



**PARK  
SLOPE  
JEWISH  
CENTER**

August 25-September 2, 2017 | 3-11 Elul, 5777  
Shabbat Shoftim

Friday, August 25   3 Elul				Shabbat Shoftim Saturday, August 26   4 Elul		
Kabbalat Shabbat with <b>David Rosen</b>   7:00PM Candle Lighting   7:21PM				Shabbat Morning Services   10:00AM <b>Natan Birnbaum Bar Mitzvah</b> Advanced Talmud   1:30PM		
Sunday August 27 5 Elul	Monday August 28 6 Elul	Tuesday August 29 7 Elul	Wednesday August 30 8 Elul	Thursday August 31 9 Elul	Friday September 1 10 Elul	Saturday September 2 11 Elul
			Rosh Chodesh Minyan 7:15AM	Support PSJC Honey from the Heart. Last day to order.	Kabbalat Shabbat with <b>Charlie Urich</b> 7:00PM  Candle Lighting 7:10PM	<i>Shabbat Ki Tetze</i>  Shacharit 10:00AM  <b>Jonah Ceresney Bar Mitzvah</b>  <b>Dov Alperin &amp; Sam Drezner Bar Mitzvah - Mincha</b>
<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) Aileen Heiman, Director of Youth Education (aileen.heiman@psjc.org) Marsha Stanley, Administrator (office@psjc.org) For questions about Accessibility (inclusion@psjc.org)		

**Mazal Tov!**

To **Natan** and his parents **Julia** and **David**, and brothers **Joshua** and **Max** as **Natan** celebrates his Bar Mitzvah this Shabbat.

**Todah Rabbah**

To **Julia Kamen Birnbaum** and **David Birnbaum** for sponsoring the Kiddush this Shabbat in honor of **Natan's** Bar Mitzvah.

**HaMakom Yenachem**

Our condolences go to:

**Todd Krichmar** and his family on the death of his mother, **Marilyn Krichmar**, z"l.

**Yahrzeits observed 4-10 Elul:**

**Beatrice Daffner**, great aunt of Stuart Baron; **Burt Ribnick**, father of Judy Ribnick; **David Daffner**, great uncle of Stuart Baron; **Dorothea Sasson**, mother of Nathaniel Sasson; **Emma Gorelick**, great-aunt of Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips; **Esther Rothberger**, mother of Harriet Baron; **Ethel Levine Moch**, mother of Yehudit Moch; **Herbert Orzeck**, father of Jan Orzeck; **Jerome Levine**, uncle of Gavrielle and Myron Levine; **John Speaks Jr.**, father of John Speaks; **Lillian Daffner**, great aunt of Stuart Baron; **Mark Smith**, nephew of Ann Smith; **Miryam Kessler**, grandmother of Marla Kessler; **Morris L. Drucker**, father of Ira Drucker; **Ronald Simon**, uncle of Ellen Simon; **Stella Simon Moch**, grandmother of Yehudit Moch. *May their memories be for a blessing.*

**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 or hevrakadisha@psjc.org.

**Got announcements?** Email by Monday 5:00PM (office@PSJC.org)

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

*Order honey for your friends and family and support PSJC while doing it!*

**Last week** to get your order of honey for your loved ones.

Order **here** by **Thursday, August 31!**

\$11.00 each plus \$4.00/jar for shipping and handling fees.

Thank you for your support.

For more information and to order at: <http://orthoney.com/psj>



**Advanced Talmud**

Saturday, August 26 | 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)

**Board Meeting**

Wednesday, September 6 | 7:15PM

PSJC Board meetings are open to members in good standing.

**Special Membership Meeting**

Wednesday, September 6 | 8:30PM

All members are welcome to attend a brief meeting to vote on authorization for a \$450,000 line of credit to support our construction cost as we raise funds through the Capital Campaign. We hope to use the funds as little as possible. To obtain a proxy ballot, email [office@psjc.org](mailto:office@psjc.org).

**Book Club The Calligrapher's Secret**

Saturday, September 9 | 1:30PM

We will discuss *The Calligrapher's Secret* by Rafik Schami, the pen name (meaning Damascene) of the Syrian Christian German writer Suheil Fadél. This historical novel is a pessimistic plea for diversity and pluralism that predates yet anticipates Syria's current civil war between a brutal dictator and an opposition dominated by equally violent religious extremists. The novel is set in Damascus in the 1940s and 1950s where Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities and individual Damascenes coexist while privately disliking one another. The novel has only one minor Jewish character, but it provides a sense of what life was like in the countries surrounding Israel at that time as well as a prescient portrayal of the fissures in Syrian society that would rend the country in its current civil war.

**PSJC Knitters**

Monday, September 11 | 7:30PM

For more information contact [marjorie.rothenberg@gmail.com](mailto:marjorie.rothenberg@gmail.com).

**In Search Of A Few PSJCers to Help Organize the Fall Music Concert.**

While it's not exactly "plug & play," the concert is not a complicated event to put together. As one of our biggest fundraisers of the year, it can be incredibly fulfilling....and fun to plan. In the past, we've had David Broza and the expert jazz sounds of Yotam Silberstein. Help make this year's concert enjoyable and profitable. Contact [rfsnyder@gmail.com](mailto:rfsnyder@gmail.com) for more information.

**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).



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## Please Consider Making Your Contribution Today!

We now call upon all members to join our **\$750,000** Capital Campaign to provide **immediate repairs** and to ensure that PSJC continues to stand strong well into the 21st century!

Please stand up and generously donate to maintain and preserve our cherished spiritual home for this and future generations.

We are grateful for every donation and pledge!

Visit <https://www.psjc.org/capitalcampaign>



### Rodfei Tzedek Meeting

Tuesday, September 12 | 7:15PM

Please join us as a community sit down together to consider how we as PSJC can expand our efforts and become a community that truly is RODFEI TZEDEK - Pursuers of Justice. As a community we can define our priorities, areas of interest/passion, and capacity for meaningful, ongoing social action projects and social justice initiatives that involve members of all generations. Email [rabbicarie@psjc.org](mailto:rabbicarie@psjc.org) to RSVP.

### Shabbat Shmooze

Saturday, September 16 | 1:30PM

During the summer, Shabbat Shmooze is a get-together at Prospect Park. We will walk together over to the Shabbat Shmooze Potluck Lunch in the park after the Kiddush. Bring a dairy or pareve potluck dish to share. If anyone would like to host a Shabbat Shmooze in the coming year, please email [shabbatshmooze@psjc.org](mailto:shabbatshmooze@psjc.org).

### Selichot Across Brooklyn

Saturday, September 16 | 9:30PM

FREE ADMISSION - This 6th annual community collaboration is co-sponsored by Altshul, Brooklyn Jews, Congregation Beth Elohim, East Midwood Jewish Center, Flatbush Jewish Center, Kane Street Synagogue, Kolot Chayeinu, Mishkan Minyan, Park Slope Jewish Center, Shir HaMaalot, and Union Temple of Brooklyn.

### Hebrew School Registration

Register now for the Hebrew School year 2017-2018  
Email [aileen.heiman@psjc.org](mailto:aileen.heiman@psjc.org) for more information.

### Annual Membership Renewal 2017-2018

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.

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

We would love to get to 100% participation.

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

**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).



## Shabbat Shoftim

Triennial (Deuteronomy 16:18-18:5): Etz Hayim p. 1088; Hertz p. 820; Plaut p. 1455

Haftarah (Isaiah 51:12-52:12): Etz Hayim p. 1107; Hertz p. 835; Plaut p. 1607

## Humans or Trees: Answers and Questions

You, dear reader, searching the parsha and my comments on it for guidance for answers to life's great questions, are going to be disappointed, at least today. For there are times when Scripture is simply too ambiguous, too open to opposing interpretations, to allow us to simply read and understand how exactly we are meant to live our lives.

One such case is the well-known prohibition of cutting down fruit-bearing trees in a time of war. Deuteronomy 20:19-20 reads: When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the axe against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siege-works against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been reduced.

The commandment seems quite clear, but the famous words “are trees of the field human” are ambiguous and difficult to translate. The ancient targumim (Aramaic translations of the Tanakh) add in a negative, rendering the verse “for trees of the field are not human,” to run away in war. Trees cannot defend themselves, and therefore, you may not attack them. While such a rendering has a certain appeal, there are several problems with it. First of all, it does not explain well why non-food yielding trees may be cut down. Second, it leads to the moral problem that it is fine to kill human beings since they can run away.

Sifre Deuteronomy 203, a second century rabbinic midrash, reads the verse in a completely opposite way. “To come before you in the siege’ – thus, if it is blocking you, coming in front of you in the siege, cut it down.” If the tree impedes the progress of the siege, one can cut it down. The Rashbam, a 12th century commentator, reads the verse in the same way.

Another passage from the Sifre and another medieval commentator, Ibn Ezra, reads this phrase as explaining why fruit-bearing trees may not be cut down—they provide human sustenance. Trees are symbolic of a broader environmental message—one may not engage in wanton destruction of the environment.

It would be easy for me to have chosen one of these readings and used it to support my own environmental stance. If I am opposed to fracking, for instance, I could cite Ibn Ezra and point out that human sustenance comes from trees. If, on the other hand, I support fracking, I could cite the Rashbam and claim that the prohibition of cutting down trees is waived in times when they interfere with human needs.

So what, you ask, is the point of studying Torah, if it does not give us straightforward answers to our deepest questions? Torah study is not, in my opinion, about the answer. It is about the question itself—it is a process that leads to delving deeper into the meaning of the world and our role in it. Torah does not provide easy answers—it leads to hard questions.

This weekly commentary on the Torah portion is by Dr. Joshua Kulp, from the “Torah Sparks” series produced by the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem, <http://learn.conservativeyeshiva.org/torah-sparks/>. Dr. Joshua Kulp, Rosh Yeshiva, Talmud teacher, and a founder of the Conservative Yeshiva. A Haftarah commentary by Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein of the Conservative Yeshiva may be found at <http://www.uscj.org.il/learn/commentaries/>

**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.