



igniting your shabbat services

tribe spark



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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

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Hello and welcome to Spark!

Spark is a new idea from Tribe, aimed at facilitating the smooth running of Toddlers' Services, Children's Services and Youth Services across United Synagogue communities.

Firstly, thank you for offering to run a Children's Service in your local shul. The US is very proud of the numerous Children's services that are run every week across the UK, and we would not be able to do this without you!

Spark has been designed in order to help you run your Children's Services. Obviously, every Children's Service is different, in terms of how many children there are; what their age range is; how long it is for; and how knowledgeable the children are likely to be of this week's parasha.

Ideally, where possible, a Children's Service should consist of some time used to discuss the weekly parasha, and some time devoted to davening. Spark is aimed at the parasha part of the service. It gives you an overview of what happens in the weekly parasha, and then a song, activity, discussion or Dvar Torah to run with the children - depending on their ages.

After the parasha summary on the next page, Spark has been split into 5 sections. Larger communities may have 5 different Children's / Youth Services running concurrently. Each of these will be able to use one section for their relevant age group. If your shul does not have as many groups, then you should use the section that best suits the age range of your participants.

It has been created in a way to be flexible, so that it can be run in 10 minutes, if you have a short service, or longer if you have the time. If you also look at sections for other age groups, you may even find that you would like to use the ideas and information from more than one of the sections.

It is important to note that Spark should help you to run Children's Services, but it does not completely run it for you. It is not designed to give to one of the children to read out to the group for them to run themselves. You are running the Children's Service, and Spark is here to help you do it.

Largely, no props will be needed, but ideally you should read Spark before you start the Children's Service, so that you can think of further ideas to complement it.

We hope that you and the children in the Children's Service will benefit from Spark, we thank and congratulate you for doing it; and as always we welcome your feedback.

Shabbat shalom,

The Tribe Education Team

PARASHA SUMMARY

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- Just three days after he had his brit mila, Avraham welcomes 3 guests into his tent and feeds them.
- Sarah is told that she will have a child.
- Avraham argues with God about destroying Sodom.
- Sodom is destroyed, but Lot is saved.
- Avraham and Sarah travel to Gerar.
- Yitzchak is born.
- Hagar and Ishmael are expelled and then saved from starvation by God.
- The Akeda (binding of Yitzchak): God tells Avraham to sacrifice Yitzchak, his son. So he binds Yitzchak up and just before Avraham slaughters him, a voice from heaven calls out to tell him not to.
- Instead, Avraham sacrifices a ram and uses his horn as a shofar.
- At the end of the portion, Rivka is born.



PRE-NURSERY TO RECEPTION

Tots

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Avraham and Sarah would always invite lots of visitors, and they would teach them to say Brachot (blessings) - to thank God for the food He gives us.

Teach the children to sing the song 'Here we go round the Bracha Tree'
(to the tune of Here we go Round the Mulberry Bush)



Here we go round the Bracha tree
The Bracha tree, the Bracha tree
Here we go round the Bracha tree
On a lovely Shabbat morning
This is the Bracha we say for wine
Say for wine, say for wine
This is the Bracha we say for wine
Borei Peri Hagafen

Now try singing some of the other verses with the following brachot:

Bread - Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha'aretz

Cake - Borei Minei Mezonot

Fruit - Borei Peri Ha'etz

Vegetables - Borei Peri Ha'adama

A drink - Shehakol Nihiye Bidvaro

In this week's parasha Avraham and Sarah welcome visitors to their tent. Then, Avraham prays to God not to destroy Sodom even though the people are complete strangers to him. Both of these stories show us how important it is to care about everybody.



Activity;

Here are some ways we can help people. Read through the list and get each child to choose their favorite way of helping people. Or, children can act out something from the list for the other children to guess.

- Welcoming needy people into our homes.
- Assisting people in times of distress, with money, or advice.
- Visiting lonely, elderly people.
- Looking for opportunities to help children less fortunate than ourselves.
- Praying for the recovery of an ill person.
- Praying for the security of Israel and the safety of the people living there.
- Preventing someone from doing something wrong.
- Inviting someone to eat a meal in your home.
- Showing new neighbours where the shul, school or shops are.
- Looking after a younger brother or sister when Mum or Dad is very busy.
- Making friends with a new boy or girl in the class so that they will know what to do and won't feel alone and shy.

Avraham was famous for doing the mitzvah of 'Hachnasat Orchim' (welcoming guests), but there are many other examples throughout the Tanach (Hebrew Bible), when great people show kindness to strangers.

Here are a few to read out with the children:

- Noach - Was invited into the Ark by God. From here we learn that one should verify that his guest is not a bad person (God first proclaimed Noach a Tzaddik, a righteous man, and then told him to enter the ark). Additionally, one must be invited, and cannot bring along his family unless explicitly allowed (God instructed Noach to enter the Ark with his household).
- Avraham - He would actively seek guests. He would give them food that was of better quality than they were used to receiving. He built roadside stands with food and drink for travelers.
- Lot - Risked his life to invite guests into his home, who in turn saved his life.
- Eliezer and Rivka - Eliezer devised a litmus test of eligibility for a bride to marry Yitzchak, based on how the prospective young lady would invite him to the house. Rivka passed with flying colors, thus becoming a Matriarch of the Jewish People.
- Yitro (Moshe's father-in-law) - Told his daughters to invite Moshe to their home, and was rewarded by having descendents who were members of the Sanhedrin (Jewish High Court)
- Egypt - Although the Jewish people had a terrible time in Egypt, we are nonetheless instructed to have gratitude to the Egyptians for hosting us.
- Amon and Moav (the nations who dwelled in the Jordan, near the land of Israel) - Did not offer the Jewish people food when they passed by them on their journey through the desert.
- Yehonatan - Did not bring bread to King David. This led to a chain of events that ultimately led to the massacre of the city of Nov and the death of Saul and three of his sons.
- Micha - Avoided having his name placed in its rightful spot on the notorious list of people who have no share in the World to Come, because he offered bread to all wayfarers.
- Iyov (Job) - had a house that was open on four sides to enable hospitality.

Discussion Points

- Why are we told so many occurrences of this mitzvah?
- Why does it have such a great reward?
- How easy is it for us to do it nowadays?

In this week's parasha, we read about the test that Avraham had. God commanded him to sacrifice his son Yitzchak, and even though it was something that must have been very hard for Avraham to do, he was prepared to do anything that God told him to.

Activity

Ask the children to act out the story of the Akeda (binding of Yitzchak.)

Make sure they include the following;

- God tells Avraham what He wants him to do
- Avraham gets up early to do it (as he is eager to do a mitzvah - even this one.)
- After 3 days they arrive in the place Avraham was told about. As they prepare, Yitzchak asks 'where is the lamb for the offering?'
- Avraham is about to sacrifice his son, when an angel calls out for him to stop - because God now knows that Avraham really is willing to do ANYTHING for Him.
- Avraham sees a ram, so he offers that up instead
- The angel tells Avraham that he will receive many blessings, including 'I will increase your offspring like the stars of the Heaven and like the sand on the seashore.'

Discussion Points

- What can we learn from the story of the Akeda (binding of Yitzchak)?
- What was Yitzchak's role here?
- We also read this on Rosh Hashanah, why?
- The Akeda (binding of Yitzchak) was the last of Avraham's 10 trials, which he passed and was rewarded for. It is mentioned regularly through our daily prayers, and the prayers on Rosh Hashanah make many references to it - this shows how central it is to our faith.

Dvar Torah

The parasha begins with God appearing to a 99-year old Avraham sitting in front of his tent, slowly healing from his recent circumcision. The Rabbis teach us that he was waiting for guests to pass by, so he could invite them in, and he was quite discouraged by the lack of any visitors. Suddenly Avraham looked up to find three men approaching him, and he sprang into action. He ran to them and exclaimed: "Please don't pass on from your servant. Let a little water be brought...and you'll rest... I'll bring a morsel of bread and you'll satisfy your appetite."

The Torah describes how he excitedly told Sarah, "Quickly knead bread and make cakes!" Then again he ran to his herd, chose a good tender calf for his guests to eat, and hurried the lad to prepare it. But of all the things that Avraham did for his guests, why did he offer only "a little water"? Everything else was served with great abundance, but why of all things was the water limited?

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter gives us the answer through example; He was invited by a student of his for a Friday night meal. "I don't except any invitations without first knowing about the house I'm staying in," replied the rabbi. The student began to explain how he hired the widow of a learned man who cooks for him who is very meticulous in her standards of keeping kosher, and which butcher he buys from. He explained how he arranges the Friday night meal with song and Torah discussion, and how his feast always ends at a very late hour. "I'll accept your invitation on the condition that you end two hours earlier," said the Rabbi.

Indeed, the entire meal took less than one hour, and before they all benschted (said grace after meals) the host requested the Rabbi to explain what was wrong with hosting a long meal. The Rabbi summoned the widow who cooked the elaborate meal and said to her: "Please excuse me for putting you under pressure to rush the meal so much on my behalf." Just the opposite, I wish you would come every week," said the woman. "I work hard all day Friday preparing, and I'm usually falling off my feet by the late hour that we finish. Because of you we finished earlier, and now I can go home and rest."

Rabbi Yisroel turned to his student and said "this woman's answer is the answer to the question. Indeed, your Friday night customs are extremely admirable, but not if they are observed at the expense of others."

When it comes to the work of having guests which Avraham and Sarah committed themselves to, and which they personally undertook, the sky is the limit. However, in the case of the water, which someone else was bringing, Avraham did not offer that in abundance at the expense of those who were carrying it. This is the sensitivity which Avraham conducted himself with even when he was personally caught up in performing acts of kindness for his guests.



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We hope you find our guide to this week's Parsha useful.

Be sure to look out for exciting Tribe programmes in your shul.

Shabbat Shalom!

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