

# NCYI Youth Groups Parshat Balak

([http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/HebEngTaNaKh\\_TorahSummary.htm](http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/HebEngTaNaKh_TorahSummary.htm))

## Parsha Outline

- Balak hires Bilam to curse Yisrael
- Bilam's donkey speaks to him
- Bilam's attempted curse becomes a blessing
- Yisrael is lured by Moav

## Parsha Summaries

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/390331/jewish/Balak-Roundup.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/390331/jewish/Balak-Roundup.htm)

### Balak Roundup

In the previous Parshah, we read about how when other nations attacked the Jews, they were badly defeated and their lands were conquered? So in this week's Parshah we learn that Balak, the king of Moav, has seen what's happened to those other nations and he's terrified. But he knows that he if he tries to fight the Jews, he will lose. So he thinks of a better plan. He will hire a prophet to curse the Jews, and then he will be able to be victorious over them.

So he hires Balaam, a non-Jewish prophet, to curse the Jews, and Balaam saddles his donkey and sets out on his journey. G-d sends an angel to block his path, and Balaam's donkey, seeing the angel, goes off the road to bypass the angel. Balaam, who doesn't see the angel, beats the donkey for going off the road. The donkey then opens its mouth and starts speaking to Balaam, asking why he is beating her! Then Balaam sees the angel who tells him that he should know that he will not be able to curse the Jews and will only be able to say what G-d allows him to.

So Balaam arrives at his destination, and King Balak and all the dignitaries are there, waiting for Balaam to come and curse the Jews. Balaam begins to speak, and instead of cursing the Jews, he blesses them! Balak tells Balaam, "What did you do?! I hired you to curse the Jews, and instead you're blessing them!" Balaam replied that he can only say the words that G-d puts into his mouth.

Balak takes Balaam to another mountain, hoping that a change of place will allow him to be more successful in cursing the Jews. But when Balaam opens his mouth again, he says

more blessings! This time, Balak just says, "Enough! Don't curse them and don't bless them. Just don't say anything!" But Balak really wants it to work, so they go to one last place. There, once again, Balaam opens his mouth and out come blessings.

Finally, Balak gets really angry, saying, "I hired you to curse my enemies, and instead you blessed them three times!" Balaam answers that he can only say the words that G-d puts in his mouth and then ends off with a prophecy about the time of Moshiach.

Unfortunately, the Jews then begin to sin by serving idols and being with non-Jewish woman. A man named Zimri takes a Midianite woman to his tent, and a fierce plague starts spreading, killing many Jews. Pinchas, the grandson of Aaron, knows what he must do. He takes his spear and kills Zimri and the woman, and the plague stops.

Stay tuned. Next week we hear about Pinchas' reward for this heroic deed.

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/530988/jewish/Aliya-Summary.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/530988/jewish/Aliya-Summary.htm)

## Balak Aliya Summary

**General Overview:** In this week's Torah reading, *Balak*, King Balak of Moab retains the sorcerer Balaam to curse the Jewish people. Instead of curses, only blessings come out of his mouth—including prophecies concerning the Messianic redemption. Moabite women entice some of the Israelites to sin, resulting in a plague amongst the Jews. Phinehas zealously kills two of the high-ranking offenders, and the plague comes to an end.

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**First Aliyah:** The Israelites have just conquered the Emorites and the Bashanites, the two mighty neighbors of Moab. Balak, king of Moab, worries that his nation would be the Israelites' next victim. He sends messengers to the Land of Midian, to Balaam, a famed non-Jewish prophet and sorcerer, asking him to come and curse the Jews. G-d appeared to Balaam that night and instructed him not to go to Moab. "You shall not curse the people because they are blessed!"

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**Second Aliyah:** Balaam sent word with Balak's messengers that G-d doesn't permit him to go with them. So Balak sent more prestigious messengers to Balaam, promising him great riches in return for his services. Once again G-d appeared to Balaam. This time G-d

allowed Balaam to go -- provided that he only speak the words which G-d dictates to him.

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**Third Aliyah:** Balaam leaves together with the Moabite dignitaries. G-d sends an angel with a drawn sword to block Balaam's path. While Balaam couldn't see the angel, the she-donkey he was riding did, and refused to move onwards, causing Balaam to strike her. The donkey miraculously speaks, admonishing Balaam for striking her. Eventually, G-d "opens Balaam's eyes," and he sees the angel. A conversation between Balaam and the angel ensues, wherein Balaam is chastised for his behavior towards his donkey, and again he is reminded only to say what G-d dictates to him. After this humbling episode, Balaam arrives in Moab where he is greeted by Balak.

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**Fourth Aliyah:** Upon Balaam's instructions, Balak builds seven altars and offers sacrifices to G-d. G-d "chances" upon Balaam, and dictates to him the words he should repeat to Balak and his ministers: "From Aram, Balak the king of Moab has brought me, from the mountains of the east: 'Come, curse Jacob for me and come invoke wrath against Israel.' How can I curse whom G-d has not cursed, and how can I invoke wrath if the L-rd has not been angered?..." Balaam then proceeded to shower the Israelites with beautiful blessings and praises. When Balak responds angrily to the blessings, Balaam reminds him that he can only say that which G-d tells him to say.

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**Fifth Aliyah:** Balak takes Balaam to another location, hoping that this new venue would be more inauspicious for the Jews. They again build altars and offer sacrifices, and again G-d dictates blessing for the Jews which Balaam repeats. "G-d does not look at evil in Jacob, and has seen no perversity in Israel; the L-rd, his G-d, is with [Israel], and he has the King's friendship..."

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**Sixth Aliyah:** The entire process repeats itself once again, Balak takes Balaam to another place, hoping that Balaam can curse the Jews from there. For a third time they build altars and bring offerings, and for a third time, only blessings issue from Balaam's mouth: "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! ... G-d, who has brought them out of Egypt with the strength of His loftiness He shall consume the nations

which are his adversaries ... Those who bless [them] shall be blessed, and those who curse [them] shall be cursed." At this point, Balak despairs of accomplishing his goal, and sends Balaam on his way.

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**Seventh Aliyah:** Before leaving, Balaam prophesies about the end of days: "I see it, but not now; I behold it, but not soon. A star has gone forth from Jacob, and a staff will arise from Israel which will crush the princes of Moab and uproot all the sons of Seth..." He also speaks about the eventual destruction of Esau, Amalek and Assyria. Following Balaam's unsuccessful attempt to curse the Jewish nation, Moabite and Midianite women seduce many Jewish men. In the course of their seduction, they also entice the Jewish man to worship the *Baal Peor* deity. G-d commands Moses to execute the guilty people, and simultaneously a lethal plague erupts amongst the Jews. A Jewish leader, Zimri, publicly displays the Midianite princess with whom he was consorting. Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, kills them both, and the plague is halted.

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/3576>

Balak, king of Moav, is in morbid fear of *Bnei Yisrael*. He summons a renowned sorcerer named Bilaam to curse them. First, G-d speaks to Bilaam and forbids him to go. But, because Bilaam is so insistent, G-d appears to him a second time and permits him to go. While en route, a *malach* (emissary from G-d) blocks Bilaam's donkey's path. Unable to contain his frustration, Bilaam strikes the donkey each time it stops or tries to detour. Miraculously, the donkey speaks, asking Bilaam why he is hitting her. The *malach* instructs Bilaam regarding what he is permitted to say and what he is forbidden to say regarding the Jewish People. When Bilaam arrives, King Balak makes elaborate preparations, hoping that Bilaam will succeed in the curse. Three times Bilaam attempts to curse and three times blessings issue instead. Balak, seeing that Bilaam has failed, sends him home in disgrace.

*Bnei Yisrael* begin sinning with the Moabite women and worshipping the Moabite idols, and they are punished with a plague. One of the Jewish leaders brazenly brings a Midianite princess into his tent, in full view of Moshe and the people. Pinchas, a grandson of Aharon, grabs a spear and kills both evildoers. This halts the plague, but not before 24,000 have died.

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## Parsha Songs

[The lyrics are supplied here. For the tunes, please click on the link]

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/573767/jewish/Parshah-Song.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/573767/jewish/Parshah-Song.htm)

**Lyrics:**

Ma tovu oholecha Yaakov mishkensoecha Yisroel  
Ma tovu oholecha Yaakov mishkenosecha Yisroel

The Jewish nation Balak wanted to destroy  
It was Bilam he decided to employ  
Balak said curse the people that you see  
They are becoming too great for me

Bilam was a very greedy man  
For wealth he would do what he can  
He told Balak the Jews I will meet  
But only Hashem's word I can repeat

Ma tovu oholecha Yaakov mishkensoecha Yisroel  
Ma tovu oholecha Yaakov mishkenosecha Yisroel

The Jewish tents were arranged just so  
Privacy for each family these did show  
When these tents Bilam saw at first  
He gave a brachah he could not curse

Mah tovu were the words of the bracha  
To each and every Jewish mishpacha  
Now in shachris we say mah tovu  
For family unity is part of every Jew

## **Parsha Questions & Answers**

Selected from the following websites:

[http://www.chinuch.org/item\\_details.php?mid=7077](http://www.chinuch.org/item_details.php?mid=7077)

[http://www.chinuch.org/item\\_details.php?mid=5040](http://www.chinuch.org/item_details.php?mid=5040)

[http://www.chinuch.org/item\\_details.php?mid=1676](http://www.chinuch.org/item_details.php?mid=1676)

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/1759>

The following are a selection of questions obtained from the above mentioned websites.

## Questions

1. Why did Balak hire Bilam the navi?
2. What did the donkey see on the road?
3. What did Bilam do to the donkey?
4. What nes happened with Bilam's donkey?
5. What did the donkey say?
6. Why couldn't Bilam curse the Bnei Yisrael?
7. What did HaShem make him do?
8. What was the famous berachah of Bilam that we say in the davening?
9. How did Bilaam die?
10. Bilaam told Balak that the Jews' G-d hates something. What is it?

## Answers

1. To curse the Bnei Yisrael
2. A malach with it's sword stretched out
3. He hit the donkey
4. It spoke
5. What did I do that you hit me three times
6. Bilam could not go against what HaShem wanted
7. Give them berachot
8. Mah Tov
9. He was killed with a sword
10. Promiscuity

3-4

## Questions

1. Who was the king of Moav?
2. Why did Balak hire Bilam the navi?
3. Why did HaShem give nevuah to a rasha like Bilam?
4. Who got Bilam's donkey ready?
5. What did the donkey see on the road?
6. What did Bilam do to the donkey?
7. What nes happened with Bilam's donkey?
8. What did the donkey say?
9. Why couldn't Bilam curse the Bnei Yisrael?
10. What did HaShem make him do?
11. What did Bilam compare the Bnei Yisrael to and what does that represent?
12. What was the famous berachah of Bilam that we say in the davening?
13. What was special about the tents of the Bnei Yisrael?
14. How did Bilaam die?

15. Bilaam told Balak that the Jews' G-d hates something. What is it?

## Answers

1. Balak
2. To curse the Bnei Yisrael
3. So that the Goyim can't say that they would have been better if HaShem had given them a Navi
4. Bilam himself woke up early to get it ready
5. A malach with it's sword stretched out
6. He hit the donkey
7. It spoke
8. What did I do that you hit me three times
9. Bilam could not go against what HaShem wanted
10. Give them berachot
11. Bilam compared the Bnei Yisrael to the dust of the earth, hinting to the fact that the Bnei Yisrael are too numerous to count
12. Mah Tov
13. Their Tziniut (their openings did not face each other)
14. He was killed with a sword
15. Promiscuity

## 5-6

## Questions

1. Who was the king of Moav?
2. Why did Balak hire Bilam the navi?
3. What did Balak offer Bilam as a reward for cursing Bnei Yisrael?
4. Why did Balak want to call a bad navi?
5. Why did HaShem give nevuah to a rasha like Bilam?
6. When did Bilaam receive his prophecies?
7. Who got Bilam's donkey ready?
8. What did the donkey see on the road?
9. What did Bilam do to the donkey?
10. What nes happened with Bilam's donkey?
11. What did the donkey say?
12. Was Bilam able to curse the Bnei Yisrael?
13. Why couldn't Bilam curse the Bnei Yisrael?
14. What did HaShem make him do?
15. What did Bilam compare the Bnei Yisrael to?
16. What does that represent?
17. What was the famous berachah of Bilam that we say in the davening?
18. What was special about the tents of the Bnei Yisrael?
19. How did Bilaam die?

20. Bilaam told Balak that the Jews' G-d hates something. What is it?

## Answers

1. Balak
2. To curse the Bnei Yisrael
3. Great honor and anything that he asked for
4. He heard that the Bnei Yisrael's power is in their speech, so he wanted to curse them and cursing is done with speech
5. So that the Goyim can't say that they would have been better if HaShem had given them a Navi
6. At night
7. Bilam himself woke up early to get it ready
8. A Malach holding his sword
9. He hit the donkey
10. It spoke
11. What did I do that you hit me three times
12. NO
13. Bilam could not go against what HaShem wanted
14. Give them berachot
15. Bilam compared the Bnei Yisrael to the dust of the earth
16. That Bnei Yisrael are too numerous to count
17. Mah Tov
18. Their Tziniut (their openings did not face each other)
19. He was killed with a sword
20. Promiscuity

## Parsha Stories

[http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/700346/jewish/Sleeping-Lion.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/700346/jewish/Sleeping-Lion.htm)

### Sleeping Lion

By [Mendy Loewenthal](#)

"You know," David said to Ben, "I had a really good year at school. Thank G-d."

It was the summer, and Ben and David were reminiscing over the year at school.

"Do you remember last year?" David continued. "Do you remember how I used to flunk every Jewish Studies test?"

"Yes," Ben said, "you used to kind of scrape along by somehow sending in these half-hearted assignments."

"It's funny," David said as he leaned his head back to remember. "I always thought that Jewish Studies was not for me. Math was boring but I was good at it, and history I could kind of handle. But those essays on Jewish Studies just seemed too much for me to bite!"

Ben chuckled; there had been a class joke about how much David didn't enjoy doing those assignments.

"But then," Ben said, "Mr. Benson came along."

"Yes," David said. "Mr. Benson came along... So?"

"I feel that he was one of the most inspiring teachers we've had," Ben said. "He is a teacher who managed to make us feel like we were in control of our studies and that we could do better or worse based on our choices."

"I remember," David said, "he always used to say to me: 'David, you are a sleeping lion just like the Jewish people in exile.'"

"What does that mean?" Ben asked. "Why are the Jewish people like sleeping lions?"

"Well," David said, "there was this king called Balak who didn't like the Jewish people so he got this gentile prophet Balaam to curse the Jewish people while they camped in the desert. But in the end, Balaam ended up blessing and praising the people."

"Yes," Ben said, "I am starting to remember. He said that we are like a sleeping lion because even though we are in exile and not in power and don't have a Temple, nevertheless we are compared to a sleeping lion because no one has power over us. But what does that mean? Surely there have been times when other nations have had power over us?"

"Well," said David, "the Chassidic masters say that only our bodies are in exile but our Jewish souls are free and in power. So, in fact, even though it might sometimes seem that others have power over us, really we are free—free to do mitzvot and serve G-d"

"So as lions, we might wake up any moment," said Ben. "But only to do good things..."

<http://ohr.edu/yhiy/article.php/Parshat-Balak.pdf?docid=3584&ie=1&showobject=1>

# LESSONS FROM THE PARSHA

## THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING

Abba, how can we understand Bilaam? He was a man full of contradictions.” “Can you give me an example, Chaim?” “Yes, Abba. Bilaam was a novi (prophet) whose revelation was on a par with Moshe Rabbeinu’s. Our Sages relate that in Klal Yisrael there never arose another novi like Moshe. However, amongst the nations, there was a novi whose nevuah was on the level of Moshe’s. Who was that novi? Bilaam. Although his nevuah was so great, it did not inspire him to do good. He was prepared to destroy every one of Hashem’s chosen people – man, woman, and child. How could such a gifted person do such a terrible thing?”

That is an excellent question, Chaim. Rav Chaim Shmuelewitz zt”l addresses this question in his sefer Sichos Mussar (27:5731). He goes even farther. Bilaam idealized his evil views and taught them to others. The Mishna (Pirkei Avos 5:19) relates that the talmidim (students) of Bilaam had ayin ra’ah – jealousy of their friend’s success, haughty pride, and greedy souls. Bilaam was so evil that he taught other people to follow his evil ways.” “What a shame.” “I agree. However, Bilaam did appear to have a redeeming quality. He realized that there was merit to being good. He knew that the Avos HaKedoshim (Holy Forefathers) were yashar (straight in the ways of Hashem), and desired to die like them, as the verse states, ‘May my soul die the death of the upright’ (Bamidbar 23:10). In death Bilaam wanted to be like them, however, he was not prepared to live his life as they did.” “How could he do such a thing? Where was his yashrus?” “Rav Chaim answers your question, Chaim. Bilaam’s bad middos corrupted his sense of emmes and yashrus. His self-serving desires became his ‘Torah’ (so to speak) - his ‘rules of life’. How could this happen? Because he did not take his knowledge to heart. His mind knew many things to be true; however, he did not apply them to himself. His knowledge was disconnected from his heart, desires, and his ways. He did not apply the yashrus and emmes to his own life, because it would interfere with fulfilling his desires for wealth and honor. This is what Rav Chaim refers to as ‘a lack of contemplation about ones ways.’ The person does not think about what he is doing.” “How do we avoid such a thing, Abba?” “A person must constantly ask himself the following questions, Chaim. ‘Are my actions emmes? Are they in harmony with my knowledge? When I learn a piece of Torah wisdom, do I put it into practice? Do I live my life according to the emmes that I learned?’ He must always strive to think about what he is doing, imbuing all of his actions with the truth of yashrus. Bilaam failed because his bad middos corrupted him. Therefore, we must learn from him to perfect our middos. If we tame our desires, then they will not interfere with our living according to the emmes. We can then objectively take the Torah that we learn and apply it to our daily actions.” “Thank you Abba, you have shed a lot of truth on a confusing issue.” “Chaim, we should all merit to live by this truth.”

Kinderlach . . .

Chaim's Abba gives us the key to living a life of emmes. We must learn Torah and know the emmes. Without knowing what is right and wrong, we have no hope of ever doing the right thing. We must work on our middos and perfect them so that they do not interfere with our understanding and applying the emmes. Uncontrollable desires corrupt the person. He cannot resist fulfilling them, even though he understands that they are wrong. We must apply the emmes that we learn to our daily actions. We must think about what we are doing and ask ourselves, "Is this emmes? Does this correspond with what I know to be right and true, or does it contradict it?" With Hashem's help, we will straighten all of our ways, and live a life of emmes and yashrus.

## THE POWERFUL EYE

Balak took Bilaam to Baumos Baal, and from there he saw the edge of the people" (Bamidbar 22:41). Bilaam only saw a small part of the Jewish nation. If he had seen more, the results would have been disastrous. Only Hashem's great mercy prevented a tragedy. What was Bilaam's crime? He never lifted a finger against the Jewish people. Or even planned to life a finger. Yet, he was executed in the war against the Midianim. The Ha'amek Davar relates that he looked upon Klal Yisrael with an evil eye. He had evil thoughts and feelings about us. This evil eye was so powerful, that Hashem had to change the teva (laws of nature) to protect us.

Why are thoughts so powerful? Rav Chaim Friedlander explains that thoughts are totally spiritual. They are not bound by the physical world in any way. They are the purest form of expression of the neshama (soul), which is also completely spiritual. Therefore, they have great power in the spiritual worlds. A pure thought can go straight up to Hashem's Holy Throne. He then considers it and if it is worthy of being fulfilled, He appoints angels to carry it out. So too, and evil thought can wreak havoc. Bilaam's evil eye, had it seen all of Klal Yisrael, and cursed all of us would have caused destruction.

Kinderlach . . .

There are two ways to look at our fellow Jews. With a good eye or an evil eye. "He annoys me by praying too loud." "Yes, but consider that he is in the Beit Kineset praying. That's good." "My friend in class took my pencil and broke it." "She's in a good school and a good class: yours. That's good." He comes from a different country and his customs are strange." "Do you know how much he sacrificed to come here? He's a hero." "Imma, I'm hungry. Why isn't lunch ready yet?" "Three meals a day, seven days a week. Delicious, nutritious, and on time. That's great." Kinderlach, always look with the good eye. You will bring untold blessings to yourself, and all of Klal Yisrael.

<http://www.aish.com/torahportion/pArchive.asp?eventType=40&eventName=Balak>

There are other stories available as well at the above website.

[http://www.aish.com/torahportion/family/Different\\_Beings.asp](http://www.aish.com/torahportion/family/Different_Beings.asp)

## **Balak** (Numbers 22:2-25:9)

### **Different Beings**

## **From this week's Torah Portion**

There's nothing wrong with being different from the crowd. In this week's Torah portion (23:9), the Jewish people are told that their values and world role are often going to set them apart from the crowd. We can learn from here to accept people who seem 'different' (even if that person is *us*).

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## **Story**

*In our story, some kids discover that it's possible to see being different in a different light.*

### **THE RIGHT FIELD**

"Mason, you'll take right-field, okay? But pay attention!" barked Jim, the captain of the junior-division camp softball team, at the skinny boy.

Mason shrugged and slowly ambled to the outfield. He knew they always stuck him in right field because it was the place the other team was least likely to hit the ball. But Mason didn't mind. He was only even playing in this softball game because he had to - it was a mandatory camp activity.

Unlike the rest of the guys in his bunk, who seemed to love all competitive sports, Mason found these kinds of games to be pointless and boring. He liked things like arts and crafts, canoeing (as long as they didn't make him race) and most of all, just exploring and enjoying the beauty of nature.

Of course it could cause him problems - like during last week's softball game, when he was so busy checking out all the interesting looking plants and insects by the edge of the right-field fence that he hadn't even noticed that someone had hit a ball his way. Since then had been really teasing him for being so different; calling him 'weird' and 'space case.'

Though it hurt his feelings, there wasn't much Mason could do about it. It wasn't like he *wanted* to be different. He just was different. Well at least tomorrow's all-day hike would take off some of the pressure. After all, there was nothing competitive about walking through the woods...

**AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT MASON THOUGHT...**

"Okay, guys! Whoever gets to the top of the next hill first is the man! Let's gooooo!" Jim yelled out and began to charge, with the rest of the guys racing behind ... except for one.

"Ughh!" Mason groaned. "Why does that kid have to turn everything into some sort of war-game?"

When he finally got to the top of the hill, which had a beautiful view, Mason found that the guys had all spread out and were eating their boxed lunches, and the counselor was lying down on the grass, passing out.

He grabbed his lunch and started to relax, taking in the amazing scenery. It was so nice and calm up here and even Jim wouldn't be nuts enough to jump up and declare a lunch-eating race! Mason took a bite out of his sandwich, when a voice boomed out:

"Boys, we've got a big surprise for you!" the counselor suddenly stood up and smiled. "To help make this hike more 'interesting', before you got here, I hid nine silver tickets - and one gold one..."

All the kids started perking up, as he went on. "Whoever finds a silver ticket, gets a free double-dip ice-cream cone from the camp canteen. And whoever finds the *gold* one..." he paused... "gets a free ice-cream every night of the WHOLE SUMMER!"

Immediately the calm forest clearing turned into a beehive of activity as the guys all jumped up from their half eaten lunches and started to turn the place upside-down - lifting rocks, climbing trees, combing through the grass - in fierce competition to find the coupons.

*Here we go again.* Mason sighed and walked over to the edge of the clearing. *Just when I was starting to have a good time - and now this!*

Trying to stay clear of the frenetic activity around him, Mason leaned over to get a better look at some beautiful orange tiger-lily flowers. He had just brought one to his nose to smell, when he heard a voice behind him:

"Hey, weirdo, haven't you got something better to do with your life than waste it smelling flowers?" It was Jim. "Get a life, man..."

Mason wished the kid would just leave him alone. He was just being who he was. As he was trying to ignore the boy's stinging comments Mason noticed something shiny at the base of the flower he'd been smelling.

"Unless you wake up and start being like everyone else," Jim said, "you're gonna spend you whole life as a loser!"

Mason turned around and said, "Or maybe you mean ... a winner." He smiled, waving the shiny, gold grand-prize coupon he'd just found in front of the boy's shocked eyes.

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## Discussion Questions

### Ages 3-5

Q. How did Mason feel about the types of games the other kids liked to play?

A. He didn't like them and enjoyed doing different things.

Q. Is it bad not to be like everyone else?

A. No. A person should try to be happy with the way God made him.

### Ages 6-9

Q. What life-lesson do you think someone could learn from this story?

A. Everyone is unique. Some people, though, tend to stand out as 'different' from the people around them. We should know that whoever we are, we are that way because that's how God made us and that's fine.

Q. Does that mean a person should never try to change?

A. If there are things about us that are destructive to ourselves or others, or that go against our true values, we should try to change and improve. But besides from this we should accept ourselves and try to make the most of who we are.

### Ages 10 and Up

Q. Is it a value to go along with the crowd? Is it a value not to?

A. It depends on what the 'crowd' is doing. If they are doing something positive - why not go along? If they are doing something negative - stand apart. And if it's neither, then we can do what feels right.

Q. What do you think the Torah means when it says the Jewish people are to "dwell alone"?

A. Like every people, the Jewish People has its special role in the world. Our role is to live an especially ethical and spiritual life according to the values of the Torah, and serve as an example to help the rest of the world move closer to peace and spirituality. There are times that this role will make it necessary to stay apart from certain activities that run counter to it -thus 'dwelling' alone.

## Parsha Games

## K-2

In the parashah the Angel says to Bilaam 'Why have you hit your donkey three times?' the Torah tells us to be kind to animals and not hurt them

### **Middah/ Jewish Value**

- **Kindness to animals**

### **Activity**

The importance of caring for animals. Do any of the children have a pet?

How do they care for it?

How does an animal show that it needs something?

How do farmers care for their animals?

Sing 'Old Macdonald', but stop after each verse and talk about how each of the animals is cared for.

## 3-4

Bilaam is impressed by the fact that the children of Israel have set up their tents so that no entrance is overlooked by any other. He utters the sentence '*Ma tovu ohalecha Yaakov mishkenotecha Yisrael*'

### **Middah/ Jewish Value**

- **Respecting privacy**

### **Activity**

The tefillah *Mah Tovu* comes from this week's parashah - Bemidbar Chapter 24 verse 5. It is said each day on entering the synagogue.

This is often sung as a round. Teach any of the versions to the group.

## 5-6

Bilaam is impressed by the fact that the children of Israel have set up their tents so that no entrance is overlooked by any other. He utters the sentence '*Ma tovu ohalecha Yaakov mishkenotecha Yisrael*'

## **Middah/ Jewish Value**

- **Respecting privacy**

### **Activity**

#### **Activity one**

**Discussion: 'How can each of us respect the privacy of other people?'**

#### **Activity two**

**Sing '*Mah Tov*' as a round.**