



# Five Cities of Refuge: Weekly Reflections on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

*Lawrence Kushner, David Mamet*

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In the ancient Jewish practice of the kavannah (a meditation designed to focus one's heart on its spiritual goal), Lawrence Kushner and David Mamet offer their own reactions to key verses from each week's Torah portion, opening the biblical text to new layers of understanding.

Here is a fascinating glimpse into two great minds, as each author approaches the text from his unique perspective, each seeking an understanding of the Bible's personalities and commandments, paradoxes and ambiguities. Kushner offers his words of Torah with a conversational enthusiasm that ranges from family dynamics to the Kabbalah; Mamet challenges the reader, often beginning his comment far afield—with Freud or the American judiciary—before returning to a text now wholly reinterpreted.

In the tradition of Israel as a people who wrestle with God, Kushner and Mamet grapple with the biblical text, succumbing neither to apologetics nor parochialism, asking questions without fear of the answers they may find. Over the course of a year of weekly readings, they comment on all aspects of the Bible: its richness of theme and language, its contradictions, its commandments, and its often unfathomable demands. If you are already familiar with the Bible, this book will draw you back to the text for a deeper look. If you have not yet explored the Bible in depth, Kushner and Mamet are guides of unparalleled wisdom and discernment. *Five Cities of Refuge* is easily accessible yet powerfully illuminating. Each week's comments can be read in a few minutes, but they will give you something to think about all week long.

Lawrence Kushner teaches and writes as the Emanu-El Scholar at The Congregation Emanu-El of San Francisco. He has taught at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City and served for twenty-eight years as rabbi of Congregation Beth El in Sudbury, Massachusetts. A frequent lecturer, he is also the author of more than a dozen books on Jewish spirituality and mysticism. He lives in San Francisco.

David Mamet is a Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright. He is the author of **Glengarry Glen Ross**, **The Cryptogram**, and **Boston Marriage**, among other plays. He has also published three novels and many screenplays, children's books, and essay collections.

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