



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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## VAYECHI 5779

### Parsha Summary:

- Yaakov has been in Egypt for 17 years and is 147 years old. Knowing that he will soon die, he asks Yosef to take an oath to bury him in Cana'an in Me'arat Hamachpela (the Cave of the Patriarchs) where his forefathers are buried. Yosef agrees.
- Yaakov becomes ill; Yosef visits him together with his sons Ephraim and Menashe. Yaakov tells Yosef that these two grandsons will be like the other tribes and will receive their own portion of the Land.
- Yaakov's sight is failing. Yosef places his younger son Ephraim to Yaakov's left and his older son Menashe to Yaakov's right. However, Yaakov crosses his arms, putting his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left hand on Menashe's head. He blesses them with his hands in this position. Yosef tries to switch Yaakov's hands back but Yaakov resists. He tells Yosef that Menashe will be great, but Ephraim greater still. Yaakov tells Yosef that God will eventually bring the people back to Cana'an.
- Yaakov now gathers his sons 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.
- Yosef falls on his dead father in tears. Yosef instructs doctors to embalm Yaakov. This process takes 40 days, followed by 30 days of the Egyptians mourning Yaakov's death. Yosef asks for permission from Pharaoh to bury his father in Cana'an. Pharaoh grants permission and sends a large entourage to accompany Yosef and his relatives. The brothers observe seven days of mourning.
- 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 will continue looking after and caring for them all.
- Yosef grows old in Egypt and he asks his family to remember to take his bones out of Egypt when the nation eventually leaves. Yosef dies aged one hundred and ten. He is embalmed and placed in a coffin. This concludes the Book of Bereishit.

## 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.

### **The Twelve Tribes:**

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 sons 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.

## **Yaakov blesses Ephraim and Menashe:**

### **Activity 1:**

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!

Your participants should kneel on the floor in circle 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 and rest their hand back on the floor.

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 2:**

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 ....

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?

### 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.

### **The end of Sefer Bereishit**

This week's parsha is the last one in the book of Bereishit. The first parsha in Bereishit introduces us to Adam and then throughout The Book we meet the generations who come after him. This continues all the way until Vayechi.

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 (or both) depending on the needs of your group and



you can include more or less of the names, again according to the group's ability.

Names : Adam Eve Cain Hevel Noach Shem Ham Yafet Avraham

Sarah Yitzchak Hagar Yishmael Rivka Yaakov Esav

Rachel : Yosef, Binyamin

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

Bilhah : Dan, Naftali)

Zilpah: Gad, Asher

### **Yaakov addresses his children:**

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.

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.

## Discuss:

- 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?