



Welcome to Spark2, the Tribe weekly parsha activity sheet for Children's Service Leaders across the United Synagogue communities.

Thank you for offering to run a service. The US is very proud of the numerous Children's Services that are run every week across the UK and this would not happen without you.

Spark2 gives you an overview of the weekly parsha, a song, activity or Dvar Torah linked to the parsha or important event that week. Every children's service will be different, in terms of how many participants there are, their age range, its length and the varying abilities of the children. Please read through the document and find the activities that will best suit the needs of your group. It is advisable to read it before Shabbat in case there is some preparation that may be needed in advance.

I hope you and the children at your service will benefit from Spark2. Please be in touch if you have any queries, feedback or if I can be of any help.

With best wishes,  
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## Balak

### **Parsha Summary:**

- Balak the King of Moav was worried about the advancing Jewish nation and sends messengers to Bilam, a famous sorcerer in the Land of Midian. He asks Bilam to come and curse the Jewish people. God appears to Bilam and instructs him not to go to Moav.
- Balak sends even more prestigious messengers to Bilam promising him riches in return for curses. This time God grants permission for Bilam to go, provided he only uses the words that God speaks to him.
- Bilam leaves on his journey together with the Moabite dignitaries and God sends an angel with a sword drawn in its hand, to block the way. Bilam was not able to see the angel but the donkey does see it and refuses to move, causing Bilam to hit the donkey. Finally God enables Bilam to see the angel and he continues his journey to Moav.
- Bilam showers the Jewish People with blessings and Balak is furious with him. Bilam explains to Balak that he is only able to say the words that God tells him to say. This same story happens three times. Finally Balak sends Bilam away.
- The parsha ends with the Moabite women enticing some of the Jewish men to sin. One of these was a Jewish leader known as Zimri and a Midianite woman. They behave immorally and are killed by Pinchas, the grandson of Aaron. Hashem sends a plague amongst the Jews due to their behaviour.

## Children's Service: Tots – Year 2

### **Tefillah:**

In the parsha this week Bilam looks down at the camp of the Jewish people and sees that their thousands of tents were arranged so that their entrances did not face one another. This prevented them from intruding on the private lives of each other. Although the tribes were grouped together, showing that they felt responsible for one another, they were still careful to protect the dignity and personal rights of individual families.

This act of mutual respect was so precious to God, that He caused Bilam, their greatest enemy, to bless the Jews instead of cursing them as he had intended. When we respect people's privacy, we show that we respect who they are. Bilam utters the famous words, "*Ma Tovu Ohalecha Yaakov*", "How goodly are your tents Jacob..."

Have a look at the words of 'Ma Tovu' in the siddur and explain the origin of the words.

### **Discuss:**

- Why is it important to respect people's privacy?
- Can you suggest some ways that we can respect people's privacy? (Knock on your parent's door before entering, don't open other people's letters....)

### **Activity 1:**

When Bilam went on his way to meet Balak he went with the permission of God, but in his mind he hoped that he would be able to go against the will of God and curse the Jewish people.

God wanted to show Bilam and his Moabite escorts that Bilam was powerless to act on his own so he sent an angel to block the way. Bilam was unable to see the angel until the end of his mission, while the donkey was able to see it and turned off the path in fear. This was an embarrassment for Bilam in front of the Moabite escorts. He had boasted to them that he knew the will of God and was God's spokesman, yet he was not able to see the angel while his donkey could!

The Torah continues to tell us that the donkey saw the angel standing with a sword in its hand so it turned away from the road and went into a field. Bilam then hit the donkey to turn it back onto the road. The donkey saw the angel again and pressed itself against a wall. Once again Bilam hits the donkey. Finally the donkey again, trying to avoid the angel, crouches beneath Bilam who hits the donkey a third time.

If you have a suitable safe area, set up, with the help of the children, a short obstacle course. Ask the children to go through the obstacle course. The second time round, blindfold some of the children and ask sensible children to lead them through the course. Afterwards, ask the children which way was the easiest way through the course? (With the blindfold on or off?) Hopefully all the children will say: 'without the blindfold'. Link this to the paragraph above where Bilam could not see the angel with the sword but the donkey could. Explain the story in a way that is suitable for the children at your service.

### **Activity 2:**

'Pin the tail on the donkey' A bit of fun to link to the donkey in the parsha!

## Children's Service: Years 3 – 6

### Activity 1:

Ask the participants to look around them for as many blue things as possible. Go around the circle and ask each child to point out something blue. Do this again but this time with circular shapes and then again with another category such as square shaped objects. When you have done this several times ask the following:

When you were looking for blue objects did you notice a lot of red objects?

When you were looking for circles did you notice a lot of rectangles?

When you were looking for squares did you notice a lot of circles?

Mostly the answers will be, "No".

Now discuss the idea of focus. We usually see things on which we are focused. If we focus on our problems we will continue to see only those. If we focus on things that make us happy we will have a more positive outlook.

Relate this to the words below about the focus of Avraham compared to the focus of Bilam and discuss:

When Bilam awoke in the morning to go to meet Balak in Moav the Torah says:

*'Bilam arose in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the officers of Moav.'* (Numbers; 22:21)

Bilam was a man of stature; surely it was not fitting for him to saddle his own donkey? Wouldn't he have a servant to do this

for him? The Talmud explains that hatred causes people to act in ways that are unusual for them. Bilam hated the Jewish people so much that he did not let dignity stand in his way. He was so enthusiastic to get a move on and curse the Jewish people that he even got up early in the morning and saddled his own donkey. We know that every single word in the Torah is important and is there to teach us something. When Avraham was asked by God to offer up his son, the Torah again uses the words;

*'Avraham arose early in the morning and saddled his donkey'* (Genesis 22:3)

Even though it was excruciating for him, Avraham did not delay. He had enthusiasm to perform the will of God however difficult it was for him.

We can compare the attitude of Bilam to the attitude of Avraham. They both had enthusiasm, but their focus was different. One was focusing on doing good and the other on bad.

## **Activity 2:**

### **Story/ Privacy Discussion**

Read the story about some friends who learn about the value of privacy. Note the link to the parsha and the discussion questions below.

#### **"Take a Peek!"**

"Hey guys, you're not going to believe this!" squealed Kenny, as he pressed his eye against the wall above his bunk bed. At first none of the boys, who were crashed out after a long afternoon of sports, paid him much attention. But what he told them next, perked everybody up in a flash. "I can see through this hole in the wall, right into Andy's room!" Immediately ten pairs of feet

jumped out of their bunks and piled onto Kenny's bed, angling to get a glimpse of their madrich's private room.

Andy always kept his door locked and made it clear that the area was 'off limits' to campers. But now the guys finally had their chance to get a free peek into the 'forbidden zone'. "Take a look!" laughed Kenny, as he made way for the next boy. "What a mess! Andy always complains that we don't keep the dorm clean enough, and *his* room looks like a tornado hit it!" "And check out all those snacks! What a mess!" added Rob with a howl.

Soon it was Ben's turn to peek in, but the boy startled his friends when instead of looking into the peephole, he covered it with his hand and wouldn't let anyone else get near. "Hey what are you doing?!" called out the guys, indignantly. "Take your turn, move on and let someone else enjoy the show." But the boy wouldn't budge. "This 'show' is someone else's private space. We can't just peek in like it is some movie or something. How would you like it if...?" But Kenny and some of the other boys didn't want to listen. They got angry and started pushing Ben out of the way, when just then, they heard some loud voices outside the cabin. It was Andy!

All the boys quickly jumped back, trying to look as casual as possible as the madrich walked in. "Hi guys!" said Andy with his usual upbeat voice. "What is *he* doing here?" Kenny whispered to one of the boys. "It's Wednesday - Andy's afternoon off!" The mystery was soon solved. "Today is dorm inspection day," he informed them. "No big deal, I just have to make sure everything is neat and shipshape. So everyone please open up your lockers."

The boys were annoyed. "What?" protested Kenny. "That's our private space. You have no right to snoop around our stuff..." Even as he was saying it, Kenny could feel Ben's incredulous stare. After all, weren't they all just doing the same thing they were accusing Andy of now - invading someone's privacy?

The madrich and the boys argued back and forth, until they reached a compromise: the inspection would be put off until the following day so the boys could have time to put away anything private.

Andy walked out and soon enough a couple of the kids went back over to Kenny's bunk to peek in the hole. But this time it was Kenny who blocked the way. He pulled out the big wad of chewing gum he had been chewing and stuffed it in the peephole. "Sorry guys, the show is over ... forever." Kenny then turned to Ben and said, "You were right. A guy's privacy is important. Thanks for reminding us how to respect the *people* behind the peephole."

(Adapted from aish.com)

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## Discuss:

Q. How did Kenny feel at first about peeking into Andy's room?

A. He thought it was okay and was upset that Ben tried to stop him.

Q. How did he feel after Andy came in to look through his locker?

A. He realised that it is important to respect other people's privacy, just like he wanted others to respect his.

Q. Why is it important to respect people's privacy?

A. We all have parts of our lives that we wish to share with others and parts that we prefer to keep only to ourselves or those very close to us. When we respect someone's privacy and don't go crashing in to where we don't belong, we show the other person that we respect his right to truly be himself and only share with us that which he feels comfortable.

Q. What are some other ways we can respect people's privacy?

A. We can be careful always to knock before we enter a room instead of just barging in. We can also refrain from reading people's private letters, diaries, etc. Even not being nosy and not asking people personal questions with no good reason is a way of respecting their privacy.

Q. Do you think that close friends should ideally have no barriers between them, or is it healthier for each of them to maintain a degree of privacy? Why?

A. While it may seem in theory that closeness requires totally revealing oneself, it doesn't work out that way. It is true that we will want to share more of ourselves with those close to us than with others who are not, but there is still a part of ourselves that we naturally want to keep to ourselves. If these borders aren't respected, a person will begin to feel invaded and pull away, causing the friendship to weaken.

Q. When someone steals another's privacy, what exactly does he steal?

A. To many people, their privacy is their most valued possession. Privacy is the breathing space to let each of us develop into our own, unique selves. It gives us time to reflect on the most important issues in our lives and build close personal relationships with those to whom we choose to draw close. To 'steal' this from someone is to withhold one of life's most basic and essential freedoms.

- Does an individual deserve privacy? How about if they are famous?
- Is there no privacy anymore because of CCTV, reality TV shows and social media?
- In your opinion do you think there are times when it is ethical not to respect someone's request for privacy?

**And finally....**

Pin the tail on the donkey! A bit of fun to link to the donkey in the parsha!