

# Ha Shavuah B' Sha'arey Israel

June 24 – June 30, 2010

12 Tammuz – 18 Tammuz 5770



Candle lighting time 8:28 pm  
Friday June 25

Friday Evening Kabbalat Shabbat Services begin at 6:15 pm  
Saturday morning Shabbat Services begin at 9:30 am

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**PARASHAT BALAK** (Commentary on Page 3)

Annual (Num. 22:2-25:9): Etz Hayim p. 894

Triennial (Num. 23:27-25:9): Etz Hayim p. 903

Haftarah (Micah 5:6-6:8): Etz Hayim p. 915  
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**Best Wishes for a Speedy Recovery to:**

Elaine Dreizin, Carol Besser, Paul Kruger, Doris Rabinowitz and Paul Adler

**We wish a Happy Birthday this week to:**

Richard Singer, Irit Ullman, Larry Solanch, Joan Kent and Diane Jahr

**We wish a Happy Anniversary this week to:**

Barbara & Ian Altman, Nathalie & Harold Goodrich, Carole & Stuart Karlins and Pam & Daniel Toland

**This week we remember the Yahrzeit of:**

Henrietta Lowin Kaplan, Helen Rubin, Mary Cohen, Estelle Cohen Dweck, Nathan Topper,  
Joseph Phillip Cohen, Henry Vogel, Max Weinstein, John S. Everall, Leslie Jampole

**Please Note ~**

**The CSI Office will be closed for Vacation  
on Monday & Tuesday - June 28 & 29  
and on Monday, July 5 in observance of  
Independence Day.**

**Rabbi Bat-Or will be attending the Institute for Southern  
Jewish Life Conference in Jackson, Mississippi from Friday,  
June 25 through Wednesday, June 30.**

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**The New High Holiday Mahzor Lev Shalem  
Prayer Books Have Arrived at CSI**

**If you would like to plate a prayer book  
for a life cycle event, the cost is \$35.00**

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**Tisha B'Av  
Service on Monday Evening  
July 19 at 7:00pm**

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***Save the Date!***

**Marc Rosengart's Bar Mitzvah  
August 6-7**

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**The CSI Gift Shop**  
Birthdays - Anniversaries - Weddings  
Bar/Bat Mitzvahs - Graduations  
House Warming Gifts



Call Terri 477-8597 or Deborah 474-0505 for an Appointment

## Parashat Balak

Numbers 22:2-25:9

*This week's Torah commentary is by Rabbi Neal Joseph Loevinger who is currently the rabbi of Temple Beth-El in Poughkeepsie, NY.*

**Not Seeing Is The Sin** - Like Bilaam, we should open our eyes to seeing the problematic paths we take in life.

### Overview

This week's parashah is mostly the story of Balak, the king of the nation Moav. He hires the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites, whom he perceives as a threat. Balaam then discovers that the power of blessing and cursing is God's alone. On his way to curse Israel, his donkey stops, for an angel blocks the way, but Balaam can't perceive what his animal is doing. Finally, Balaam blesses Israel with a famous blessing that is now part of the daily morning service. At the end of the parashah, the Israelites get in trouble by worshipping a foreign deity.

### In Focus

"Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, 'I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back'" (Numbers 22:34).

### Pshat

Balak really wants Balaam to curse the Israelites, but Balaam senses that this is not what God wants him to do. After Balak's men pressure and cajole him, God tells Balaam he can go to meet Balak, but he must only do what God tells him. Still, God seems to be angry that Balaam has chosen this path, and sends an angel with a drawn sword to block his way. The donkey sees the angel, and refuses to proceed, but Balaam thinks the donkey is disobeying him. Finally, God allows Balaam to perceive the angel, and then Balaam pleads ignorance--he wouldn't have tried to move on if he had known there was an angel blocking his way!

### Drash

A Hasidic commentator points out that if Balaam really didn't know about the angel, how could he have "sinned" in trying to move along?

"I have sinned. . ." This is surprising! If he didn't know, what was the sin? The answer is that there are times when not knowing is itself the sin. For example, if a child strikes a parent, he can't justify it by saying he didn't know it was forbidden to strike one's parents. A captain of the guard of the king cannot say that he didn't know who the king was!

This is the case of a prophet and an angel--if the prophet says that he didn't know that the angel was stationed before him, that's the sin. This is what Balaam said: "I sinned, because I didn't know--as a prophet, I should have known that the angel stood before me--not knowing was the sin itself." (From Itturei Torah, translation mine.)

We could further point out that Balaam went with God's apparent permission, even though he knew that Balak's goals were destructive. He chose to go anyway--that's what having free moral choice means. Even though Balaam knew it wasn't a good thing, God let him go, with

the warning to make the right choices in the end. So then we get back to our original question: what was the sin, if he really didn't know the angel was there?

I think this midrash implies that Balaam really did know, on some semiconscious level, that it was not good to head out to meet Balak. Balaam did a very common thing: he overruled his own conscience, and chose not to see, not to understand, the problematic nature of his chosen path. It's literally a path in the story, but I think the road or path here symbolizes the set of decisions he's making. He didn't want to see the angel, so he didn't.

The idea that not knowing can itself be a chet, or falling short of the mark, is a powerful challenge. What are we not seeing that we choose not to see? Do we use Balaam's excuse-- "I didn't know"--when our friends and family need our help and support? Do we say, "I didn't see" when we step over the homeless on our way to work, or when we encounter the effects of any other problem in our community? Choosing not to see is something we all do at times-- even a prophet can sometimes fail to see the angel in front of him. The good news is that we are created with a spark of the Divine within, and we can have our eyes opened at any time.

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**For other commentaries on this week's Torah portion check out these sites:**

[Aish.com](http://Aish.com)

[ISJL Taste of Torah](http://ISJL Taste of Torah)

[JTS](http://JTS)

[MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com)

[USCJ Torah Sparks](http://USCJ Torah Sparks)

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**Quick links:**

- [CSI Macon Online](#)
- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism \(USCJ\)](#)
- [JTS Podcast - this week's Parsha](#)
- [Audio Siddur](#)
- [Jewish Telegraphic Agency \(JTA\)](#)
- [Israeli News Broadcast – in English](#)
- [The Jewish Ethicist](#)
- [Synagogue 3000](#)
- [Learn through USCJ online](#)
- [The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum](#)
- [United Jewish Communities \(UJC\)](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)

**For the children (or the young at heart):**

- [Torah Portion Coloring Pages](#)
- [Babaganews Torah Parasha of the week movie](#)

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