**The children and the stones:**

It was the time of Yom Kippur and everyone was thinking about all the things they did wrong in the past year that they wanted to change. A little girl came to the rabbi and said: ‘I feel really really bad because I did one really wrong thing this year, I did say sorry to the person but I still feel bad about it and now I do not know what to do’. The rabbi said ‘go and find a really big rock, the heaviest you can possibly carry and bring it back here to me’. And so the girl went out and picked the largest rock she could find that she could carry, she put it in a rucksack and with great difficulty she went back to the rabbi with it.

***What do you think was the really bad thing she did?***

While she was away, a boy came to the rabbi and said: ‘I feel bad because I did two bad things this year, they were bad but not really really bad and I did say sorry to the people I hurt but I still feel bad about it and now I do not know what to do?’ The rabbi said ‘Go out and find two big stones, not the biggest you can carry but the biggest you can fit into each of you hands. And so the boy went out to find two stones to bring back to the rabbi and with great difficulty he went back to the rabbi.

***What do you think was the two quite bad things he did?***

While he was away a third child came to the rabbi and said: ‘I heard you talk to the other children but I cannot think of any big things that I did wrong this year. So what do I do for tashlich when I have done nothing wrong?’ ‘Really?’ the rabbi said, ‘you did nothing bad at all this year, not even one little bad thing?’ ‘Ok’ the boy said ‘maybe I did some small things, but surely none of them were bad enough to worry about?’ ‘Ok then said the rabbi, why don’t you go out and fetch lots of little pebbles for every little thing you know you did but that were not big enough to worry about and then come back here with them? ‘That’s a deal’ the boy said and walked off humming while he gathered lots of little stones until his pockets were full and then he went back to the rabbi’s house.

***What do you think was the small bad things that the child did?***

The three children all met at the same time at the rabbis house with their stones. The child with all the pebbles was feeling quite chuffed compared to the other two because the others had done really bad things and their rocks looked really heavy and this child, though is pockets were full, it was not really a heavy burden. The rabbi spoke first to the girl – ‘What I want you to do now is to take this rock and put it back exactly where you found it. Exactly where you found it and then you have done everything you could to be forgiven’. She sighed with relief but then smiled because though the rock was heavy she knew she would be forgiven.

The rabbi then turned to the boy with the two stones – ‘what I want you to do is to take your two rocks and put them back exactly where you found them and then you have done everything you could to be forgiven’. The boy sighed picked up his rocks but smiled because he knew that once he put the stones back he knew he would be forgiven.

The rabbi then turned to the boy with all the pebbles – ‘What I want you do to is to take all your pebbles and put them back exactly where you found them’. ‘But that is impossible’ the boy said, ‘I cannot remember where I picked up each one’. ‘Exactly’ the rabbi said, ‘just because they were small does not mean that they were not hurtful. Big things you have done wrong can be forgiven even though they might be heavy, but lots of small things are sometimes worse because you can never ask for forgiveness for all of them as you cannot remember who you did it to’!

***Which child do you think you were this year? The one with the rock, the one with the two stones or the one with many little pebbles? Which bad thing from your own life would you like to throw away now and try not to do again?***