



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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## Vayechi

### Parsha Summary:

- Yaakov is 147 years old. He realises his end is drawing near and he calls Yosef to him. Yaakov asks Yosef to promise that he will bury him in Mearat Hamachpelah – the burial cave in Eretz Yisrael in which his forefathers and mothers are buried. Yosef promises to do so.
- Yaakov becomes ill and Yosef brings his 2 sons, Ephraim and Menashe to see their grandfather. Yaakov blesses Yosef and adds that Ephraim and Menashe will now be considered as part of the twelve tribes and will receive the same inheritance as them.
- Yaakov wants to bless Ephraim and Menashe. He says he never dreamed he would see Yosef again, let alone Yosef's children too. Yaakov then does a strange thing – Menashe, the older brother is standing on Yaakov's right and Ephraim on the left. Usually the one bestowing the blessing places his right hand on the older child's head. This time, Yaakov crosses his hands over so his right hand is on Ephraim and his left is resting on Menashe. Yosef assumes that this is a mistake on his father's part due to his failing sight and gently switches Yaakov's hands around. But, it is too late and the blessings are already given.
- Yosef questions his father about his actions. Yaakov replies that both boys will merit to have holy descendants, but Ephraim needs slightly more protection since his children will be greater than Menashe's.

- Yaakov now gathers the rest of his son's and blesses each one, according to their individual character traits and behaviour. He compares many of them to animals, for example – Naftali to a deer due to his swiftness, Dan to a snake as his descendants will have great cunning and Yehuda to a lion as his future generations will become the leaders of the Jewish people.
- Yaakov's final request before he passes away, is to reiterate his desire to be buried in with his family in Canaan – Eretz Yisrael.
- Yaakov dies and is mourned by his family and all of Egypt for 70 days. Once the 70 days are over, Yosef asks permission from Pharaoh to bury his father in Canaan. Permission is granted and Yosef, his brothers, all their families and Pharaoh's servants, travel to Canaan and bury Yaakov.
- Yosef's brothers are worried that now that Yaakov is no longer alive, Yosef's attitude towards them will change and he will remember all that they did to him. They beg him for forgiveness once again. Yosef calms his brothers and assures them that he knows it was the will of God and he will continue looking after and caring for them all.
- Yosef grows old in Egypt. He knows the exile is about to start but as a reminder that it will come to an end too, he asks his family to remember to bring his bones to Eretz Yisrael, when they eventually leave Egypt. He dies aged 110.

## Children's Service: Tot's – Year 2

### **Activity 1:**

In many synagogues and in many works of art, the twelve tribes are depicted by an animal that represents them. The basis for this is from this week's parsha. When Yaakov is blessing his son's he compares many of them to animals. The main characteristic that the animal is known for is a characteristic that is prominent in that particular tribe. For example, Naftali, Yaakov says is like a deer due to his swiftness, Dan is like a snake as his descendants will have great cunning and Yehuda compared to a lion as his future generations will become the leaders of the Jewish people.

Sit your group in a circle and explain the above concept. Next, go around the group and ask the children to think of what animal they feel best describes them and why? How can we use these character traits for the good? For example, if we can run fast, like a cheetah, we can run to help others.

### **Activity 2:**

Criss Cross, Cross Criss.

As explained in the parsha summary above, Yaakov confused Yosef by switching his hands over when he was blessing his grandsons. In this fun game, we too are going to try and confuse people with crossing over hands!

All participants should kneel on the floor and put both their hands on the floor in front of them. Everyone should then put their left hand under the arm of the person to their left.

One person starts a beat by slapping one of his hands on the floor, this is then passed around the circle in one direction with each hand slapping in turn. If someone slaps his or her hand twice in succession then the direction is reversed. A hand is out if the

person hesitates or slaps when it is not their turn. A person is out when both his hands are out.

### **Activity 3:**

Before Shabbat print out some pictures of parts and their wholes, for example parts of a car and a car, hands and feet and a person, ingredients for a cake and a cake etc.

Spread out all the pictures on the floor and ask the children to group them into their correct categories. Once this is done gather the children together and discuss how we need all the parts in order for the whole to work. So too with the brothers. Each tribe had a unique role to play and together they make up all of the Jewish people.

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

#### **Activity 1:**

This week's parsha is the last one in the book of Bereshit. The first parsha in Bereshit introduces us to Adam and then throughout the next weeks we meet the generations who come after him. This goes on all the way until this week, when we get to the beginning of the exile to Egypt.

Divide the group into a few teams. Each team should receive an envelope with several papers on them. Each paper should have a name written on it. (See below for the list. You will have to prepare this before Shabbat.) The team should then put the papers in the correct historical order, and where relevant, into the correct family tree order too. The names can be written in Hebrew or English depending on the level of your group and you can include more or less of the names, again according to the group's ability.

Adam

Eve

Cain

Hevel

Noach

Shem

Ham

Yafet

Avraham

Sarah

Yitzchak

Hagar

Yishmael

Rivka

Yaakov

Esav

Rachel (Yoseph, Binyamin)

Leah (Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Issachar, Zevulun, Dina)

Bilhah (Dan, Naphali)

Zilpah (Gad, Asher.)

## Activity 2:

In this week's parsha Yaakov addresses each of his children. He blesses them all and gives them advice for the future. Unexpectedly, he also reminds Reuven, Shimon and Levi of events from their past in which they became angry with other people and in their anger, did not behave well. It is surprising that after all these years Yaakov is still dealing with these events. We can learn a lot from this.

One of our wise sages, Rambam / Maimonides, suggests that in life it is good have a balance in all things....except anger. He advises to stay as far away from anger as possible.

Discussion:

- Why is it important to control ourselves when we feel we are getting angry?
- Can you think of a time when you calmed yourself down when you were feeling angry?
- How did that feel?
- How can we communicate with someone that we are upset with them without getting angry?

Have prepared a clear plastic bottle with some glitter at the bottom and filled with water. Shake it up and show the children that at first the entire bottle is filled with glitter. After a while however the glitter settles and falls to the bottom. The same is with anger. At first it can overtake us completely but soon we feel calm again. Reuven, Shimon and Levi acted as soon as they got angry and their actions were inappropriate. Perhaps, if they had waited for their anger to subside – like the glitter falling to the bottom of the bottle, they would have chosen a different course of action which would not have upset their father so much.

### **Activity 3:**

Before Shabbat print out some pictures of parts and their wholes, for example parts of a car and a car, hands and feet and a person, ingredients for a cake – eggs, flour, sugar etc. and a cake, and so on. You could make some connected to the Jewish year, such as an egg, bone, matza - the seder plate, or willow branch, Etrog, lulav, myrtle branch as the arba minim / the 4 species we take on Succot....

Spread out all the 'parts' pictures on the floor and ask the children to group them into their correct categories. If they get stuck, hand out the 'whole' pictures too.

Once this is done gather the children together and discuss how we need all the parts in order for the whole to work. So too with the brothers. Each tribe had a unique role to play and together they made up all of the Jewish people. Likewise, we too each have our own special qualities and individual traits. Does that mean we have a responsibility to the Jewish people? To our communities? Our family and friends? How about to ourselves? What do you feel is unique about you?

**Written by : Shoshana Citron**