

PARSHA POINTS

LITTLE GEMS

Parent/Teacher Preparation:

Please see the instructions for the Little Gems story on the YMTOI website. We recommend that you print out the characters and familiarize yourself with each story so that you can implement the visual representations of your choice (felt, laminated or stand-ups) at the appropriate time.

A Loyal Donkey

Shalom children! As we start out today's story, the Yisra'elites are camped in the desert plains of Mo'ab, beyond the Yarden of Yeriho. Now in Mo'ab lived a king named Balaq, and he was afraid of the Yisra'elites. After all, there were so many of them, and they had been winning their battles. **(Place Balaq on board.)** When this king heard that the Yisra'elites had come out of Mitsrayim and were camped near him, he was afraid that he wouldn't be able to beat them in a battle because they were so strong. But not far away was a gifted man named Bil'am, who lived in another town near a river. **(Place Bil'am on board.)** King Balaq sent some messengers to go ask Bil'am to curse the Yisra'elites for him. **(Place first group of messengers on board next to Bil'am.)** His messengers took some money so that they could pay Bil'am to curse the Yisra'elites. When they arrived, Bil'am told them to spend the night there and wait while he talked with Yahweh.

Well, that night Elohim came to Bil'am and asked him who the men were. Bil'am said that they were sent by King Balaq who wanted Bil'am to curse the Yisra'elites for him. But Elohim told Bil'am not to curse the Yisra'elites, because they were a blessed people.

When Bil'am got up in the morning, he went to the king's messengers and told them that he could not curse the Yisra'elites because Yahweh would not allow it. So the messengers went back to King Balaq and told him what had happened. **(Move first group of messengers next to Balaq.)** But King Balaq was a stubborn guy, so he sent different messengers to go see Bil'am. **(Place second group of messengers next to Bil'am.)** They gave him compliments to try to sweet-talk him into going with them. But Bil'am knew what they wanted and said that even if King Balaq gave him a house filled with silver and gold, he would not do any more or less than what Yahweh his Elohim told him to do. But instead of sending them away, he asked the messengers to stay the night so that he could talk to Yahweh again.

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Once again, Elohim came to Bil'am at night and said that he could go with the men, but that he must only do what Elohim spoke to him. Elohim wasn't really glad that he was going with the men, but when morning came, Bil'am saddled up his donkey and went with them anyway. **(Remove Bil'am from board and place Bil'am on donkey next to second group of messengers.)**

As they were riding along the road, the Messenger of Yahweh came and stood right in front of the donkey, blocking its path. **(Place Messenger of Yahweh in front of donkey.)** When the donkey saw the Messenger standing there with a sword, she turned off the path into a field. Bil'am hit her to try to get her to go back to the path. But the Messenger of Yahweh stood in a narrow place in front of them so that they could not pass. **(Move Bil'am on donkey, and Messenger of Yahweh to new place on board.)** The donkey saw the Messenger again and leaned against a wall, which squished Bil'am's foot, so he hit her again. The Messenger moved even further ahead and stood in another narrow place, so that they could not pass. **(Move Bil'am on donkey, and Messenger of Yahweh to new place on board.)** When the donkey saw the Messenger there, she completely stopped and lay down. By this time, Bil'am was quite upset that the donkey was stopping, and he hit her again with his staff.

Right away, Yahweh opened up the donkey's mouth so she could talk. Wow—a talking donkey! That's pretty unusual, if you ask me! And Bil'am could understand everything she was saying! She asked Bil'am what she had done to deserve being hit 3 times. Bil'am said some mean things to the donkey, but the donkey reminded him that he had ridden her many times and that she had never acted like this before. Suddenly, Bil'am's eyes were opened so he could see the Messenger standing there with a sword. **(Point to Messenger of Yahweh.)** He was taken by surprise and bowed down. The Messenger of Yahweh wanted to know why Bil'am had hit the donkey and told him that he was being reckless. The Messenger said that He would not have hurt the donkey and let Bil'am know that He was not happy with him.

Well, Bil'am admitted that he had done wrong, and asked the Messenger to let him go back. The Messenger said that he could go with the men, but that he must only speak what he was told to speak.

(Remove Messenger of Yahweh and Bil'am on donkey from board.)

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Now King Balaq heard that Bil'am was finally coming, so he went out to meet him. **(Place Bil'am next to Balaq. Remove all groups of messengers from board.)** Bil'am told the king that he could only say what Elohim told him to speak. The next day, they went up to a high place together where they could see the Yisra'elite camp. **(Place mountain 1 on board. Place smaller Balaq and Bil'am on top of mountain 1.)** Bil'am told Balaq to build 7 altars so they could offer 7 bulls and 7 rams to Yahweh. **(Place 7 altars on board.)** Then Bil'am told the king to wait by the offering while he went to talk to Yahweh. Yahweh gave him some words to say, so he went back to King Balaq and told him that he could not curse Yisra'el, because Yahweh had not cursed them. He even said that he wanted to be blessed like the Yisra'elites! Now remember, King Balak had hired Bil'am to curse them so that he could beat them in battle. But instead here was Bil'am, blessing them even more! Balaq was not happy. That was not exactly the ending he'd been hoping for!

So Balak tried again. He took Bil'am up to a different place, to the top of Pisgah, in order to curse the Yisra'elites from there. **(Place mountain 2 on board. Move smaller Balaq and Bil'am to top of mountain 2.)** Again, they made 7 offerings **(point to 7 altars)**, and Bil'am went to go talk with Yahweh. When he came back, he blessed the Yisra'elites yet again. He said that because Yahweh had blessed the Yisra'elites, he could not reverse it, and that there was no sorcery or divination that could come against Yisra'el, because Yahweh was with them.

Well, Balaq told Bil'am to stop talking. He took him up to a different place, to the top of Pe'or, and one more time he asked him to curse the Yisra'elites. **(Place mountain 3 on board. Move smaller Balaq and Bil'am to top of mountain 3.)** The third time's a charm, right? Well, the third time was not a charm for Balaq. After making 7 more offerings **(point to 7 altars)**, Bil'am decided that was enough. He stood looking out at the Yisra'elites camped with all their tribes **(place Yisra'elite camp on board)**, and he said the words that we still repeat in our services to this very day: "How good are your tents, O Ya'aqob, your dwellings, O Yisra'el!" In Hebrew, this is called "Ma Tov." You can sing it with me if you know it. **(Play and sing Ma Tov with children.)**



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Bil'am said lots of really good things about Yisra'el, then ended by saying, "Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you." Now King Balaq was really mad, but Bil'am reminded him that he could not go beyond the word of Yahweh. Only whatever Yahweh spoke, he would speak. He foretold even more good things about the Yisra'elites, and when he was done, both the men left to go home.

I don't think the king was very happy with the way things turned out, do you? This is a very good lesson for us children to see that Yahweh will take care of us if we follow and obey Him.

Well children, we have come to the end of our story for today. We will see you next week for another exciting Little Gems story!

