

TORAH FOR K–3 · PARASHAT HASHAVUA

פַּרְשַׁת חֻקַּת-בָּלָק

Parashat Chukat-Balak for Kids

Torah reading: Numbers 19:1-25:9

Read on Shabbat: June 27, 2026 · July 17, 2027 · July 13, 2030 (diaspora)

THE STORY IN TWO MINUTES

What happens in this parasha?

This Shabbat we read two portions together — Chukat and Balak — so the Torah-reading year finishes right on time.

Chukat opens with the most mysterious mitzvah in the Torah: the parah adumah, the red cow, whose ashes made people pure. Even King Shlomo, the wisest of all, said he couldn't fully understand this one. That's exactly what a chok is — a mitzvah we do out of love and trust, even before we understand it, the way a child holds a parent's hand crossing the street.

Then the people say goodbye to two great leaders: Miriam, and later Aharon. While Miriam lived, a miraculous well of water travelled with the people in her honor — when she died, the water stopped, and everyone understood at last how much they had been given because of her. The people were very thirsty; Hashem told Moshe to speak to a rock so water would flow. Moshe, worn out by all the complaining, hit the rock instead — water still came, but Moshe learned that a leader's words matter more than his stick.

Balak is the funny half. Balak, a frightened king, hires Bilam — a real prophet — to curse the Jewish people. On the way, Bilam's donkey keeps stopping, because the donkey can see an angel standing in the road that the great prophet cannot. Then the donkey talks. (Yes — talks!) And when Bilam finally stands on a hilltop, opens his mouth, and tries to curse — out come blessings instead. One of them we still sing every time we walk into shul: Mah tovu ohalecha Yaakov, "How good are your tents, Yaakov!"

THE ONE BIG IDEA

Some things we do out of love before we understand them — and some blessings arrive from the most surprising mouths. The same week holds the Torah's biggest mystery and its best joke, and both end in trust.

READY TO TEACH · AGES 5–9

The 30-minute lesson

1

Tell the story

7 MIN

Two halves: the mystery (red cow, Miriam's well, the rock) and the comedy (the donkey, the curses that flip). Let your voice change between them — solemn, then delighted.

2 Wonder together

5 MIN

Ask: “Is there a rule in our house you follow even though you don’t totally know why? Who do you trust about it?” That’s a *chok* — for us AND for grown-ups.

3 Learn the Hebrew

5 MIN

This week: *Mah Tov*, “how good!” Sing the first line together. Tell your child: a man who wanted to say something mean is the author of the song we sing walking into shul. The Torah kept the blessing and let go of the meanness.

4 Play “the blessing flip”

8 MIN

Take turns saying a grumpy sentence (“This room is SO messy”) and flipping it into a blessing (“This room is FULL of toys we love”). Bilam-style: same mouth, opposite output.

5 Wrap up with Miriam

5 MIN

Tell them: a whole well of water followed the people because of one kind woman. Ask: “What follows our family around because of something kind someone keeps doing?” End there — gratitude is the landing.

HEBREW, ONE WORD AT A TIME

This week's Hebrew words

SAY IT	WHAT IT MEANS	HEBREW
<i>chok</i>	A mitzvah we do out of trust, even without fully understanding it	חֹק
<i>parah adumah</i>	The red cow — the Torah’s most mysterious mitzvah	פָּרַח אֲדֻמָּה
<i>be’er</i>	A well — Miriam’s well followed the people in the desert	בְּאֵר
<i>aton</i>	A donkey — Bilam’s saw the angel before he did	אֲתוֹן
<i>brachah</i>	A blessing — what came out instead of curses	בְּרָכָה
<i>Mah Tov</i>	“How good!” — Bilam’s blessing, now the song we sing entering shul	מַה־טוֹב

AT THE SHABBAT TABLE

Three questions to ask

- Why do we sometimes follow rules even when we don’t understand them? Who has earned that trust from you?
- Bilam opened his mouth to say something mean and something kind came out. Has your mouth ever surprised you — either direction?
- The donkey saw what the prophet couldn’t. Who in your life notices things everyone else walks past?

A GENTLE NOTE FOR PARENTS

This double portion includes saying goodbye to Miriam and Aharon. For K–3, keep it warm and brief: the people were sad, they remembered everything these two leaders gave them — Miriam's well, Aharon's peacemaking — and they carried those gifts forward. Skip the battles at the portion's edges entirely; the donkey and Mah Tovv are where this week's joy lives.

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