

Introduction to Parsha #29: Acharei Mot¹

READINGS: ***Torah:*** **Leviticus 16:1 – 18:30**
 Haftarah: **Amos 9:7 - 15**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Corinthians 6:9-17**



And on this day y'kaper – i.e. He will kapor – you all ...
[Leviticus 16:30]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 3, *S'lach* [the Petition for Forgiveness]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe - *And the Holy One spoke to Moshe ...* ***acharei mot sh'nei b'nei Aharon*** – *after the deaths of Aharon's two sons* **Leviticus 16:1a.**

Since the opening lines of *Sefer Vayikra*² the Holy One has been laying out the Essential Protocols by which He intends to bring about the radical transformation that I like to call '*the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover*'. The stunning deaths of Nadav and Avihu have provided the dramatic backdrop for the Creator/Redeemer's most intense Bridal Makeover Protocol Download yet – the *Kedusha* [*i.e. 'Holiness is ...'*] *Discourse*. Through this multi-chapter download of Divine Wisdom our Bridegroom-King is introducing His strategy for *setting us apart from*, and thereby setting us up *in position to bless, the rest of the nations of the world*. It all starts with getting a vision for – and committing to invest time, energy, and passion in -

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²*I.e.* the 'book of Leviticus'.

'becoming holy as He is holy'. This is our *Lech Lecha* call. This is our *Mount Moriyah* moment. This is our *Beit-El* dream experience. This is our *burning thorn bush*. This is our awakening to our true identity, to our essential role in the Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration, and to our glorious calling as sons and daughters of the Avrahamic Covenant.

A Time is Coming ... And A People Is Arising!

It should be dawning on us by now that the promise of a people that will *arise when called*, and which will, by His special empowering, actually *become holy as the One Who called us is holy*, constitutes THE CENTRAL THEME of Torah. This revelation is not just a thematic center-point of Torah however. It also happens to be presented at *the physical midpoint of Chumash*. The parsha we will study next week – *Kedoshim* - represents the point in Torah at which the number of words³ remaining to be studied in Torah will be exactly the same as the number of words we have studied to date. Hence the *aliyot* of Torah we are now studying – in which the Bridegroom-King's most essential Holiness-defining protocols are set forth - represent *the geographical center point of the five scrolls of Torah*. “*What possible difference does that make?*” you may ask. “*Is there any significance to us in the fact that we are at the mid-point of the text?*” you may wonder.

Will You Meet Me In the Middle?

Consider the difference between Hebraic thought and Western thought. Western thought is *linear*. In Western thought one thing follows and builds upon another – as if being laid out in a straight line. This means that *the present is always over-writing the past*, and making it irrelevant. With Hebraic thought it is completely different. Hebraic thought is sometimes described as *circular/cyclical* – *i.e.* repeating itself in concentric circles, in a wave-like motion. Hebraic thought thus begins at a point or action sequence that disturbs the status quo, then works its way outward in constantly building waves the way ripples work their way outward in all directions from the point where a pebble disturbs the water, or the way a mathematical compass draws a circle around the point at its center. The essence of a Hebraic thought is thus often found not at the beginning or the end, but *in the center*. The different manifestations of that central theme are found showing up in wave after wave in all directions until predetermined ‘*book-ends*’ are reached beyond which no man can see. Genesis 1 is such a bookend. So is Revelation 22. So the fact that the matters we discussed last week and will discuss this week fall in the center of Torah could be very significant. It could even be said that the matters we study during these 2 weeks reveal the very essence of what the Torah is all about. Let us not therefore pass over the subject matter of these parshot too quickly. Let's look deeper ... and see what treasures lie waiting to be uncovered.

³ In the original Hebrew text that is.

Moments of Prophetic Revelation Like This . . .

The *Kedusha* Discourse started with the Holy One speaking tenderly to Aharon in the wake of his sons' demise – turning his attention back to, and clarifying, the mission for which he and all his sons have been called: *i.e. ... that you may badal between the tahor and the tamei, and between the kadosh and the chol, and that you may teach B'nei Yisrael all the instructions that the Holy One has spoken to them by the hand of Moshe.* Leviticus 10:10-11. He followed that with twice repeating: *Be/become/keep becoming kedoshim* [*i.e. holy, set apart, completely dedicated ones*] *as I am kadosh* [*holy, set apart, completely dedicated*]. Leviticus 11:44-45. There it was – laid out for us in a few simple – yet stunning - words. This is why we were born. This is why we are called. This, for us, constitutes the litmus test filter through which we view and engage with – or refrain from engaging with - every person, every situation, every interaction, and every circumstance. This, for us, colors and counsels every decision we make. This, for us, is what defines the meaning and purpose of life. We are knights of the *tahor* and *kadosh* realms; our reason to live is now to identify with, internalize, externalize, and model the beauty of those realms. We are always to both walk in and release that which is *tahor* and *kadosh*. We are never to confuse the people walking outside, or who are oblivious to, the Covenant by walking in or releasing anything *tamei* or *chol*. There will be collision between our lives and the realms of the *tamei* and *chol*, but there is to be not a hint of collusion between us and those dark realms. There will be many, many conflicts between us and the realms of the *tamei* and *chol*, but there is to be for us not a hint of compromising with them. We are to bring light to the darkness; how can we do that if we embrace the darkness and its destructive energy? May it never be. Instead, we are to do all things without complaining and disputing, that we may become blameless and harmless, children of God without *tumah* in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in the midst of whom we are to always shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life. See **Philippians 2:14-16a**.

So, we know what the Holy One told Aharon immediately after Nadav and Avihu died. We know how that led to all kinds of instructions about the intersection of the realms of *tahor* and *tamei* and *kadosh* and *chol* – and all the protocols for aiding people in transitioning from the latter to the former. But wait – we left something out, didn't we? What did the Holy One tell Moshe the day his nephews perished? Ah – that is where the special section of the *Kedusha Discourse* known as parsha *Acharei Mot* comes in!

Moments of prophetic revelation like this – when the Holy One shares with us the deeper aspects of His Divine Intent for our species and us as its model society – are precious. Such stunning incidents of 'ultimate mystery unveiling' are very rare. We were given one in *Genesis 1:26* – then not again until *Genesis 12:1-3*, *Genesis*

17:1-9; Genesis 18:19-20, Genesis 28:13-14, Exodus 6:6-8; Exodus 19:3-5; Exodus 20:1-17; Exodus 34:10-17 – and now Leviticus 10:10-11.

The Greater Plan – And the Really, Really Good News

Now that we know about the ‘danger zones’ of life on planet earth in this age – let’s turn our focus to the *Greater Plan* – and the *really, really good news*! I’ll jump right in. The week’s primary theme is ***B’yom hazeh*** [*on this day, i.e. the 10th day of the 7th month*] ***y’kaper*** – *i.e. He will kaper -You All!* If you want the definition of good news, you do not have to look much further than that!

Let me explain. Most of us have heard the English term ‘atonement’ used extensively in religious contexts. We inherently sense that atonement belongs on the *required-doctrines* list of our framework of systematic theology. We understand that it is important. But *do we know why?* Do we have a meaningful grasp of exactly what this thing we call ‘atonement’ *means* to our relationship with our Divine Bridegroom? Do we understand what atonement means *in the context of a Covenant?* Do we have a functional understanding of what part ‘atonement’ plays in the *Ultimate Divine Make-Over Protocol* that constitutes the essence of the Book of Leviticus?

Most of Christendom has a hazy mental picture of atonement as the experience of being *acquitted* of what we think of as our ‘sin’ by the great Judge of Heaven - or at least *pardoned* to the point that we are ultimately *not held accountable* for that ‘sin’. But the atonement concept about which we read in the Torah is not a concept of English jurisprudence. Indeed the English language did not even exist when the Bible was written. Our English word “atonement” is therefore a very rough approximation of what the ancient Hebrew term underlying it means. The essence of the action Torah describes as *kafar*, and which English-speaking students of the Bible know as ‘atonement’, is *covenantal*.

Every Covenant Involving Fallen Man Needs a Kafar-ing Protocol

Outside of the context of a *living, vibrant, growing covenant relationship* the imagery of *atonement* makes no sense whatever. What needs *kafar-ing*, you see, has its root and essence in covenant. *Kafar-ing* is what one Covenant Partner does for another, when the latter has broken the Covenant’s terms, but the former nevertheless does not intend for the Covenant to end. The Partner who did not breach the Covenant then does whatever it takes to ‘make up the deficiency’ in the breaching partner’s performance. It is not just forgiveness. It is taking the breaching partner’s place, assuming his responsibilities for him, and fulfilling them. And the purpose is not to end the Covenant – but to perpetuate it. *Kafar-ing* is all about restoration of *Covenant* relationship. If there has been no breach or

perceived breach of covenant protocol, there is no need for – and nothing to be accomplished by – *kafar* [atonement].

What needs *kafar*-ing is often misunderstood. It is not some moral failing. Nor is it a particular ‘bad act’. It is *a breach of COVENANT* – a failure on the part of one party to the Covenant to play his or her assigned role and do his or her assigned part. Immorality – whatever that means in any given culture - is not the issue. The issue involved is *relational*, not moral. *Kafar*-ing is all about restoration of *Covenant* relationship. But if we are parties to a covenant it is understood that from time to time we and indeed *every thing associated with our lives* is going to very much need this thing we know of as atonement. Atonement, you see, is not a *theological concept we are supposed to believe in with our minds*. It is instead a substantive *covenant reality* that someone in the role of a priest has to *asah* – *i.e.* make/build/construct out of the raw materials of earth – for us through painstakingly physical activity performed on our behalf. Let me get more specific.

The Lesson Of First Usage

The first usage of the Hebrew verb *kafar* in Torah is found very early - in Genesis chapter 6. More specifically in Genesis 6:14 the Holy One tells Noah that in preparation for the Flood which He is soon to send on the earth He wants Noah to:

*Make yourself an ark of etzei-gafar [usually translated as gopherwood];
make rooms in the ark,
and kafar [usually translated “cover”] it inside and outside
with k’fer [usually translated “pitch”].*

Gesenius opines that the Hebrew verb *kafar* literally means ‘*to cover, to overspread, to cover over*’. But let us look deeply into what kind of covering/overspreading we are talking about.

Noah was instructed to make an ark out of *etzei-gofer* – what our English Bibles call ‘gopherwood’. Note the similarity of the word Hebrew word *gofer* [describing the kind of wood to be used in building the ark] to the Hebrew word *kafar* about which we are speaking. The only difference is the first letter. *Gafer* is spelled *gimel, feh, resh*; *kafar* is spelled *kaf, feh, resh*. *Gofer* is believed to mean ‘oozing’. *Gofer*-wood is believed to be resinous wood that *oozes sap* when cut, and therefore seals itself off against moisture.

It was going to take many, many pieces of *etzei-gofer* to make a vessel of redemption of the magnitude Noah was instructed to build. And however good a carpenter Noah might be, there were bound to turn out to be seams and cracks and

gaps between the pieces of wood he used. Seams and cracks and gaps are definitely not good for watercraft – or for those who use watercraft for their mode of deliverance. While oozing sap from the planks might help seal the cracks somewhat, in order to fully make the vessel waterproof and impenetrable by raging Flood waters the Holy One instructed Noah to do something very important to protect those destined to be delivered through the ark. He directed Noah to kafar [cover, overspread] both the inside and the outside of the ark with kofer. Our English Bibles choose to translate kofer as ‘pitch’ to make sense to English readers. But the exact substance with which the inside and outside of the ark were to be overspread/covered is not specified.

Nowhere else in Scripture is kofer translated as ‘pitch’. It is usually translated to mean ‘ransom’, or ‘redemption-price’, or ‘appeasement’, or ‘restoration-compensation’. So if what Noah was to coat the ark inside and out with was not really pitch – then what was it? Whatever it was it had to be something that would compensate for the inevitable cracks and seams in the *wood*. Wherever the best efforts of Noah to build an ark would prove insufficient to accomplish salvation and deliverance for his family, the Holy One provided in His Word for something to be added to *cover every deficiency and make up every lack*. Welcome to *the real-time substance of what atonement is all about*.

The Message of the Hebraic Pictograph

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘atonement’ is *kafar*⁴. Let’s put aside our preconceived Western notions of what ‘atonement’ is for a little while and explore the revelation inherent in that Hebrew word. As we have discussed many times in these studies each Hebrew letter is a *hieroglyphic word picture* or *pictograph*. Since words are combinations of letters in sequence, that makes every Hebrew word a *hieroglyphic mural* – a pictograph in motion. Keeping that principle in mind let us look at the pictograph created by the letters of the Hebrew word *kafar* and see what images present themselves to our eyes.

The first letter of the word *kafar*, a *kof*, which provides the “k” sound, pictures a *winged creature with its wings cupped* – in flight, but descending, covering and casting a shadow on the place it is about to light. The second letter, a *peh*, which in this case provides the “f” sound, pictures a *mouth*, or *lips*, representing an opening, or portal, or passageway. The third letter, a *resh*, which provides the “r” sound, presents a picture that is interpreted two ways, depending upon the context. One common interpretation is that it pictures a man’s head (figuratively the “head” of a household, or the Head of man – i.e. the Holy One, or His Messiah). Another common interpretation of “resh” is that it pictures a ‘sinner’, in Hebrew called a *rasha* – i.e. a

⁴ Kafar is *kof, peh, resh*. Strong’s Hebrew word #3722, it is pronounced *kaw-far’*.

man who has *wandered from* the household⁵.

In the case of the word *kafar*, the dual imagery presented by the *resh* means that a mural is being presented that shows *something happening simultaneously in two realms*. On the one hand, the winged creatures [*serafim*] are flying around the Holy One's throne, and are reaching toward the Holy One's mouth, to receive His Words and His Breath. That is what is happening in the spiritual realm of Heaven. But simultaneously (because they have upper and lower sets of wings) the *serafim* are also alighting upon and reaching toward the lips of the *rasha* (covenant-breaker/sinner).

Does the image I have just described strike a *familiar chord* yet? It is what *Yeshayahu* [Isaiah] saw in Isaiah 6 - the *serafim* that surround the Throne of the Holy One, receiving His words, simultaneously placing a burning coal from His eternal flame upon the mouth of a man of *tamei* lips. This was necessary in order that the King and the sinful man might commune together, and that the sinful man might be placed back on the path and foundation established for him, in proper relationship with the King. So now you see what "atonement" means Hebraically. Now you should be able to understand why the Ark of the Covenant – a model of the Throne Room of the Holy One in Heaven – had to be constructed having two winged creatures on its *kafar* [cover]. May the Holy One grant you to experience it in all its fullness. And may your life and mine forever mirror and reproduce the *kafar* mural.

Introducing Acharei Mot

In *Acharei Mot* the great Sinaitic *Kedusha Discourse* is going to continue, but with a slight twist in focus. We have been talking about the distinction between that which is *tahor* - i.e. 'clean' in a Courts of Heaven sense - and that which is *tamei* - i.e. 'unclean' in a Courts of Heaven sense. The next several parsha are going to focus more upon another critical distinction - the distinction between that which is *kadosh* - i.e. 'holy' in the Courts of Heaven sense - and that which is *chol* - i.e. 'common' in the Courts of Heaven sense.

In *Acharei Mot* and its sister parsha, *Kedoshim*, we are going to discover that our Bridegroom-King's call to '**become holy as I am holy**' requires us to die to everything in and around us that is not holy - and to simultaneously let Him teach us to *abide in* and *live unto* Him Who is holy. Holiness cannot happen for us

⁵ These pictures both come from the relationship of the letter *resh* to the prior letter *beit*. *Beit* [the symbol for a household, or kingdom] is a *resh* established upon the foundation of a supine *vav*. The *resh*, separated from the *vav*, can either represent the *head* - *rosh* - of the household/kingdom, or a man who has abandoned his foundation, and strayed from his assigned path - a *rasha*.

without the death and burial of our flesh. Our will must die. Our curiosity about the dark realm and the perverse pleasures with which it pitches its wares must die. Our insecurity must die. Our rage must die. Our offenses must die. Our desire to criticize, complain, accuse, and judge must die. Our craving for a city, a tower, and a name for ourselves' must die. Our thirst for influence, for control, and for seeing and enjoying the impact we have on others must die. Our opinions, philosophies, and ideologies must die. Being holy, we will discover, means saying with the Master - and meaning with all our hearts – ***not my will, Father, but Yours be done!***

An Acharei Mot Travelogue

The Hebrew phrase *acharei mot* means 'after death'. In this parsha the Ultimate Extreme Bridal Makeover protocol continues with a slight twist. In this parsha we discover that our Bridegroom-King's call to '***become holy as I am holy***' requires us to *die to everything in and around us that is not holy - and to simultaneously let Him teach us to abide in and live unto Him Who is holy*. Holiness cannot happen for us without the death and burial of our flesh. Our will must die. Our curiosity about the dark realm and the perverse pleasures with which it pitches its wares must die. Our insecurity must die. Our rage must die. Our offenses must die. Our desire to criticize, complain, accuse, and judge must die. Our craving for 'a city, a tower, and a name for ourselves' must die. Our thirst for influence, for control, and for seeing and enjoying the impact we have on others must die. Our opinions, philosophies, and ideologies must die. Being holy, we will discover, means saying with the Master - and meaning with all our hearts – ***not my will, Father, but Yours be done!***

Acharei begins with a cryptic reminder of the recent deaths of Nadav and Avihu. Among the multitudes who participated in the great Exodus these two sons of Aharon were the first to die. They represent the first fruits of death in the Camp of the Redeemed. In order that an unthinkable strange fire event like that which led to the deaths of Nadav and Avihu not recur, however, the Holy One follows up his reference to their demise by laying out a pathway of holy fire. The road markers along this pathway of holy fire are His essential protocols of atonement.

The Kedusha [Holiness] and Avodah [Service] of Yom Kippur

The Holy One begins by turning the eyes of Moshe – and all readers of Torah – to a Great Day He has established. The 10th day of the 7th Biblical month⁶ is set aside

⁶ Tradition has it that this is the day that Moshe returned from Mount Sinai bearing the second set of tablets to show the world Israel had received atonement for the making of the golden calf. The mo'edim of the Holy One not only commemorate historical events - the revelation that came with the original event is released afresh into the world each year on the appointed date. Thus, the day chosen as the prototypical Day of Atonement was the day the Holy One forgave the sin of the golden calf. And thus, that day each year holds the same potential for atonement for each person alive on that day.

by the Holy One forever, in all our generations, for a very special theme and purpose. That day is not to be like any other day of the year. It is the holiest of days. It is on this day that the Holy One will reveal and release the ‘atonement’ He has ordained for mankind from before the foundation of the world. This is to be set aside forever as the Great Day of *Kafar-ing*.

This special day of our Bridegroom-King is the appointed time for breaches of covenant by the nation and each person in it are to be dealt with. The day has a name - *Yom Kippur*. It means the day of complete covering. This day will join *Passover and the associated Feast of Unleavened Bread* as the first to be revealed of what will eventually be seven annual *mo’edim* - Divine Appointments between the Creator and His People, each of which is designed for very specific covenant re-affirming purposes.

The holy protocol for *Yom Kippur* has several facets. First the date must be discerned. Secondly, the High Priest is to take off his usual ‘coat of man colors’ and put on instead special garments of the purest white. Then, outside the *Holy Place*, in the sight of all the people, the High Priest is to act out a prophetic drama of atonement. From among the goats in the *kohanim*’s flock of firstborns two special kids are to be chosen. The High Priest is then to cast lots to determine which of these young goats is to become a surrogate of *korban chata’t* and which will be led outside the camp and released.

Yom Kippur is also the only day each year upon which the High Priest actually enters the Holiest Chamber of the *Mish’kan*. Once there he will act out a second prophetic drama. Once he has entered the holiest place on earth in the midst of a cloud of burning incense, he will confess aloud all breaches of covenant the entire nation has committed. What a moment! He will then sprinkle the blood of three separate *korbanot* on the *kafar* [covering] of the ark. **Leviticus 16:12-23.**

The redemptive drama of *Yom Kippur* is not all performed by the High Priest, however. Every member of the Covenant community has a part to play as well. As the High Priest is performing all the aforementioned things on our behalf, we are to keep a solemn vigil. This requires, first of all, that we refrain from doing any *regular work*; secondly, it requires that, for the entire day, we *deny ourselves* – i.e. *fast*. **Leviticus 16:29-31.**

How long is this to remain relevant? Forever! The length of time for which we are to continue to observe and do our part in this special day of *Kafar-ing* is clearly set forth. The Holy One specifically declares it is to be *an ordinance forever*. See **Leviticus 16:29(a) and 34.**

Other Important Matters of Kedusha for the Holy Nation

The focus of the Holy One will then turn from the prophetic drama of *Yom Kippur* to a number of other matters He deems critical the holiness of the Covenant People.

1. Altar Shock:

Unlike Other Nations, We Are To Have Only One Altar

The Holy One will instruct us that we are to have only one altar for the entire nation. We are not to build or maintain altars for our homes, our communities, our regions, or our nations. And no *korbanot* are to be slaughtered or presented anywhere but at the brazen altar of the *Mish'kan*. **Leviticus 17:1-9.**

2. Definition of Food:

We are to let the Holy One, not our Eyes or Appetites, Define Food

The Holy One will also revisit the issue of what His Holy People are, out of love for Him and in order to reflect His Holiness, to choose not to eat. Blood, as well as the flesh of animals that are injured or killed by predators, or which die by themselves by reason of age or sickness, are not to be considered food by us. **Leviticus 17:10-16.**

3. Kingdom Counterculture:

We Must Not Embrace Any of the Ways or Values of our Pagan Neighbors

The Holy One warns us that we will inevitably be exposed, in the course of our time on earth, to other cultures and foreign ways. That is, of course, part of His redemptive plan. He intends for us to positively affect them – not for them to negatively affect us. It is therefore essential to our mission and His Exaltation that we not pollute ourselves or compromise our mission by adopting the ways of the foreigners we encounter. **Leviticus 18:1-3.**

4. The Living Testimony of Torah:

The Torah Is to Become and Forever Remain Our Lifestyle

The Holy One then reiterates that in order to fulfill our mission our lifestyle must be exactly what He prescribes for us in the Torah. Nothing foreign is to be added, and nothing of its holy substance is to be overlooked or subtracted. **Leviticus 18:4-5.**

5. Sexuality the Kingdom Way, With No Compromises:

Modesty and Sexual Wholeness/Integrity Are to Be Carefully Guarded

Ever concerned about our welfare and our ability to reflect His Holiness to the world, the Holy One will then set forth some very specific instructions on how to keep our eyes, minds, hearts, and other body parts unpolluted by the uncovered

‘nakedness’ of anyone – or for that matter any creature - other than our heterosexual spouse. **Leviticus 18:6-23**. Our Divine Bridegroom-King will then conclude parsha *Acharei Mot* with a revelation that it is the failure of a person to restrain sexual appetites, curiosity, and impulses, more than anything, which will open a person and a nation up to ever-deepening levels of perversion and eventually culminate in blatant idolatry and the failure to value human life – even the lives of children. Any people who allow themselves to indulge unrestrained sexual appetites, He warns, winds up polluting the land He has created for His People, to the point that the land will begin to violently convulse on account of them. **Leviticus 18:21, 24-30**. We are to be careful not to indulge in even the attitudes, much less the behaviors, the pagans of Kena’an we are called to displace have indulged now for so many generations that the land is ready to vomit them out.

Oh Beloved – we have a wonderful King – and a magnificent calling. We actually have the opportunity, at every moment, wherever we are, and whatever we or anyone else is doing, to both commune and co-labor with the Creator of the Universe. We have the privilege of serving as the earthly ambassadors of His Glorious Heavenly Kingdom. We were created for so much more pleasure than the fleeting and always destructive sensual experiences offered by this world could ever give us!

A Brief Note on the Haftarah

Amos 9:7 - 15

In the *haftarah* we study this week along with parsha *Acharei Mot* the Holy One our God will speak through the prophet Amos - a simple herdsman from the small village of Tekoa. The subject matter of the prophetic messages which Amos will relate to us this week will be what the Holy One planned/plans to do with the national entity [i.e. kingdom, governmental structure] built on earth by the ‘northern tribes’ under the leadership of Yosef’s descendants [the tribes of Efrayim and Menashe]. Though he was from the Southern Kingdom [*Y’hudah*] the capitol of which was Jerusalem, Amos was sent to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom [*Israel*], whose capitol was Samaria.

Even as the ‘Northern Kingdom’ was expanding and flourishing under Jeroboam II the Holy One sent Amos to announce that because the leaders of that national entity had persistently for generations strayed after the ways of the heathens and had refused to make *t’shuvah*, receive atonement, and return to the *ways of holiness*, their days as a political entity were numbered. The Holy One very specifically declared through Amos:

***Behold, the eyes of the Holy One Elohim are upon the sinful kingdom,
and I will destroy it from the face of the earth.***

*All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword;
those who say: 'The evil shall not overtake or confront us.'*

But even though the national entity claiming physical descent from Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov was judged faithless and sentenced to destruction, the Holy One promised that the covenant He made with Avraham, Yitschak, and Ya'akov would not cease. He proclaimed loudly that the covenant would be renewed powerfully in the end-times with a 'sifted' remnant made up of those He would enable, against all odds, to survive their various exiles. Specifically the Holy One promises:

*... I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations,
as corn is sifted in a sieve,
yet the least grain shall not fall upon the earth.*

In other words, the Holy One promises to take that which is perceived as *evil* [the captivity of the Northern Kingdom and dispersion of its tribes throughout the world] and turn it into good. Here are some of specific 'good' things the Holy One promises to do when He brings back the remnant to the Promised Land:

*In that day I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David,
and repair its breaches.
I will raise up his ruins and build it as in the days of old,
so that they may possess the remnant of Edom,
and all the nations upon whom My name is called.*

*Behold, the days are coming, says the Holy One
when the plowman shall overtake the reaper,
and the treader of grapes, the one who sows seed.
The mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills will melt.
And I will turn back the captivity of My people Israel.
They will rebuild the desolate cities and inhabit them;
they will plant vineyards and drink their wine;
and they will make gardens and eat their fruit.
And I will plant them upon their land,
and they will never again be plucked up
from their land which I have given them, says the Holy One your God.*

Hasten that day, O Bridegroom of Heaven!

A Quick Look at this Week's Readings from the Apostolic Scriptures

I Corinthians 6:9-17

In the B'rit Chadasha passage we study this week Shaul of Tarsus will list ten groups of people who have chosen to refuse to receive and embrace the Kingdom of God as their eternal inheritance. The list of groups whose hearts Shaul says are hardened against the kingdom include:

Those who let sexual urges control their thoughts and behavior
idolaters
adulterers, male prostitutes
practitioners of homosexual acts
thieves, covetous persons
drunkards
slanderers, and
extortioners

What is the ‘common thread’ between all these groups? The common link between all these groups is not merely that they are all *covenant-violators* [a term which includes all who fall short of the glory of the Holy One], but is instead that each has *rejected the Holy One’s prescribed antidote for breaches of the covenant – i.e. substitutionary and experiential atonement*. Shaul will make it clear that, though these 10 groups of people tend to have especially hard hearts, *there is nevertheless, as long as a person lives, still hope for every covenant violator*, because:

Such were some of you ...
but you were washed [made tahor].
and you were sanctified [made k’dosh].
and you were justified [made tzedek]
in the name of the Holy One Yeshua,
and in the Spirit of our God.
[I Corinthians 6:9-11]

That, Beloved, is atonement. Bless His Holy Name!

May you meet the Holy One in His throne room,
receive atonement through the eternal korban of Messiah,
and begin to be made holy in Him.

The Rabbi’s son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

The Fourth Petition: Ga’al [Kinsman Redemption]

Re’eh v’onyeinu, v’rivah riveinu

Behold our troubles, and carry away our sorrows

u’goleinu m’hera l’ma’an sh’mecha

and redeem us quickly, for the sake of Your Name

ki go’el chazak atah

for You are a fierce Redeemer

Baruch Atah Adonai Go’el Yisrael

Blessed are You, O Holy One, Israel’s Kinsman-Redeemer