

THE PARSHA THIS WEEK

ACHAREI MOT · KEDOSHIM

פרשת אחרי מות – קדשים

CANDLE LIGHTING

7:54 PM

Friday · Vaughan, ON

SHABBOS ENDS

9:00 PM

Motzaei Shabbos

SEFIRAS HAOMER

Day 23

Gevurah sheb'Netzach

PIRKEI AVOS

Ch. 3

read this Shabbos

DVAR TORAH

Holiness Without Heroes.

These are weeks of leaders throwing their weight around. Iran trades missile salvos with Israel.

American jets are in the air over the Gulf while allies in Europe bristle at Washington's latest posture. In Beijing, Xi hosts a rotation of heads of state almost daily.

Where, then, are the leaders of higher stature? Not those who command armies or sign sanctions — there is no shortage of those, and most of them keep the letter of every law on their own books and still keep falling short of what is needed in our times — but figures who stand for the *klal* in a history-moving moment, a Moshe, a Mordechai, a David HaMelech. Following in the bold and determined leadership of the Rebbe, the world has rarely needed such voices more: leaders who do not apologize for the Torah's claim on the world, who assert its light against the politics of their day, who give a whole people direction and nerve.

The Ramban, centuries ago, named the quieter failure that lives underneath this feeling of lack. Is it possible, he asked, to keep every law in the Torah and still miss its point?

It sounds like a trick question. Eat kosher, keep Shabbos, daven three times a day, raise the kids, give tzedakah — what more is there? He says there is a great deal more, and he has a name for the person who ticks every box and still misses the point: גבול בְּרִשּׁוֹת הַתּוֹרָה. A scoundrel within the Torah's permitted space.

It is also the animating question of the verse that opens our parsha's second half — קְדֹשִׁים תִּהְיֶינָה, *Kedoshim tihyu*. You shall be holy. Two famous words, and not a syllable of explanation attached.

Rashi answers it simply:¹ *keep aloof from the forbidden relations* just given. Kedusha is withdrawal, a pulling back, especially from the long list of forbidden relations the Torah has just finished giving.

The Ramban demands more.² A separate command, he argues, aimed precisely at the man who has technically complied with everything: *sanctify yourself also in what is permitted to you*. A glutton with a hechsher is still a glutton. Cruelty with a halachic loophole is still cruelty.

It was asking for you to step up.

The Alter Rebbe takes the idea one step further, in a way most characteristic of Chabad.³ Kedusha is not only withdrawal (Rashi) and not only refinement (Ramban). It is, most fundamentally, a drawing-down. The root of the word *kedusha*, קִדְּשׁ, names something separated, yes — but separated so that it may illuminate what is beneath. Shabbos shines on the week; the Mishkan, on the camp; the Kohanim bless the people.

Which is why it is no accident that the moment the Torah issues its great call — קְדֹשִׁים תִּהְיֶינָה, *be holy* — it descends,

within the very same chapter, into the ordinary. Honest weights and measures. The corner of the field left for the poor. The love of one's neighbor. These are not afterthoughts to kedusha. They *are* kedusha. קְדֹשִׁים תִּהְיֶינָה is the heading; the dishes in the sink, the honest scale, the pe'ah at the field's edge — those are the chapter. The figures we long for — of the stature of Moshe, of Mordechai, of David HaMelech — come once in a generation. The Torah, following the Rebbe's call, is asking each of us — לְהִשָּׁתַּבֵּל לְהִיּוֹת אִישׁ — to step into that necessary role, quietly, where we stand.

¹ Rashi on Vayikra 19:2, drawing on *Toras Kohanim*.

² Ramban on Vayikra 19:2.

³ Likkutei Torah, parshiyos Acharei & Kedoshim.

OUR MOMENT

A Light to the Nations.

the prophet Amos, read this Shabbos, in a time of wrath

The haftarah for Acharei Mot-Kedoshim is drawn from the final chapter of Amos. The pairing is deliberate: the parsha warns Israel not to follow the corrupt ways of the nations, and Amos is the prophet who saw what happens when they do. He was a shepherd from Tekoa, a small town in the Judean hills south of Bethlehem, sent north to a kingdom grown fat on injustice, and his nine chapters move from devastating rebuke to a promise that has carried the Jewish people through every exile since. We read the closing verses this Shabbos.

Israel woke this week to ballistic missiles over Tel Aviv and Bnei Brak. The Lebanon ceasefire frayed again. Across Europe, ambulances burned in Golders Green, and antisemitic incidents climbed on streets that had been quiet for decades. It has been a period of hard headlines. The dark side of this world keeps reminding the Jewish people that they are conspicuous in it.

Through all of it, a question that will not leave us alone: *why?*

Amos does not soothe. He accuses. He had been called from his sheep in Tekoa to walk north into the prosperous Northern Kingdom, where the rich slept on ivory beds and crushed the poor in the marketplace, and to tell them that the success they were toasting was already over. *Hear this word*, he says — and what follows is a relentless catalog of the destruction to come. Israel's neighbors first — Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab — and then, with grief, Israel herself. He saw a basket of summer fruit; God told him it meant the end was near. He saw the altar struck down, its pillars shaken until the roof of the temple fell on those who had gathered to worship there. He saw the people exiled.

Then, in the final verses — the verses we read this Shabbos — he pivots, and the pivot is the point:

“I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be uprooted from their land which I have given them.”

AMOS 9:15

The prophet who opened with destruction ends with planting. The verb is *וַיִּטְעֵנִי* — *I will plant them*. The image is agricultural, patient, generations-long. It is also what Yeshayahu meant by *אֹר לְגוֹיִם* — a light to the nations.¹ Not because we have persuaded the nations. Because, planted, we continue to shine.

Two truths to hold at once. The pain is real. And it is a year in which the Jewish people are still *planted* — living, learning, building families and shuls and yeshivos on

every continent they have been scattered to. The evenings in Osh and Williamsburg and Stockholm are real. So is the missile siren that sounded in Jerusalem this week. So is the prophet's last word: *never again be uprooted*.

The classical commentators read the verse simply: *and they shall not be exiled again*.² The Rebbe taught that the hour of the geula is already upon us. We are asked only to open our eyes to it — to stay planted, and to continue to shine.

¹ Yeshayahu 42:6, 49:6.

² See Radak and Metzudas David on Amos 9:15.

* Amos 9:14–15 is the haftarah for Acharei Mot · Kedoshim. Events as reported by *Times of Israel* & *JNS*, April 2026.

PIRKEI AVOS · CHAPTER THREE

Beloved is Man.*a teaching of Rebbe Akiva, read this Shabbos*

AVOS 3:14

חביב אדם שנברא בצלם · חבה יתרה נודעת לו שנברא בצלם

Beloved is man, for he was created in the image. A greater love — that it was made known to him that he was created in the image.

Rebbe Akiva distinguishes two gifts. The first is the gift of *being* made in the divine image — a dignity every human carries whether he knows it or not. The second, and greater, is the gift of being *told so*.

Why is being told so the greater gift? Because knowledge changes what a person does with himself. A Jew who does not know he is in *צלם אלהים* still carries it, but he does not walk by its light. A Jew who knows, walks differently. He stands taller. He is less easily degraded, by himself or by others, because he is aware of what he carries.

Rebbe Akiva describes this awareness as a *חבה יתרה* — an *additional* love. In the Rambam's image: a friend who gives a gift but does not say so gives half a gift; the one who gives and tells, gives twice. The Creator does not stop at making the human being valuable — He makes sure the human being is told. The telling is itself an act of love.¹

¹ Following the Rambam's Commentary on the Mishna, Avos 3:14.

ON THE HORIZON

FRIDAY, MAY 1

Pesach Sheni

פסח שני

The Torah's second chance for those who could not bring the Korban Pesach in time.

TUESDAY, MAY 5

Lag BaOmer

ל"ג בעומר

Day 33 of the Omer. Yahrzeit of Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai.

MAY 22-23

Shavuot

שבועות

Matan Torah. Many have the custom of reading the Book of Ruth.

FOR THE YOUNGER READER · ANOTHER TEACHING OF REBBE AKIVA

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself.*the “great principle” of the Torah*

Rebbe Akiva points to another verse as the *קלל גדול בתורה* — the great principle of the whole Torah: *ואהבת לרעך כמוך*, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.¹ When a man came to Hillel asking to be converted on condition that Hillel teach him the whole Torah while he stood on one foot, Hillel gave a similar answer: what is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. So when you say *good Shabbos*, when you help your brother find his missing shoe — that is Torah. The “holiness” at the beginning of our parsha is built of these small, real moments; it is also how a people stays a people.

¹ Vayikra 19:18.

THE QUESTION · FOR YOUR PEN THIS WEEK

In this week's parsha the Torah commands *ואהבת לרעך כמוך* — love your neighbor as yourself. The Ramban raises a famous difficulty: how can love be commanded at all? Learn his resolution, share it in your own words, and add an insight of your own. The strongest answer wins.

TO ENTER

Email treeoflifebookinfo@gmail.com by Thursday night. Next week's issue prints the winning answer.

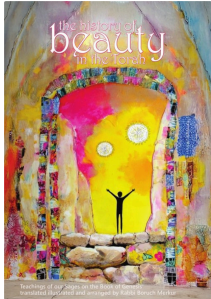
PRIZES

First — \$36 cash or a Tree of Life hardcover of your choice.
Second — \$10 or a Tree of Life softcover of your choice.

OUR LIBRARY

Also Available from Tree of Life Books.

scholarly Jewish titles, classical texts, and illustrated editions

**The History of Beauty in the Torah** ★ NEW*the Book of Genesis, illustrated*

To the Sages, beauty was the visible radiance of the divine. Journey through Genesis with the Talmud, Midrash, and Zohar — hundreds of classical teachings in English for the first time.

HARDCOVER • \$49 CAD

**The Days of Creation***the story of Genesis with classic Jewish commentaries, illustrated*

A breathtaking retelling of the world's first week, where Eden's creatures lived in harmony and Adam was made complete only when God gave him Eve — pointing toward the great Sabbath of divine rest.

HARDCOVER • \$36 CAD

**King David — Part 1***Hebrew & English with classic interpretations*

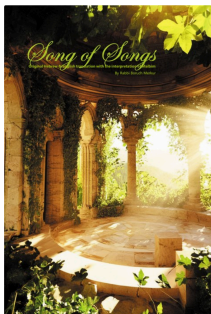
When Saul defies God by sparing Amalek, the prophet Shmuel anoints a new king: David, an unassuming shepherd whose heart God sees beneath his humble appearance. His faith blazes against Goliath, felling the giant with a single stone.

HARDCOVER • \$49 CAD

**Garden of Tanya***summarized & illustrated*

An illustrated guide to Tanya, the foundational work of Chabad Chassidut by the Alter Rebbe. Discover the soul's two opposing forces — divine and animal — and the attainable path of the beinoni.

HARDCOVER • \$49 CAD

**Song of Songs***Hebrew & English with the interpretation of Malbim*

A maiden lives in Solomon's palace, yet her heart belongs to a shepherd in the wilderness. Beneath the poetry lies an allegory: the soul's longing for union with the Creator.

HARDCOVER • \$25 CAD

**Kamtza, Bar Kamtza***the dramatic Talmudic story with insights from Chassidut and Kabbalah*

The Talmudic account of how Jerusalem fell — not to armies, but to a single act of public humiliation. When Bar Kamtza is shamed before silent Sages, his bitterness ignites the chain of events that destroyed the Holy Temple.

PAPERBACK • \$18 CAD

**Gog & Magog***Ezekiel's prophecy with the interpretation of Malbim*

Edom and Ishmael converge upon Israel, only to turn their swords upon one another by divine design — illuminated through Malbim's commentary.

HARDCOVER • \$25 CAD

**Psalms***Hebrew & English with Malbim's insights*

David pours out his soul to a God who truly listens. Each psalm reveals a hidden depth, illuminated through Malbim's commentary.

HARDCOVER • \$49 CAD

ORDER HERE

treeoflifebookinfo@gmail.com • www.thetreeoflifebooks.com

ALL PRICES IN CAD • SUBJECT TO CHANGE