

Torah Weekly

April 26- May 2, 2020
2-8 Iyar, 5780
Torah: Acharei-Kedoshim:
Leviticus 16:1 - 20:27
Haftorah:
Amos 9:7-15
PARSHAT ACHAREI-
KEDOSHIM

Calendars
We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs
Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah
We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.

A lifetime of Forward Steps

Our Parshah exhorts us to "be holy" and the reason given is "for I (G-d) am holy." The Midrash adds that though we are encouraged to reach for G-d's holiness, it will always remain beyond us. What did the Midrash seek to accomplish by this statement? Try to reach Me but know that you really will. What a disheartening thought! *Learning to Walk* In teaching his child to walk, a father will place the child on the floor and stand a little distance away. He will then reach to the child, encourage him to take his first step and thus reach his father. Encouraged by the thought, the child happily takes the step. Seeing this, the father now takes two steps back, hoping the child will follow suit. *The Goal* A mature child may stop and wonder: why would his father foster an illusion of nearness only to later retreat? Why does he ask me to take a step forward only to become elusive once again? The father is looking to teach his son the true objective of life: it is not important to reach your father, it is important to walk on your own. This simple yet incredible piece of information will enable the child to take a lifetime of forward steps. Our father in heaven interacts in the same way. he places us under the illusion that we can indeed reach him. However, the more we learn, the more we discover how humble and insignificant we truly are. The more we know, the

more we learn how much we truly don't know. We may wonder in exasperation: why he would appear to be so close only to hide himself once again. The wise Jew remembers that the goal is not to reach Him but to learn to take forward steps. Indeed a lifetime of forward steps.
By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

From The Heart

This week's Parshah speaks about how we should approach another person if we feel the need to point out some aspect of their behavior that is bothering us or may seem unacceptable. The Baal Shem Tov tells us that another person is like a mirror—if we find ourselves noticing faults in others, it is because they exist within ourselves. It is not such a foreign concept—it is common in psychological terms to speak of one person "projecting" their own faults onto another. It is incumbent upon us to realise that when we see a fault in somebody else, it is only because we need to work on ourselves. This fits well with the time-period we are in, *Sefirat Haomer*. During this traditional period of semi-mourning, we commemorate the loss of Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 disciples. The Torah tells us that each of them was so sure that he was right, and so determined to share this wonderful news with his fellow, that he lost sight of his fellow's needs and wishes. It is said that "Words that come from the heart, enter the heart." This implies that if the other person is not receptive to my

message, it is a clear indication that my words are not coming from the right place—the blame falls upon me, rather than upon him. If I still need to point something out to somebody, it must be done in a manner of sincere and genuine kindness and concern for them, not for myself. Our tradition is replete with anecdotes regarding the importance of guarding one's speech. The story is told of the group of travelers who found themselves guests in a stranger's house, in a strange city, their host being kind enough to feed them and provide shelter. The guests, scrupulous in their observance of the kosher laws, asked question after question regarding the exact details of the food and its preparation. One of those present in the house asked them, "Tell me—are you as careful about what comes out of your mouth as you are as what goes into it?" The tongue, say the sages, has no bones, allowing it to move in any direction. We have to be careful that it should only move in the right direction!
By Rabbi Mordechai Wollenberg

Don't Be Holy!

Holiness is overrated, Kedushah is not
This week's Torah portion contains the directive to the Jewish people: "*Kedoshim tihiyu*," always translated as "*You shall be holy*." The English word "holy" indicates G-dly, otherworldly, a state of being that is fundamentally different from the norms of

everyday life. Indeed, the OED suggests that the word's etymology is derived from the same root as "wholly"—something entirely dedicated to G-d. When we turn, however, to that which this week's reading describes as "kadosh" (holy), we notice that mixed in with laws about the Temple and the like (your typical "holy" stuff) we have laws about leaving a portion of our fields to the poor and laws about not lying to each other. We have laws about the Shabbat; one of whose most important precepts is to enjoy ourselves, physically, on that day—it is mandatory. We have an absolute obligation to aid an innocent third party being attacked and laws against bearing grudges and engaging in vendettas. These laws are not devoted to divine and spiritual matters alone. They are about managing the realities of our everyday life in a "kodesh" manner. The actual meaning of the Hebrew word kodesh is "separated." But separated in the sense of refinement. When we refine something we separate the substance we desire from extraneous substances that are mixed in with it. The things that are kodesh are the ordinary events and stuff of life; remaining so, but separated from undesirable elements that would dilute and weaken them. So the doctrine of kodesh declares: "Don't abandon the world and everyday life—refine it!" Kodesh tells us: Don't eschew business and live out of dumpsters—but separate all dishonesty and fuzziness from your marketing. Don't hesitate to appreciate a really nice wine—but separate it from the rest of your bottles and save it for Shabbat. Don't live in as state of dreamy oblivion as to your neighbor's shortcomings—confront them as necessary. But separate the momentary experience out of your long-term "ledger" and don't bear grudges. Don't strangle ambition, indeed strive to attain economic success, but separate out the impurities of greed and arrogance and you will be left with gratitude to G-d and generosity to those who lack. Don't get close to G-d by leaving your everyday life, get close by bringing G-d in to your everyday life. We bring G-d into the places in our being cleared by separating out the "impurities," the negative character traits, the selfishness, and the shallowness. So, don't be holy; make your life "kadosh." *By Rabbi Shlomo Yaffe*

April 26, 2020 --- 2 Iyar, 5780

Maharash Born (1834)

The fourth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn (1834-1882), known by the acronym "Maharash", was born in the town of Lubavitch (White Russia) on the 2nd of Iyar of the year 5594 from creation (1834). His father, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (the 3rd Chabad Rebbe, known as the "Tzemach Tzedek") once remarked that Rabbi Shmuel's birthday, coinciding with the 17th day of the Omer Count, is defined by the Kabbalistic masters as *Tifferet sheb'Tifferet* ("Beauty of Beauty") Although Rabbi Shmuel was the youngest of Rabbi Menachem Mendel's seven sons, he was chosen to succeed his father as "rebbe" and leader of Chabad in the movement's capital, Lubavitch (four of his brothers established branches of Chabad Chassidism in other towns in White Russia and Ukraine). In addition to leading his Chassidim, guiding and advising their spiritual and material lives and authoring many *maamarim* (discourses of Chassidic teaching), Rabbi Shmuel traveled extensively throughout Europe, meeting with government and business leaders to exert pressure on the Czarist regime to halt its instigation of pogroms against the Jews of Russia. Rabbi Shmuel passed away at age 48 on the 13th of Tishrei, 5643 (1882).

April 29, 2020 --- 5 Iyar, 5780

Passing of R. Yeshayahu Berlin (1799)

R. Yeshayahu Berlin was a noted Talmudist who served as rabbi in Breslau (today Wroclaw, in Poland). He authored numerous works, but is most famous for his cross references to parallel Talmudic texts mentioned in various tractates. These references, together with those of two previous scholars—R. Yehoshua Boaz and R. Yosef Shmuel—are indispensable for Talmud study, and are printed alongside the text in all standard editions of the Talmud.

April 30, 2020 --- 6 Iyar, 5780

Passing of R. Levi ben Gershon (1344)

R. Levi ben Gershon, known by the acronym *Ralbag* or by the Graecized *Gersonides*, was a great Torah scholar who lived in Provence (a region in Southern France). He is famous for his Bible commentary, which includes many ethical lessons to be learned from the stories of Scripture. He was also proficient in philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics, and wrote numerous works and treatises on these topics.

May 1, 2020 --- 7 Iyar, 5780

Jerusalem Walls Dedicated (335 BCE)

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was celebrated with great jubilation nearly 88 years after they were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia. April 26, 2020 --- 2 Iyar, 5780 Passing of Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Luntschitz, "Kli Yakar" (1619) Born in the year 1550 in Luntschitz, Poland, with just the name Ephraim, the name Sholomo was added later during a life-threatening illness (a common practice in Judaism). Rabbi Sholomo Efraim was a disciple of the famed Talmudist, Rabbi Sholomo Luria, author of the Yam Shel Sholomo, as well as the great Jewish kabalist and philosopher, Rabbi Judah Lowe, known as the "Maharal of Prague." In the year 1604, after having first headed the yeshivah in Levov, he was appointed rabbi of Prague, replacing Rabbi Lowe, who was then quite elderly. He held the position until his passing. He is the author of a number of works, but is perhaps best known for his work *Kli Yakar* (a commentary on the Torah) and *Olelot Ephraim* (a collection of sermons). Among his prominent students was Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller, author of a classic commentary on the Mishnah called *Tosfot Yom Tov*.