from Be'ersheva towards Charan. The Torah tells us that when it was evening and the sun was setting, Yaakov took some stones and arranged them on the floor to use as a pillow for his head. While he slept, he had a dream in which there was a very long ladder that reached from the ground to the sky and that angels of God were going up and down on the ladder! In his dream God spoke to him and promised to look after Yaakov wherever he would be. When Yaakov woke up he said, "This must be a very special place for such a special dream! I will call this place 'Bet - El' - 'The House of God'." Yaakov took the stone which had been his pillow and stood it up to mark the place where he had slept and had his wonderful dream.

We can learn from this story that God watches over us all the time and is available to help in all situations.

The Torah also tells us that before Yaakov lay down to sleep he prayed to God. We learn from here that each evening we should pray. This prayer is called, *Ma'ariv* – the Evening Prayer.

Ask the children:

Do you dream? What do you dream about?

Did you know that before we go to sleep at night it is a mitzvah to say the first paragraph of the Shema and some other prayers? One of these prayers is called '*Hamalach, hagoel.*' See if any children are familiar with it and can sing a tune for this tefillah.

What tefillah do we say when we wake up in the morning?
(*Modeh Ani* – in this prayer we thank God for giving us a new day.)

Song – to the tune of '*Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.*'

Yaakov left his parents' home,
He walked all day, all alone.
Yaakov was sleeping and far from home
He made a pillow from some stones
Then he had a special dream
Hashem promised to look after him.

Activity 1:

Build a ladder out of lego or bricks, or if you have access to jenga blocks, these would work too. The children should build a ladder like the one Yaakov saw in his dream. See who can build it the tallest!

Yaakov Arrives at Charan

Yaakov continues on his journey. When he is near to Charan he sees a well in the field with lots of sheep nearby. The shepherds were waiting for more shepherds to arrive so that everyone could join in to roll the heavy stone away from the top of the well and give their sheep a drink. Just then, Rachel came along with her father's sheep. Rachel was the daughter of Lavan.

Yaakov went up to the well and rolled the huge, heavy stone away from the top of the well all by himself! He was very strong! After that he introduced himself to Rachel. Rachel was very excited and ran to tell Lavan that Yaakov had come. Lavan ran to meet Yaakov and took him to his house.

Discuss

If you were going on a journey what would you take with you? What would be different if you were going on a journey in Yaakov's time?

What is a well?

Who else in the Torah met someone important at a well? (Eliezer met Rivkah at a well and took her home to meet Yitzchak and they married. Moshe met his wife Zipporah at a well too.)

Activity 2:

When Rachel is about to marry Yaakov, she realizes that her trickster of a father, Lavan, is quite capable of secretly putting her sister Leah in her place. Yaakov and Rachel therefore prepare for this and arrange a secret password. Rachel would make the password known to him at the wedding so that Yaakov would be sure he was marrying the correct woman. When the time came however, Rachel could not bear to see her sister humiliated and so told her the password.

In this game we too are going to have our own secret sign! Everyone stands in a tight circle, with their heads down looking at their shoes. When 'Heads Up' is called, everyone looks up and stares at someone else in the circle. If that person is staring right back at you and does the "secret wink", then you give a loud scream and jump back out of the circle. If the person you are looking at is not looking at you, put your head back down and wait for the next round. Keep going until there are two players remaining.

Children's Services Years 3-6

Activity 1:

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Rachel however, was such a compassionate woman that she could not bear to see her sister humiliated and she teaches her the secret signs. At the expense of her marriage to her love and her future destiny she saves her sister embarrassment and pain.

When Rachel dies, Yaakov is commanded to bury her near Bet Lechem and not in the Cave of Machpela where the other *Avot* and *Imahot* were buried. Rashi tells us that when Yaakov later explains this to her son Yosef, he tells him that God wanted her to be buried where she was as He knew that one day the Bet Hamikdash would be destroyed. The Jewish people would be sent into exile and on the way they would pass Rachel's grave. God knew that Rachel would come before His throne and beg Him to have mercy on the Jewish people and return them to their Land.

The Midrash tells us that indeed Rachel did cry out to God. She reminded Him that she spared her sister humiliation and was not jealous that Leah would marry her intended husband. Therefore, how could God be jealous of the idolatry and send the Jews into exile? The Midrash continues to tell us that God replies to Rachel

that because of her and her compassion He will return the Jewish people to their borders.

From Rachel we can learn true compassion – she cared so much for other people that she was willing to forgo her own benefit to avoid causing them hurt. Many people still go today to visit and pray at Rachel's Tomb.

'The Crinkle Kid'

Have a picture of a child from a magazine and hold it up to the children who should be seated in a circle. Go around the circle and each child has to say something not nice to the child in picture. Each time they say something crinkle it a bit more. Keep going until the picture is crinkled into a ball. Then go round again and say nice things. Each time smooth out the paper a bit more.

When the paper is flat again ask the children what they notice. They will say that the paper is much smoother but not back to its original condition. Point out to the children that once you say something mean you can't take it back. You can say sorry and mean it, but the person who you hurt will never be quite the same again. We must be careful how we speak and care for the feelings of others in the way Rachel taught us.

Activity 2:

In this week's parsha we see the Lavan trying to deceive Yaakov out of everything that was rightfully his. We also see Yaakov and Rachel planning a secret sign so that Yaakov would know it was Rachel under the chuppa. Later we see Rachel teaching the secret password to her sister Leah to save her from embarrassment. What can we learn from all of this?

All of us have been in situations where telling a lie may be the best way to get out of a tricky situation. Sometimes if we tell the truth it can hurt someone or us. Have a look at the situations below:

Discuss:

Situation One: You are at the airport going to Israel and your parents are asked by security if anything in the suitcase does not belong to you. They reply that everything belongs to them. You suddenly remember that your friend gave you a bar of chocolate to take to his cousins in Israel and you packed it in the suitcase. Your parents do not know this. Should you speak up and tell security?

Situation Two: A person in your class notices that you were not in school yesterday, and asks you where you were. You are not particularly friendly with that person and don't want to tell them where you were. Can you make up a lie?

Situation Three: Your friend made a speech in front of the whole school. In it she pronounced a word wrong. When she finishes she asks you if everyone was laughing at her when she made the mistake. What should you say?

- Have you ever been in a situation where telling a lie was a good way to protect someone from hurt or embarrassment?
- In the above situations does it matter if the other person will find out the truth?
- Do you think that if you lie too often to protect others you will become accustomed to lying?

In the Talmud it asks: "How does one praise the bride?"

Beit Shammai says: 'Praise the bride based on how she is.'

Beit Hillel says: 'Beautiful and graceful bride!'

Beit Shammai said to Beit Hillel: 'If she is ugly, can one call her: 'Beautiful and graceful bride'? Doesn't the Torah say, 'Distance yourself from false matters'?'

Beit Hillel said to Beit Shammai: 'According to you, if one has made a bad purchase in the market, should one praise the purchase or make him feel bad? Surely, one should praise it.'

Our rabbis therefore tell us that one should always try to get along with other people. According to Beit Shammai one may not lie and tell a bride that she looks nice, if in reality, she doesn't. According to Beit Hillel, exaggerating is sometimes part of our obligation to get along with other individuals.

The Rambam in Hilchot De'ot teaches us that our character traits must be balanced and each one of us must find the perfect balance for ourselves. He also tells us that we should not mislead others unless it is for matters of peace or other similar matters.

The Torah does not say 'don't lie' but it says in Shemot that we should, 'distance ourselves from false matters.' There are some times when bending the truth may be more appropriate. We need to find the proper and correct balance between being truthful and making peace.

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