

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,
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VAYIGASH 5779

Parsha Summary:

- 22 years after Yosef was sold by his brothers, they now face the prospect of their father Yaakov 'losing' another one of his sons, Binyamin. Yehuda does not yet know that the viceroy of Egypt standing in front of him is actually Yosef. He approaches Yosef, recounting Yosef's demand to see Binyamin and explains Yaakov's reluctance to let Binyamin leave. Yaakov did not want disaster to befall Binyamin. He had already lost Yosef. Yehuda says that if he returns without Binyamin, Yaakov will surely die. Yehuda offers to take the place of Binyamin and be a servant for Yosef. Yosef orders everyone apart from his brothers out of the room. He reveals his identity and asks if his father is still alive. He tells his ashamed brothers not to be sad; God had sent him on this mission in order to sustain them during the famine
- Yosef tells the brothers to go back to Canaan to relate to Yaakov that he (i.e. Yosef) is alive and is the viceroy of Egypt. Yaakov should come immediately to Egypt; Yosef will ensure their safety and sustenance in the remaining five years of famine. Yosef and Binyamin cry on one another's necks.
- Pharaoh instructs Yosef to give his brothers wagons. Yosef sends them back with money and provisions for the journey. He sends twenty laden donkeys for Yaakov. The brothers return home and tell Yaakov that Yosef is alive and is ruling over the land of Egypt. Initially, Yaakov does not believe them.

- Yaakov travels to Egypt, stopping at Beersheva to bring an offering. God appears to Yaakov in a night vision promising to make his descendants into a great nation. The Torah lists the 70 members of Yaakov's household who came to Egypt.
- Yosef and Yaakov meet in the region of Goshen. Yosef falls on Yaakov's neck and cries. Along with five of his brothers, Yosef goes to inform Pharaoh of his family's arrival and tells him that they are sheep and cattle farmers. Pharaoh grants them the right to live in Goshen. Yosef brings Yaakov to meet Pharaoh. Yaakov blesses Pharaoh, who asks him his age.
- Despite the famine in Egypt, Yosef makes sure that his family has food. The starving Egyptians give Yosef their animals in return for bread. The following year, they sell their land to Pharaoh in return for more food and seed. They become serfs to Pharaoh, and are to give him one fifth of all produce from that land. Yosef fixes this as a national statute. Yaakov's family increases greatly.

Children's Service: Tot's – Year 3

- 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.

Emotions in the parsha

Tip: To enhance this activity print off emoticons before Shabbat and use them instead of or in addition to saying the emotion. You can also hold up the picture and ask the children to guess the emotion.

Assign each child in your group a character from the parsha. You can use the same person a few times if necessary. For example, Yaakov, Yosef, Yehuda, Pharaoh, guards, Egyptians, Binyamin and any of the other brothers.

Explain to the children that this week's parsha is a riveting one, full of suspense, drama and emotions! It goes from a tense and worrying situation to an overwhelmingly joyful one. Tell the events that took place in the parsha or through questioning ask the children to explain what happened.

Below is a list of emotions, read through them aloud one at a time. For each emotion the child who thinks his /her character experienced this at one point in the parsha, should jump up and shout their characters name. They should then explain why they think this. For example, FEAR – Yehuda would have been extremely fearful when Yosef was threatening to keep Binyamin. What would happen to his brother? What would he tell his father?

LIST OF EMOTIONS

Excited, worried, happy, afraid, generous, confused, emotional, helpless, content, blessed, reassured, regret, shocked.

Dan L'Kaf Zechut: Judging Favourably

Before Shabbat, gather together a group of household items that the children will be familiar with and put them in an opaque bag. Try to gather an interesting range of various types of items. (Make sure there is nothing with which the children could hurt themselves.)

Sit the group in a circle. One at a time, bring each of the children up and blindfold them. They should take one object out of the bag and try to guess what it is and what it is used for. The children will soon realise it is not as simple as it seems!

Once this is done, explain to the children that in this week's parsha we learn that sometimes in our lives we need to look a bit deeper and that often there is more going on than what first meets the eye.

At the end of last week's parsha, we are left thinking that Yosef is a cruel and greedy Egyptian leader, who does not care about the brothers and their family. In this week's parsha we are surprised to find out that it is the exact opposite!

Explain the meaning of the phrase, 'Dan L'Kaf Zechut' 'Judging Favourably'. Discuss with the group how we can apply this to our everyday life? What about with our friends or family? Has anyone ever been in a situation when they thought one thing was happening but really it was something else entirely?

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.

Yosef is still alive!

Yaakov was 130 years old when Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers! The brothers knew they had to inform their father but they were worried the shock would be too great for such an old man. The Midrash tells us that Serach bat Asher, Yaakov's granddaughter, had a beautiful voice, so in order to break the news gently, she wove it into a song. She sat by her grandfather with a *kinor*, (string instrument) and gently sang "Yosef, my uncle, did not die, he lives and rules over the land of Egypt." She sang this two or three times until eventually Yaakov realised the message she was giving him.

The EgyptVision Song Contest!

The children should group themselves in pairs or threes. How would they break the news? In their groups they should prepare a song – they can take an existing song and change the words, or make up an original one. They can make it fast or slow, a rap or any other song style they wish - there will be points for originality! Once they have prepared their song they should perform them to the group. The audience should allocate points

after each performance and the pair with the highest points is the winner!

Yosef forgives

You will need a large space to play this game. Designate a person to be the "freezer" and another to be the "forgiver". The freezer will run around trying to freeze people. If the freezer touches someone, that person should freeze in that position until the forgiver comes and whispers in his ear, "You are forgiven".

Play this game several times, choosing new children to be the forgiver and the freezer.

A major theme in Vayigash, is that of forgiveness. Once the brothers realised who this powerful leader of Egypt really was, they must have been terrified that he would use his position to punish them for what they did to him all those years ago. Yosef however reassures them that they shouldn't worry as he had forgiven them and that he knew that God had a plan and that he was part of it. This must not have been easy for Yosef to do. He was separated from his family for many years and went through much hardship all alone.

Yosef saw that his brothers had changed. When he pretended to want to keep Binyamin as a slave, it was a test to see how the brothers would react. When they became so distressed, Yosef knew that they had changed. They had learnt their lesson from their previous actions and he saw they were honest men. Seeing this allowed him to forgive them with all his heart.

It is easy to say the words “I’m sorry,” but do we really mean them? One way to know if we mean it, is to judge our reactions if we find ourselves in the same situation again. Do we repeat what we did before, or do we learn from our past mistakes and act differently this time?

Explain how sometimes, not forgiving someone can make us freeze and unable to move on. It can be difficult to do but when we let go, we can move past the pain that was caused us and hopefully become happier people. Yosef was able to rejoin his family and meet his father once again all those years later, because he forgave his brothers and was able to move forward with them by his side.

Yehuda offers to stay in Egypt instead of Binyamin

Place your participants in groups and tell them that they are going to be stranded on a desert island. Each member of the group is allowed to bring with one item. Each member of the group should explain to the rest of the group what object they have chosen and why.

Now ask the groups to work out how they can combine all their objects in a creative way that will increase their chances of survival. When this is done each group should present it to the rest of the groups as a whole.

Obviously this activity requires teamwork. In the parsha we see that Yosef chooses to finally reveal who he is to the brothers after Yehuda offers himself to be a slave instead of Binyamin. It was at this point that Yosef knew the brothers were finally working as a team. (For more on this theme see activity above about Yosef forgiving.)

With thanks to NCIY