

Magshimim Peulat Shabbat
Parshat Balak

Goals:

- To teach chanichim the story of Balak and Balaam, and the unexpected outcome of a curse turning into a blessing
- Creativity through drama
- To engage chanichim in the parsha through creative means
- Encouraging individual participation in group activities

Schedule:

- Meet in Beit Kneset at 4:45
- Divide into 5 groups and find spots around the grove
- Madrichim lead groups in three improv games (10 minutes total)
- Madrichim tell story of parshat Balak (5 minutes)
- Chanichim create a skit of the parsha using props provided by the madrichim (15 minutes)
- Groups join together and perform skits for the rest of the *edah* (15 minutes)

Improv Games:

- Sit, Stand, Lean
 - Throughout this improve game there is one simply rule; one person must be sitting, one standing, and one leaning. Before the performance, the audience suggests a location. The actors assume their appropriate positions and begin the scene. After just a few moments of conversation, one of the actors should switch positions (perhaps from sitting to standing). Then, one of the other two actors must assume a new position.
- Taxi Cab
 - One performer plays the role of the cab driver. He/she starts the scene by pantomiming driving. Feel free to develop a funny, quirky “cab driver” personality. After a few moments “driving,” the performer spots a customer. The passenger hops into the back of the cab. Now, here’s where the game begins. The second performer playing the role of the passenger should have a distinct personality. Here’s the gimmick: the cab driver adopts the personality traits of his customer. When a new performer (a new passenger) enters the scene, the cab driver and the other passengers emulate the new personality/behavior. The passengers explain to the driver where they are going and what they plan to do. After the passengers have interacted with one another, the cab driver will start to drop off his/her customers. When a passenger is dropped off and exits the scene, everyone switches personality again, until eventually the cab driver character is alone again and back to the original personality.
 - Personality ideas:
 - David Offit
 - Josh Edelglass
 - Aviel

- Hannah Glickman
- Britney Spears
- The Five-Minute Fairytale
 - The Moderator asks the audience for fairytale suggestions. Hopefully, the audience will shout out choices such as:
 - Snow White
 - Rapunzel
 - The Little Mermaid
 - Hansel and Gretel
 - Sleeping Beauty
 - Little Red Riding Hood
 - Once the story has been chosen, the game can begin. To keep the storyline fresh in the minds of the performers, the Moderator should quickly recap the key events of the story.
 - Next, the performers begin to act out the story. Even though they are trying to complete the entire tale in a very short amount of time, they should still create funny, interesting characters. They should also establish setting and conflict. Whenever the cast members slow things down, the Moderator can prompt them by narrating a new event, or simply by reading from a stopwatch. Nothing moves a scene along like calling out, "20 seconds left!"

Explanation of skit:

- Chanichim must create a skit of Parshat Balak that uses all the people in the group
- The skit must tell the entire story of Parshat Balak
- Chanichim must use all the props provided by Madrichim
- The skit should be creative and coherent
- SKIT SHOULD BE NO LONGER THAN 3 MINUTES TOTAL

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!"

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.

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.

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.

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..."

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.

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.

Materials:

- Each madrich or madricha should be three objects from the bunk