


Friday, June 29   16 Tammuz				Parashat Balak Saturday, June 30   17 Tammuz		
Kabbalat Shabbat with <b>Shayna Klainberg/Freddie Brooks</b> 6:30PM Candle Lighting   8:13PM				Shacharit   10:00AM <b>Isaac Tepper Bar Mitzvah</b>		
Sunday July 1 18 Tammuz	Monday July 2 19 Tammuz	Tuesday July 3 20 Tammuz	Wednesday July 4 21 Tammuz	Thursday July 5 22 Tammuz	Friday July 6 23 Tammuz	Saturday July 7 24 Tammuz
			 Happy 4th of July Morning Minyan 9:00AM		PAI Walking Group 9:30AM  Kabbalat Shabbat with <b>Steve Gradman</b> 7:00PM  Candle Lighting 8:12PM	Parashat Pinechas  Shacharit   10:00AM
<b>Park Slope Jewish Center</b> 1320 Eighth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215 (718) 768-1453 Office hours: M-Th 9AM-5PM, F 9AM-2PM www.psjc.org   email: office@psjc.org				Rabbi Carie Carter, PSJC's Rabbi (rabbicarie@psjc.org) Ellen Brickman, President (president@psjc.org) Elana Ayalon, Director of Administration (office@psjc.org) Aileen Heiman, Director of Youth Education (aileen.heiman@psjc.org) For questions about Accessibility (inclusion@psjc.org)		

### Mazal Tov!

To **Isaac, Jennifer, David and Lee** on Isaac's Bar Mitzvah this Shabbat.

### Todah Rabbah

To **Linda Miller**, Isaac's grandmother for contributing to the Kiddush Fund in honor of Isaac's Bar Mitzvah this Shabbat.

### HaMakom Yenachem

Our condolences go to:

**Roberta Moskowitz** and family on the death of her mother, **Libby Rosenfeld**, z"l.

**Marshall Sohne** and family on the death of his wife, **Ellen Fried**, z"l.

**Elizabeth Schnur, Rosanne Milic** and family on the death of their mother, **Harriet Schnur**, z"l.

### Yahrzeits observed 17-23 Tammuz:

**Barry Zaretsky**, husband of Joan Glatman; **Carol Brahm**, mother of Laura Brahm; **Florence Thomases**, mother of Matt Thomases; **Hananiah Harari**, stepfather of Roland Lewis; **Irwin Septimus**, father of Matthew Septimus; **Janet Stone Holmes**, mother of Peter Holmes; **Joseph Blustein**, father of Jeffrey Blustein; **Marge Palmer**, mother of Alan Palmer; **Mildred Cantor**, aunt of Samuel Hornick; **Paul Gundersheim**, father of Ellen Briefel; **Roberta Weiner**, friend of June Zeitlin. *May their memories be for a blessing.*

### **For a Sweet New Year - Support PSJC with Honey From the Heart!**

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June 29-July 7, 2018 | 16-24 Tammuz 5778  
Parashat Balak

### **Hebrew School Registration is Live!**

Registration for 2018-2019 Hebrew School is OPEN!  
Join us for another year of Jewish learning!

[https://www.psjc.org/hebrew\\_school\\_registration](https://www.psjc.org/hebrew_school_registration)

### **Annual Membership Renewal 2018-2019**

Renew your membership today! It's easy and can all be done online.

Visit [www.psjc.org](http://www.psjc.org) and log in to your account.

That means we have already begun planning for 5779!

We hope you will join us for another great year at PSJC!

We would love to get to 100% participation. No amount is too big or too small.

Please contact Peter by email [treasurer@psjc.org](mailto:treasurer@psjc.org) if you have to arrange payments or limited income.

### **PAI Walking Group**

Friday, July 6 | 9:30AM

We will walk across the Brooklyn Bridge starting on the Manhattan side. We will meet at 9:30AM at the City Hall Park Path before it crosses Centre Street to become the Brooklyn Bridge Promenade. Our meeting spot is just outside the Brooklyn Bridge City Hall station for the 4, 5, and 6 trains. This is an easy 1.3-mile walk. RSVP: <https://www.psjc.org/event/pai-walking-group1.html>.

### **Shabbat Shmooze**

Saturday, July 21 | 1:30PM | Prospect Park

Shabbat Shmooze is a get-together at Prospect Park during the summer months. We will walk together over to the Shabbat Shmooze Potluck Lunch after the Kiddush. Bring a parve potluck dish to share. If anyone would like to host a Shabbat Shmooze in the coming year, please [shabbatshmooze@psjc.org](mailto:shabbatshmooze@psjc.org), with the date they would like to host a Shabbat Shmooze (3rd Shabbat of the month).

### **Where was God in the Holocaust? with Avi Ullman**

Saturday, July 21 | 7:00PM

Where was God in the Holocaust? A question we ask over and over again. A question which hovers in the air every Yom Ha'Shoa. Is it possible at all to try answering such a question? Should we? Are we allowed to ask how could God have allowed a Holocaust to happen? In this lecture I will discuss a number of issues: First I will talk about the existence of evil in the world. I will then discuss the question of when a tragedy such as the Holocaust can come and why, and finally I will devote the large part of this talk to the question where was God in the Holocaust.

**G'mach, Hevra Kadisha welcome new members** If you are able to cook, deliver meals, visit, attend shiva minyanim, do shmira or tahara for those who have died, and support our members in good and bad times - please contact G'mach and Hevra Kadisha to add your name to the distribution list: [gmach@psjc.org](mailto:gmach@psjc.org) or [hevrakadisha@psjc.org](mailto:hevrakadisha@psjc.org).

**Got announcements?** Email by Monday 5:00PM ([office@psjc.org](mailto:office@psjc.org))

### Host an Israeli Shinshin

#### IsraelBKLYN is looking for host families for Israeli Shinshinim this summer and next Fall.

A "shinshin" is an 18-year-old Israeli emissary to communities abroad with the goal of educating people of all ages about Israel and Israeli culture. Shinshinim work with children at Jewish camps, schools and synagogues. Over the last five years, Shinshinim have added a lot to our PSJC community. If you are interested in hosting a shinshin, please contact [rabbicarter@psjc.org](mailto:rabbicarter@psjc.org).

#### Tisha B'Av Services

Saturday, July 21 | 9:00PM

Tisha B'Av (the 9th day of Av) is observed this year on Saturday evening, July 21. Please join us for a stirring and evocative service. Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of both the first and second Temples, but over time, other Jewish tragedies have become connected to this date. Tisha B'Av, traditionally a fast day (fasting from sunset to the appearance of 3 stars the next night), is observed on Saturday night by a relatively brief moving service in which we sit low or on the floor (like mourners) and read Eichah (Lamentations) - which is chanted to a particularly haunting melody. This is followed by the singing of kinot (similarly moving songs and elegies). We dim the lights and read by candles and flashlights. Tisha B'Av continues on Sunday morning, as a gesture toward *Klal Yisrael*, this year we encourage PSJC members who would like to attend morning services to join the service at Kane Street Synagogue (236 Kane Street). Their Sunday morning minyan begins at 9am.

#### Advanced Talmud

Saturday, July 28 | 1:30PM

This class is an on-going self-study group appropriate for people who are proficient in Hebrew and have some prior experience in Gemara study. New students are welcome! Email [aronrhalb@gmail.com](mailto:aronrhalb@gmail.com).

#### Book Club: The Extra

Saturday, August 4 | 1:30PM

Join us after kiddish as we discuss *The Extra* (תבצין), A. B. Yehoshua's novel of ideas whose themes include the title character's decision to not have children, eldercare, housing and real estate, relations between Haredi and secular Israelis, cinema, theater, and classical music. BPL has 9 English print copies and an ebook.

### Lulav & Etrog Sale

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Last day to order Wednesday, August 29



**All congregants and visitors** (of all genders) are requested to wear a head covering in the Sanctuary. Cell phones and photography are not permitted in the synagogue during Shabbat. Please also refrain from applause during services. **PSJC runs on community participation.** If you are interested in: **leading Kabbalat Shabbat/Maariv Services**, email [freddie.brooks@psjc.org](mailto:freddie.brooks@psjc.org); **leading Shabbat Morning Services**, email Elizabeth Schnur at [davening@psjc.org](mailto:davening@psjc.org); **chanting Haftarah**, email Alan Palmer at [haftarah@psjc.org](mailto:haftarah@psjc.org), reading Torah, email Rabbi Sue Oren at [leyning@psjc.org](mailto:leyning@psjc.org). **To request an Aliyah or other honor**, email Rabbi Carter a week in advance ([rabbicarie@psjc.org](mailto:rabbicarie@psjc.org)), or notify the usher if you arrive before the Torah Service begins; we honor requests whenever possible. **To usher services**, email Ira Drucker at [ira.drucker@psjc.org](mailto:ira.drucker@psjc.org).

## Parashat Balak

Triennial: Numbers 22:39-23:26 | Etz Hayim p.899; Hertz p. 673; Plaut p.1176

Haftarah: Micah 5:6-6:8 | Etz Hayim p.914; Hertz p.682; Plaut p.1272

## D'var Torah: Free Will is Given

Balaam could really have used a spin doctor, or even an entire PR firm. He had one job to do – to curse Israel – and the exact opposite happened - not once, not twice, but THREE times. It was arguably the first “Kinsley gaffe” - so named by journalist Michael Kinsley who said, “A gaffe is when a politician tells the truth – some obvious truth he isn't supposed to say.”

But really, Balaam has only himself to blame. All the signs were there that he was headed for a fall. Even before the big moment, God made a mockery of him, embarrassing him in the most shameful way. Balaam, a soothsayer, someone looked up to by the masses and sought out by kings, a person who could communicate with God – was upstaged by a donkey. And the devastating combination of the pathetic and the comedic ensured the story would go viral. Surely he hoped that nobody had seen what transpired. But like someone undone by a “hot mic,” an overhead security camera, or a passing smartphone, his great embarrassment was recorded for all posterity in the Torah.

But unlike many for whom the passage of time helps to repair their damaged reputations, Balaam continued to be the butt of jokes. The Babylonian Talmud calls him all sorts of names, some of which cannot be repeated in polite company. And yet, there is another side to the rabbinic treatment of Balaam – one which poses an interesting question, worthy of our attention.

There is a rabbinic tradition that asserts that Balaam was a prophet of almost unparalleled ability, his only competition for the title of Greatest Prophet was Moshe Rabeinu – Moses, our teacher. When Devarim 34:10 says: “Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses” the Sifrei (an early Rabbinic midrash) says “In Israel, no, but among the nations, yes. And who was it? Balaam ben Beor!” (Sifrei Devarim 357:10) Essentially, Balaam was (or could have been) the Moshe of all the other nations! But if these two prophets were equally talented – had equal potential – what made Moshe the celebrated hero and Balaam the ridiculed anti-hero?

The answer to this question may be found in a famous teaching of Rabbi Akiva – one that has troubled many people over time. In Pirkei Avot 3:19, Rabbi Akiva says: “All is foreseen (tzafui), yet freedom of choice is given.” This teaching has always been seen as a paradox. How can I be said to have free will if God already knows what I will do? And if I don't have free will, then why should I be taught right from wrong, and how can I be held accountable for my behavior?

In the Mishneh Torah (Laws of Repentance, chapter 5), the Rambam wrestles with this question, ultimately drawing a distinction between human knowledge and divine knowledge – asserting as a matter of faith that our choices are real choices. Finding this answer unsatisfying, many later commentators have based their explanations on complex typologies of knowledge or mystical concepts. Professor Avigdor Shinan, a modern Israeli commentator, has a simpler answer. He points out that some medieval manuscripts of Pirkei Avot have a final nun instead of a yud – thus turning the problematic word “tzafui” (foreseen) into “tzafun” (seen). In other words, it is not that God knows what we will do before we do it, it is simply that nothing we do goes unnoticed! (Pirkei Avot – Peirush Yisraeli Hadash, p. 113.) The upshot of Rabbi Akiva's teaching is that each of us chooses what to do with our God-given abilities. Moshe and Balaam may have had equal prophetic talent – Balaam may even have had an edge over Moshe – but when push came to shove, Moshe chose to bend his will to God's, while Balaam arrogantly sought to bend God's will to his. Thus while Balaam became an unwilling conduit for blessing, Moshe became the willing conduit for Torah, which, quite poetically, contains both blessings and curses, offering us a choice between them.

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This weekly commentary on the Torah portion is by **Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein**, *Conservative Yeshiva Faculty* from the “Torah Sparks” series produced by the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem. A Haftarah commentary by Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein found at <http://www.conservativeyeshiva.org/torahsparks>