

PARSHA GAMES

Pin the Mouth on the Donkey

by Sammy Schaechter

GOAL: To teach the kids the story of Bilam and his talking donkey.

TYPE: Moderate, indoor, group game.

PREPARE IN ADVANCE: Print out a big picture of a donkey

HOW TO PLAY: Put the picture of the donkey onto the wall. Give each kid a mouth sticker. One at a time, blindfold the kid who's turn it is and have them make their way to try and place their mouth sticker as close to the mouth of the donkey as possible.

For a second time, now place small obstacles in the way in between the kid and the donkey once the kid is blindfolded. The group must help the kid out so that they can make their way safe and sound to the donkey and place the mouth as close as possible to the donkey's mouth.

DISCUSSION: In our Parsha, Balak the evil king of Moav wants to curse Bnei Yisrael. He calls upon Bilam, the prophet, to come

and do the evil task. Bilam wakes up early, packs his donkey and goes on his way to curse Bnei Yisrael. Hashem sends an angel to block Bilam's path. Bilam does not see the angel, but his donkey does and goes off the path and Bilam hits the donkey. A while later, the same thing happens again as the angel returns and Bilam hits the donkey as he goes off the path again. Later, for a third time the angel stands in the way of Bilam and the donkey lies down and refuses to move. This results in Bilam losing his temper and hitting the donkey again. Suddenly, the donkey miraculously starts to speak and reprimands Bilam for trying to curse Bnei Yisrael. Hashem then opens Bilam's eyes and he is able to see the angel who warns Bilam that his plan to curse Bnei Yisrael will never work. Bilam tries three different times in three different places to curse Bnei Yisrael but every time it comes out as a blessing. We learn from this story that no matter how hard our enemies try to curse us or bring us down, Hashem will always protect us

TEFILAH TREASURES

Shemona Esre - Retze

We ask Hashem to look at us and our tefillot kindly so that He can see that we deserve the third Beit HaMikdash and the services we did there. The davening we say every day is only a substitute for the korbanot we used to give and wait to give again just like the way Hashem intended us to before he sent his into galut. When Hashem does give us the Third Beit HaMikdash, we hope that He will accept our korbanot with kindness, in addition to the prayers that we will say as well. Whether we serve Hashem with korbanot or our simple prayers, we hope that Hashem will always find it acceptable.

This bracha is also where the prayer Yaaleh V'Yavo is said on holidays and Rosh Chodesh, times when a Musaf korban was given in the Beit HaMikdash. In Yaaleh V'Yavo, we ask Hashem to remember the qualities of our Forefathers, His promises to bring Moshiach and to rebuild Yerushalayim, and whatever good qualities we have so that we can enjoy Hashem's gifts- chessed and rachamim. Chessed-kindness-means giving us good things even though we may not deserve them. Rachamim-mercy-means not punishing us, even though we may deserve it. The more we try to talk to Hashem, the more He will help

us with everything in life.

Further discussion for older kids

The bracha ends with a desire to witness Hashem's return to Zion, meaning the Beit HaMikdash. The root of the word "to see" used here (v'techezenah) is not the usual re'eh, but chazan, a word usually used for a prophetic vision (as in "Chazon Yeshayahu," "the vision of Isaiah" in Isaiah 1:1). To completely visualize and appreciate the meaning of Hashem's return to the place of His Beit HaMikdash requires the insight of a prophet!



Balak Wrap-Up

by Sammy Schaechter

Bnei Yisrael just conquered the Emorim and the Bashanim, the two strong neighbors of Moav. Balak, king of Moav, worried that his nation would be Bnei Yisrael's next victim. He sent messengers to Midian, to Balaam, a famous non-Jewish prophet and sorcerer, asking him to come and curse the Jewish people. Hashem came to Balaam that night and told him not to go to Moav and not to curse the Jews because they are blessed. Balaam sent word with Balak's messengers that Hashem doesn't let him go with them. So Balak sent more prominent messengers to Balaam, promising him great riches in return for his services. Once again Hashem appeared to Balaam. This time Hashem let Balaam go – only if he only spoke the words that Hashem dictates to him. Balaam leaves together with Balak's messen-

gers and Hashem 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 forward, causing Balaam to hit her. The donkey miraculously spoke, reprimanding Balaam for hitting her. Eventually, Hashem "opens Balaam's eyes," and he sees the angel. A conversation between Balaam and the angel follows, where Balaam is disciplined for his behavior towards his donkey, and again he is reminded only to say what Hashem dictates to him. After this overwhelming episode, Balaam arrives in Moav where he is greeted by Balak.

According to Balaam's instructions, Balak builds seven mizbeachs and offers korbant to Hashem. Balaam blessed Bnei Yisrael with beautiful blessings and praises. When Balak responded angrily to the blessings, Balaam reminded him that he can only say what Hashem tells him to say. Balak takes Balaam to another location, hoping that this new place would be less promising for the Jews. They again build mizbeachs and

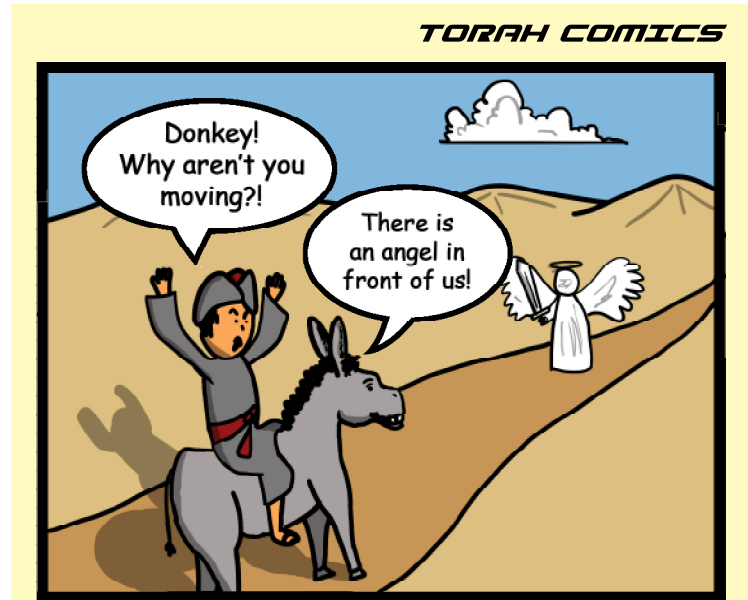
LEADER TIP:

The story of Bilam and his Donkey always remind me of Shrek. It's a great opportunity to act out the story with costumes and comedy!

offered korbanot, and again Hashem dictated blessing for the Jews which Balaam repeated. The entire process repeated itself again, Balak takes Balaam to another place, hoping that Balaam can curse the Jews from there. For a third time they built mizbeachs and gave korbanot, and for a third time, only blessings came from Balaam's mouth. At this point, Balak gave up accomplishing his goal, and sent Balaam on his way. Before leaving, Balaam prophesied about the end of days and the eventual destruction of Esav, Amalek and Assyria.

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Excerpt from ANDiDREW Torah Comics. Get the book or draw your own at Torah-Comics.com



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To the Music

The death of the righteous (23:10)

His devoted chasidim used to say lovingly of their Rebbe, R' Moshe Leib of Sassov, that he loved orphans more than a father loves his own son! And that he did more for them, too!

Indeed, R' Moshe Leib's heart went out to all miserable and suffering Jews, but he was especially famous as the protector of orphans. As soon as he heard the tragic story of a newly orphaned youngster, he would gather that child into his home and care for him like a loving parent. He would feed him and clothe him at his own expense and, when the time came for the orphan to get married, R' Moshe Leib would worry about finding a proper match.

The Rebbe would invite a huge crowd to participate in the joyous wedding celebration. He would prepare a lavish feast and hire the best musicians to make merry, and all at his own expense.

At all such weddings of his orphans, R' Moshe Leib would sing and dance to gladden the hearts of the bride and groom. He threw himself into this mitzvah with boundless joy and energy.

R' Moshe Leib once married off an orphaned boy to an orphaned girl. At the height of the wedding festivities, he was dancing with his entire body, his eyes tightly shut. The band was playing and the excitement was electric. People sang, danced and clapped their hands to the music; everyone was carried away with the fervor of the event and the infectious rapture of the whirling figure in the center, R' Moshe Leib. All felt a heavenly ecstasy, a joy of a mitzvah.

And then, with dozens of dancers spinning dizzily about him, R' Moshe Leib came to a full stop. His face glowed with excitement and joy. All eyes turned to him as he spoke, "I pray that when I die I shall be accompanied

to the grave with such wonderful music!"

People were aghast. R' Moshe Leib's funeral? What did he mean? The Rebbe did not give them time to reflect, for he began dancing again in tempo to the lively music. The band played on, the people soon forgot all about the Rebbe's strange words and were carried away with the joy of the occasion.

Years passed and R' Moshe Leib was summoned to the World of Truth. This time, all of Sassov, in fact, all of Europe, felt orphaned, for R' Moshe Leib had been revered and loved by thousands. The merciful father, who had helped countless orphans and others in distress, was now gone. To whom would the unfortunates now turn for help?

When people heard of his death, they streamed to Sassov to participate in R' Moshe Leib's funeral, to accompany him on his last journey and show, in some small measure, how they loved him. A heavy cloud of gloom fell over the assembly. Melancholy filled the air. People wept unashamedly.

The funeral procession inched forward, ever so slowly, as if people were reluctant to part with the beloved Rebbe, even now that his soul was gone. When the crowd reached the gates of the cemetery, two wagons could be seen approaching. They were full of musicians, holding their instruments poised, ready for playing. People tore their gazes away from the casket in front of them to look at the musicians. What were they doing here, at a funeral?

As soon as they reached the procession, the musicians explained, "We were hired to play at the wedding of a rich man's daughter. He doesn't know anything about the funeral. As we were riding along, the horses suddenly became headstrong, veered off the road and went their own way. The drivers tried to guide them back to the road, but they would not follow. They began galloping at top speed, on and on, over

hills and dales. We tried to check them but they were in a mad frenzy and we could only hold tight and hope for the best. And now we find ourselves here, at the Sassov cemetery, right in the midst of a funeral! Can anyone explain this mystery?"

Suddenly, one of them spoke up excitedly, "Do you remember when R' Moshe Leib hired us to play at the wedding of two orphans? And do you remember what he said at that memorable event? He stopped dancing for a moment and made a strange wish — that we would play thus at his funeral!"

"Yes! Now I remember!" said another. "We all thought it so strange at the time."

"But what shall we do? It was the Rebbe's wish. Perhaps we should play after all, as he requested!"

People were horrified by the mere suggestion. Here they were, heartbroken, crushed with sorrow, weeping and wailing. Was this the time for musicians to play?!

And yet, R' Moshe Leib had expressly asked for music at his funeral. And here were the musicians, all set to play! Opinions passed back and forth until it was decided to put the question before a beis din. Three of Sassov's talmidei chachamim formed a court. After serious and lengthy deliberation, they came to their decision: since it had been R' Moshe Leib's personal request, it should be honored; the musicians should play at the funeral.

The musicians took up their instruments and the singers cleared their throats. One of them gave the sign and they all burst into a thunderous song, the same one that they had played at that unforgettable wedding. Never had a cemetery heard anything like it!

Thus, it was that the tzaddik, R' Moshe Leib Sassover, was laid to rest to a symphony of resounding music.

He had known that when he left the world, he would be heavily mourned.

Ori Sasson

born 18 August 1990

Ori Sasson, is an Israeli Olympic judoka-which is someone who competes in judo. He won the bronze medal in the +100 kg (+220 pounds) competition at the 2016 Summer Olympics. He started training in judo when he was eight years old. Sasson was born in Yerushalayim.

At the 2016 Summer Olympics, Ori beat Egyptian judoka Islam El Shahaby in the first round. When the match was over, Ori tried to shake his opponent's hand, but El Shahaby refused. The packed crowd all booed El Shahaby for his poor sportsmanship and behavior. Ori came over to El Shahaby with his hand extended after beating him, but the Egyptian judoka backed away before leaving the floor without bowing to Sasson, which is a violation of ju-



do's rules. Ori still politely bowed and walked off. A referee called El Shahaby back and forced him to bow, but by then Sasson had already left.

Ori also beat Polish judoka Maciej Sarnacki, Dutch judoka Roy Meyer, and Cuban judoka Alex Garcia Mendoza. His only loss was in the semi-finals against the eventual gold medal winner French judoka Teddy Riner.

Not only was Ori an incredible role model and inspiration at the Olympics, but he also auctioned off his Olympic team jacket for \$100,000 at a fundraiser for Shalva, an organization in Israel for children with disabilities. He also announced, during the organization's annual dinner, that he will be

heading a new judo program for children with disabilities at the new Shalva National Center in Jerusalem. "A min-

ute before I handed over the jacket, when it was still in my hands, I thought about whether I would miss having it," Sasson said. "But then I thought about all of the good it would do and realized that it has reached its ultimate purpose."

He started training in judo when he was eight years old. Sasson was born in Yerushalayim and he is the younger brother of former judoka and Israel national team captain Alon Sasson, who, when they were children, would hit him to show him who was boss. He now lives in Netanya and studies Business Administration at Ruppin College.

Ori won the Israeli judo championship in 2007-09 and 2011, and 2012.

LEADER TIP:

What do you think you would do if you were Ori Sasson? Would you able to keep your cool and stay composed and be the bigger man?

He has also competed and won many other different judo competitions all over the world.

PUZZLERS ANSWERS

PARSHA CODE

- BALAK was the SON of TZIPPUR and the KING of MOAV
- BALAK BROUGHT BILAM BEN BE'OR to CURSE the JEWS
- BILAM told BALAK'S MESSANGERS to STAY for the NIGHT, while he ASKS HASEM what to do
- BILAM said, even if you OFFER me a HOUSE filled with SILVER and GOLD, I cannot go against HASHEM
- BILAM'S DONKEY saw a MALACH HOLDING a SWORD, and didn't PASS
- BILAM HIT the DONKEY 3 TIMES trying to get it to MOVE
- The DONKEY SPOKE to BILAM, asking why he HIT it 3 TIMES
- The MALACH told BILAM to go to BALAK, but can only SAY what HASHEM says to YOU
- BILAM told BALAK to BUILD 7 MIZBAYACH's and to SHECHT 7 BULLS and RAMS

- Instead of CURSING, BILAM BLESSED BNEI YISROEL 3 TIMES
- PINCHAS KILLED a JEW who LIVED with a MIDYAN WOMAN

TEST YOUR PARSHA KNOWLEDGE

- Give them berachot
- It spoke
- The Jewish people misbehaving
- What did I do that you hit me three times
- Mah Tov
- Bilam could not go against what HaShem wanted
- He was killed with a sword
- A malach with its sword stretched out
- He hit the donkey
- To curse the Bnei Yisrael
- Bilam compared the Bnei Yisrael to the dust of the earth, hinting to the fact that the Bnei Yisrael are too numerous to count
- Their Tziniut (their openings did not face each

- other)
- So that the Goyim can't say that they would have been better if HaShem had given them a Navi
- Bilam himself woke up early to get it ready
- Balam
- NO
- That Bnei Yisrael are too numerous to count
- Great honor and anything that he asked for
- He heard that the Bnei Yisrael's power is in their speech, so he wanted to curse them and cursing is done with speech
- At night

TORAH RHYMES & RIDDLES

- Balak.
- Bilaam the Prophet.
- Bilaam's donkey.
- The angel.
- The children of Israel.
- Blessing.

delegation came to set the Shpoler Zeide free. When he heard the officers' news, the rebbe continued speaking.

"Master of the Universe! Even if my

desire to die a holy death is not fulfilled, please do not reject me. Even if I must die in my bed, 'May my end be like his!' Let me sanctify Heaven publicly, as other holy martyrs have done."

The rebbe returned to Shipoli, leaving a profound impression on the Jews he had left behind. His poignant cry echoed in the city's streets for a long time after he was gone.

STORIES MY GRANDFATHER TOLD ME

The Letter of the Law

"I am unable to transgress the word of Hashem" (Bamidbar 22:18)

R' Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, the Brisker Rav, was once ill. His family noticed that he was unable to fall asleep, even in the early hours of the morning.

"Father, what is the matter?" his son asked.

"I can't sleep because I'm wondering whether I can recite the blessing over the Torah in the morning if I haven't slept all night," R' Yitzchak said.

"R' Akiva Eiger ruled that if you sleep during the day, you can recite the berachah over the Torah the next day, even if you haven't slept all night," his son told him.

The Rav asked his son to read him R' Akiva Eiger's exact words in the ruling. As soon as he saw the source, he became calm, and fell instantly asleep.

During that same period of his illness, every movement caused R' Yitzchak pain. Still, when his family suggested that, to ease his suffering, he put on his clothes sleeves first, he

rejected the idea strongly. According to the halachah, he said, one should get dressed by putting his clothes over his head first, then putting his right arm through the sleeve, and then the left.

It is worth suffering a little pain for the sake of adhering to the laws of the Shulchan Aruch!

ing a profound impression on the Jews he had left behind. His poignant cry echoed in the city's streets for a long time after he was gone.

STORIES MY GRANDFATHER TOLD ME

The Whole Truth

"G-d is not a man that He should be deceitful, nor a human being that He should relent." (Bamidbar 23:19)

In the summer of 5643 (1883), the Chofetz Chaim published the first volume of his Mishnah Berurah. He then traveled personally from town to town to sell his sefarim.

In one town, he saw a notice posted in a shul. The notice said that the Chofetz Chaim was the author of two sefarim, "Chofetz Chaim" and "Mishnah Berurah." At once, the Chofetz Chaim took out a pencil and added a few words to the bottom of the notice.

Only the first volume of Mishnah Berurah has been published so far. The other volumes would, with Hashem's help, be coming out at a later date.

The Chofetz Chaim did this so that

people would not give him respect for something he had not yet done. He wanted them to know the exact truth about what he had written and what he had not yet written. As our Sages say, if a person knows one tractate of Gemara well and he arrives in a place where people honor him as though he were an expert in two tractates, he is obligated to say, "I know only one!"

R' Baruch Ber Liebovitz, rosh yeshivah of Kaminetz, managed, through great risk and personal danger, to travel through Russia all the way to the Polish border at the end of World War I. On his way, he was stopped by soldiers, who asked him, "Are you a Polish citizen?"

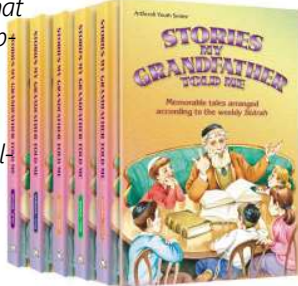
R' Baruch Ber's entire future hinged on this answer. Perhaps even his very life depended on it. Only Polish citi-

zens were permitted to enter Poland. Nevertheless, R' Baruch Ber did not want to state anything less than the truth.

"I am not a Polish citizen," he answered.

The soldiers were so impressed by his honesty that they allowed him to continue on into Poland.

Stories My Grandfather Told Me by Zev Greenwald (Author) Libby Lazewnik (Translator) and Tova Katz (illustrator) is packed with short pleasant stories that teach children important life lessons from the weekly Parsha. The five-volume set is available from your favorite Jewish book store, or at artscroll.com.



He did not want people to weep and be unhappy. All his life he had sought to banish sorrow and suffering and bring about only happiness and joy. Should

his parting, then, be cause for sorrow and suffering? Certainly not! And so, R' Moshe Leib had thought of his beloved fellow Jews, even before death

and ordered a band of musicians to lay him to rest with music, rather than with tears.

TALES OF TZADIKIM

Down to Earth

Who has counted the dust of Yaakov (23:10)

R' Aharon of Belz was a holy man, entirely removed from worldly things. His single purpose in life was to worship Hashem through prayer and the study of Torah.

Once, R' Aharon asked his household to arrange for the planting of a pleasant garden around the house. They were astonished and imagined that they had misunderstood him. But since it was a direct request, it had to be followed, even if it seemed inexplicable.

A professional gardener was hired and a fine garden was laid out all about

the Rebbe's house.

The gardener, a Jew, worked diligently and with deep reverence, as though engaged in holy work. What a rare privilege — to make a garden for the Belzer Rebbe! He devoted extensive thought to its design.

He plowed the ground, spread fertilizer and planted the seeds. He watered and weeded devotedly until, finally, after weeks of hard labor, the signs of his efforts were evident — lovely flowers arose all around the house.

Even after the garden was in full bloom, the gardener was hired to tend

to the shrubs and flowers. It was the Rebbe's express wish.

The following year was shmittah, during which we are commanded to abandon all work on the land and leave it fallow. The gardener was told to cease his labors. Now the Rebbe's purpose became apparent. He had wished to fulfill the commandment of shmittah. He could now abandon his garden.

As soon as his chasidim realized this, they began talking about the Rebbe's garden with reverence and awe. "Even when the Rebbe talks about the earth — he is referring to heaven!" they said.

TALES OF TZADIKIM

An Omen in Gerona

The death of the righteous (23:10)

The people of Gerona, Spain, were beside themselves with sorrow when their great leader left them to move to Eretz Yisrael. R' Moshe bar Nachman, the Ramban, had been born here. He had lived and taught in this city for many years, acquiring many followers and disciples. But, none of them were able to follow him to Eretz Yisrael and all would feel his loss deeply.

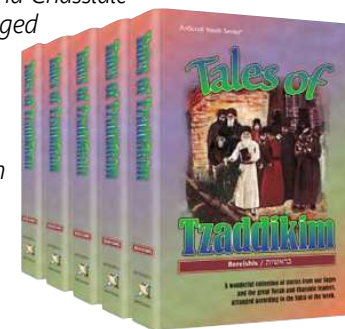
The Ramban tried to comfort them. "I will never forget you, kind and wonderful people. Even when I am in Eretz Yisrael I will be thinking of you and

praying for you. In fact, I will give you a sign so that you will know when I have passed on from this world. On the day of my death, the tombstone above my mother's grave in the Gerona cemetery will split asunder. If you look at the cleft, you will be able to see the design of a menorah. When you see this, you will know that I have passed from this world."

Three years elapsed. Then, one day, one of the Ramban's former talmidim discovered that the stone above the grave of the Ramban's mother had split. Peering closely, he saw the design of a menorah, etched naturally upon the stone!

Later, when letters and news arrived from Eretz Yisrael, the people of Gerona learned that the Ramban had died on the very day that the menorah had been discovered!

Tales of Tzadikim by G. Matov is a wonderful collection of stories from our Sages and the great Torah and Chassidic leaders, arranged according to the Sidra. The five-volume set is available from your favorite Jewish book store, or online at artscroll.com.



PARSHA PUZZLERS

TEST YOUR PARSHA KNOWLEDGE

by Sammy Schaechter & Dovid Saleman
Answers on page 7.

EASY Qs

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

LEADER TIP:

Go around taking turns giving a blessing to everyone in the group.

MEDIUM Qs

10. Why did Balak hire Bilam the navi?
11. What did Bilam compare the Bnei Yisrael to and what does that represent?
12. What was special about the tents of the Bnei Yisrael?
13. Why did HaShem give nevuah to a rasha like Bilam?
14. Who got Bilam's donkey ready?
15. Who was the king of Moav?

HARD Qs

16. Was Bilam able to curse the Bnei Yisrael?
17. What does that represent?
18. What did Balak offer Bilam as a reward for cursing Bnei Yisrael?
19. Why did Balak want to call a bad navi?

CRACK THE PARSHA CODE

by Rabbi Yaakov Levine
Answers on page 7.

1. B was the S of TZ and the K of M
2. B B B B B to C the J
3. B told B M to S for the N, while he A H what to do
4. B said, even if you O me a H filled with S and G, I cannot go against H
5. B D saw a M H a S, and didn't P
6. B H the D 3 T trying to get it to M
7. The D S to B, asking why he H it 3 T
8. The M told B to go to B, but can only S what H says to Y
9. B told B to B 7 M and to S 7 B and R
10. Instead of C, B BB Y 3 T
11. P K a J who L with a M W

Rabbi Yaakov Levine is the 5th grade rebbe and afternoon mashgiach at Yeshiva Toras Moshe in Queens, NY. He is also the Night Activity Director and a rebbe at Camp Lema-la. Rabbi Levine can be reached by email at rabbiylevine@gmail.com

20. When did Bilaam receive his proph-ecies?

PARSHA PUZZLERS

TORAH RHYMES & RIDDLES

Answers on page 7.

1. I rule the land of Moav
And I'm trembling in fear
Israel beat two mighty kings
And now they're heading here!
I know that G-d is on their side
My army cannot win;
But maybe I can have them cursed
If they have done some sin. _____
2. Tell me to curse; tell me to bless.
I cannot say a word unless
It's put in my mouth by Hashem
Then I'll speak and only then
_____ the _____
3. My master is a prophet,

And he's proud as he can be.
But I saw a holy angel
That my master could not see.

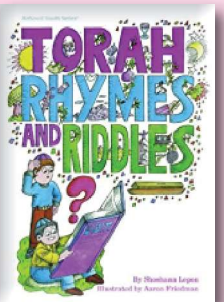
4. Hashem sent me into the road
With a sword held in my hand.
For Bilaam was going to curse the Jews.
Against Hashem's command
The _____

5. High up on a hilltop,
The wicked Bilaam stood
Looking down upon our tents.
He saw that they were good.
No one could see in the doors.
Each faced a different way.

Who are we? Whose camp is this?
Can anybody say?
The _____ of _____

6. I came out of Bilaam's mouth.
He found it most distressing.
For he had meant to give a curse
And instead he said a _____

Torah Rhymes and Riddles by Shoshana Lepon (Author) and Aaron Friedman (Illustrator) is filled with rhyming riddles that test young children's comprehension of the weekly Parsha. For more great children's Torah books, visit artscroll.com



PARSHA STORIES

STORIES MY GRANDFATHER TOLD ME

The Zeide's Plea

"May my soul die the death of the upright, and may my end be like his!" (Bamidbar 23:10)

A Jewish youth who lived near Shpoli — an adventurous and frivolous young man looking for excitement — once decided to enlist in the Russian Army. Those were the days before Jews were accepted for military service. The youth converted to Christianity and became a soldier.

Before long, he grew tired of army life and of the way the officers tormented him. One day, he fled the army camp, running to hide in the home of R' Leib, the Shpoler Zeide. R' Leib fed him and took care of all his needs.

The camp officers pursued the runaway soldier and eventually found him. He was thrown into prison.

"Why do you blame me?" the converted youth complained. "The rabbi of Shpoli convinced me to desert. He said that if I don't return to Judaism

and leave the army, I'd lose my immortal soul. He had me brought to his house!"

At once, the officers went to the Shpoler Zeide's home and arrested him as well. He was borne off in chains to a nearby city. The Jews in the area trembled for his fate. They scattered a fortune in bribes among the army officers so that they would at least remove the chains from the rebbe's wrists. Finally he was permitted to walk through the town without chains, but under guard. He climbed a small hill in the center of the city, while all the Jews gathered round.

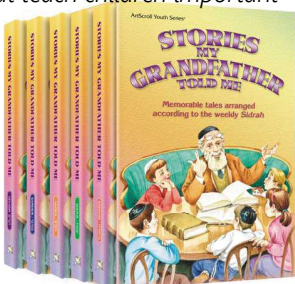
Lifting his head toward Heaven, R' Leib said, "Master of the Universe! The verse states: 'Who counts Yaakov's dust'? This means: Who will count the number of Jews who have turned into dust in order to sanctify Your Name? And the verse continues: 'And who can count the Jewish seed?' This means: Who knows how many Jews have been

torn to pieces for Your Sake? Creator of the World — Master of the Universe! All of my life I have worked to fulfill Your Will. Now, please, fulfill my request, perform my will: 'May my soul die the death of the upright.' Let me meet my death the way so many upright and holy Jews have done, for the glory of Your Name —"

Before he had finished speaking, and while the crowd of Jews still stood around him, weeping bitterly, an army

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PARSHA STORIES

TALES OF TZADIKIM

Ignorance Is a Sin

I have sinned, for I did not know (22:34) A village rabbi once came to visit R' Chaim of Sanz. The Rebbe knew that a certain Jew in his village was suffering from hardships and asked his visitor how that Jew was faring and whether his lot had improved at all. The rabbi said, "I really didn't know that he had such problems."

R' Chaim was appalled. "What?! A Jew in your own town is in distress and you don't even know about it? That is disgraceful! In fact, that lack of knowledge is a sin. We learn this from Bilam, who said: 'I have sinned, for I did not know.' If he did not know, how could he have sinned? The answer is that his very ignorance is a sin."

In a stern voice, he continued, "It is a rabbi's duty and responsibility to know everything that occurs in his city; which people are in distress, need help or are unhappy. He must make it his business to know everything. And if he does not know — he has committed a sin."