



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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## Mishpatim

### **Parsha Summary:**

- The parsha this week details many laws. The first section discusses laws about servants, punishments for murder, manslaughter and kidnapping.
- The parsha continues with the laws for personal injury, personal liability for damages caused by ones possessions or ones actions, theft and the mitzvah of lending money to the poor.
- The next section of the parsha introduces us to many new laws: the prohibitions against cursing a judge or leader, sanctifying the first born son, returning a lost animal to its owner, consuming meat that was not ritually slaughtered, separating agricultural tithes correctly, and the commandments not to take bribes.
- Mishpatim introduces us to the mitzvah of Shmittah (the Sabbatical Year) where we work for six years and harvest the land but allow the land to rest on the seventh year. We too work for six days and rest on the seventh.
- We are commanded to celebrate the three festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot and to visit the Bet Hamikdash on these occasions. Finally we are told not to cook a kid in its mother's milk.
- The parsha concludes by returning to the events that happened at Mt. Sinai. God instructed Moshe regarding his ascent up the mountain for forty days where he would receive the Torah and regarding the promise that the Jewish people would make to God.

## Children's Service: Tot's – Year Two

### Activity 1:

#### Part One:

If you have an appropriate space ask the children to run/walk around when you tell them to start. When you call out a number such as, three, they should form groups of that number. Anyone not in a group is 'out'. Play the game a few times and ensure that you call out the number seven a couple of times.

#### Part Two:

Call out a number and ask the children to try and name as many Jewish things that are connected to that number as you can. For example:

3 = forefathers, foot festivals, prayer services.

10 = commandments, men to make a minyan, Days of Repentance.

7= weeks of the Omer, Shabbat, branches of the Menorah, Shivat Haminim, Noachide laws, Ushpizin.

**Ask:** Why have we been playing games all about numbers?

**Explain:** In Judaism the number seven is an important one. It usually marks time. We have seven days in a week, seven years in a cycle and so on. In the parsha this week it says:

“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce and in the seventh you shall leave it unattended and unharvested and the poor of your people shall eat.” (Mishpatim 23: 10-11)

Explain to the children that in the parsha this week we are told to keep the mitzvah of Shmitta. That means that for six years we

work the land but on the seventh we leave the land unharvested. In that year anyone would be free to eat the produce.

- Why do you think we are commanded to keep the mitzvah of Shmitta?
- How would a farmer feed his family during the Shmitta year?

## Conclusion

Play the game 'I am a farmer and I grow....' (Similar to 'I went to Israel and I took with me.....')

Sit in a circle. Child one says, "I am a farmer and I grow tomatoes." (They should choose a fruit or veg.) Child two says, "I am a farmer and I grow tomatoes and peas..." Play continues in this fashion, travelling around the circle. Each child repeating the previous list in order and adding one more item of their choice. If a child leaves out an item they are 'out'.

## Activity 2:

One of the important aspects of Kashrut is to keep milk and meat properly separated. This is derived from the verse in the parsha this week which says, "Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk." This verse appears in the Torah three times. The Sages explain that the repetition of the verse teaches us that it is not only forbidden to cook meat and milk together, but it's also forbidden to then eat or derive benefit from the mixture.

Hide lots of pictures around the room of foods made from milk, foods made from meat, vegetables, fruit, snacks and drinks. Split the children into groups and give them the task of collecting the pictures. (See below for print out.) When time is up give each group a paper/plastic plate and ask them to create a meat meal on their plate and a milk meal on their plate, using their pictures.

You can also add another plate for the children to create a dessert. Ask the children for feedback and show everyone what they have created. Ask the groups to judge the meals of the other groups and decide if they have completed the task correctly.

### **Children's Services: Years 3-6**

#### **Activity 1:**

##### **Part one:**

Split the children into teams and ask each team to count to the number seven aloud and in order without discussion. If two children say the same number at the same time or speak over one another they have to start from zero again. Much more difficult than it sounds! Time each group and see which one can perform the task in the shortest amount of time.

##### **Part Two**

If you have an appropriate space ask the children to run/walk around when you tell them to start. When you call out a number such as, three, they should form groups of that number. Anyone not in a group is 'out'. Play the game a few times and ensure that you call out the number seven a couple of times.

##### **Part Three**

Split the children into groups and call out a number. Each group should take it in turns to name something that connects that number to Judaism. For example:

3 = forefathers, foot festivals, prayer services.

10 = commandments, men to make a minyan, Days of Repentance.

7= weeks of the Omer, Shabbat, branches of the Menorah, Shivat Haminim, Noachide laws, Ushpizin.

The group that continues after the other groups have given up are the winners!

**Ask:** Why have we been playing games all about numbers?

In Judaism the number seven is an important one. It usually marks time. We have seven days in a week, seven years in a cycle and so on.

In the parsha this week it says:

“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce and in the seventh you shall leave it unattended and unharvested and the poor of your people shall eat.’ (Mishpatim 23: 10-11)

Explain to the children that in the parsha this week we are told to keep the mitzvah of Shmitta – the Sabbatical year of rest. That means that for six years we work the land but on the seventh we leave the land unharvested. In that year anyone would be free to eat the produce.

### **Discuss**

- Why do you think we are commanded to keep the mitzvah of Shmitta?
- How would a farmer feed his family during the Shmitta year?
- What can we learn from the Shmitta year? (The Sefat Emet says that we can learn from Shmitta that the primary force in the world is God and not the law of nature. We are not in control of everything! We can also think about how to give ourselves break. To put down our phones, turn off the

computer/TV and stop! We have this opportunity each week on Shabbat, also the seventh day of the week.)

## **Conclusion**

Play the game 'I am a farmer and I grow....' (Similar to 'I went to Israel and I took with me.....')

Sit in a circle. Child one says, "I am a farmer and I grow tomatoes." (They should choose a fruit or veg.) Child two says, "I am a farmer and I grow tomatoes and peas..." Play continues in this fashion, travelling around the circle. Each child repeating the previous list in order and adding one more item of their choice. If a child leaves out an item they are 'out'.

## **Activity 2:**

Story and discussion:

### **"SMASHING SUCCESS"**

I was sitting at my desk at home, doing my homework. At my school we were learning all about being fair and how to treat each other's property. It was fascinating stuff and I was really into it. Then suddenly I jumped at the sound of a loud crash and lots of shouting. It sounded like World War III had started up in the next room. How in the world was I supposed to do my homework in the middle of all this noise? I tried to ignore the racket and put my head back in the books, but it was no use.

"Hey guys, can you please keep it down?" I shouted as I pushed open the door to the room of my younger twin brothers. But the scene that met my eyes made me stop in my tracks.

Sammy was standing on a chair, holding a Casio keyboard threateningly over his head, with Dave, face red as a beetroot, jumping up and down in the middle of a pile of batteries and

wires trying to snatch the keyboard from him. Neither of them paid me the least drop of attention.

"What in the world is going on?!" I yelled.

Finally, Sammy looked my way. "I'm going to smash this thing to smithereens - that's what!"

"Don't you *dare!*" screamed Dave hysterically, as he took another swipe at his twin's arm.

The two of them were always pretty rough and tumble, but this looked serious. "Whoa! Wait a minute. Can you guys declare a two-minute cease-fire and tell me what's happening?"

They looked at each other. "Let's let Josh decide, okay?" said Dave, as his twin nodded in agreement.

They explained to me how Dave had borrowed Sammy's game-boy, and while his brother was outside playing, Dave had dropped it on the floor, where it turned into the electronic pile of spaghetti that now lay at my feet. Sammy figured it was only fair that he should be allowed to 'return the favour' and smash his brother's keyboard. They were both very angry and I realized I had about ten seconds to come up with something brilliant before the truce broke down. But what could I say? How in the world was *I* supposed to know what's fair?

Suddenly it dawned on me. This was exactly the kind of thing I was learning about in school! Maybe I didn't know what was fair, but the Torah *did*. I tried hard to remember, what it said ... yeah, that was it!

"Guys, the Torah has just the fair solution."

"I'm allowed to smash it, right?" said Sammy.

"Not quite."

"Oh, so it's not my fault then!" declared Dave with a smile.

"Well, not quite that either."

"So then *what?*" they both shouted at the same time.

"Well the Torah says that if someone borrows from somebody else and the thing breaks, he has to make restitution."

"Resti-what?" asked Dave.

I laughed. "It means he has to pay for the damage. The other guy can't take revenge by breaking his thing, but neither can the first guy just walk away scot-free. Well, what do you say, guys?"

The room was quiet, and I held my breath. Finally Sammy climbed slowly down off the chair. "Sounds fair to me - if he's willing to pay for me to get another game-boy. Smashing his keyboard won't get me anywhere."

We looked over at Dave. "Yeah, I guess it's only fair, I *did* break his thing. I was saving up my pocket money to get a scooter, but I'll have to wait, that's all."

They shook hands and once again peace reigned at 25 Meadow Drive. "I'd better go back to my studies to make sure I know the answer to the next pickle you guys get yourselves into!"

### **Discuss:**

Everyone knows that "fair is fair." The only problem is figuring out just *what* fair is. Wouldn't it be great if we knew what God thought was fair?

Well, we do. It's the Torah! This week's parsha is packed with all sorts of guidelines of how to deal with conflicts and damages in the fairest, most just way possible. When we learn and live by the Torah's guidelines, we create an environment that will keep people at peace with each other.

Q. How did Sammy feel at first when his twin brother broke his game?

A. He felt like it would be fair for him to take revenge and smash his brother's keyboard.

Q. How did he feel after they spoke to their big brother?

A. He saw how the Torah's solution that his brother told them was much fairer for everyone.

Q. Why do you think the twins agreed to Josh's solution?

A. More than anything, because it was fair. Even though someone might want to have everything 'his way,' when presented with a solution that is genuinely fair, he'll feel satisfied.

Q. The Torah is full of very detailed codes of conduct. Why do you think an infinite God would be concerned with such seemingly unspiritual petty details as property laws?

A. The answer to that depends upon how we define spirituality. The Jewish spiritual ideal is to neither overly indulge in, nor abstain from the physical world and all of its activities. Rather, our goal is to *perfect* the physical world by being involved in it, but in a moderate and just way. God's 'concern' is to provide us, via the Torah, with detailed guidance in all of life's situations, so that we can best elevate them, and by doing so, perfect the world, and ourselves.

Q. How can we know whether we are properly interpreting the guidelines that God has given us?

A. When God gave us the Torah, He provided us with not only the Written Torah, which outlines the general guidelines for spiritual living, but also a much lengthier and more detailed Oral Torah, which explains and applies these guidelines to every conceivable life situation. This oral tradition has remained with us in an unbroken chain for thousands of years and has been carefully scrutinized, clarified and transmitted by the greatest thinkers and spiritual giants throughout the ages. By attaching

ourselves to that chain, we take possession of a priceless gift and powerful tool of transformation.

(story adapted from Aish)



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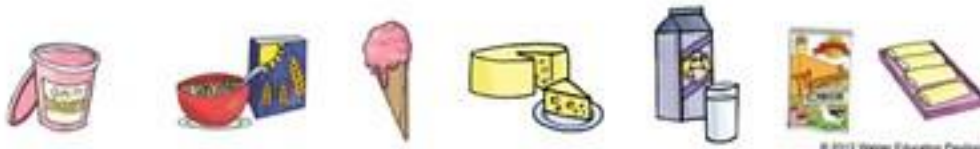
Meat - בשרי



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