

EREV SHABBOS

17 Av 5786

Friday · July 31, 2026

CANDLE LIGHTING

8:24 PM

Friday · Vaughan, ON

SHABBOS ENDS

9:31 PM

Motzaei Shabbos · Sat
night

TORAH READING

Eikev

Haftarah: Yeshayahu
49:14–51:3

PIRKEI AVOS

Ch. 4

Ben Zoma · wise, strong,
rich, honoured

PARSHAS EIKEV · SECOND OF THE SEVEN CONSOLATIONS

They Can't Take the Torah Out of Us.



An empty room. Twelve Torah scrolls were carried out of the Grand Synagogue of Levallois-Perret near Paris overnight between Sunday and Monday, and nothing else was touched. This week's haftarah, the second of the seven consolations, opens with Tzion saying she has been forgotten.

Overnight between Sunday and Monday, two men came through a window of the Grand Synagogue of Levallois-Perret, a suburb northwest of Paris, on a rope. They opened the ark and carried out twelve Torah scrolls. Rabbi Chalom Lellouche found the ark empty on Monday morning, when he arrived to prepare the building for a bar mitzvah.

Nothing else was taken. Silver, fittings, objects worth far more than parchment on any resale market, all of it was left where it sat. The president of the Levallois community said it was the Torah, and only the Torah, that was targeted, by a professional team that worked around the cameras and the alarms. He called it a spiritual trauma for the Jewish community of France. Two days before the break-in, French police had detained six people over an alleged plot against a different synagogue in the north of the city.

Four days earlier, on Friday, on the other side of the world, someone walked up to the single wall still standing at the Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center in Altadena, California, and sprayed swastikas across it. That wall carries a mural: one large orange California poppy and the words כל ישראל ערבים לזה לזה, all of Israel is responsible for one another. The campus

burned down in the Eaton Fire in January 2025, and the mural was painted on the one wall the fire left standing. It existed because that same wall had already been defaced once this year, in January, with an obscenity aimed at Zionism. Now it had been covered again. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department opened a hate crime investigation.

Then Shabbos came in, and it happened a third time, in a third country. At around three on Shabbos morning, on Leicester Road and a neighbouring street in Salford, outside Manchester, the windows of parked cars belonging to visibly Jewish families were smashed, the second week running that those streets had been hit.

Tzion Says She Was Forgotten

The haftarah this Shabbos is the second of the *shiva d'nechemta*, the seven haftaros of consolation read on the Shabbosos running from Tisha B'Av to Rosh Hashanah, in order, climbing out of the mourning toward the new year.

Last week's haftarah opened with *nachamu*, be comforted. This week's opens with the city refusing it. 'וְתֹאמַר צִיּוֹן עָזְבֵנִי ה' וַאֲדֹנָי שָׁכַחְנִי. And Tzion said, Hashem has abandoned me, and my Master has forgotten me.

Yeshayahu prophesied in Yerushalayim in the generations before the *churban*, the destruction, and through these chapters he speaks to the city as if she were a woman: a wife who believes her husband has walked out on her, a mother who has buried her children, *Rachmana litzlan*. Tzion is that woman. Her walls were breached and left in heaps when Bavel, Babylon, took the city, the Beis HaMikdash was burned, and the people were marched out of it into exile. That is the rubble she is speaking from.

Her word for it is *shechachani*, He has forgotten me. Not that He has punished me, which would at least mean He was still paying attention. Forgotten is the worse claim, because forgotten means the file is closed.

Engraved, Not Written

Hashem answers the charge of forgetting two verses later, and not with an argument. With an image. הֵן עַל כַּפַּיִם חִקְתִּיהָ. *Behold, I have engraved you on My palms; your walls are always before Me.*

It could have said written. It says engraved, and that is the whole point. Writing sits on a surface, and anything on a surface can be lifted off it, scraped, painted over, carried away. *Chakikah*, engraving, means the letters are not added to the material at all. They are cut out of it. You cannot take them off an engraved hand without destroying the hand.

Rashi reads it as a man who cuts a mark into his own hand so that he cannot forget what it stands for. The Radak reads it plainly, that the palms are the one place a person cannot avoid looking at. The answer is not a promise to remember. It is that forgetting is not possible.

Then the verse names her walls, the ones Bavel broke: *your walls are always before Me*. The rubble she holds up as proof He stopped looking is the thing He says never leaves His sight.

The Heel That Walks

The parsha opens תִּשְׁמְעוּן עֲקֵב הַיָּהּ, *and it will be, eikev, that you listen*. *Eikev* means heel, and that root names our generation: *ikvisa d'Meshicha*, the heels of Moshiach, which Rashi

explains as the end of the exile, immediately before he comes.

The phrase comes from the last mishnah in Sotah. In the heels of Moshiach, insolence increases, the wisdom of the scribes rots, those who fear sin are held in contempt, truth goes missing, and the face of the generation is like the face of a dog. Then the mishnah asks one question and answers it: on whom is there left to lean? On our Father in Heaven. The era is painted that bleakly on purpose, so the conclusion has nowhere else to go.

The heel is the least sensitive part of the body, which fits an era with little open revelation, and it is also the part that walks. The hand the mishnah leaves us to lean on is the same hand the haftarah says we are engraved into, the one surface that cannot be scraped clean.

The Mural Went Back Up on Thursday

On Thursday afternoon, in the heat, the congregation in Altadena gathered at their burned campus. Miriam Hellmann, the artist who painted the mural the first time, stood at the wall and finished it a second time while people watched. Neighbours came, including the family who lived across the street until the fire took their house too. Officials spoke. What the members kept mentioning afterward was the neighbours who stood out in that heat next to them.

There is one wall left standing on that lot, which is the only reason there was anything to paint on. We know that arithmetic. The holiest place we have is the Kotel, the piece still standing when everything else came down. A single wall left standing is not what is left over. It is what holds.

The scrolls of Levallois are still missing as this Shabbos comes in, and they should be found and returned. Until they are, that community reads from a borrowed one. Those scrolls matter, which is why their loss is a wound. What no one can carry out of a window is the covenant that keeps putting Torah into parchment.

ON THE HORIZON

Mon, 20 Av · August 3

Yahrzeit of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, the Rebbe's father and Rav of Yekaterinoslav, niftar in Soviet exile in Alma Ata, 5704.

Thu–Fri, 30 Av–1 Elul · August 13–14

Rosh Chodesh Elul, two days. Forty days to Yom Kippur, and the first shofar after Shacharis.

RAMBAM STUDY SCHEDULE · SHABBOS, 18 AV · DAY 180

Three chapters a day: Korban Pesach, chs. 3–5 · **One chapter a day:** Kiddush HaChodesh, ch. 2 · **Sefer HaMitzvos:** Positive 57, 56, 58.

Sefer HaMitzvos, in brief: P 57, to slaughter the Pesach lamb at its time on the fourteenth of Nisan; P 56, that it be brought only by those counted on it; P 58, to eat it roasted on the night of the fifteenth, with matzah and maror.

SOURCES

Devarim 7:12 · Yeshayahu 49:14, 49:16 (Haftaras Eikev, Yeshayahu 49:14–51:3) with Rashi and Radak on 49:16 · Mishnah Sotah 9:15; Sotah 49b with Rashi · Shevuos 39a (*kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh*) · News: JTA, Times of Israel (Levallois-Perret, overnight July 26–27); The Forward, Algemeiner (Altadena, July 24 and the gathering of July 30); Jewish News (Salford, July 25).

