



NOAH'S BARK

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What's a boat builder to do?! Noah has an ark to construct, but how can he manage his task with the snakes quacking, the beavers crowing, and the pigs howling? Find out how each animal came to make its unique sound in this retelling of the Noah's ark story.

From the earliest chapters of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) human beings and animals have a special relationship. One of Adam's first tasks, in fact, was to name the animals God created. In *Noah's Bark*, each of those animals is given a unique sound. What can we take from this? Each of us has a unique personality, way of speaking and reason for being. All things have their place in the universe, including the maddening mosquito and the terrifying tarantula.

THE BLESSING OF INDIVIDUALITY

The *Talmud* – a collection of ancient rabbinical writings on Jewish laws and customs – tells us that “God created nothing that is useless.” And in *Pirke Avot* (The Ethics of the Fathers), the sage Ben Azzai reminds us that “there is no one that does not have his/her hour, and there is no thing that does not have its place.” Interacting with the world in a voice of one's own is a blessing. Here are some questions to ask your little ones as you share *Noah's Bark*:

- Which animals can you name?
- What sound does this animal make?
- Why doesn't a fish bark or a fly growl?
- What animal do you like the most? Why?
- If you could make only one sound, what would you want it to be?

BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY

By giving every creature a unique sound, Noah helped the animals see that each one had its place and a contribution to make to the group. In other words, Noah helped them form a community – in Hebrew, a *kihillah*. Living as part of a community takes practice, and that practice can begin with very young children simply by giving them opportunities to be together to play, laugh and learn from each other's company. Join a neighborhood playgroup or participate in a drop-in activity at your local library or fitness center. Take advantage of children's programming the Jewish community offers by calling your local Jewish Community Center, Federation, or synagogue. These early experiences help children build a foundation for sharing, compromise, and many other important qualities that enrich all our communities.