

Parsha Activities

The youth leader's database of parsha activities,
organized by parsha.

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Most activities formerly displayed on <http://parshaactivities.com> (עליו השלום)

Special thanks to: Dr. Shira Berkovitz, Rabbi Jonathan Kroll, Joe Teplow

General Pointers

Props are your best friend. When you whip out those luchot, no matter what you do with them, the kids will remember the luchot. It turns Parsha into not just another circle game, but something real and official that the kids can look forward to.

Older kids love competition. Younger kids not as much. Many activities can be done either as a contest or as a group. For younger kids, if the whole group is on the same team, all the better.

Younger kids like feeling personally involved. Whenever you can, go around the room and let every kid say something. If you have a prop, let everyone touch it.

Always prepare before Shabbos. It's quite frustrating when you think of a great idea Friday night, but you can't do it because of a small thing you need to have prepared.

Orient the kids before each week's activity. Start by saying, "Last week we talked about..."

You may want to break up parsha time into three parts: 1. Talking about what happens in the parsha 2. An activity 3. A wrap-up about what we learned from the activity, if anything.

Always end a parsha activity while it's still fun. Don't keep playing until it dies down. You want them to remember the feeling of wishing they could keep playing, not as that game that started fun but got boring.

They say that you remember 10% of what you hear, 20% of what you see, but 90% of what you do. Whether the numbers are accurate or not, the point is keep kids engaged and active or they will forget it by lunch. If there's a message to be learned, have them either figure it out themselves or at least personally verbalize it.

Can't think of an activity? There's always other options: maybe there's a holiday coming up (see the holidays section). Maybe there's a general game that you can play (see the general games section). Maybe you want to spend the week reviewing some things you've learned (see the general games trivia games).

If there's a week with only a few activities listed, that may be an indication that the parsha often coincides with a holiday. Think if there's a holiday coming up! Or a midda you want to work on. Or a general mitzvah to teach about.

Props with a * require preparation before Shabbos

Sefer Breishit

Breishit

Creation Relay Race

Props:

-*Six pieces of paper, with “Day 1” – “Day 6” written on them.

-Two items for each day of creation. For example:

Day 1- A clear plastic bag and a black plastic bag

Day 2- Bottles of water

Day 3- A fruit and a mini globe

Day 4- Glow in the dark stars

Day 5- Birds and fish

Day 6- Other animals

Activity: Split the group into two teams, and give each team a full set of props. Each team lines up behind their props. When you say go, one person from each team picks up an item and runs across the room to place the item on its proper day. The next player cannot pick up an item until he is tagged. Whichever team brings all of their items over first wins.

Discussion: Once all the items are properly on their places, ask the kids which day is missing. Of course, you didn’t put a spot for Shabbos. Discuss what kinds of thing might go on the Shabbos spot. What’s special about Shabbos for you?

Creation Skit

Props:

- The skit [link]
- Costumes

Activity: Put on the skit!

Kayin and Hevel Skit

Props:

- The skit [link]
- Costumes

Activity: Put on the skit!

Noach

Animal Matching

Props:

- Robe

- Slips of paper with names of animals written on them. There should be two of each animal.

Activity: Older groups: Give out the slips of paper. Meanwhile, put on the robe and stand on one side of the room. Explain that Noach can only allow animals onto his ark if they come in twos.

Without speaking, the kids need to find their partner by acting like their animal. Once the animals match up, Noach can let them onto the boat.

Variation for Younger groups: Everyone gets a free pass onto the ark. In order to get on though,

they all need to tell you what animal they would be, and act like that animal as they come into the ark.

Tower of What?!

Props:

- Random things
- *Instructions for how to build a tower, with made-up words replacing many of the items
- *A list of the made-up words and their translations

Activity: The group needs to build a tower exactly as described. Of course, they don't understand half of the words in the instructions. They need to use the dictionary you provide in order to figure out what the instructions are saying. See how the builders of the tower of Bavel felt not speaking the same language as each other! (For example: The *gnog* must be lying on the *welp*. There must be a *kono* connecting any two *blibs* on the same *garf*.)

Discussion: When in our lives is communication important? What happens when we don't express ourselves properly? When we don't listen properly?

Noach the Teiva Man

Activity: This is an alternation of the game "Mother May I?". One kid, Noach, stands on one side of the room. All of the other kids are given names of animals and they must stand on the other side of the room. One kid calls out, "Noach the teiva man, may we come into your ark?" Noach responds something like, "Only if you have a tail," and every kid who is an animal with a tail takes one step forward. The first kid to tag Noach becomes Noach, and everyone starts again

Lech Lecha

Brit Bein Habetarim Puzzle

Props:

- *Pictures of cows, goats, and rams, cut unevenly in half.
- Fire (something orange)

Activity: Explain that when Hashem promised Avraham Israel, they couldn't shake hands on it, or even sign a document. So instead, Avraham cut up these animals and laid them out on the ground with the two halves facing each other. Then, Hashem sent a fire to walk between them.

Drop all the half-pictures on the floor, and challenge the group to match each half with its pair. You may want to time them and see how fast they can get it down to. Then, have everyone watch while the fire passes through the middle.

Journey to the Promised Land

Props:

- Blindfold
- Something to represent Israel (a flag, a map)

Activity: Blindfold Avraham. Explain to the group that Avraham had to trust in Hashem to lead him to Israel, because Avraham didn't know where it was. Have the group lead Avraham to Israel just by talking. You can make it more challenging by placing obstacles in the way.

Discussion: Ask Avraham if he trusted the group. Discuss how that would have been different if

Hashem was the one leading him.

Vayera

Akeida Skit

Activity: Act out Akedat Yitzchak. Cast includes Avraham, Yitzchak, a ram, the Satan, and Hashem. (Be sure to clarify that it was only a test and Hashem didn't actually want Avraham to sacrifice his son.)

Catch Those Guests!

Props:

-*Balloons or balls (optional: with faces on them)

-Sheet

Discussion: What do you do on a really hot day? Well, Avraham didn't do any of that. In fact, he sat outside in the hot sun. And why? He was looking for guests, it was so important to him.

Activity: Everyone grabs part of the sheet, so it's suspended in the middle. Explain that this is Avraham's tent, and any guest that comes by must be brought into the tent. Throw the balloons into the air one at a time, while the kids run around with the sheet and catch them all. Make sure as each guest comes in, the old ones don't fall out!

Chayei Sara

A-Z Chessed

Discussion: We've seen many acts of chessed the past couple of parshiot. But these are just a small sampling of the opportunities to do chessed we encounter every single day.

Activity: Split the children into teams, and have each time line up. Start with A and work through the alphabet. At each team's turn, the person in the front of the line has 5 seconds to name a chessed that starts with the next letter of the alphabet. If you say one, your team gets a point, you go to the back of the line, and it's the next team's turn. If not, you go to the back of the line anyway and it's still the next team's turn. Feel at liberty to award double points for things like saying a chessed from the parsha, or if you actually did that chessed this week, or if you are the letter Z. No repeating chessed.

Every Second Counts

Discussion: Avraham and Sarah are both described as "Baim Bayamim," literally they "came with their days." This is often interpreted as using they cherished every moment of their lives and maximized it to its fullest potential. Do we appreciate the value of time?

Activity: Everyone closes their eyes. When you say start, everyone must count 60 seconds to themselves and silently raise their hands when they think 1 minute is up. Once everyone has raised their hands tell them to open their eyes. The winner is whoever came the closest.

Two-line vocabulary

Discussion: Avraham was famous for saying a little and doing a lot, as in last week's Parsha. Unlike Efron in this week's Parsha, who says a lot and does little. Sometimes you don't need to say all that much to get across what you need to, and you say a lot more through your actions.

Activity: Give three kids a scene to act out. One of them can say whatever he wants, but the other two are each given a specific phrase they are limited to. By altering tone of voice and connotation, the sentences take on many meanings and the whole thing can be very entertaining. If necessary, you be the person who can talk to keep the scene moving.

Thirsty Thirsty Camel

Props:

- Plastic cups
- A camel

Discussion: This week, it's a really hot day again, and something else happens. Avraham's servant Eliezer is looking for a wife for Yitzchak. He's really thirsty, and he asks a random girl if he can have some water. And Rivka answers sure, you can have water, and I'll give all of your camels too! Can you imagine her doing all that work, on that hot day, so everyone else would have enough water?

Activity: Make two teams, and put the camel on the other side of the room. Each team gets a stack of cups, and when you say go, each team sends someone to bring a cup to place in front of the thirsty camel. Each cup must be right side up, and cannot tip over. Whichever team gets all the cups to the other side first wins.

Younger groups: Everyone gets a cup. When you say go, everyone runs to the other side, places their cup in front of the camel, and runs back. Repeat until all the cups are gone.

Finish up Discussion: Point out that Rivka had to do this all by herself, with heavy jugs, with water in them, on a hot day, for ten camels! And she didn't complain one bit!

Toldot

Punny Brachot

Activity: Hand everyone some random object, and give them some time to think. When each person is ready he or she must step into the middle and wish a blessing on someone based on their object. Don't go in order, let people step in as often or seldom as they want.

For example: Cow- may you not be a coward. Pretzels- may all of your problems crumble. etc etc, Bring anything, kids will think of clever connections even if you can't.

Two Truths and a lie

Discussion: Yitzchak knew his children well enough to realize when something "Esav" said was out of character. How well do we know our own friends?

Activity: Go around the room and everyone says three facts about him or herself. Two of them should be true and one false. See if everyone else can guess which "fact" is false.

Dress-up

Props:

-Wig

-Red pieces of material- shirts, hand towels, scarves. The crazier and more old-lady like the clothes, the funnier

-Old lady bag to put the props in.

Activity: No matter how old they are, everyone gets a kick out of dressing up. Set up a scene with a Yitzchak, Rivka, Yaakov and Esav. After Yitzchak sends Esav out to the field, hand Rivka the bag and tell her to dress up Yaakov so he looks like Esav (of course you didn't tell Yaakov about this when you gave him the part). Once he's ready, make Yitzchak give him a real bracha out loud. Ask the kids what kind of bracha they would give their own brother or friend. Or what do they think their father is wishing them on Friday night?

Hakol Kol Yaakov...

Props:

-A hairy hat

- A smooth hat

Activity (younger kids): Put the two hats on two kids' heads, and have them stand in the middle. Tell the story of Yitzchak's two sons, the hairy wild one and the smooth calm one. Ask the kids which of the brothers they are more like. Then explain that Yitzchak couldn't see so well, and couldn't tell their voices apart. Ask for suggestions on how he might tell who is who. Once they suggest it, close your eyes and tell the actors to come close to you so you can feel them and guess who's who. Repeat so everyone has a chance.

Older Kids: See if you can guess who's who without them wearing anything special. Can you tell who's kipa this is? Or who's headband this is? (obviously if you have both boys and girls, you probably don't want to play this)

Vayetze

Expressions

Props:

-*Pictures of faces from magazines.

Discussion: Yaakov decided to leave because he saw Lavan's face was not as it had been in the past. What can we notice about people from their faces that they aren't saying out loud? I need a friend, I'm lonely, I'm confused. How attentive are we to our friends' moods?

Activity: Hand out the pictures. Have everyone tell a story of what that person is thinking right now based on their facial expression. For a challenge, require each story to build off the previous one.

Who stole my idols?

Props:

- An idol. Or a doll if for whatever reason you don't have one.

Activity: While one volunteer waits outside, line everyone else up side by side with their hands behind their backs. Give someone the doll to hold behind their back, and invite the original volunteer back in. After telling the story of Yaakov fleeing Lavan and Rachel taking the idols ("to help her father," of course), ask Lavan to guess who has the idols.

Ufaratzta- The Four Corners game

Activity: Avraham was told that his children would spread out over the four corners of the Earth. One person stands in the middle with his eyes closed, and everyone else runs to a corner. The person in the middle shouts the name one of the corners, such as "west." Everyone in that corner comes to the middle. Then everyone in the middle looks down and sings "Ufaratzta.." for a few seconds while everyone who's still in chooses a new corner. The kids in the middle all decide on a corner and call it out. Keep playing until there's only one person left. They win!

Vayishlach

Director

Activity: Have Yaakov prepare to greet Esav by doing three things: preparing a present, davening, and putting everything in order. Then have the actor do it again twice as fast. Then backward. Then in a British accent. Freeze the actor in the middle and ask the group how the actor should continue.

River of Fire

Props:

- An old jug/empty bottle
- Chairs

Discussion: Imagine you're going on a vacation. You're driving, and all of a sudden, you remember you forgot your... Siddur! Should you go back and get it? Now, what about if you forgot... your empty jug? Not a chance, right? Well, when Yaakov was leaving Lavan's house, Yaakov goes back to get some jugs. To Yaakov, they weren't just some silly little jugs. He saw everything he had as gift from Hashem, and he didn't want to lose anything. He knew that Hashem gave him these jugs, and for that they were so special to him that he wanted to go get them.

Activity: Everyone stands on a chair on one side of the room, and the jug is on the other side of the room. The kids have to get the jug from the other side of the water without touching the floor. They can move chairs, work together, and do whatever they need to do without touching the floor. Once they get it, make them bring it back to side they started on.

Vayeshev

Birthday Party games

Activity: This week we have the only birthday party in the Torah! Bring in hats and a cake, and play Egyptian-style birthday games like pin the tail on the Pharaoh.

Think Before You Speak

Props:

- *- Slips of paper that contains sayings such as "None of your business" and "Can I see?"
- Envelopes
- Empty tissue box

Activity: Yosef didn't get along with his brothers because he said things he shouldn't have said. I have some letters that I plan on mailing to my friends. Help me decide which are nice things to say and put them in the "mailbox," and which go in the garbage.

Joke Competition

Activity: Yosef knew just how to cheer up the baker and the butler. In his case it wasn't by telling jokes, but we can. Split everyone into two teams. For each round, present a category of jokes, for example Egyptian jokes, or technicolored coat jokes. Each team has one minute to confer and tell a joke from that category (making one up if they have to). You decide who wins each round based on criteria such as relevance, creativity, and of course funniness.

Miketz

Find the Gavia in the Grain

Activity: Bring in a bowl full of flour and one marble. Everyone gets a turn to search Binyamin's sack to see if there's a 'cup' hiding in there somewhere. It's harder to find than you'd think!

(See Chanuka)

Vayigash

Guess Who?

Activity: One person stands in the middle with their eyes closed. The person in the middle spins around and stops, and points to someone, still with their eyes closed. Whoever they're pointing to must say in a disguised voice, "Guess who?" The person in the middle must guess who it is, based on their voice. If they're wrong, they go again. If they're right, the person who said "guess who?" goes in the middle.

Counting to Ten, Together

Discussion: Have a conversation about siblings: How many siblings do you each have? Do you ever fight with your siblings? If your siblings threw you into a pit and sold you to passing Yishmaelim, would you forgive them? Well Yosef's brothers did just that to him and he forgave them.

Activity: In order to win this game, you need to be able to work together and think as one unified group. Someone shouts out "one", then someone else says "two," and you have to get to ten. The catch is if two people say the same number, you have to start again. When it works well, it feels like you're all working like one unit.

Vayechi

The Sum of its parts

Props:

-*Assorted pictures of parts and their wholes. For example, parts of a car and a car, ingredients for a cake and a cake.

Discussion: Now that the brothers are reunited and working together again, they can accomplish so much more than when they acted on their own.

Activity: Spread out all of the pictures of parts on the floor, and have the kids group them into categories (you can make some of them more difficult. would you recognize the shiva minim?). Once they figure out that the eggs, flour, and sugar go together, offer them trades- for example all of the pictures in that group a picture of an actual cake.

Discussion: Why should one be preferable over the other? Isn't a car just a collection of doors wheels and a motor? What does this teach us about what it means to work together? Is it the same as just lots of people working side by side?

Shevatim Family Tree

Props:

- *Choice of a family album made of construction paper OR a picture frame. Both should be decorated and have Hebrew names on them under their corresponding slits. (see the activity for explanation.)

- *12 popsicle sticks, with a paper head pasted on each one. On the front write the names of the Avot, Imahot, and/or Shevatim in Hebrew, and on the back in English.

Activity: Place the empty album on the floor, and tell a generalized summary story of all of sefer Breishit (starting from Lech-Lecha.) As you mention each character, reveal that character's popsicle stick. Whoever can read the name on the stick must decide where on the family tree it belongs and places it in its proper slit. (Obviously this can be made harder if the names are not also written on the tree itself.) You can also challenge them to leave the older ones less pushed in to represent height differences.

Courtesy of Ellen H.

Review

End of Sefer Breishit! Play one of the trivia games (see [General Games](#) or Trivia Games) to review all of Sefer Breishit. Be sure to reference the activities you've done together to cement the lesson from each activity in their minds.

Sefer Shemot

Shemot

Baby Moshe skit

Props:

- Basket

- Something to represent Moshe (a doll, a stuffed animal)

Activity: Put on a skit of Batya finding Moshe in the water. Cast includes Miriam, Batya, Batya's servant, and Paraoh.

Slavery

Props:

- Building blocks

Activity: Give each kid a few blocks, and instruct them to build a specific thing. Everyone's should look exactly the same. Then instruct them to reclaim their block and instead build whatever they want. They can combine, use their shoes as part of the building, whatever they like.

Discussion: Now, which was more fun? Doing exactly what I told you or building it yourself? But when I told you what to build, it was so easy, right? Right, but the second time you got to use your imagination and that makes it more fun. So too, even though being a slave may be "easier," it's no fun to spend your whole life doing only what other people tell you. That's why the Jews hated being

slaves so much. What kinds of things might they have wanted to do that the Egyptians wouldn't let them?

Help!

Discussion: Moshe saw the burden of his fellow Jews and tried to help them. More importantly, he was able to figure out what they needed without anyone telling him.

Activity: Split the kids into teams. Each team needs to act out a scene where they are in need of help, but without talking. They keep going until someone who's not acting jumps in and does what they need. If they're wrong, the actors just nervously shake their heads and keep acting until someone else jumps in. Scenes can include: in a boat with no paddle, taking a test but no one brought a pen, doing construction but the scaffolding is falling, etc.

Scrambled Words

Props:

- * Slips of paper containing scrambled phrases of various ways to help around the house. For example, cooking dinner, reading a book, singing a lullaby, etc.

Discussion: Shifra and Puah were told to kill the babies in the homes they entered. Instead, they did the opposite. They helped the babies live. How can we be more helpful around the house? Do our parents and siblings want us be around, or can't wait until we leave?

Activity: Hand everyone two scrambled words. They need to arrange themselves so they're standing in alphabetical order of what their words *would be* once they're unscrambled. But wait a second, I have two! Correct, trade until your two are next to each other alphabetically, and then stand in order.

Va'era

Makkot Commercials

Activity: Give each pair of kids one makka and a few suggestions of commercials that might be on TV in Egypt during that Makka. Then, acting and speaking like a news anchor, call up each group to perform their commercial for everyone else.

[See link for examples]

Reliving the Makkot

Props:

-A red drink in a clear bottle

-Barrel of Monkeys, or some homemade variant such as "assorted animals in a bag"

-Dodgeball

Activity: Let's get a little taste of what it was like during the first seven makkot:

Dam- Who's brave enough to drink a number of gross-looking red drinks you bring in?

Tzvardeya- Frogs everywhere! Throw the monkeys/animals everywhere and have the kids run around collecting them and putting them back into the bag. As soon as they turn around to get more, throw them on the floor again.

Arbeh- Dodgeball.

Make up your own!

Gratitude

Discussion: According to the Midrash, Moshe could not perform the first three makkot because he owed gratitude to the Nile and the ground and therefore could not strike them. Let alone inanimate objects, do we recognize the good that other *people* do for us?

Activity: Many shuls have workers, and unfortunately, kids naturally tend to be either afraid of them or at least don't speak to them on a regular basis. Have the kids each come up with something they would like to thank these workers for. Then call the workers in, and going around the circle, have each kid say thank you for something.

Bo

Kiddush Hachodesh

Activity: Pair the kids up, and tell them to prepare a story about how they saw the new moon and exactly what it looked like. Then bring everyone back together, and call up the first set of witnesses. One witness waits outside, while you “interrogate” the other. Ask very detailed questions, such as what did the moon look like, which side of the sky was it on, what time was it, etc. Then call in the second witness. Ask all the same questions and see if you can “catch” them being inconsistent. Then call up the next set of witnesses and do the same.

Jewish Calendar Journey

Discussion: This week we receive our first mitzvah as a nation- to create a calendar. Why is this the first mitzvah?

Props:

-Different color pieces of paper

-Dice

Activity: Divide the group into teams. Each team designates one member to walk across the colored path, while the rest of team answers questions. The goal is to reach the other side of the room.

Children have to work their way across the “calendar” by throwing dice and walking across the correct number squares. When you reach a square, you can only stay there if you correctly answer a question corresponding to the square’s color. The different colors represent different types of questions. Categories can include “name that tune,” dates, halachot, months, etc.

Cycles of the Moon

Props:

- Lots of Oreos

Activity: You can create the cycles of the moon by separating Oreos and strategically replacing the cookie on top of the cream. You need to take a bite before replacing it for the later stages.

Have the kids create the various cycles of the moon. Ask what the moon looks like during Rosh Chodesh. This is the new moon Hashem shows Moshe in this week’s parsha. Once everyone has raised the correct cookie, they can eat theirs. What does the moon look like on Pesach? And so on.

Discussion: Determining the new month is the first commandment we’re given. Why is that?

Beshalach

May I Cross Your Golden River?

Activity: Someone stands at one end of the room, and everyone else lines up on the other side. Everyone else shouts "May I cross your golden river" and each time, the person on the other side responds, "Only if you're wearing blue" "Only if you have a kippah" etc. The first person to reach the other side and tag the leader gets to start the game again as the person on the other side of the river.

Song Competition

Discussion: This week is known as shabbat shira because it includes az yashir. Imagine being so thankful to Hashem that you just burst into song! Have you ever felt like that?

Activity: Divide the children into groups. For every round, choose a theme and each group has to alternate singing a song about that theme. They need to sing only enough of the song to make it clear what song it is. Keep going back and forth until a team has run out of ideas. If the other team can still think of a song with the proper word after the other team has given up, that team gets a point. While you're at it, you have any fun songs to teach, this is a good week to do it!

Relay Races

Activity: We have Matzah because Bnei Yisrael ran out of Mitzrayim, and there was no time for the bread to rise. I wonder what that was like... Conduct a series of races, where the kids have to hop, go backward, run with their eyes closed, balance a cup on their head, etc.

Yitro

Three Headed Rabbi

Activity: This week we get the Torah and all the laws. Moshe had to teach over the laws to the people, and boy did it tire him out. Yitro had to tell him to stop.

Three people come to the front (preferably a group leader and two kids). They are the Three Headed Rabbi. Someone from the crowd asks a question about something Torah related. The Three Headed Rabbi needs to answer the question, by each "head" saying only one word at a time. They keep talking, alternating saying one word at a time, until the question has been answered. It gets very funny when the actors are good.

The Ten Instructions

Props:

- A sheet
- A printed list of the Ten Instructions (not the Ten Commandments): [attached]

Activity: Spread a sheet on the floor, and tell everyone to get on. Then challenge them to flip the sheet over, but no one is allowed to step off. Then whip out the Ten Instructions on how to do it and allow one kid to read it off to the rest of the group, and they will be able to do it.

Then discuss: The only way to do this properly was to follow the Ten Instructions carefully. So too, in order to live life the right way we must follow the Ten Commandments. What are they trying to get us to do?

Mishpatim

Two Truths and a Lie

Discussion: Among its many laws, this week's parsha warns against lying. Is it ever ok to lie?

Activity: Going around the circle, everyone says three "facts" about him or herself- two true and one false. The group has to guess which is false.

Hot and Cold

Activity: This week's parsha tells us that if you find a lost object you need to try to return it. One person gives the group an item (like a bracelet or a watch) and leaves the room. The group hides the item and calls them back in. The group helps him or her find their lost item by shouting "warmer" when they walk closer and "colder" when they're getting further.

Trumah

Furnishing the Mishkan

Props:

*-A piece of oak tag or paper, with the basic outline of the mishkan drawn on it: four circles where the Aron, Menorah, Shulchan, and Mizbeach go, as well as a line to separate the kodesh from the kodesh hakodashim.

*-Pictures of assorted Jewish items, four of which are the Aron, menorah, shulchan, and mezbeach. Others can include things like a dreidel, a shofar, a torah, a kiddush cup....

Activity: Lay the mishkan on the floor, and spread out the various pictures. Explain that one item belongs on each circle, and they need to decide together what they think goes where. You may want to first help them narrow it down to which four items to use, and then try to guess what goes where.

Discuss: Why was it adorned with these types of things? What is the purpose of the mishkan? And why were Bnei Yisrael willing to give the money to make such expensive kelim? Where else do you see these items? Do we act differently in these types of places?

Mishkan Memory Game

Activity: Everyone stands or sits in a circle. The first child says, "I helped build the Mishkan and I brought x" The next child says, "I helped build the Mishkan and I brought x and y," adding his or her own item. The next child says, "I helped build the Mishkan and I brought 'x', 'y' and 'z'". Examples of what they can bring to help build the mishkan are gold, jewels, skins, pretty cloth, paint, hammers, nails, screwdriver, etc.

Courtesy of Elana Z.

Stand Like the Kruvim

Activity: Everyone stands on one foot, raises up their arms, and stares forward, just like the Kruvim. The last one to stand perfectly still in that position wins.

Discussion: What did the Kruvim represent?

Tetzaveh

You Are What You Wear

Props:

- Different articles of clothing, such as a sports jersey, a handbag, an apron, etc.
- A kohen gadol costume, or just a tallis

Activity: Give out the different costumes, and ask each volunteer act out a certain everyday activity based on their character. How would the guy with the cowboy hat brush his teeth in the morning, as opposed to the girl with the professor glasses? How would each of these people greet a friend? Then pull out something that the kohen gadol would wear, or a tallis, and put it on someone else. How would someone dressed like *that* perform those same actions?

Discuss: Why do the kohanim wear special clothes? Is it for the people around them, or to remind *themselves* to act a certain way? How does clothing help set the mood? When else do we wear special clothes?

Fashion Show

Props:

- Dolls (or real people)
- Lots and lots of doll clothes (or real clothes)
- *Cards with "awards" on them. For example, "Best dressed for Shabbat", "Most Egyptian looking," "Looks like she just got out of bed" etc.

Discussion: The kohanim wore special clothes, because the clothes we wear can send an important message about who we are and what we are like to other people.

Activity: Divide the kids into teams, and have one or two leave the room to be judges. Give each team a doll and a bunch of doll clothes. Pull out a card and read it to the group. Each team must dress their doll (or a designated kid) in a way that illustrates the message on the card. When they are done, the judges come into the room and decide which doll best sends whatever message is on the card. Repeat with all the cards to show how different clothes say different things about ourselves.

Courtesy of Sarah

Ki Tisa

Vote with Your Feet: Luchot or Golden Calf?

Props:

- Luchot (or inside-out cereal boxes with aleph through yud written on them)
- Golden Calf (or something similar)

Activity: Place the luchot on one side of the room, and the cow on the other. Then ask a number of questions, and they must choose which side of the room to go to based on their answer. For example, which of these would you rather have as a pet? If you'd prefer two stone tablets as a pet go to the luchot side, if you prefer the cow go to the cow side. Once everyone has gone to a side, ask them to raise their hand if they'd like to explain their vote. They'll come up with very clever things. Ask a few more questions like this. (Which would you rather find in your room one day? Which would you rather have the superpowers of?)

Finally, ask which would you rather listen to? The luchot, which say "don't kill, don't steal, etc," or the cow, which says basically "moo". See what they choose. Once they've chosen sides, ask them

again to explain their votes. Then talk about what happened in this week's parsha and why they think Bnei Yisrael chose what they chose.

Steal the Salami, Literally

Props:

- A Cow

Discussion: When your parents do something nice for you, what do you say? Well for some reason, Hashem gave us the torah and we couldn't even say thank you! We said thank you to a cow instead. Let's learn from their mistake and appreciate when someone does you a favor.

Activity: With the cow in the middle, when you call out a number the kid on each team with that number has to run to the middle, and bring the cow back to their side without getting tagged. The purpose of this game is to get rid of the cow. We are not thanking it, we are trying to get it out of the middle.

Courtesy of Gila R.

Personal Golden Calves

Props:

- Various objects, OR

- *slips of paper with values on them, such as "honesty" or "zionism"

Activity: Place the objects or slips of paper on the floor, and have everyone decide together on an order of importance.

Discuss: Would the order be the same if your goal is to stay alive versus to be a nice person or versus to be a good Jew? Which of those goals should we be thinking about more often? Do we always act upon this? What kinds of things do we improperly 'idolize' in our own lives?

Vayakel

Treasure Hunt

Props:

- *List of the various kelim and begadim of the mishkan, and materials needed for each one. For example: gold, scarlet wool, a linen piece of clothing, a gold ring, wooden poles, two gems, two chains, four peices of tchelet string, etc.

- The materials that you included on the list (Make the list based on what you have. You don't need to have all of the items of the list, but you should have a significant amount.)

Activity: Send them on a treasure hunt to find all of the items. You can split them into teams, and have clues where to find each material.

Discussion: Go through what each item was used for. Where did the Jews find all of these items to build the Mishkan with in the desert? Why were they so eager to donate such beautiful and expensive things?

Pekudei

Name that Outfit

Props:

- *Pictures of people wearing different outfits from different cultures, countries, events, etc.

Activity: Present each picture one by one, and whoever guesses based on their clothing what the person is, gets to keep that picture. Make sure to include pictures of the kohen gadol and the other kohanim.

Discussion: What does our clothing say to the people around us? What impression does it give them? As Jews, what impression do we want to be giving?

Being Resourceful

Props:

- Bag with assorted objects

The Torah (with the help of Chazal) gives an account of the materials donated to the Mishkan, as well as how each item was used to follow Hashem's will. Mirrors were used for the kiyor, coins were melted into the sockets, linen was woven into clothing, etc.

Activity: Place the bag in the center of the room. One at a time, send each kid up to remove an item from the bag and act out how that item could be used to serve Hashem. Is it a cup for making kiddush on? Or a key to start an ambulance? Or a key to enter a room to visit old people? Or a twist-tie for keeping the challah fresh? The more obscure the objects, the sharper the lesson.

Review

End of Sefer Shemot! Play one of the trivia games (see [General Games](#) or Trivia Games) to review all of Sefer Shemot. Be sure to reference the activities you've done together to cement the lesson from each activity in their minds.

Sefer Vayikra **Vayikra**

Which Korban?

Props:

- Assorted beanie babies, preferably kosher animals

Discussion: When you hurt someone, physically or emotionally, everyone knows you're supposed to say sorry. That's exactly what a korban is. It's coming to the beit hamikdash and saying "sorry, Hashem." In fact, it's so important that there's a whole sefer on it! Hashem knows it's hard though, and that's why spends so much time on it.

Activity: Give each kid an animal and tell them to get a good look of who had which animal. Then have one kid close his eyes. Someone quietly places his animal in the kid's hands. The kid must first feel the animal and guess what type of animal it is, and based on that determine whose it was.

Tzav

Bringing a Korban- Simon Says

Discussion: The rules of bringing a korban are very specific. Why is it so important to follow the rules so exactly? Why is it important to say exactly what it says in the siddur? Is there room for adding my own tfillot into the davening?

Activity: Simon say, but Hashem is telling us what to do. Hashem says...(give your friend a toy, say thank you, go kiss the Siddur over there, etc...) If you can, make them do motions that were part of the korban process.

Shmini

So Many Animals!

Props:

- Lots of beanie babies, from many different categories. Try to include birds, aquatic animals, wild beasts, etc.

Activity: Put all the animals on a table. Let the kids study them for 15 seconds and then put them away. Now test their memories- name three kosher animals you saw, name three animals that would need fins and scales to be kosher, etc. For the final question, see if anyone can name all of them.

The Sound of Silence

Activity: Everyone stands in a line and is completely silent. Once it's quiet, stand behind them and one by one, say each child's name barely audibly but not a whisper. When they hear their names, each child steps towards the noise. Once a certain atmosphere is established, kids will naturally try to avoid breaking the silence and enjoy being able to perceive quieter and quieter noises.

Discussion: After Ahron's sons died, his reaction was to be silent. Why is this a proper way to react to tragedy? How does silence make you feel?

Courtesy of [Montessorimom](#)

Kosher or Not-Kosher?

Activity: One side of the room is "kosher," while the other side is "non-kosher." Stand in the middle and call out names of animals, and the kids have to run to the appropriate side. Once they get the hang of it, see what happens when you say giraffe. Or people.

Tazria

Drama Telephone

Activity: Three kids leave the room. One comes back in, and someone designated by the group acts out a scenario for them, for example washing an elephant. Then the next kid comes in, and the first kid has to act out whatever he saw. By the time the third kid acts out what he saw, the action will likely have morphed from washing an elephant into doing a disco dance into swatting at flies. The more complex the original scenario, the more open it is to misinterpretation and the funnier it can be.

Discussion: We often misinterpret people's intentions and falsely accuse them of things they didn't really mean. Be careful before you judge people and speak badly of them.

Hot Potato

Props:

- Lashon hara ball (a ball with "lashon hara" written on it, or on a piece of tape)

Activity: Hot potatoe with the lashon hara ball. Don't hold onto it for too long!

Lasho Hara Stories

Activity: There are some powerful stories you can find online about the importance of avoiding lashon hara. Print one out and read it to the kids and discuss it.

Metzarah

Telephone

Activity: One person whispers something to the person next to him or her in the circle. That person whispers it to the next person, and the last person to receive the message announces it out loud. The final word or phrase is often very different than how it started.

Discussion: How often do you hear people say, "I heard that David..." Very often these rumors aren't even true!

How Can I Ever Take it Back?

Props:

- A feather pillow that you don't want anymore (or more likely, some confetti)

Activity: Tell the story of the woman who came to a Rabbi asking how she could take back all the Lashon Hara she had spoken over the years. The Rabbi told her to get a feather pillow, scatter the contents all over the city, and come back. When she came back, he said now go collect all of the feathers. She tried but could not. When she came back to the Rabbi, he explained that just as you can never find all of the feathers to fit back into the pillow, you can never undo all the harm that one word of Lashon Hara can cause. Like the feathers, the Lashon Hara spreads and spreads and once it gets out its effect can not be confined.

As you tell the story, give each child a handful of confetti, then have them throw it into the air, and finally have them try to pick up as much as they can. If they get frustrated at the impossibility of picking up every piece, well that's the point.

Afterwards, you can sweep up the remaining confetti.

Acharei Mot

Ketoret!

Props:

- Spices

- Spoons

- A nice shiny tray

Discussion: What does it smell like when you walk into a bakery? What does it smell like when you go to the zoo? Which of those smells is more fitting for Hashem's house? So how did we prevent it from smelling like a zoo, with all those animals all over?

Activity: Give everyone a spoon, and put some spices on it. Put the tray on the opposite side of the room. First, make a boreh minei besamim together so everyone can smell their spices. Then explain that twice a day the kohen gadol took a spoonful of spices and very carefully walked to the mizbeach to pour them on. On the count of "Ketoret!" everyone must carefully balance their spices on their spoon to reach the mizbeach and pour their spices in. You can do it again walking backward, putting one foot directly in front of the other, etc. You can also challenge them to see how

much spices they can fit on a single spoon. Alternatively, play with a ping-pong ball, and if it falls off they need to go back and start again.

Kedoshim

1. 2. 3 Orlah!

Props:

- Balls that look like fruits
- basket

Activity: Spread out "fruits" all over the floor and explain that we are going to pick all the fruits that we see. But before picking each fruit, the Torah tells us you need to wait three years. In these three years, the fruit is known as orlah and you can't pick it. So before we pick each fruit, count off the years with me: "one" "orlah!" "two" "orlah!" "three" "orlah!" Now pick it and put it in the basket!

Impossible Puzzle

Props:

- A medium-sized puzzle, preferably something Jewish related

Activity: Give each kid a few pieces of the puzzle, and instruct them to complete the puzzle, as best as they can, with only their own pieces. Obviously they can't finish it.

Discuss: There are many mitzvot in the Torah, specifically in this week's parsha. But not everyone can do all the mitzvot. Some only a farmer can do, some only a kohen can do, some a king, woman, etc. Nobody can do all the mitzvot by themselves. Together though, we can do them all. If everyone does their part, and contributes, all the mitzvot can be done.

Now finish the activity: Now everyone can combine their pieces and see what they've done. As a group, if everyone does their part and contributes, then we can complete the puzzle.

Emor

Holiday Jeopardy

Activity: This week's parsha is packed with holidays. Play Jeopardy! to review them all. Categories can include:

- Dates and Numbers (How many days in a Jewish month? How many species do we take on succos?)
- Name that Tune (Hum a tune, they have to guess the holiday it's from)
- Alternate Holiday Names (Which holiday is also known as Chag haAsif?)
- Customs (On what day is there a debate over whether we should sit in the succa? What type of food do shphardim eat on pesach but ashkenazim do not?)
- Identify the Object (Show a picture of a kittel. Or a sfira chart.)
- Added Prayers (Neilah. Tal. Geshem. Ka Keili. Yizkor. Retzeh.)

Sequence

Props:

- Picture of something Pesach-related (such as matzah)

- Picture of something Shavuot-related (such as the luchot)
- Twelve other pieces of blank paper

Activity: On one side of the room is a picture of pesach. On the other side is a picture of shavuot. Explain that there are seven weeks from pesach to shavuot, but there are 12 pieces of paper on the floor between pesach and shavuot. One kid stands on pesach, and has to step on 7 pieces of paper to get to shavuot. But there is a specific sequence he has to do it in, which you decide before each kid goes. Everyone gets 3 “wrong steps” before the next person goes. They can learn from each other’s mistakes too!

Change

Activity: This is an improv game, which tend to work better with older ages. Several actors, preferably one of them a counselor, act out a given scenario. Every time a designated member from the crowd says "change," the last line said or action done must be redone differently, and the scene continues from there. If it's done well, it can be very funny.

Discussion: Pesach Sheni presents an opportunity to have a second chance. Why does G-d give us this second opportunity?

Behar

Tzdaka Commercials

Props:

- Pictures of different tzada organizations, or any worthy cause [see link]
- Fake money [see link]

Activity: Each group gets a few examples of tzdaka organizations, for example, Magen David Adom, Tomchei Shabbos, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. They each need to prepare a commercial convincing the other groups to give to their organization. At the end, everyone gets to give their money to whichever organization they were most convinced by. That organization wins!

Number Bingo!

Props:

- several home-made Bingo! cards, each containing a grid of either nine numbers (3x3) or 12 (3x4) or more.

Activity: Judaism, especially this week's parsha, is full of numbers. Everyone gets a card and some markers to cover the numbers with. One by one, announce clues such as "the number of years until shmitta." The answer for every clue will be a number, and anyone who has that number covers that number on his or her card. The first one to get a line wins. You may want to put the number seven more than once on each card, and they will note how the answer to many of the clues is seven. Afterwards discuss why this might be.

Shoe Yovel

Activity: Everybody takes off their shoes and puts them in a big pile in the middle. Explain that the Torah tells us that for 49 years, you can trade and sell things all you want, but the fiftieth year is called Yovel, and everybody has to give any fields they bought back to their original owner. Everyone has 30 seconds to find their own shoes and put them back on. The more shoes in the pile, the more hectic it is!

Discussion: How is Hashem allowed to say who gets what? I bought it, doesn't that mean it's mine?

Bechukotai

What Changed?

Discussion: The message of the tochacha is that no matter how far we've strayed, how much we've sinned, we can always come back. We can always fix our behavior and improve our ways.

Activity: One person steps out, changes something about their appearance, and comes back in. It can be untying a shoelace, rolling up a sleeve, removing a kipa clip, taking out a ponytail, or anything else they think of. They come back in and everyone else has to guess what they've changed about themselves. Whoever guesses right goes out for the next round. Make sure everyone gets a turn, because everyone has the ability to change themselves!

Review

End of Sefer Vayikra! Play one of the trivia games (see [General Games](#) or Trivia Games) to review all of Sefer Vayikra. Be sure to reference the activities you've done together to cement the lesson from each activity in their minds.

Sefer Bamidbar

Bamidbar

See it, Build it

Props:

-Two sets of thirteen of something- beads, marbles, toothpicks, etc.

*- Two identical sets of Index cards on which you drew different sequences of those thirteen beads. Preferably these sequences parallel how Bnei Yisrael traveled in the desert. (One card has a bead in the middle (the mishkan) and three on each side (the shvatim). Another is the same but the top group is moved upward. Then the right three move up, then the mishkan follows, then the back group and finally the left group.)

Activity: Everyone finds a partner, and two partners play at a time. One kid is given the index card, and the other is given the beads. He has to create the picture shown on the card based on his partner's description. The one who can touch the beads is not allowed to see the index card. Whoever's you approve first wins that round.

Discussion: First, explain how these bead patterns represent how Bnei Yisrael traveled in the desert. Then, notice how the mishkan is always in the middle. Also notice how in the main shul the bima where we read the Torah from is in the middle. Why do we do that? What types of things are in the middle of the Jewish people's circles?

Tribes Matching Game

Props:

- Two pictures of each of the twelve tribes' flags

Activity: Turn all of the pictures upside down. On each person's turn, they flip over two pictures. If you find a match you get to keep it.

Nasso

Kadima!

Activity: Everyone stands in a circle around the leader. Like Moshe and Hashem, the leader instructs everyone where to stand. He does this using the following commands:

“Kadima!” – everyone takes one step towards the center.

“Achora!” – everyone takes one step backward.

“Yemina!” – everyone takes one step towards the right

“Smola!” – everyone takes one step towards the left

When they get the hang of it, switch it up. Kadima means backward and Achora means forward and so on. Then switch it up again, Kadima means right and Achora means left and so on.

You can add in other things too. Like “Jump,” everyone jumps. “Name,” everyone shouts their name. Then switch it up, and watch as people get super confused and start jumping when you say “Achora.”

Discussion: Hashem wanted everyone to camp in very specific places. This shevet should be next to that shevet, and not that one. How do the people we live near and sit near affect us? In what areas of our lives do we see this? Communities? Daily life? Friends?

Rapid Counting

Props:

*- Pieces of paper, each with a different number of flags on them.

Discussion: Do any of you collect cards? How many do you have? Why do you love counting them so much? Well, in this week's parsha, Hashem count us. It's not so that he knows how many of us there are, it's to show that he cares about us.

Activity: One kid from each team steps forward. Flip over a paper. Whoever is the first to shout the correct number of flags they see on the paper wins that round and goes to the back of the line.

Behaalotcha

Musical Cloud

Props:

-White pillow

Activity: Musical chairs, with a pillow. When you raise the pillow, everyone travels. When you put the pillow down, everyone sits. (Tip: when someone gets out, let them hold the cloud for the next round.)

Choosing Judges

Props:

- *Pictures of random people, and a list of some character traits for each one.

Activity: Explain that you are thinking of leaving, and a new group leader is going to be appointed to lead the group. These are pictures of them with descriptions, and the kids can choose who they would like to be their new group leader. Ask them for what kind of person they would want. We would want someone who is nice. And fair. And smart. As they mention each trait they want or don't want, eliminate or nominate the different candidates. You can do this by giving each kid one

picture and having them sit or stand depending on how their character matches up with the traits listed so far. Eventually, there will be only one or two candidates left.

Discussion: In this week's parsha, Moshe picks judges based on very specific requirements. What kind of requirements do you think they needed to be a leader of the Jews?

Shlach

I Spy

Props:

- map of Israel
- pictures of Israel, or Israeli items

Activity: Spread the map of Israel on the middle of the floor. Explaining to them that they are spies, send the kids to collect the pictures of Israel that you scattered around the room and place them on the map. When all the pictures are on the map, have everyone sit around it.

Discussion: Moshe sent Bnei Yisrael with questions about Israel based on what they saw. So tell me, based on these pictures and on the map, is Israel near the water? Are there Jews there? Does it grow good fruits? For every answer, have the kids point to which picture they know that from.

Red light, green light, 1-2-3.

Activity: Act like the spies, sneaking up without being seen. The caller turns their back to the rest of the group, who are all lined up against the far wall. As the caller says, "red light green light, 1-2-3," everyone else walks forward in an attempt to tag the caller. If the caller turns around after and sees anybody moving, that person must return to the wall and start again.

Around Israel in 40 days

Props:

- Maps of Israel with specified locations [link]
- Questions about each location [link]
- Pictures of each location to give out [link]

Activity: Every kids gets a map. They need to collect one picture for each of the locations specified on the map. They do this by going to around to different stations and answering questions at that station. If they get the answer right, they receive a picture of that place and they can go to a different station until they have pictures for all of the places specified on the map. They can do this in teams, by starting at different sides and seeing who can get through all of the stations first.

Korach

Press Conference

Activity: Hold a press conference with Moshe, Aharon, and Korach. Allow kids to ask these leaders about how they responded to certain situations, what their goals are as leaders, how they treat the people, etc.

Discuss: What makes a good leader? Who comes closest to attaining that, Moshe or Korach? What about leaders of today, like the president, a team captain, the main actor in a play, an older sibling, etc. Maybe have another press conference with the "ideal captain."

Sefer Devarim

Shoftim

Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.

Props:

- Lots of random things.

Discussion: The Torah commands us not to cut down fruit trees for no reason. This is the basis for *bal tashchit*, the prohibition against wasting. What does this say about our responsibility towards the world?

Activity: Find uses for all of the random things! Split the kids into groups and give them each several items. Announce something that each group must create using their items. For example, every group must make a serving utensil. Then a hat. Eventually you can combine all of the groups and have them create something together.

Mock Trial

Activity: After discussing briefly how a *beit din* works and what kinds of cases were dealt with there, have kids act it out. Two can be the litigants and make up a case between themselves, which they act out and tell to the judges. The judges must now decide (with the help of everyone else) who is guilty and who is innocent. Take turns with the different roles.

Courtesy of Sarah

Ki Tetze

Don't Disturb the Mother Bird

Props:

-Basket

- Eggs (or balls)

- Bird

Activity: One kid gets to be hold the bird. He closes his eyes, and everyone has to try to take an egg without the mother bird noticing, ie getting tagged.

Discussion: Hashem has so much compassion on just a bird. Do you think he would like it if we didn't care about other people?

Ki Tavo

The Importance of Rebuke

Props: A rope

Discussion: How many of us have ever gotten yelled at? Do you like it? Well in the parsha, Hashem tell us that if we don't listen, he will yell at us. Why?

Activity: Put the long windy string on the floor. One person closes their eyes, and has to walk along where they remember it being. As soon as they step off, everyone in the group screams "off!" and the person quickly gets back on. For younger groups, keep repeating "on" when they're on it as well. Eventually the kid reaches the other side. Look how helpful their criticism was!

Netzavim

see Rosh Hashana

Vayelech

see Rosh Hashana

Haazinu

Poems

Activity: Read any poem out loud, appropriate for their age level.

Discussion: This week's Parsha is written as a poem. What is different about poems? Are they easier to understand? To memorize? To enjoy?

Vezot Habracha

Review

End of Sefer Devarim! Play one of the trivia games (see General Games or Trivia Games) to review all of Sefer Devarim. Be sure to reference the activities you've done together to cement the lesson from each activity in their minds.

Holidays

Rosh Hashana

The Scale

Props:

*- Ten slips of paper, five of which each have a mitzva written on them, and five on which is written an aveira

- A scale (or a hanger with clips on the ends, or a person to hold out their hands and act like a scale)

Activity: Hide the scraps of paper around the room, and send the kids around to collect them all. When they're done, unwrap each one, and have the kids decide whether it is a mitzva or an aveira. Put each one on the appropriate side of the scale, and point out how it tips back and forth. At the end it's tied.

Discussion: Oh no, how can we tip the scale to the mitzva side? What mitzvah can we do? Let's make a bracha together, daven, say thanks to someone, etc.

Azivat Hachet

Props:

-* Scenarios written up

Discussion: A big concept in tshuva is that you've only done real tshuva once you come across the scenario you failed in again, but this time you do better.

Activity: Write up some "testimonies" by children who feel bad because last week when such and such happened, I responded by doing such and such, and I shouldn't have. Or last week I got into this uncomfortable situation and I wasn't sure how to handle it. Make the scenarios detailed and

exciting, but do not include how the narrator acted in the end. Then appoint actors to be each of the characters in the story. Have them decide how the narrator could have handled the situation. After each scene you can pose follow-up questions, "what about if you couldn't respond that way because...or what if the scenario was less extreme, would this still be necessary?" Get them to think about whether they would really respond that way if it ever came up in their lives.

Succot

Ananei Hakavod

Props:

- Several balls that won't hurt if they hit someone

Activity: Start throwing balls at them from a certain spot, and tell them to use a chair to protect themselves. Once everyone is safely behind the chair, move to another direction, and force them to make a wall on all sides. Eventually, they are protected by a wall on all sides.

Discussion: What you have just done is built yourselves a sukkah! In the dessert, there were people attacking Bnei Yisrael from all sides, and Hashem protected them by putting clouds on all sides. That's one of the things a sukkah is supposed to commemorate.

Building a Candy Sukka

Props:

- Graham crackers
- Marshmallow fluff
- Pretzel sticks
- Plates and spoons

Activity: Build a sukka out of candy! Go over the relevant halachot before you build. How much schach does there need to be, how many walls, etc.

Simchat Torah

Yaamod...

Props:

- A mini Torah

Activity: The kids can't get aliot in shul, but they can in groups! Open it and look inside. If you can, bring them to the Beit Midrash and show them a real Torah.

Chanuka

Find the Oil Jug

Props:

- Oil jug or gelt

Discussion: After the Chanukah story, the Maccabees wanted to relight the Menorah. But there was one problem: they had no oil. The Greeks had come in and destroyed every single pitcher of oil. So what did the Macabees do? They looked anyway, they didn't give up! And you know what? They did ended up finding a jug of oil!

Activity: Hide something in the room, preferably either an oil jug or chanuka gelt. Have the kids pretend they are Maccabees, and not to give up the search however long it takes.

Dreidel Contest

Props:

-Dreidels

Activity: Have a dreidel-spinning contest. After gaining entry by answering a question about Chanuka, every kid gets a chance to spin their dreidel in a series of rounds. Whoever's lasts the longest, second to longest and third of the round gets a certain number of points. Round can include specifications such as upside down, lefty, dropping it from high up, two at a time, using your palms instead of fingers, etc. Of course, be sure to discuss the story behind playing dreidel.

Chanuka Bingo**Props**

- Bingo Sheets [link]

- Candy corn as pieces (they look like flames!)

Activity: Play Bingo!

Chanuka Scavenger Hunt**Props:**

- Scavenger hunt clues [link]

- Pictures of oil jugs to put with each clue [link]

Activity: Play the scavenger hunt! Make sure you set it up right.

Maccabia!

Activity: Maccabia is like a mini color war. Have a javelin-throwing contest, a push-up contest, a cookie-from-the-forehead-to-the-mouth contest, and other important contests that prove that we're strong and brave enough to fight the Greeks.

Mi Yimalel

Activity: Sing Mi Yimalel in rounds. Split into two groups, and while one groups gets to "oTAN mi yimneh" the other groups start with "MI yimalel." (TAN and MI are said at the same time. Similarly, for the high part BA and SHMA are said at the same time, as well as EL and MI for starting again). It's catchy and fun if everyone does it right. Even if not, it's fun to try.

Tu Bishvat

Fruit Designs**Materials:**

- Fruits. shiva minim or otherwise. Pieces of dried fruit works well.

Activity: Fruit is pretty! Split the group into teams and give them each some fruits. Have them create designs, sculptures, and other forms of art. Give them something to make, and judge each team's based on certain criteria. Then give them something else to make. Then eat the fruits.

Discussion: Do we appreciate fruits enough?

Shiva Minim Taste Test**Props:**

- blindfold

- As many of the shiva minim as possible:

Activity: Blindfold kids one by one and silently decide with the rest of the kids what to give him/her to taste. If they master individual tests, see if they can still guess when you give them a few

mixed together.

Tree tag

Activity: One person is "it" the entire game. When someone gets tagged, they become a tree. Trees stand in place and can tag other people. The last one standing after everyone else has become a tree wins and becomes the tagger.

Purim

Put the Purim Story Back in Order

Props:

- *Pictures of various scenes from the Megilla [link]

Activity: Lay the pictures on the floor, and have the group line them up in chronological order. If you have enough, give each child a picture and have them line up based on the picture everyone is holding. You can make two teams and see who can get them all in order first.

1...2...3...Golden Scepter

Props:

- Golden Scepter (or some equivalent)

Activity: One person stands one side of the room, and everyone else stands on the other. When Achashverosh sticks out his golden scepter everyone moves forward, and when he puts it down everyone freezes. Anyone caught moving must start again from the back of the room. The first one who reaches Achashverosh gets to be Achashverosh.

Parshat Zachor Memory Game

Activity: One person begins by saying a short sentence. Going around the circle, each child must repeat the previous sentence and add something of their own. For example,

"I went to the store to buy Mishloach Manot."

"I went to the store to buy hamentashen for Mishloach Manot."

"I went quickly to the food store to buy apricot hamentashen for Mishloach Manot."

Who Am I?

Activity: How well do you know the less famous characters in the Megilla? Read off descriptions in the first person of characters from the Megilla, and the children need to guess who it is. For example, "I advised Haman to kill Mordechai by hanging."

Who is the Leader? –Indian Cheif

Discuss: One message of Purim is that sometimes Hashem is hidden, but he's always there. That is why we dress up, and why Hashem's name isn't in the Megilla, etc.

Activity: Explain that just as it's hard to tell who's the leader in this game, so too in the Purim story and in life it's often hard to tell who's the leader. But of course, we know the leader is always Hashem.

Courtesy of Gila R.

Pesach

Coke and Pepsi

Activity: Everyone finds a partner and follows your commands. Commands can include:

- Mitzrayim: run to one side of the room and say boo
- Israel: run to the other side of the room and cheer
- Yam suf: face your partner in the middle of the room and wave your arms and to make waves. Also make wave noises with your mouth
- Kriat yam suf: still facing your partner, now raise your hands straight up. Have the group coordinate so it looks like the splitting of the sea
- Chariots: everyone freezes in place like they're stuck in the mud
- Egyptians: everyone drops to the floor and drowns
- Moshe: everyone makes a serious face and raises their imaginary staff
- Ananei hakavod: everyone put their hands out and spins around to show the clouds were on all side of us
- Az Yashir: everyone sings and dances in place
- Be creative! make up your own commands. this activity can really be used for any parsha and is always a big hit, so long as the commands clever, fun, and new.

Sprinkling the Blood

Props:

- cups with water
- a bowl

Activity: The Mishna in Pesachim 5:6 describes how the kohanim efficiently got a cup of blood from each korban pesach to the mizbeach for a sprinkling and back out again. They lined up in front of the mizbeach, and the full cups were passed towards the mizbach while the empty ones were simultaneously passed in the opposite direction.

If there was ever a mishna that begs to be acted out, it's this one! Have the kids line up, raising their right hands and lowering their left hands. Start handing them full cups of water from one side, making sure there's something representing the mizbeach to pour the water into on the other side. They need to pass the full cups towards the mizbeach with their right hands, and the empty ones back with their left hands. The kid at the end dumps the water onto the mizbach.

And as the perek continues to describe, all the while the kids need to be singing hallel. It's fun!

Hide the afikomen

Props:

- Square of cardboard

Activity: Whoever finds the Afikomen gets to hide it for the next round.

Lag Baomer

Interactive Story

Activity (for younger groups): There was once man named R' Shimon Bar Yochai, and the Romans didn't let him learn torah. One day they were chasing him, so he started running away (everyone stamping feet), and was looking for a place to hide (hands on you forehead, looking around). He sees a cave, ducks in (off chairs, ducking on floor). Soon he gets thirsty, and Hashem makes a stream of water, (cup hands and drink from it). Then he's hungry, and Hashem makes tree grow. What grows on trees? Fruits, so he picked fruit (pick fruit off tree) and drank water (sip from

stream), while he was hiding from the romans (looking around nervously), who didn't let him learn torah. Then one day, there's a knock on the door (knock), and its Eliahu Hanavi, that guy who visits us at the seder, who tells him he can come out.

Shavuot

Seven Weeks, Seven Steps

Activity: Place a toy Torah on one side of the room, opposite the children. Then set up seven markers separating between the group and the Torah. Explain that Sefirah is a preparation for matan torah, where we slowly advance until we're finally ready by the time Shavuot comes around. The group can come closer one marker at a time (representing the seven weeks) by performing a series of activities to prepare them for matan torah. Activities may include:

- acting out a scene from the torah
- saying "naaseh venishma" in unison
- singing "torah torah"
- trivia questions
- setting up a fence of cups around the torah

Mesorah

Props: A toy Torah

Discussion: Hashem gave Moshe the Torah, but Moshe didn't hog all for himself. He gave it to Yehoshua, who gave it to the zkenim, etc, and that's how we have it today. But how is the next generation going to get it? It's up to us to learn the Torah so we can pass it on too.

Activity: "Hashem" stands on a table, Moshe on a chair, and everyone else lines up behind them. Hashem starts with the stuffed Torah, and when you say go he passes it to Moshe, and then to everyone else until the end of the line. Then do it again while singing "torah torah torah..", then when you get it you have to say a Mitzvah, then everyone kisses when they get it, then pass it backwards while singing it backwards, then pass it in slow motion while singing slowly, etc. You can also play "This is a fork" while passing it, see the Game Resource section.

Yom Ha'atzmaut

Pin the City on the Israel

Props:

- *Map of Israel
- *Pictures or names of famous locations in Israel

Activity: Make two teams. One person comes up from each team, and they each have a chance to place the city on the proper place on the map. Whoever's is closer wins. You can do this either blindfolded or not, depending on how hard they are.

Israel appreciation fair

Activity: Bring in Israeli foods, clothes, teach Israeli songs, hold the flag and sing hatikva. Show the kids pictures of Israel and allow them to identify the places and even tell stories if they've been to those places.

Discuss: Aside for its culture and physical beauty, why is Israel so special to us?

General Games

Can't think of anything? These games can be used for any week. Just plug in this week's parsha and you have a perfect activity.

Jeopardy!

Props:

This game requires a significant amount of preparation once, but it pays off. Any future weeks you want to use it, all you have to do is write 16 new questions.

- *Jeopardy board: Split a large piece of oak tag into 5x5 boxes, 25 boxes in total. On the top, write Jeopardy! In the boxes on the left column, write point values from 100-400. In all other boxes, cut horizontal slits towards the top, and slide a paper clip through it. Then come up with four categories to put on the top row, sliding each one into the paper clip so it stays. Categories may include "names" "places" "mitzvot" "brachot" "famous rashes," "words that start with M," etc. Now all you have to do is write 16 questions and you're ready to play!

Activity: Jeopardy! When a team gets an answer correct, they get that number of points and choose the next question. Regardless of who chose the question though, any team can always answer any question if they raise their hand first.

Taboo

Props:

- *These cards are surprisingly quick and easy to make. On the top write a word having to do with the parsha (moshe, rock, yovel, gan eden), and underneath, write four words you might use to describe the word on top. The cards should preferably be related to a specific parsha, holiday, sefer, etc, but it's not a bad idea to have a set around that deals with Jewish stuff in general.

Activity: One partner picks a card and needs to get his friend to say what it says on top. In describing the word, he is not allowed to say any of the words listed on the card. See how many they can get in a minute. Then the next pair gets a turn.

Torah baseball

Props:

- * Technically you don't need to do any preparation for this one. But you should prepare questions beforehand that are arranged into single, double, triple, and homerun questions.

Activity: When each batter is up, he decides what kind of question he wants. If he gets it right he goes to that base, and if he gets it wrong he's out.

Partial words

Activity: One kid goes out, and the rest of the group is given a parsha related word, such as "Potifar." Each section of the group is told to say only a certain syllable of the word. A third of the group is given "Po" a third "ti" and the rest "far." When the kid comes in, on three everyone says their syllable. The kid needs to decipher what the word is.

Veggie-off:

Activity: Two kids stand in the middle, back to back. Together they count out three steps away from each other, at which point you call out a reference from the parsha, such as "menora!" They each have to immediately act out a menora, and the group decides who's is better. These can range from people to actions to vegetables, and in a good group atmosphere it gets really funny.

Visual Review

Props:

- *Pictures or toys that are related to a certain parsha or holiday.

Activity: Hold up the items one by one. As you present each item, whoever raises their hand and explains the item's connection to the parsha or holiday gets a point. Allow up to three answers for each item.

Paper Bag Dramatics

Props:

- Several bags, each containing a different collection of random items.

Activity: Split the kids up into groups. Give each group a bag of random objects, and assign them a topic from the parsha. Each group must create a skit about their topic, but they have to use EVERY object in the bag.

Speak for a Minute

Activity: One volunteer stands in front of the room. On the count of three, you give them a topic (for example, the mishkan) and they need to speak about it for a full minute without saying "um" "like" "and" "so" or any words like that, depending on how strict you want to be. As soon as they get out, call someone else up!

Would You Rather?

Activity: Ask a series of questions where the kids need to choose a side based on their answer. You can ask thoughtful questions from the parsha. Would you rather be around for makkat dam or makkat Tzfardea? Would you rather donate to the mishkan or help build it? Would you rather eat manna every day or real food?

Bingo!

Props:

-* Bingo sheets

- Candy to cover the squares with

Activity: Everyone loves bingo. You can make these for any parsha.

Matching

Props:

Pictures of things from the parsha

Activity: Flip everything over. One by one, players flip over two pictures and try to find matches. When you find a match, tell everyone what it's a picture of, and you can keep it.

Telephone

Activity: One person whispers a phrase to whoever is sitting next to him or her. The message is passed in whispers around the circle until the last person says what they think they heard out loud. Pick words or phrases from the parsha.

Scavenger Hunt

Props:

- *Clues

Activity: If you're good at rhyming, scavenger hunts are surprisingly easy to make. Think of spots in the shul, and write clues that send the kids around looking for something that you placed in each spot.

If you can hear me clap once

This is a great way to get kids' attention whatever they're doing.

Without raising your voice, say the following and the kids respond accordingly to the beat. Once they know this routine, it becomes fun and effective because people love joining in familiar beats.

"If you can hear me ... clap once" (clap)

"If you can hear me ... clap twice" (clap) (clap)

"If you can hear me clap *three* times" (clap) (clap) (clap)

You can then go into alternatives, such as "If you can hear me ... shush once" (shh). Or snap once, or stomp once, or whistle once, etc.

If you can hear me clap once (alternative version)

Without saying anything, clap once. Keep doing it until they figure out that you want them to clap after you. Then clap twice and they copy that too. Next do a stomp stomp clap, and have them repeat more and more complex beats until finally you lose them. By then everyone is completely focused and you can move on to your next planned activity.

The Ultimate Game Resource

These games aren't necessarily "parsha games" yet, but they're fun! Often all it takes is a small tweak to make it somehow parsha-related. If you don't know how to play any of these, Google it.

Trivia Games

Family Feud- The signature question in Family Feud is "Survey Says." Make two teams, and ask questions like, "What are the five most popular holidays?" Everyone on the team lines up and each player has a chance to offer an answer. If someone offers a wrong answer, the team gets an X. If the team gets 3 Xs before getting all the answers, the other team has an opportunity to steal it..

Jeopardy!- There's 5 categories and 5 questions in each category, each one harder than the next. The game is more fun when the categories are interesting.

Torah Baseball- Make 4 bases. When a batter is up, he chooses either a single question or a double. Every so often offer a triple or home run question also. If the player gets it right, the player goes to that base.

Torah Basketball- Both teams line up at the foul line, or a set distance from an empty garbage can. In order to take a shot, you need to answer a question. Team with the most points at the end wins.

Fastest finger- This game is every man for himself. Whoever knows the answer first bangs on the table, and you immediately stop, even if it's mid-sentence, and let them answer the question.

Running Around Games

Coke and Pepsi- Everyone gets a partner. When you say “coke” everyone goes to one wall. “Pepsi” they go to the other wall. “7 Up” they freeze. “Dr. Pepper” they meet in the middle. Make up your own! This game can be played with Jewish words too.

Four corners- everyone goes to a corner except one person. They shout “east,” and everyone in the east corner comes to the middle. Everyone still in finds a new corner. Last person still in wins.

Would you rather?- For each questions, kids have to think what their answer is and go to that side. For example, would you rather fly or be invisible? Fly on that side, invisible on the other side. For thoughtful questions, let one kid from each side explain themselves.

Minute to Winnit- Come up with a series of tasks. Call up two contestants, and they each have exactly a minute to do the task. Whoever does it better wins that round. Be creative. Stack cups, throw something into a garbage, carry something on your head, knock something over, etc.

Steal the salami- Make two teams, give out numbers. Put something in the middle. You know the rest.

Relay races- Hop, close your eyes, one foot in front of the other, be creative.

Helicopter- One person stands in the middle and spins something around. Everyone else stands in a circle and jumps over it. If it hits you you’re out. Don’t let the kids spin it, it’s harder than it looks and you get really dizzy.

Belts- Everyone lines up behind two belts. They need to get to the other side by taking only two steps between the two belts. After everyone goes, the belts move further apart and everyone goes again.

Running bases- Two throwers, one ball, and one angry custodian. Don’t get caught, please.

Red light green light- One kid stands on one side, closes his eyes and calls “red light green light 1-2-3.” Everyone else is on the opposite wall and has to run and tag him, but they can only move while he’s not looking. Anyone caught moving has to start again.

Sharks and minnows. Everyone crosses the room, and the person in the middle has to tag them. If you get tagged, you’re in the middle.

Tree tag. Everyone crosses the room, and when you yell “freeze,” anyone who doesn’t freeze becomes a tree. Trees can tag people.

Crossing the river of fire- line some chairs up against one wall. They need to cross to the other wall without touching the ground. Instead of chairs you can give them plates, shoes, anything.

Rock paper scissor tournament- when you win, play someone else. Soon only two people are left.

Limbo- You’ll need a limbo stick, the limbo song, and a Spanish guy in a sombrero.

Keep the feather in the air- first group to let their feather hit the floor (or hit their hands) loses.

Sitting circle games:

I am sitting on a chair- Make a circle of chairs, with one extra. Everyone gets a number. One by one, people move down the circle and say “I am sitting on a chair and waiting for number _.” Whoever has that number runs and takes the chair. If you say the wrong thing or don’t go, you’re out.

Zero zero one one- Everyone gets a number. 0 starts by saying 00-33 on beat. Then 3 has to say 33- and a different number. If you mess up you’re out.

Concentration. Same beat as 00-11 but you have a theme. Like “Jewish Names.” Everyone has to say a Jewish name when you get to them, on beat. You can play with anything.

GHOST- Everyone says a letter. If you finish a word, you’re out.

A strong wind blows- someone stands in the middle and says “As strong wind blows for anyone who...” Anyone who that applies to stands up and switches seats.

Tapping- Everyone sits in a circle and crosses hands. You pass the tap around the circle by tapping once for forward, twice to switch directions, snap to send to your other hand.

Snapping game- bang, clap, snap, snap. If you don’t know how to play, this won’t help.

Charades- someone acts out a scene/title/person and we have to guess what it is. Easy to make parsha-related.

Connection- One person goes in the middle and says something about themselves. When someone else hears something that they have in common, they say “connection” and take his place.

Hajepajee- Everyone says one word, on a beat, and you make sentences and tell a story.

Indian chief- Everyone follows the chief’s movements. Someone comes back in and needs to guess who’s the chief.

Cup games- Pitch perfect, John Scotts Gavar

Count to ten- the group needs to count to ten. If two people say the same number, you start again.

Psychiatrist- One person goes out. Everyone else decides on a disorder they all have. That person comes back in and needs to figure out their disorder by asking questions. For example, everyone things they’re the person sitting to the left.

Contact- amazing game, impossible to explain. Essentially, one person thinks of a word and everyone else tries to guess it.

20 questions- Someone thinks of something. Everyone else has 20 yes/no questions to ask in order to figure it out.

Mafia- There’s a mayor, a cop, a bunch of drug dealers and lots of great values.

7 up- Everyone closes their eyes with their thumbs up except a few kids. Those kids go around and tap people’s thumbs. They need to guess who tapped them.

2 truths and a lie- Someone tells us two truths and a lie about themselves, and we need to guess which is the lie.

Telephone- someone whispers a phrase to the next person in the circle, and it gets passed around. The last person says it out loud.

Hot and cold- one person goes out, and the group hides something. You help them find it by saying colder or hotter. Or by singing louder and softer.

Syllables- split up a word amongst the group. On three everyone says their syllable. One kid has to figure out what the word is.

Standing circle games:

Wa- The words are, Wah, Wah, Wah.

Woosh Bang Zip- Woosh moves the woosh forward. Bang moves it backward. Zip moves it across. Neovav everyone neovavs. Click turns the sound off. Mush pot when you get out.

Cucumber game- everyone passes a cucumber behind their backs, and they need to eat the entire thing before the person in the middle spots who has it.

Who has it?- The cucumber game for lame people. Pass something normal around, and when you say stop, the person in the middle has 3 guesses who has it.

Make me laugh- Someone does something in the middle. Everyone has to copy them. First person who laughs goes next.

This is a fork. A what? A fork. A what? A fork. Oh, a fork. Great game.

Bang- you say someone’s name. That person ducks and the people on the sides need to face each other and shoot. Whoever says bang first kills the other person and they go in the middle and say the next name.

Song game- Give them a word. Each side needs to think of a song beginning with that word. Keep switching off until one team doesn't have a song.

Pillow fight- with blindfolds. Spin them around and give them each a pillow. First person to make contact wins that round. For extra fun, only blindfold one of them.

Name anomia- hold up a sheet and two people face each other. When you drop the sheet, the first person to shout the other person's name wins that round.

Cat and mouse- the cat chases the mouse in and out of everyone's arms. Good for younger kids.

Blindfolded guess who- the person in the middle points to someone. They say "guess who?" in whatever voice they want. The person in the middle needs to guess who it is.

If you love me baby smile/I love you baby but I just can't smile- Someone stands in the middle and says to someone specific, "If you love me baby smile." They need to respond "I love you baby but I just can't smile." If they smile, they're in the middle.

Ninja- On your turn, you can make one movement. If you hit someone's hand, that hand is out. Last person standing wins.

Screaming toes- everyone stands in a circle and looks down at someone else's toes. When you say 3, everyone looks up at the person's toes they were looking at. Anyone who makes eye contact screams for as long as they can. Whoever loses the screaming match is out.

Improv Games

Change- Whenever the changer says "change," the last person who spoke needs to say something else.

Party guests- Two people leave the room and everyone else decides what characters they should be. When they reenter, the guests talk to everyone else and figure out who they are.

Scenes from a hat- Kids pull scenes out of a hat and act them out. You can make them parsha related.

3 Headed Rabbi- Three people are the three heads of a Rabbi. The group asks a question and the 3 headed Rabbi answers by saying one word each until the question is answered.

Questions only- Two kids have a conversation, but they can only ask questions. If you mess up, you go to the back of the line.

Typewriter- You type at a typewriter and the kids act it out. Every so often say and then he said...and let them improvise.

Note- Leave a bunch of phrases all over the floor. Whenever you call "note," someone picks up a note and reads it out loud.

Director- The kids act out a scene. Then you tell them to do it again in slow motion, in British accents, backward, etc.

Freeze and Justify- Someone gives a speech about something. Anyone can shout freeze, and swap in for the speaker. They need to start in the same position but change the subject.

A-Z- two kids have a conversation. The first sentence in the conversation needs to start with A, then B, etc.

Paper bag dramatics- Give them some props and five minutes to prepare a scene on a certain topic. They need to act out a scene that uses all of the props. Great for connecting to the parsha.

Story Telling

Alternate ending- Pause before the ending and make groups. Let each group act out how they think the story ends.

Sound track- Give each kid a word, and when they hear their word they make some noise.

Characters- Tell the group to cheer for certain characters and boo for others.