



November 2018

Welcome to Spark, the Tribe weekly parsha activity sheet for Children's Service Leaders across the United Synagogue communities.

Thank you for offering to run a service, for all the hard work that you put into it and for making a real difference to so many young people. 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.

Spark gives you an overview of the weekly parsha, a song, an activity, discussion questions or D'var 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 Spark. Please be in touch if you have any queries, feedback or if we can be of any help. Thank you again for your amazing work.

With best wishes,
Sharon Radley
sharonradley@tribeuk.com

VA'ERA 5779

Parsha Summary:

- God reassures Moshe that He will keep His promise to the forefathers to bring the nation into the Land of Cana'an (later Israel). God has heard the crying out of the enslaved Israelites; He instructs Moshe to tell them that He will redeem them from slavery. The Israelites, exhausted from their labour, do not accept Moshe's reassurances.
- The Torah details the genealogy of Moshe and Aharon. They are the sons of Amram and Yocheved, who were both descendants of Levi, the third son of Yaakov.
- Moshe expresses again his reluctance to speak to Pharaoh, given his speech impediment. God restates that Aharon will be Moshe's spokesman. God will harden Pharaoh's heart and He will send plagues. This will make Egypt aware of God's omnipotence.
- Upon God's command, Aharon throws down his stick in front of Pharaoh; it turns into a snake. Pharaoh's magicians duplicate this. However, Aharon's stick swallows up their sticks. The 1st Plague: Moshe and Aharon confront Pharaoh while he is bathing in the Nile and warn him that if he does not let the Israelites leave, the waters of Egypt will turn to blood. Pharaoh ignores the warning; Aharon strikes the water with a stick and it turns into blood. Pharaoh's magicians duplicate this. The plague lasts a week. The 2nd Plague: Aharon strikes the waters of the Nile. A plague of frogs emerges, which covers Egypt. Pharaoh asks Moshe to pray for the frogs to die.
- The 3rd Plague: Aharon strikes the ground with his stick and lice spread all over Egypt. The Egyptian magicians fail to duplicate this, admitting it is the 'finger of God'.

- The 4th Plague: A plague of wild beasts spreads over Egypt, apart from Goshen, where the Israelites live. Pharaoh agrees to let the Israelites leave for three days to bring offerings in the desert. Moshe prays for the plague to stop but Pharaoh reneges on his promise. The 5th Plague: The Egyptian livestock is killed, but the Israelites' animals are untouched. The 6th Plague: Moshe throws a fistful of ash in the sky. This turns into dust covering all of Egypt, which then turns into boils on the Egyptians and their animals. God hardens Pharaoh's heart.
- The 7th Plague: A fiery hail falls on all of Egypt, apart from Goshen. Pharaoh admits that he has sinned and that God is righteous. After Moshe has prayed for the hail to stop, Pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites go.

Children's Service: Tot's – Year 2

- Tip: The information in the parsha summary above can be used as the basis of a quiz. Make sure if you do decide to have a quiz that it's inclusive and fair. Think through carefully before your service to decide if a quiz is a suitable activity for the dynamics of your group.

Song: Please note although this song is about all the plagues, only the first seven plagues are in the parsha this week. The last three are in the next parsha.

To the tune of; 'This old man...'

First God sent,
Plague number **one**,
Turned the Nile into blood.
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
Plague number **two**,
Jumping frogs all over you.
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
Plague number **three**,
Swarms of gnats from head to knee.
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
Plague number **four**,
Wild animals, need we say more?
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
Plague number **five**,
All the livestock up and died.
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
Plague number **six**,
Boils and sores to make you sick.
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
Plague number **seven**,
Lighting and hail down from heaven.
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
Plague number **eight**,
Locust came and they sure ate.
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
Plague number **nine**,
Total darkness all the time.
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
They told Pharaoh "Let them Go!"

Then God sent,
The last one,
Pharaoh was sad about his son,
All the people in Egypt were feeling pretty low,
Finally Pharaoh let them go.

Activity and discussion: Gratitude

In order for some of the plagues to begin the Nile was struck. It was Aaron and not Moshe who did the striking. This was because Moshe felt a debt of gratitude to the river that had helped save his life when he was a baby. Even though the river was an inanimate object and the story happened so many years ago, Moshe still remained grateful. We can learn from Moshe's actions to feel and show appreciation to those who help us in any way.

Sit the children in a circle and have a bag with the letters of the alphabet in it. Choose a child to pick a letter out the bag. The child whose name begins with that letter should begin. If there is more than one child with the same starting letter, call out another letter and see whose matches their surname. Ask the child to answer one of the questions below. (Choose one.) The child should answer it and then pick out another letter of the alphabet. The child whose name begins with this letter should answer the questions too. Play continues in this fashion until all children have had a turn.

- Describe something that you do often that makes you happy and why.
- Describe something that happened this past week that you are grateful for and why.
- Describe something you are particularly grateful for in your life and why.
- What do you appreciate the most about the person sitting next to you?
- Name someone you know who makes your life better and explain why.
- Describe a special gift or talent you have, how you use it, and why you are grateful for it.
- Think of something you used today that other people make take for granted.

- Describe a special favour you received, how it helped you, and how it touched you.

OR:

Sit everyone in a circle and place one person in the middle. Everyone must go around and say something wonderful or something they are thankful for about the person in the middle. It could be that they're good at football, help them with their homework, they're funny, they held the door for them. When everyone has said a comment change the person in the middle. This activity will work best if you have a smaller group. If you have a large group of participants perhaps continue the activity throughout your service – stopping every so often to give another participant a turn in the middle.

Activity: Miracles

You will need some red scarves/fabric or strips of paper and some ping pong balls or cotton wool balls.

Explain to the children that they are going to act out the miracles that God performed in order to show Pharaoh that He was in charge.

- The first miracle that God did was that he made Aaron's stick turn into a snake when it was thrown on the ground. All children should lie on the floor and wiggle like snakes.
- Next God brought the plague of blood. The children should wave the red fabric or paper around like the current of a river.
- After the blood God made frogs come out of the river and infest all of Egypt. The children should jump around the room like frogs.
- After the frogs came lice. Lice are very itchy. The children should pretend to scratch their body.
- Lice was followed by the plague of wild animals. The children should, on the count of three, make the noise of a wild animal, a roar or a hiss, shriek or yell...

- The next plague was an epidemic which made all the animals die. All the livestock of the Egyptians such as the horses, camel, donkeys and sheep, died. The children should walk around the room on all fours and on the count of three should drop down to the floor.
- As the next plague was boils the children should hop up and down, saying, “Ouch!” as if they have sores all over their bodies.
- The final plague in the parsha this week was hail. It was not ordinary hail that God sent the Egyptians but huge big blocks of hail that we are told had fire inside. The Torah says that there had never been hail like it before. Have the children throw the cotton wool balls or ping pong balls up into the air on the count of three.

Children’s Service: Years 3- 6

- Please check the activities written in the age group above as some of them may be suitable for your service too.
- Tip: The information in the parsha summary above can be used as the basis of a quiz. Make sure if you do decide to have a quiz that it’s inclusive and fair. Think through carefully before your service to decide if a quiz is a suitable activity for the dynamics of your group.

Activity and Discussion: Gratitude

Give each child a soft sweet or something really good to eat that will preferably last a few minutes as they suck on it. (Remember to check your synagogue’s/children’s service allergy guidelines.) At the same time give each child a small pebble or marble and ask them to put it inside one or both of their shoes and put their shoes back on again. With the sweet in their mouths and the pebbles in their shoe take a short very gentle walk (no running about) with them. If this is not possible, walk around the room.

After the walk ask each child to talk about his experience. What did he feel during the walk? What was he thinking about? In most cases the child

will dwell on the discomfort that they felt when walking and won't mention the good taste of the sweet.

Ask the children how this can be compared to our experiences in life. Do we sometimes focus on the difficulties and problems that we have (the pebbles) and forget about all the good things around us and the people that have been kind to us (the sweets)?

In order for some of the plagues to begin the Nile was struck. It was Aaron and not Moshe who did the striking. This is because Moshe felt a debt of gratitude to the river that had helped save his life when he was a baby. Even though the river was an inanimate object and the story happened so many years ago, Moshe still remained grateful. We can learn from Moshe's actions to feel and show appreciation to those who help us in any way.

Discuss

- How can we increase our ability to feel and show gratitude?

(We could try to think of the people in our lives and focus on the good that they have done for us. We could make a note of these acts and look out for ways to return the kindness.)

- Do you think that an important part of happiness is being able to show gratitude?
- See more discussion questions on the topic of 'gratitude' in the activities for the younger age group above.

Activity: Drama ideas from the parsha

- Ask a child to be 'Mrs. Pharaoh' trying to convince her husband to let the Jews go. She can be talking after or during any of the first seven plagues in the parsha this week.

- One child should be an advisor to Pharaoh and the other child should be Pharaoh. They should act out the advisor speaking to Pharaoh. What will he say to him? Will he try to convince Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go or will he encourage him to keep them as slaves?
- Children should act out a weather report from Egypt during the time of the plagues.