

Parsha #29: Acharei Mot¹

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

Parsha #30: Kedoshim

READINGS: ***Torah:*** Leviticus 19:1 – 20:27
 Haftarah: Ezekiel 22:1-19
 B’rit Chadasha: I Peter 1:13-16



Atonement will be made for you
[Leviticus 16:30]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 2, *Teshuvah* [Turning Back to the Path of Torah]

***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.**

This week our studies will be drawn from *parshot Acharei Mot* [Leviticus 16:1-18:30] and *Kedoshim* [Leviticus 19:1- 20:27]. This five-chapter unit sits at the epicenter of the *Great Kedusha Discourse* – i.e. the longest continuously running download of Divine Speech in all of Holy Writ². In this Discourse the Holy One lays out His radical strategies for setting His Covenant People apart from, and thereby empowering them to bless, every family, household, and bloodline on earth. If we are ever to '*be/become holy as He is holy*', and serve as models of His Holiness to the people and nations of the world the way He has called us to do, this Discourse lays out the pathway we must follow.

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² The *Kedusha Discourse* is a free-flowing Divine briefing on the subject of practical and situational holiness that begins in Leviticus 10:8 and continues through Leviticus 24:9.

The promise of a people that will arise when called, and which will actually become holy as the One Who called us is holy, constitutes THE CENTRAL THEME of Torah. And it all starts with awakening to our true identity, to our essential role in the Grand Plan of Redemption, and to our glorious calling as sons and daughters of Avraham.

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*; *20:1-17*, and *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 *kafer* -***You All!*** If you want the definition of good news, you do not have to look much further than that!

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 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 that is involved; it is

taking the breaching partner's place. It is assuming all his responsibilities, and fulfilling them, when he can't..And the purpose is not to end/abolish the Covenant, or make it obsolete; it is strengthen, reaffirm, and 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 *everything 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 the Holy One tells Noah that in preparation for the Flood 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. **Gafar** 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 took 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 have been Divinely empowered to be, there were 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 Noach to do something very important to protect those destined to be delivered through the ark. He directed Noach 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 Noach 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 Noach 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 Pictograph

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘atonement’ is **kafar**³. 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.

³ Kafar is *kof, peh, resh*. Strong’s Hebrew word #3722, it is pronounced *kaw-far’*.

a man who has *wandered from* the household⁴.

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 the Parshot

In *Acharei Mot* and *Kedoshim* we will find 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 our *affinity for the perverse pleasures with which it pitches its wares* must die. Our *self-obsessed insecurity* must die. Our *outrage* must die. Our *offenses* must die. Our *desire to nit-pick, 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, political theories, 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!***

⁴ 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***.

An Acharei Mot Travelogue

The Hebrew phrase *acharei mot* means 'after death'. *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 month⁵ is set aside 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.

⁵ 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.

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

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 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/Purity 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 will 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 Kedoshim Travelogue

The 30th parsha, *Kedoshim*, begins with the Holy One calling *B’nei Yisrael* His *adat* – i.e. *witness throng*. We are not just Redeemed; we are partners in His Covenant, and co-laborers in His Grand Plan of Redemption and Restoration. We are His Bride-People, His Army, or His Nation. But, first and foremost, we are His

WITNESSES. Our lives are supposed to serve as unambiguous proof-texts of the power and the beauty of His love. Our lives are supposed to provide solid evidence of the wisdom and superiority of His Ways. The people of the world are supposed to be able to look at us, listen to us carry on conversations, business transactions, and relationships, and be inspired to want to be like us.

After calling us His *adat*, the Holy one then reminds us of our primary assignment as a witness thron/nation: “***You are to be kedoshim*** - i.e. *holy ones* - ***for I, the Holy One your God, am kadosh*** – i.e. *holy*.” Leviticus 19:1. The Holy One wants no confusion as to the reason He redeemed us from bondage. He wants to train us to represent Him in the world as ambassadors, emissaries, and models/teachers of His Wisdom, His Goodness, His Wonders, and His Ways. For us to do that, we have to offer the world *a way out of both mediocrity and depravity*, and be prepared to *lead anyone who wishes to come out of such things into a new, more excellent way of life consisting of holiness, wholeness, harmony, hospitality, and hope*. We have to *be fully present and functional in this fallen world*, yet never consider ourselves to *be of or be even one bit like it*. He calls us to be an elite *spiritual special forces team*, ‘shadowing’, ‘echoing’, and emulating the character, attributes of our Redeemer-King in all things at all times, in all situations, before all men. We are called – and trained – and expected - to serve in the danger zones of this world – at risk of our own lives, expecting nothing from those we help – we have everything we need and more from the King Whose Kingdom we represent. We are to be about this *Adat B’nei Yisrael* mission wherever we live. We are to be fully engaged in this witness thron calling in times of prosperity and in times of deprivation. We are to be about this service in times when we enjoy the favor and friendship of our fellow human beings, and in times when we are confronted with hate, ridicule, persecution, and holocaust. We are to do this ‘*be holy ones as He Who calls us is Holy*’ gig when everything is going right in our families, communities, and nation – and when all Hell is breaking loose in and around us. We are to do this even – indeed especially - when war rages, when famine strikes, when pestilence breaks out, and when ‘natural’ and/or man-made disasters befall. We are His First-Response Team. We are his field medics. We are to run to the flames, not from them. No retreat. No compromise. No surrender. No turning back. No *man*, no *woman*, no *child* left behind. This is *job one*. This is our *Mission: Impossible*. Ready ... Set ... ***Go!*** Just remember: we are not a *strike force*; nor are we a bunch of code enforcers or vigilantes; we are a ***M*A*S*H*** [i.e. *mobile army surgical hospital*] unit. The only weapon we are issued for this mission is *a glorious, inspiring love story*; any weapon of mass destruction is just too heavy for us to lug around.

The Holy One provides dozens of very practical examples of what emulating Him is to look like in real time. These examples include the following 31 very practical matters, all of which constitute part of the Holy One’s ‘love language’:

1. *making it a noticeable priority to unselfishly honor both our father and our mother* in ways that surpass the parental respect shown in the nations, and show the supremacy of the Holy One's ways over the ways of fallen man;
2. embracing and cherishing in our hearts, minds, homes, and communities, and beautifully modeling to the world, the healing, quieting, wholeness-restoring gift of *the 7th Day Sabbath*;
3. being diligent to steer clear of any trace of *idolatry* or any hint of *duality of reverence*;
4. keeping our love for both God and our fellow men vibrant, never lukewarm;
5. keeping our thanksgiving celebrations, our confessions of surrender, and all our acts of service fresh and nurturing; never allowing them to get stale, dry, or toxic;
6. approaching and doing – *and thereby modeling for the world - tzedakah* as the Holy One does *tzedakah* - i.e. *fruitful charity/benevolence provided wisely and responsibly, always with redemption and restoration in mind, never motivated by pity, condescension, manipulation, or disdain*;
7. making sure that all our business dealings are ethical and honest;
8. recognizing and honoring the personal dignity and property rights of all – rich or poor;
9. being consistent in truthfulness – always speaking whatever truth[s] we have been entrusted by our King *in love*;
10. trustworthiness – i.e. faithfulness to fulfill our commitments and keep our promises;
11. returning borrowed – or compensating the owner for damaged - items promptly;
12. paying day-workers'/contract laborers' wages daily;
13. behaving respectfully toward all people – including the deaf, the blind, the poor, and the rich – even when they are not present or have no way of knowing what you are saying or doing;
14. refusing to speak or listen to *lashon hara* – i.e. negative talk, accusation, or complaint about, or condemnation of, any person];

15. always valuing human life above convenience, ideology, or self-interest;
16. refusing to indulge feelings of hatred, malice, or contempt toward anyone;
17. caring enough to personally go to and privately warn others in the Covenant community of the consequences of thoughts, speech, behavior or reactions that is contrary to the Covenant plan AND to offer to assist them in making *teshuvah* [i.e. a meaningful, practical, methodical return back to the Covenant ways] and *tikkun* [i.e. healing and restoration];
18. leaving vengeance/retribution – i.e. ‘payback’ – to the Holy One, and trusting Him, not men, to make things ‘right’;
19. keeping no record of wrongs, but bearing all things, and enduring all things without holding a grudge – i.e. being quick to forgive every insult and offense;
20. loving our fellow man as we ourselves have been loved by the Holy One;
21. refusing admixtures/adulterations practiced by the people of the world who do not know the Holy One’s ways;
22. always focusing our energy, passion, and activity on the goal and Divinely prescribed pathway for *kippur* [atonement] rather than on the moral depravity of or the damage done by other people’s – or our own - sin;
23. responsible, patient, God-honoring fruitfulness;
24. refusing to ingest the blood of any creature – i.e. respecting each creature’s purpose, function, and place in, as well as its value to the ecosystem, Creation;
25. not seeking ‘knowledge’ or receiving counsel from any ‘occult’ – i.e. uncleanness/unclean spirit influenced – source;
26. grooming, dressing, and adorning ourselves only as our Bridegroom-King tells us will bring Him honor;
27. speaking and acting reverently toward the Holy One and everything He says is holy [especially the *Sabbaths* and the *Mish’kan* – i.e. the earthly courts of Heaven];
28. speaking and behaving reverently toward the aged;

29. treating foreigners/strangers with respect, being sensitive to the challenges of disorientation and loneliness they face, and showing them practical forms of love in the same way you do those who dwell with you;
 30. not cheating or applying different standards or measures for different people;
 31. cherishing and putting into practice all the Holy One's instructions as to how life is to be lived; and
- ^{32.} understanding, and dealing appropriately with, the most dangerous forms of breaches of Covenant/failure of essential purpose.

Kedoshim consists of 64 verses. The Hebrew mnemonic for 64 means “glow”. This fits with the theme of parsha **Kedoshim**, and indeed of all the Torah – i.e. that what we are called to do is to “glow”, to “shine”, and to *reflect our King's Resplendent light*. Is not this what the prophet Yeshayahu said [Isaiah 60:1: *Arise, shine, for your Light has come ...*]? This was the heart of the message of both Yeshua [see Matthew 5:14-16] and of Shaul of Tarsus [see Philippians 2:12-15]. So, Beloved – we truly have a great calling. We have been offered the opportunity and taught the methodology to know, and 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!

***The Week's Second Major Theme:
Real Holiness, Wholeness, Harmony, Hospitality, and Hope Lived Out
in Real Ways In Real Time for a Real World***

The placement of **Kedoshim** at the very heart of the Torah is far from coincidental; indeed, the *essence of Torah* is contained in this short parsha. In other words, if for some reason you could only have one parsha of Torah to read and study **Kedoshim** *just might be the parsha to choose*.

The theme of **Kedoshim** is that the Holy One is calling the people He has redeemed to *be drastically different* from, *live by a different standard* than, and *become a blessing* to the people of the nations who surround them. This concept of the Divine Will and Upward Call of the Holy One was first expressed to Avraham, then in turn to Yitzchak and Ya'akov. But at the beginning of Exodus 19 the Holy One broadened this calling to all descendants of the patriarchs - both natural and engrafted. At the beginning of the Mount Sinai experience He spoke prophetically and creatively over all those who followed Moshe out of Egypt that He would

make them a *goy kadosh* – i.e. a *holy nation*.' Exodus 19:4-6. A holy *nation* must necessarily consist of *holy people*. And I mean a people holy not merely in some moral or religious sense – holy in a COVENANTAL sense. What does it mean to be holy in a covenantal sense? To be holy in a covenantal sense means to *adopt a lifestyle of thought, word, and action that conforms to and keeps the focuses of attention ever on the purposes and protocols of the covenant*.

Kedoshim – the name of our parsha - means “***holy ones***” – but it means holy ones *in a covenant sense*. ***Kedoshim*** is *who we were created to be*. You. Me. Our spouses. Our kids. Ordinary Joes and Janes. Holy ones. A holy nation. *Kedoshim*.

Real holiness in real time for a real world. Think about it! But ... how can this be? What exactly does it *mean* – and even more important what exactly does it *take* – for an ‘ordinary Joe’ or ‘Jane’ to be ‘holy’ – and not just to be a little holy, but ***holy like the Holy One Himself is holy*** – and to do it in the *real world in real time*?

Can a real flesh and blood person be holy while he is getting an education? Can a real person be holy while he is looking for or doing a job, and/or trying to find a mate? Can a real person be holy when he is dealing with bills and appetites and emotions and cantankerous family members at home? Can a real person be holy while he is hanging out, having dinner, and joking around with friends? How about while he is trying to make way to work through heavy traffic or while he is being jostled, insulted, ignored or taken advantage of by rude, obnoxious, lustful people in the marketplace?

Is the Holy One demanding/expecting *the impossible*? Perhaps this warrants a little investigation! The calling of the Holy One upon our lives - i.e. the primary elements of His Covenantal ‘love language’ - can be summarized by five words: *Holiness, Wholeness, Harmony, Hospitality, and Hope*. Do those words describe your life? Do they describe the kind of life, family, and community you want? Do they at least *stir positive passion* in you? Let’s talk about each one, and what it entails.

1. The Love Language of Holiness

Most people who live in 21st Century America are at best ambivalent about, and frequently downright hostile to, any suggestion that *holiness* could actually be the goal of life. Our culture, after all, is a *Rosemary’s Baby* of overblown religion and over-hyped sensuality. Birthed from the illicit union of Hollywood and Madison Avenue we slobber over celebrities, swoon over grown men who play children’s games for obscene paychecks, and go gaga over the latest gadgets and gizmos – not to mention pyrotechnics, laser light shows, and computer-animated action

sequences. The world in which we live is absolutely obsessed with exposed flesh, outrageous hair, Botox smiles, surgically enhanced body parts, hyped-up emotions, fake news, and shock-value ‘entertainment’. We are connoisseurs of altered states and alternate lifestyles. We all fancy ourselves philosophers. We even like to trumpet our culture as ‘advanced’, ‘civilized’, ‘post-modern’, and ‘enlightened’. In the midst of such a culture it is only natural we are uncomfortable with the implications of the Creator’s call to ‘holiness’. That is because to us, in a society with a decidedly latter-era Greco-Roman worldview, holiness is an *abstract concept*, not a physical reality. We tend to define ‘holiness’ as a sort of lofty but impossible-to-define spiritual goal for unenlightened prudes and religious fanatics to aspire to, not as the very real state of being in which man was designed by His Creator to thrive.

Western culture tends to think of “holiness” as an impossible-to-achieve and downright scary spiritual state like the new age’s concept of *nirvana* – a state of detachment where *the physical world around us all-but disappears*, where *time all-but stands still*, where *all we do to occupy our time is commune with God and His angels*, and where *all our bodily and emotional needs, and all our worldly cares and affairs become irrelevant*. To someone with a Hebraic mindset, and who understands *covenant*, however, *kadosh* does not imply a state of *nirvana* – or indeed any state involving detachment from ‘real life’ - at all. *Kedusha* – i.e. ‘holiness’- is just part of our new creation identity. It is *who we are*. It’s *how we roll*. It is what makes us *us*, makes our lives meaningful, and enables us to be a blessing to all the families, ethnicities, and bloodlines on the earth. Every time we trade the *kedusha* love language that our King has showed us for the common vernacular, priorities, philosophies, ideologies, religions, pleasures, and passions of this world we start becoming irrelevant. We become a lamp that will not produce a flame. We become salt that has lost its savor; fragrant, healing oils that have lost their potency. Covenantal holiness is not an ‘escape’ from the mundane affairs of life; it is allowing our love of the Divine Bridegroom, our thankfulness for His goodness, and the Words of Torah that He has written on our hearts to infiltrate our ordinary daily activities and transform them into instruments of praise to the Creator of Heaven and Earth. Holiness is the oil in our lamp - and the flavor in our salt.

The Contagion of Holiness at Work

We are supposed to be exposed to – and infected - by holiness. And even more than that, we are supposed to be so acutely and obviously infected with holiness as to be highly contagious carriers of it. We are *supposed to* – and are in the process of being *Divinely empowered to* – bear the image of the ***kadosh*** pictograph. To be “holy” as described above is the mechanism whereby we, as sons of Avraham, are

to become a blessing to all nations. We are to do it by reflecting the Holy One's holiness in the world. That is why holiness is ***the central theme of the Torah***. Becoming holy is *our purpose in life*. Becoming holy brings glory to the Holy One our Maker and Covenant Partner. Becoming holy is *why we were redeemed from Egypt*. Becoming holy is *why we were betrothed to the Holy One at Mount Sinai*. Becoming holy is *what Messiah came to earth to model for us how to do*, even while we live real lives in real time in the midst of a very, very real, very perverse, narcissistic and neo-pagan society. Hence holiness is found not by *escaping* the physical world, but by *sanctifying* it, even its most mundane aspects. How can this be done? By surrendering to a gradual process and protocol of conforming in thought, attitude, word, and deed to the image described in the Divine Bridegroom's instructions for living. Holiness is found in embracing both the vastly different *worldview* and the vastly different *lifestyle* of Torah. Holiness finds expression in blessing the Holy One, day by day, hour by hour, in the midst of the most mundane of daily activities – from waking up, to choosing clothes to wear, to conversing with and honoring one's parents, spouse, children, siblings, and neighbors, to what one talks about, to driving in traffic, to choosing what food to cook or eat, to how to go about making a living, to how to handle the day's crises [at work, in the home, and in the world], to how one relates to other people and to animals, to how one manages one's finances, etc., etc. It even includes how one relieves himself of bodily waste.

Covenantal Holiness: Where Does It Come From?

Leviticus 19:2 is usually translated into English as “***Be holy***”. Reading this alone one might think the Holy One was using an imperative – i.e. *commanding us* to somehow ... well, to just somehow be holy. As if that were possible – or would somehow give the Holy One glory. This nonsensical way of looking at the phrase ‘***be holy***’ conjures up images of us enslaved forever, nose ever to the grindstone and shoulder ever to the wheel, determined against all odds to somehow *make holiness happen* through human effort and determination. But that is nothing like what the Hebrew text is saying. If God had been demanding that we produce holiness, He would not have used the prophetic, future tense “***Kedoshim tiheyu***”, which literally means “***you will be/become holy***”. We who are the Holy One's are therefore not *ordered* to be holy – as if holiness were something we could achieve through meritorious deeds or spiritual disciplines. We are instead *empowered by Divine prophetic word* to be/become ‘holy’. As He moved upon the face of the darkness and chaos of the primordial waters, and thus caused light to come forth into the world, so He moved upon the darkness and chaos of our individual and collective ***nafshot*** [souls] at Sinai and imbued us with holiness-capacity with prophetic, creative words – in this case: ***aleihem kedoshim tiheyu ki kadosh*** – i.e. *Holy ones you will be/become ...for holy am I*. **Leviticus 19:2.**

The abiding presence, energy, and cleansing action of the Holy One's **WORD** is what makes us holy. Think about the *Shabbat*. How did the Holy One make the seventh day holy? By *speaking holiness* over it. **Genesis 2:3**. Nothing we can do can *make* the seventh day holy – because the Holy One has already infused it with holiness. We are not therefore told by the Holy One to '*make* the seventh day holy'. We are merely instructed to 'remember' it and '*keep* it holy'. **Exodus 20:8**. Hebraically this means to *cherish* and *guard* and *be watchful over to protect* the holiness that is inherent in the day – not to let the holiness of the day *pass us by unnoticed* and not to *let its holiness be profaned*.

Letting Go of Mediocrity ... and Grabbing Hold

Holiness always involves *letting go* of something that is inconsistent with the Holy One's Plan for us as revealed in His Covenant with Avraham – i.e. something from which He calls us to 'go out for ourselves – and it also involves *grabbing hold* of, *embracing* and *running with* something that is essential to His Plan for us as revealed in the same Covenant. Every time we voluntarily give up some toxic attitude, self-righteous opinion, some dark mood, some offense, some man-centered ideological or political position, some unhealthy behavior pattern, or some Kingdom-stifling defense mechanism, we get closer to *kedusha*. That is like Avraham leaving Charan. But it cannot stop with 'leaving' places, people, or cultural situations. It has to involve 'going' where the Holy One calls us, and learning to replace/displace everything we have given up with a Kingdom-advancing substitute. We grab hold of, embrace, and run with *shalom* when we used to walk around stressed and offended. We grab hold of, embrace, and run with *joy* when we used to walk around frustrated, wounded, anxious, and depressed. We grab hold of, embrace, and run with *kindness*, when we used to walk around self-centered, self-righteous, controlling, and judgmental. We grab hold of, embrace, and run with *patience* when we used to walk around waffling between irritation and outrage. We grab hold of, embrace, and run with *Covenant Mission* when we used to walk around looking for the next thrill, the next gimmick, and the next trending hot-topic to get excited about.

2. The Love Language of Wholeness

If, as, when and to the extent we embrace those things the Creator of the Universe calls *kadosh* [i.e. *holy*], and embark on the great journey of *kedusha* [i.e. *holiness*], we begin to sniff of and peek at *the second level of Covenant life* – the one which in English we call 'wholeness'. This second aspect of the calling of the Holy One upon our lives consists of several phases.

A. The First Mile Post on our Journey to Wholeness – Tahorah

Our Great Covenant Journey toward wholeness begins with a season of *tahar-ing* – i.e. *defragmentation*. This is the process by which, as we learn to bask in and absorb

the Divine Energy and Attributes of the Holy One, the *conflicting loyalties* and *flesh's self-obsessed priorities* of our fallen flesh actually start to *yield to His will* and *conform to His far more excellent vision*. Double-mindedness yields single-minded focus. Divided hearts become undivided. Many minor attractions, affections, and interests are discarded in favor of the One Superior Love which begins to consume us, body, mind, and soul.

The key factor in this initial phase of the journey to Covenant-based wholeness is learning to distinguish between, and begin to separate ourselves from, and radically transcend, everything the Holy One calls:

1. **tumah** – i.e. ‘uncleanness’;
2. **sheketz** – i.e. *corruption, contamination*;
3. **shatnetz** – i.e. *polluted/diluted/misrepresented by improper admixture*;
4. **aven** – i.e. ‘iniquity’; *fruitlessness; vanity*;
5. **to’eh** – i.e. *diverging/straying from the path*; or
6. **to’ebah** – i.e. *abominable, wholly perverse and irredeemable*.

The laying aside/putting away of these things, then dismantling each and every stronghold that has been erected upon their foundation, is a progressive, lifelong endeavor. It can only happen as and to the extent we embrace the Manifest Presence of, and walk in constant communion with, the Holy One. As Yeshua said – ***He that abides in Me, and I in him, that one brings forth much fruit; but without Me, you can do nothing.*** John 15:5.

B. The Second Mile Post – Labash-ing Tzedakah

Once the *defragmentation process* is established, a season of *labash-ing tzedakah* – i.e. putting on, or dressing ourselves in, ‘righteousness’ – begins. ‘*Righteousness*’ – which really just means *saying and doing, in every situation, exactly what the Holy One directs us to do ... and nothing else* - then begins to become not just something we do, or some legal or moral status or reputation to which we might aspire, but *an essential component of our redeemed identity and persona*. In this phase, *tzedakah* – i.e. *saying and doing, in every situation, exactly what the Holy One directs us to do ... and nothing else* - actually begins to *define who we are*. *Tzedakah* begins to color our approach to and temper our engagement with every moment we live, every place to which we travel, every activity in which we engage, every person with whom we interact, and every situation and circumstance we encounter. *Tzedakah* becomes a begins to energize us, to motivate us, and to become ‘second nature’ to us. How to do/make/establish *tzedakah* becomes our primary focus in life, replacing both [a] the avoidance of pain, effort, inconvenience, and discomfort and [b] the pursuit of pleasure, treasure, leisure, comfort, power, glory, and wealth.

C. The Third Mile Post – Rifut

As we progress in *labash-ing tzedakah* - i.e. putting on ‘righteousness’ in every

facet of life – we begin to experience *inner healing* [Hebrew, *rifut*; see *Proverbs 3:1-8*], and to enter a continuum of gradually improving spiritual health [Hebrew, *bri'ot*]. This means we finally break free of self-limiting approaches and behaviors like sulking, whining, complaining, and blaming others for the setbacks we have experienced in life. It means we start shaking off the crippling death-grip of serpentine strongholds of offense, outrage, worry, anxiety, envy, resentment, guilt, shame, and regret. It means we quit letting fear of getting hurt [again], or rejected [again], or failing [again] cause us to back from our opportunities to have a positive impact on the people and situations in our spheres of influence. It means we stop triggering. It means we fully and finally forgive those who have trespassed against us. It means we joyfully release, acquit, pardon, and ecstatically bless people who once hurt us. It means we turn loose of the past, and *move on* – because we are completely confident that the Holy One is working all things together for good.

*D. The Fourth Mile Post: Becoming **Tamim** – i.e. ‘perfect’ in a Hebraic Sense*

The *rofit* – i.e. healing - process described above enables us to finally start making meaningful and consistent progress toward becoming *tamim* – i.e. KJV ‘perfect’. *Tamim* does not connote flawlessness, but it does mean *sound, solid, strong, well-trained, thoroughly equipped, functioning at a high level, and increasingly fruitful*.

*E. The Fifth Mile Post: Taking Stewardship of **Hashpa’ah** – Influence*

As *tamim* status begins to settle in, and fruitfulness begins to manifest, the world around a person takes notice. The reactions of people to your new level of calm, gentleness, focus, and fruitfulness may be favorable or unfavorable, peaceful or violent, but they will not be ambivalent. Success requires a response and garners attention; and in the process, it opens incredible opportunities of *hashpa’ah* – i.e. influence. How humbly, peaceably, and responsibly we handle each opportunity of influence determines whether these opportunities will increase or decrease. The quicker we learn to steward influence opportunities meekly, gently, and wisely, the sooner the Holy One will advance us to a position where we can impact regions, nations, times, and the readiness of the peoples of the world for the return of Mashiach.

*F. The Sixth Mile Post: Putting on **Mik’lal Yofi** – the Perfection of Beauty*

All the aforesaid processes, working in tandem, gradually begin to bring about *mik’lal yofi* – i.e. the perfection of beauty, splendor, brightness, and reflection of Divine light. We put on beauty for ashes. We dress ourselves in a garment of praise instead of a spirit of heaviness. We smile more. Our faces begin shine with the oil of gladness. We exchange laughter for tears, *simchah* for *shiva*, and dancing for mourning. We serve more humbly - and effectively. We love more deeply – and unselfishly. We become slow to speak, slow to anger, quick to forgive. We become more and more difficult to offend – and virtually impossible to outrage. We are

repulsed less and less, and disgusted hardly at all. It happens a little at a time - often in fits and starts. First comes one area, then another, and so on. There are setbacks, but they are temporary.

*G. The Destination: **Sh'lemut** – Wholeness*

The goal of it all – the ultimate destination for each of us who take the Great Journey that begins with *defragmentation* – is **sh'lemut** – i.e. *wholeness*. This involves becoming an *oak of righteousness* – a tree planted by the rivers of living water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf never withers, and who prospers in all things and facets of life. This involves being a consistent net ‘giver’ instead of a net ‘taker’; being a ‘given’ instead of a ‘variable’; being an *integer* instead of a fraction; and being *a source of nurture, shade, and inspiration for a vibrant, thriving ecosystem* – i.e. for one’s household, one’s kinsmen, one’s community, and ultimately one’s region, nation, and generation. Our *sh'lemut* means that our spouses, children, and children’s children are thriving – and even if they fall seven times they get back up, dust themselves off, and press forward. Our *sh'lemut* means that *tikkun* is being made for the sins and shortcomings of those in our bloodline. Our *sh'lemut* means that our communities are bustling – and even if a crisis or disaster comes, they do not collapse or turn on themselves. Our *sh'lemut* means that we release shalom, joy, hope, and wisdom into our world, and inspire kindness, patience, and faithful service in others. In short, our *sh'lemut* – to the extent we attain and embrace it – causes the Kingdom of Heaven to forcefully advance in the world, rolling back the darkness, and causing the knowledge of the glory of the Holy One to cover the earth like the waters cover the sea. On our watch. Selah!

Does this all sound too high a goal to attain? Does it sound too good to be true? Consider the words of Shaul of Tarsus about this process: He Who has begun a good work in you will be faithful to complete it - unto the day of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach. **Philippians 1:6.**

3. The Love Language of Harmony

An additional aspect of our calling as kedoshim is to be a people who understands and reflects *remuniah* – i.e. *harmony*. *Remuniah* is what happens when different things, voices, or instruments work together smoothly, in coordination, to achieve a pleasing and desirable result. In the realm of music, *remuniah* – i.e. *harmony* - is what happens when voices or instruments play in the same key, in proper sequence, in a way that complements one another. In the realm of Kingdom life, *remuniah* is what happens when members of a family, clan, community, or nation put aside their differences and ‘diversity’ in favor of a higher objective. It is what happens when people choose to overlook insults and resist envy and offense in order to co-labor in a Greater Plan.

Harmony is what happens when men and women of the Covenant are *‘kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, giving preference to one another, not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Holy One; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer, distributing to the needs of the kedoshim, given to hospitality, blessing those who are persecuting you; blessing and never cursing; rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep. Being of the same mind toward one another; not setting our mind on high things, but being content to associate with the humble; not being wise in our own opinion; repaying no one evil for evil; having regard for good things in the sight of all men; and, to the maximum extent possible, as much as it depends on us, living peaceably with all men.* Romans 12: 10 ff. See also Philippians 2:3 ff: *Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through self-serving ambition or conceit, but in humility of mind let each of you esteem others better than yourselves.* And see Ephesians 4:1 ff: *Walk worthy of the calling of which you are called, with all meekness and gentleness, with longsuffering/patience, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Ruach in the bond of shalom.*

As the *adat* – i.e. witness throng – of the Holy One, we are called to live together – with each other and with as many of the people of the nations as possible - in *remuniah*. We are not here to hate. We are not here to compete. We are not here to take. We are called and empowered to see beyond people’s attitudes and behaviors to the vast reservoirs of potential the Holy One designed into them – even if they are not even close to tapping into those reservoirs yet. We are to value other people’s lives – even if they are fantasizing about killing all of us. We are called to love when everyone else hates. We are called to humble and gentle – albeit wise - when everyone else is being arrogant and cruel.

The opposite of harmony is *discordant selfishness*. This usually manifests in competition, dissension, complaint, jealousy, *lashon hara*, harsh dealings, divisive rhetoric, acts of sabotage, vengefulness, and, ultimately in one level or another of civil war. We are not called to discordance. We are not called to dissent or dissonance. We are not called to clamor. We are not called to cacophony. We are not called to chaos. We are called to offer the peoples of the world a healthy alternative to all that.

4. The Love Language of Hospitality

Among all the other things, our calling as an *adat* – i.e. *witness throng* – requires us to be a people of extreme hospitality. In Hebrew thought, this involves two things: 1. *haknasat orchim*, or being inclusive of strangers, and 2. *hek’desh*, becoming/providing a sanctuary/safe place in/through which people can get to

know the Holy One, His ways, His blessing, and His calling in a nurturing, inspiring, encouraging, loving ‘Beauty Realm’ atmosphere and environment.

The critical importance of the hospitality aspect of our Covenant calling cannot be overstated. It is in the home –where we drop all the masks, kick off our shoes, and let our hair down – that the truest test of our commitment to and relationship with the Holy One. Anyone can put on a good ‘face’ in public; but in private, behind closed doors, when no one is watching? When tiredness shows? When there is nowhere to hide a selfish mood or attitude? When the children misbehave? When familiarity breeds contempt – or at least temptation to focus on personal comfort and convenience, and take the other people for granted? Where the television and computer screens always call for ‘me time’, but never seem to deliver what we are looking for? Where the laundry piles up like falling leaves in Autumn, the lawn needs mowing, and the trash cans need to be emptied again? Where the spouse’s and/or the kids’ clutter threatens your sanity? Where the sheets need to be changed? Where supper needs to be cooked, then dishes washed [no, it’s *your* turn – I did it yesterday!]?

Introducing the ‘Lovely Tent’ People

Bila’am, the prophet of the nations, was hired to curse B’nei Yisrael. **Numbers 22-24.** He gazed with a prophet’s eye at the Yisraeli encampment, however, and was taken aback. Instead of cursing the community/nation he saw, he blurted out: *Mah tovu ohaleicha Ya’akov* – i.e. *How lovely are your tents, Oh Ya’akov ... mish’kanoteicha Yisrael* – *your dwelling places, Yisrael!* **Numbers 24:5.** We, more than any other people on the earth, are to have *lovely tents and dwellings*. They are to be beautiful to look at, and they are to be delightful to visit. They are to make people feel welcome. They are to radiate shalom, and exude holiness. They are to make people feel safe. They are to make people feel alive – and full of hope, promise, and potential waiting to be tapped. They are to make people feel inspired, empowered, nurtured, and loved. They are where the neighborhood kids – and widows, and fatherless, and foreigners – want to come to ‘hang out’, ‘chill out’, and, when the table is spread, dine to the fullest. That is the way it is *supposed* to be. Our homes are supposed to be a *magnet* – and a safe, comfortable, uplifting, healing haven - for the lonely, the hurting, the downhearted, the overstressed, and the perplexed, as well as the weary, the thirsty, the hungry, and the lost. I call this the ‘*lovely tent*’ *phenomenon* . It should apply in our homes whether we are rich or poor, young or old, captive or free.

But what is it that is to make our tents lovely? What does it take to make our homes a delight to experience? What exactly is it that makes being in our homes feel better than being anywhere else? It is not the fact that we have two

refrigerators and a *mezuzah* on every door. It is not the fact that the rooms are decorated with Hebraica from the Promised Land. It is not that we know how to promote health and a sense of well-being in a room by diffusing frankincense, lavender, and other essential oils. It is not that we have holy books lying open on desks and tables, and psalms of praise to the Holy One playing through our sound systems even when they are not being sung around our table. Well, at least it is not *just*, or *primarily*, those things. Avraham didn't have those things – and he didn't need them. He was still 'Mr. Hospitality'. His tent was always 'the place to be' – for angels as well as for men. Why? It wasn't so much because of what he *had* in his tent; it was because of what he *didn't have* there. He didn't have *anger* there. He didn't pollute the atmosphere there with sexual perversion. He didn't make the air heavy with idols, images, icons, and oppressive religious symbols. He didn't glorify sin, death, or drama there. He didn't indulge in *self-pity* there. He didn't utter a syllable of *profanity* or *coarse speech* there. He did not speak curses, make accusations, cast blame, or there. Racial, ethnic, regional, class, or political/ideological prejudice were strangers. Hate was not welcome there. *Lashon hara* – i.e. negative, accusatory, gossip-laden speech - was never heard there. Deception, control, and manipulation were nowhere to be seen. *Avraham* was there – and he *talked to and walked with the Creator of the Universe there* – all the time ... and man, did it show! As a result of the way Avraham interacted with the Holy One there, making a home away from Home there for Him, Avraham's tent was transformed. The calming, inspiring Manifest Presence of the Almighty was always there, bringing *bayit shalom* – i.e. *peace in the home*. Avraham's tent thus became a dispensary of blessing, a sanctuary of wholeness, a factory of wellness, and a fountain of wisdom. As a result of being immersed in that atmosphere all the time, Avraham became infinitely trustworthy. The people around him became certain that he was never going to turn on them, steal from them, lie to them, judge them, rant at them, manipulate them, creep on their wives or daughters, or use them. had developed a good heart, a good attitude toward life and all other people, and imparting to him what the sages like to refer to as a 'good eye'.

Part of having a 'good eye' – i.e. a redemption-focused eye that looks beyond unpleasant attitude and sinful behavior to potential and need - is understanding that every stranger, widow, fatherless son or daughter, and impoverished person the Holy One allows to come into the orbit of our influence is there to provide as a test of our commitment to be a blessing [per the Avrahamic covenant, Genesis 12:3 and Genesis] to every family on the face of the earth. Moreover, one with a 'good eye' [in Hebrew *ayin tov*] also understands it is never only the person our eyes look upon who is standing before us – it is all his or her generations. It is every member of his or her family. It is every one of his or her ancestors – and descendants. How we respond will not only affect the person we see with our eyes, but will impact – for

the Kingdom or for our flesh - on generation after generation yet to come. That is why hospitality is so very, very important.

5. The Love Language of Hope

Our Covenant calling as an *adat* – i.e. *witness throng* – also requires us to be a people of *tikvah* – i.e. *hope*. *Steadfast hope*. *Unshakeable hope*. *Active hope*. *No matter what the circumstances – or the prognosis* – hope. The kind of hope I am talking about *never despairs, never gives up, never gives in, never retreats, and never surrenders*. *Tikvah*, which our English Bibles translate as ‘*hope*’, is derived from a verb meaning ‘*to bind*’. In Covenant, we do not just ‘believe’ in the Holy One, our lives are *bound up with Him, His Ways, His Will, His Plan, His Promises, His Strategies, and His Timing*. We do not just have a book, or a systematic theology, or a belief system, you see – we have a KING. We have a glorious, eternal, immortal, benevolent, wise and faithful King Who does all things well. We are bound up with our King’s essential goodness. We are bound up with His deep, abiding, enduring love for us – and all His Creation. We are bound up with His fierce loyalty to His Covenant with each of Avraham’s descendants individually and with all of B’nei Yisrael corporately. We are bound up with His *Shabbat Shalom*, His *Pesach* Deliverance, His *Shavuot* Empowerment, His *Yom Teruah* shofar call, His *Yom Kippur* atonement protocol, and His sweet *Sukkot Sh’kinah*. We are bound up, as well, with the sights, the sounds, and the fragrances of our King’s ‘Beauty Realm’ - on earth as it is in Heaven. We have a haven there – not just someday, but now. We have a great love story being told there - and a glorious love song being sung there. We have a seat at the table there. We have a voice in the *choir* there. We are bound up with the stunning redemptive plan that has been written there eternally, inscribed in the books of life, and which is slowly – but surely – being implemented on earth, moment by moment, lifetime by lifetime, generation after generation, as nations and movements, economies, empires and ideologies, statesmen and tyrants, armies and peaceniks, systems and institutions, all rise and fall. We are bound up with the understanding that it is all just seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night. Everything is going to turn out for the good – our King will see to it. It is just a matter of patience, timing, strategy, sequencing, and awaiting the opening of the most prodigious window of redemptive opportunity.

For this reason, the People of the Holy One should never be people of despair or paranoia. We should never fret over evildoers. We should never obsess over injustices. We should never even be discouraged, much less depressed. We should never be offended or outraged. We should be people who know anxiety and worry as merely a temporary, fleeting sensation - banished easily by thinking of, speaking with, and giving thanks and praise to our King.

A Process of Discovery

Holiness is not something that is *achieved*; it is instead something that is *discovered* and *nurtured*. The Covenant Call of Torah is a call to a journey of great discovery. All along the Torah journey, holiness is *found in plain view*. As those who elect to participate in His Glorious Redemptive Plan find these *kedusha treasures*, they *pick them up, put them on, and wear them like garments*.

With a little practice, holiness can be encountered in the course of the simplest of actions – actions such as *honoring one's father and mother*, and *learning – the hard way - to love one's neighbor as one's self despite his/her faults*. Holiness is found in *respecting and in doing whatever small thing one can to help the widows the Holy One brings into our acquaintance, the foreigners He causes to cross our path, the poor men and women or children we come to know, and the fatherless children the Holy One gathers around us*. Holiness is found in refusing to even allow oneself to desire, much less try to take possession of, anything that does not belong to you. Holiness is found in rejecting hate and condemnation, no matter what the provocation. Holiness is found in forsaking all falsehood and all deception. Holiness is *the lifestyle of a bondservant* – one who has, for love of a worthy Master, voluntarily dedicated his mind, his mouth, and his members to faithfully observing all the Master's statutes and judgments and making them come alive in every arena of life.

The Holy One sees holiness in terms of very, very practical life issues. And He considers our quest for holiness in these very practical areas of mundane life far more important to the accomplishment of our purpose on earth than how well we may sing, preach, teach, dance, write or play music, pray, prophesy, or evangelize.

Other Important Matters of Kedusha for the Holy Nation

The Holy One also wants us to know:

1. 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. Our Diet Is to Be Different From the Rest of the World

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. We Are Not to Adopt or Embrace Any of the Ways of our Pagan Neighbors

In addition, 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 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.**

4. Modesty and Sexual Wholeness/Purity Are to Be Highly Valued & Zealously 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 King will then conclude ***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 will 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, will wind up polluting the land that He has created for His People so badly that that land, which is holy, will begin to convulse on account of the inconsistent and unholy attitudes, conversations, and behaviors of a people out of touch with Torah. **Leviticus 18:21, 24-30.**

Oh Beloved – we have a great calling. We have the opportunity to know and 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! And that brings us to the glorious revelations of parsha ***Kedoshim***. This parsha consists of 64 verses. The Hebrew mnemonic for 64 means “glow”. The theme of parsha ***Kedoshim***, and indeed of all the Torah, is that we are to “glow”, to “shine”. Is not this what the

prophet Yeshayahu said [Isaiah 60:1: *Arise, shine, for your Light has come ...*]? Is not this the heart of the message of Yeshua [Matthew 5:14-16] and of Shaul of Tarsus [Philippians 2:12-15]?

The fact that the Holy One has put these instructions in the exact geographic center of His Torah means that we will do well to *pay extremely close attention* to them. Obviously, our Bridegroom-King considers them “central” to our relationship with Him. What are His priorities? There is honoring our father and mother. There is being zealous to delight in and absorb the holiness of His Shabbat. And then ... well, then there is that ‘love your neighbor’ thing.

Loving Our Neighbor – The Torah Way

What real time actions/attitudes constitute ‘loving’ one’s neighbor according to Torah? The Holy One will spell it out for us plainly. There are 8 essential elements:

1. ***“In righteousness are you to judge your neighbor.”***

We are not to be known for judging. We are to be known for righteousness. What does righteousness mean from a Hebraic standpoint? It means simply ‘*what Messiah would do under the same or similar circumstances.*’ We are to look upon, think about, speak to and relate to other people as Messiah would look upon, think about, speak to, and relate to them. We are to see past our neighbor’s external show of piety to the spiritual reality beneath, but we are also to look past the present spiritual messes he or she has in his life to the Divine potential and destiny for which he or she was created and given life by the Holy One. We are to know and relate to all other human beings we encounter *in the spirit*, not in the flesh. For it is only when we are able to look past what is ‘flesh’ about our neighbor do we love him/her in a Torah-meaningful way – and speak and behave like the *kedoshim* our Bridegroom called us to be.

2. ***“Do not go up and down as a slanderer among your people”***

We are not to allow *lashon hara* – negative speech, true or not – to proceed from our mouths. If we insist on speaking negative words – accusation, condemnation, criticism, gossip, etc. – we simply do not love either the person about whom we are speaking the negative things or our Bridegroom-King. Love in real time requires us to watch our mouths, and speak as would the Holy One – not as would the Accuser of the Brethren.

3. ***“Neither stand by without acting
when the life of your neighbor is threatened.”***

The one who truly loves his neighbor in a Torah-consistent sense, is, as Yeshua

taught in the parable of the ‘Good Samaritan’, one who gets actively involved in rendering assistance when there is a serious threat to the neighbor’s well-being.

4. **“Do not hate your brother in your heart”**

One cannot truthfully say one loves one’s neighbor, no matter what nice words or even deeds one does toward that neighbor, if in one’s heart one dislikes the neighbor. If this is a problem for you, go back to ‘love test’ number one – seeing the neighbor as the Holy One sees them.

5. **“Rebuke your neighbor frankly”**

The level of love called forth by the Holy One is real, substantive, interventional, and transformative. Kingdom rebuke should, however– like everything else in the Kingdom – be BEAUTIFUL. It should be *stunningly kind*. It should be *marvelously compassionate*. It should be *tasteful, tactful, and redemptive in approach*. After all, honey attracts more flies with vinegar; and it is the kindness – not the severity – of the Holy One that leads man to *teshuvah*. For a good Biblical example, consider Natan’s rebuke of David after the Bat-sheva/Uriah affair.

6. **“Do not bear sin because of him.”**

One who truly loves someone does not ‘bear sin’ because of him. He/she does not listen to his/her friend’s *lashon hara*. He/she does not indulge him/her in his/her un-Torah-like attitudes. He/she does not participate with his/her friend in un-Torah-like behavior. If someone truly loves another, he/she remains closer to Torah than to the object of love.

7. **“Nor bear any grudge against the children of your people.”**

To love someone Hebraically requires that a person not take up offenses – either against or ON BEHALF OF that person. One who loves another Hebraically does not get offended by rejection -- or even betrayal. Nor does one who loves Hebraically allow his/her own heart to feel anger or resentment toward others for wrongs done to one’s friend.

8. **“love your neighbor as you yourself have been loved.”**

A Brief Note on this Week’s Readings from the Prophets

Since we are studying two parshot of Torah this week, we will likewise study two haftarot.

1. Haftarah Acharei Mot: Amos 9:7 - 15

In the first *haftarah* we study this week 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, Yitzchak, 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 will overtake the reaper,
and the treader of grapes, the one who sows seed.*

The mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall 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 that I have given them, says the Holy One your God.*

Hasten that day, O Bridegroom of Heaven!

2. Haftarah Kedoshim: Ezekiel 22:1-19

In the haftarah corresponding to parsha **Kedoshim** the Holy One will speak to and through *Yechezkiel* [Ezekiel] concerning the city of Jerusalem (shortly before the Holy One brought the Babylonians to attack, besiege and devastate it, and carry its surviving inhabitants into **galut** [exile]). At the time of this prophecy Jerusalem - the capitol of the Southern Kingdom and the site of Sh'lomo's Temple - was a city the leadership of which had for many generations *refused the Holy One's antidote for covenant-unfaithfulness* – i.e. atonement. The once holy city was therefore so full of sin's poison that a more drastic form of redemption was necessary. So the therapy the Holy One applied was like chemotherapy, which kills the diseased cells of a cancerous growth in order that the vital organs being consumed by the cancer can live. The Holy One tells *Yechezkiel* how to initiate this process:

Cause them to know the abominations of their fathers

*... they didn't walk in my statutes, and they rejected my ordinances,
which if a man keep, he shall live in them; and my Shabbatot they greatly profaned.*

The Holy One gives *Yechezkiel* a promise of end-time restoration for the faithful remnant of the Southern Kingdom. He proclaims:

*I am the Holy One your God: walk in [halak] My statutes, and keep [sh'mar] My ordinances,
and do [asah] them; and make My Shabatot holy; and
they will be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Holy One your God.*

As the Holy One gave Moshe three prophetic 'signs' – *the shepherd's rod that when thrown down turned into a crocodile* but when picked up again became a shepherd's rod⁶, the pure skin which when hidden away inside one's tunic turned to **tzara'at** but when extended toward the Holy One was healed⁷, and the life-giving water that when poured out on dry ground turned to blood⁸, so the Holy One gives three signs to those who will make up his faithful remnant. The three prophetic signs the Holy One says will be manifested by His faithful remnant are: *walking in His 'statutes', keeping His 'ordinances', and re-establishing the holiness of His Sabbaths.*

Moshe's signs were given in order that the exiled and enslaved descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov would know that the Holy One had indeed appeared to him and commissioned him. If you have ears to hear and eyes to see, the three signs of the remnant are analogous to the three signs given to Moshe. The statutes of the Holy One are the shepherd's rod that some have cast aside, choosing to see them – and cause others to see them - as destructive and

⁶ Exodus 4:2-4.

⁷ Exodus 4:6-7.

⁸ Exodus 4:8-9.

dangerous. The Holy One's ordinances are the perfect skin covering that some have chosen to misuse and to regard – and cause others to regard - as leprosy. The Holy One's *Shabatot* represent the life-giving water which we called to pour out on the dry land and thirsty lands in which we live. As we pour out this life-giving water, He will cover those who receive it with His Blood.

Go and search out these mysteries, Dear Reader. These signs are given to the remnant in order that the scattered prophesied by Amos may know that the Holy One has indeed appeared to and commissioned the faithful remnant of Y'hudah prophesied by Yechezkiel.

Do you want to know if you could possibly be a part of the faithful remnant of which the Holy One is prophesying in this haftarah? If so, it is not really a very hard thing to discover. All you have to do is look for **the three signs** the Holy One has said must coexist.

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

I Corinthians 6:9-17 and I Peter 1: 13-16

In the first 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 *sinners* [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 sin*. Shaul will make it clear that, though these 10 groups of people tend to have especially hard hearts, *there is nevertheless hope for every sinner*, because:

*Such were some of you ... **but** you were washed [made **tahor**].
and you were sanctified [made **kodesh**], 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]

Moving on into the Brit Chadasha readings for ***Kedoshim*** we will look closely at Kefa's exhortations to "*the elect, strangers in the world, scattered ...* ." Kefa will echo the 'holiness' theme of parsha *Kedoshim* loudly, calling upon us to:

... just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

*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 Second Petition: Teshuvah - Starting Over

Ha-shiveinu Avinu l'Torahteichah

Turn us back, Our Father, to Your Torah

v'koraveinu malkeinu l'avodeicha

and bring us close to You, Our King, that we may serve You

v'ha-chazireinu b'teshuvah sh'leimah l'faneicha

may our repentance bring us Face-to-face with You

Baruch Atah Adonai ha-rotzei b't'shuvah

Blessed are You, O Holy One Who stirs in us a desire to return