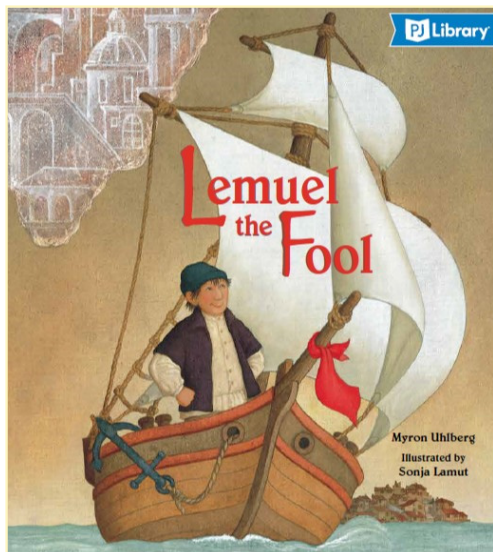


# Lemuel the Fool

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**{ How do you know when you're home? }**

## Who Is Rich?

Lemuel may be a fool, but his wife isn't. "With me and your son, in our village, you have been happy," Essie says. "But for you that is not enough. So go." As it says in Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Ancestors, an ancient collection of rabbinic sayings), "Who is rich? Those who are happy with their lot." Sameach b'chelko, Hebrew for "being happy with what you have," is a basic component of gratitude and well-being. As it turns out, Lemuel doesn't have to journey very far to realize the truth of this very Jewish lesson. The essence of sameach b'chelko is the joy he feels when he exclaims: "I'm home! I'm home!" To learn more, visit [pjlibrary.org/lemuelthefool](http://pjlibrary.org/lemuelthefool).

## HANDS ON!

### Go on a Journey at Home

In this story, Lemuel is given the gift of seeing his town and home with fresh eyes. You can look at your surroundings with fresh eyes, too. All you need is a travel log and a bit of imagination.

Supplies:  
Notebook  
Pen

Walk around your house and report on what you see as if you were a traveler from a faraway place:

There is a strange thing in the kitchen that has water pouring out of it. The people here call it a "sink." How amazing to have a waterfall inside the house!

I have located a large soft island in the living room. Some call it a "couch"; others a "sofa." Whatever the terminology, it is surely an incredible, and comfortable, landscape.

A repeating feature of this strange place are switches on the walls that flips lights on and off. How ingenious to be able to control the amount of light waves in every room in the house!

By the time you're done, you may find you've visited an enchanted village, just as Lemuel does – and you didn't even have to get on a boat to do it.

## People Are People

Can we really blame Lemuel for wanting to see more of the world, though? Part of the pleasure of travel is that it helps us appreciate the comforts of home. On the other hand, even Lemuel's thwarted journey ends up teaching him a universal lesson. There are countless regional and cultural differences to be explored in the world, but when you get right down to it, people are more alike than not, no matter where you go. (Maybe not quite as alike as Lemuel thought! But then, he is a fool.)

## Nobody's Fool

This story doesn't tell us where Lemuel lives, but he could easily be from Chelm, a place in Jewish folklore that is filled with fools. Legend has it that an angel was flying over Earth carrying two sacks – one filled with wise souls and one filled with foolish souls. The angel was going to distribute the souls evenly across the globe, but the sack holding the foolish souls developed a hole, and all the fools fell into this one storied town. Chelm stories may be silly, but they often teach a lesson, if only by counterexample. The biggest clue that this isn't Chelm? Essie is no fool!

## TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**HAVE** you ever visited someplace far away? How was it different from where you live? How was it the same?

**DO** you think Lemuel's trip changed the way he feels about his home and his village? How so?

**DO** you think Lemuel will ever want to take another trip? Why or why not?