

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS:	<i>Torah Acharei Mot:</i>	Leviticus 16:1-34
	<i>Haftarah:</i>	Ezekiel 22:1-5
	<i>B'rit Chadasha:</i>	I Corinthians 6:9-11

Tell Aharon your brother not to come at all times into the Most Holy Place

[Leviticus 16:3(a)]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 84;

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

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe - Then the Holy One spoke to Moshe ... ***acharei mot sh'nei b'nei Aharon*** – after the deaths of Aharon's two sons ... ***b'korvatam lifnei-Adonai vayamutu*** – who died when making an approach to the Presence of the Holy One. **Leviticus 16:1.**

The historical setting for our readings this week is still Mount Sinai. A great throng of recently ransomed and redeemed slaves of Pharaoh is camped at the foot of the great mountain, finally getting to know the Holy One, Who recently redeemed them from bondage, in a stunningly up close and personal manner. The Holy One is introducing the former slaves to the stunning details of the critical role He intends for them to play in His Grand Plan for Mankind's Redemption and Earth's Restoration. We have learned a lot over the past few months - about the Holy One, about the Plan, about the challenges, and, perhaps most important, about ourselves. We have learned that our destinies, and the destinies of our children and children's children, have a much higher ceiling than we had ever imagined. We have bought into the Plan. We have agreed to the role. We have embraced the vision. We have cut the covenant. We have pledged our troth. Our spirits are soaring. Our hearts are full to the brim with love – for the Holy One, for our brothers, neighbors, and kinsmen; for widows, fatherless children, foreigners, and the poor; and, yes, even for those who consider themselves our enemies and plot our genocide. We are ready – or at least we hope we are – to begin the great deployment.

First Step: Build a Sanctified Space for the Holy One to Dwell On Earth

Acting on instructions from the Holy One Tabernacle was erected and the Holy One's Presence filled it. Seven days of priestly consecration later, when every man, woman, and child came to the grand opening, fire fell from Heaven to 'kickstart'

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the brazen altar. What a moment! The people reacted with appropriate awe – falling on their faces en masse, and pouring forth wave after wave, chorus after chorus, of spontaneous praise. Alas, it was not so for two of Aharon's sons. As the Great Storyteller of Torah reminds us:

*Aharon's sons, Nadav and Avihu, each took his fire pan,
placed fire on it, and then **ketoret** [incense] on it.
They approached the Presence of God, [but it was] **esh zarah** [strange fire],
which [the Holy One] had not instructed them [to bring near].
And the fire that was coming forth from before God consumed them,
v'yamutu lifnei l'Adonai [and they died before the Holy One].
[Leviticus 10:1-2]*

In the midst of Heaven touching Earth that day, Moshe's two eldest nephews acted presumptuously, ignored protocols, and tried to approach the holiest place on earth after the pattern they had seen the magicians of Pharaoh employ in Egypt. In the midst of the great Heavenly Fire download Nadav and Avihu stood up boldly, lit censers, and carried the most profane of all things of earth – 'strange fire' of man's own design – right into the holiest of all Courts. They might as well have licked each of their respective fingers and grabbed hold of a live, high-voltage electrical wire. But, of course, as the Holy One now reminds us, the *Ultimately Holy* and the ultimate profane cannot peacefully co-exist. Without humility, reverence, and adherence to protocol, fallen man cannot – dare not try to - approach the Throne of Heaven's King. The flames of holiness which flow from Heaven's altar are designed to consume anything or anyone that insults, blasphemes, or rebels against the Holy One. So, when Nadav and Avihu tried to approach the Manifest Presence of the Holy One without humility, those flames – which the Holy One had released on earth to light the brazen altar - did what Heaven's flames do to the enemies of the King – they consumed them. When *Heaven touches earth*, you see, the stakes are high – especially if earthlings in the area do not acknowledge and respect the boundaries the Holy One has clearly established to separate the holy from the profane.

Turning Our Attention from the Tahor Realm/Chol Realm Dichotomy to the Kadosh Realm/Chol Realm Dichotomy

In the section of the *Kedusha* Discourse we know as parshot *Tazria* and *Metzora* the Holy One focused our attention on the critical distinction between the *tahor* (i.e. wholeness producing/fostering) realm and the *tamei* (i.e. fragmentation, conflict, compromise producing/fostering) realm. Now He is ready to shift the focus to the other axis of Kingdom representation. Now He wants to train us to understand and preserve the distinction between the *kadosh* (i.e. holy, consecrated, Kingdom-focused) realm and the *chol* (common, profane, fallen man's-will-and-ways-focused) realm.

So ... how close to the Holy One and His Holy Courts do you want to be? How

much do you want to know/experience of His Presence; how much/with what level of intensity do you want to feel the light of His Countenance; how clearly do you want to hear His Voice; how closely do you want your walk with Him to be? Ah, before you presume to answer those questions, Beloved, you probably need to answer this one: How attached are you to the common, ordinary, temporal, profane things – and ways - of this world? Ask Nadav and Avihu what happens when you try to draw near the Presence of the King presumptuously, for vain, selfish, profane reasons, ignoring Royal Court Protocol!

We need to understand that affection for profane things and ways and loyalty to the Holy One are *shatnetz* – i.e. an eternally improper and potentially very dangerous mixture. Lest we – our children, or our children’s children - repeat the folly of Nadav and Avihu; lest we imitate their self-destructive behavior pattern; and lest we, like they, be negatively impacted by Heaven touching earth instead of positively empowered, the Holy One is blessing us with the most extensive wisdom download of the Sinai Encounter yet – the download of wisdom that I affectionately call the *Kedusha* [i.e. ‘Holiness is ...’] Discourse. In this discourse our Bridegroom-King has been acting as the consummate Rabbi, and has been carefully teaching us everything we need to know to be able to distinguish between the *holy* and the *common/profane* on the one hand, and between that which is *tahor* and that which is *tamei* on the other hand. We are now in the middle of this Discourse, and the Holiest of All chooses this auspicious moment to remind us why all this is necessary. He does not want us or any of our children to fall into the folly trap of Nadav and Avihu. He warns us that along with the great joy that emanates from His Presence comes great responsibility to *respect and honorably steward that Presence*. Any attempted use of that Presence to advance one’s own agenda – whether the motivation be personal glory, power, influence or thrill-seeking – is playing with fire.

After Witnessing the Drama of Death Resulting from Strange Fire– Which Way Will Those Who Are Alive and Remain Choose?

In the past few chapters of the *Kedusha Discourse* the Holy One has been giving us an upper-level course in how to walk out our Covenant calling to distinguish between things that are *tahor* and things that are *tamei*. Why does our Bridegroom-King now take a step backward, as it were, and remind us of Nadav and Avihu’s deaths? It could well be because the deaths of Nadav and Avihu highlight the absolute necessity of living the *sh’ma* lifestyle² instead of building a man-made

² The Hebrew word *sh’ma*, sometimes interpreted in our English Bibles as “listen”, or “hear”, or “hearken”, and sometimes as “obey”, actually means each of the above and much more. This is because Hebrew thought and language sees a thing from seed form all the way through full maturity and ultimate state. Hebraic thought, particularly ancient Hebraic thought, is thus as different from Western thought as a snapshot of you is different from a full-length movie of your life. The Hebrew word *sh’ma* thus means

“stairway to Heaven” as most religions attempt to do.

What led to Nadav and Avihu’s demise? The Holy One had given Aharon and his sons very specific instructions as to how He could be approached. Nadav and Avihu totally ignored those instructions. They insisted on approaching the Creator of the Universe’s Manifest Beauty and Holiness *their way* – the way that seemed right to their fallen, presumptuous human minds – instead of acknowledging the Holy One’s sovereignty and voluntarily and gratefully embracing and following the Holy One’s instructions. They insisted on doing religious things their way, at their chosen time, for their private purposes. They made their own fire – though the fire the Holy One had sent from Heaven still burned brightly on the brazen altar in the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. They decided to play with strange, human-generated fire. And alas they got quite literally burned.

The Holy One did not come looking for Nadav and Avihu. He did not pursue them with malevolent intent. He had no desire to do them harm. They did it to themselves. They stood up in the midst of an awestruck nation which had fallen on their faces in adoration when fire fell from Heaven and sought, like Pharaoh’s magicians, to upstage the Holy One by producing fire by themselves. It was not so much that the Holy One *struck them in anger*; it was simply that they *crossed a line they were unprepared to cross*.

What was the line Nadav and Avihu crossed? The line they crossed was none other than the line between things *kadosh* and things *chol*. Their rash behavior on that day, in this pivotal season, is the epitome of that which is common/profane as opposed to that which is holy, and that which is *tamei* [unclean; leading to fragmentation or destruction] as opposed to that which is *tahor* [leading to wholeness]. The line they crossed is a line we who will serve as the earthly ambassadors of the Creator of the Universe’s Heavenly Kingdom in our day very much need to be able to discern as well³.

There IS a Prescribed Protocol for Entering the King’s Presence –

“listen, and pay full attention, as if your life depended on it; AND once you have paid attention, and have heard what is said, begin immediately to *incorporate what has been said into your life*, AND *adapt every aspect of your thought life, speech, and conduct to what you have heard*, AND begin to *meditate on and memorize it*, AND *teach it to your children* AND *walk it out tangibly so as to demonstrate it to the world*, until you, and the world around you, is transformed into the image of the words you hear.” The *sh’ma* lifestyle is a life spent carefully listening for and walking only in accordance with the Holy One’s instructions, and doing only what one sees the Holy One doing; the opposite lifestyle is trying to earn one’s own righteousness through spiritual exploits, experiences, and achievements.

³Similarly, the mitzvah of the scapegoat, found in today’s aliyah, is designed to bring the distinction between the realms of the *kodesh* and the *chol* into sharp contrast for us. One of the goats experiences the holiness of the Tabernacle (and later the Temple); the scapegoat, however, is cast off into *the wilderness*.

and ‘Strange Fire’ Is the Antithesis of that Protocol

The instructions the Holy One gives in today’s aliyah following the reference to the deaths of Nadav and Avihu are instructions concerning *when*, *how*, and *why* Aharon is to enter and perform the essential *avodah* [service] of the *kadosh kedoshim* – i.e. the place where only the holiest of all holiness can enter, sometimes called the “Holy of Holies”.

*... and the Holy One said to Moshe, "Tell Aharon your ach [brother],
not to come at all times into ha-qadosh m'bayit [the Most Holy Place] within the parachet [veil],
before the kaporet [mercy seat] which is on the ark;
lest he die: for I will appear in the anan [cloud] on the mercy seat.
[Leviticus 16:3]*

The instructions that follow provide the *torah* [teaching] that Aharon is only to go behind the veil to the inner chamber where the ark is located once a year – on the very special day called *Yom Kippur* (the so-called “Day of Atonement” – 10 Tishri. That does not mean the Holy One will only receive visitors one day a year. He receives visitors, and meets with men, every day – at the brazen altar in the outer court. All the *Yom Kippur* liturgy means is that, to maximize its effect on our psyches and our hearts, He only intends to replay in the realm of ‘time’ the eternal reality of the atonement that He designed - and the Blood of the slain lamb provided - before the foundation of the world one time a year. Remember – every picture tells a story!

The Most Holy Of Days: 10 Tishri

Our assigned aliyah of Torah for today lays out meticulously the “order of service” Aharon and his sons are to follow on that day, and describes what happens that day as “making atonement”. Let us examine this theme more closely. The sages say that on the tenth day of the month of the month commonly called *Tishri* [the seventh lunar month, which usually corresponds to approximately mid-September to mid-October on the Gregorian calendar] all the following events occurred:

[1] In the Garden of Eden, *Adam and Chava received a covering of skins* from the Holy One;

[2] On Mount Moriah, *the Holy One provided a ram in substitute for the life of Yitzchak*; and

[3] At Mount Sinai, *Moshe returned from the mount with the second tablets of stone inscribed by the Holy One* and made atonement for the sin of the golden calf.

The tenth of Tishri is thus – and has been from the Beginning - a very special day – a day [Hebrew “yom”] of *atonement* [Hebrew “kippur”, derived from the verb root “kafar”]. On this day the Holy One’s forgiveness of the collective breaches of covenant committed by His chosen people is made manifest - and those people *collectively*

enter into a new and different level/phase of relationship with Him. But you may say, we are not presently anywhere close to the month of Tishri⁴. We are in instead in Iyar – the second month. We are the process of *counting the Omer* in order to prepare our hearts for the Divine Appointment of *Shavuot* – months away from the Days of Awe between *Yom T'ruah* (the day of blowing Shofars) and *Yom Kippur*. So why on earth, with the summer harvest season many months way, is *the Rabbi's son* talking about 10 Tishri?

The answer is crucial to understanding Torah. You see, the center of gravity of all the festivals – indeed of all of our lives as the Holy One's people – is found in 10 Tishri. Absolutely everything about our individual spiritual lives and callings as well as our collective prophetic destiny is *dependent upon the hope of supernatural atonement*.

If we forget our need of and our dependence upon a decree of atonement we will wander so far from the Holy One that we will miss the point of all His appointments and never learn to either properly *relate to Him as Bridegroom* or *fulfill our individual and collective destinies as Bride*. Atonement is *what the redemptive plan of the Holy One is all about*. It is the *keystone of His Kingdom*. So in the middle of *Sefer Vayikra* [the book of Leviticus] the Holy One interrupts everything He has been saying about “Relationship with God ‘101’”, and reminds Moshe and Aharon, - and all of us - one more time about 10 Tishri, the ultimate day of “atonement”. The events of past 10 Tishris – from the covering of the nakedness of Adam and Chava with skins, to the provision of a ram caught by His horns in a thicket to die in place of Yitzchak, to the provision of new tablets of instructions carved by the Finger of the Holy One – all proclaim that from the foundation of the world a Way has been provided to draw near to the Holy One.

A Tale of Two Goats

The protocols of Yom Kippur are designed by the Holy One to get our attention. To do so, He calls forth a series of stunning props and images. One of the most fascinating aspects of the Holy One's *Yom Kippur* instructions has to do with the taking, on behalf of the community of the Redeemed, by the High Priest, of *two goats* [Hebrew, *ha-se'irim*].

In today's aliyah the Holy One instructs us that on *Yom Kippur*:

V'natan Aharon al-shnei ha-se'irim goralot goral

Aharon is to place two lots on the two goats

⁴ We usually study *Acharei Mot* in either the month of Nisan, around *Pesach* [Passover] or in the following month, Iyar, as we count the omer in anticipation of *Shavuot* [Pentecost]. This study thus precedes the event by approximately six months.

echad l'Adonai v'goral echad l'Az-azel

one lot [marked] 'for the Holy One,' and one [marked] 'for Az-azel.'

V'hikriv Aharon et ha-sa'ir asher alah alav ha-goral l'Adonai

Aharon is to present the goat that has the lot [marked] 'for the Holy One'

v'asahu chatat

And prepare it as a sin-bearing surrogate.

V'hasa'ir asher alah alav ha-goral l'Azazel

And the goat that has the lot 'for Az-azel'

ya'omad-chai lifnei Adonai

shall remain alive before the Holy One

l'chaper alav l'shalach oto l'Az-azel ha-midbarah

For an atonement, for sending unto Azazel in the desert.

Each *Yom Kippur* Aharon or his successor as high priest is to select from the flocks of the Redeemed Community *two live goats*. He is to cast lots concerning the goats, and based upon how the lots fall, one will be designated 'for the Holy One', and will be prepared for a chatat [approach surrogate for cleansing from breaches of the Covenant] on behalf of the Community, while the other will be sent out from the camp, into the desert⁵.

Before Aharon sends the goat designated 'for Az-azel' out into the desert however he is to do something strange. Here is how Torah puts it:

V'samach Aharon et-shtei yadav al-rosh ha-sa'ir ha-chai

Aharon is to press both his hands on the live goat's head,

v'hitvadach alav et-kol-avonot b'nei Yisra'el

and he is to confess on it all the sins of the descendants of Israel,

v'et-kol-pish'eyhem l'chol-chatotam

and all rebellious acts and inadvertent misdeeds

v'natan otam al-rosh ha-sa'ir

are to be placed on the goat's head,

⁵ The struggle between the *tents of Jacob* and the *wilderness of Esau* is the eternal battle between the supporters of life and those obsessed with death. The Hebrews were to receive the Torah in the desert. Instead, they were lured into wishing to remain in the desert rather than enter the Promised Land. At that moment death became their inheritance - death in the desert. Likewise, even after entering the Holy Land the Hebrew people in time became more like Esav than like Ya'akov/Yisrael. Instead of doing our assigned part to fix the world, we all too often emulated Esav. The realms of tamei and chol therefore expanded their operation, and the earth was plunged further frustration and yearning for the manifestation of the true sons of God. As a result Temple Mount, the Holy City of Jerusalem, and all the land of the Patriarchs became as a wasteland - deserted. The time will yet come however in the era of Mashiach's return when those obsessed with death and the tamei and chol realms will be set to flight and the land will at last be healed. On that day the ruins of Jerusalem will be rebuilt and become Eden-like [see **Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 51:3**].

v'shilach b'yad-ish iti ha-midbarah

And he is then to send it to the desert with a specially prepared man.

v'nasa ha-sa'ir alav et-kol-avonotam el-eretz gezerah

And the goat will thus carry all the sins away to a desolate area

v'shilach et ha-sa'ir b'midbar

when it is sent to the desert.

The sages tell us that in ancient times what would take place would be as follows. As the High Priest would go up to the scapegoat and press his hands upon its head he would make confession on behalf of Israel as follows:

***O Holy One your people, the house of Israel,
have committed iniquity, transgressed and sinned before You.
Pray, O Holy One atone, I pray, the iniquities
and the transgressions and the sins that your people,
the house of Israel have committed and transgressed, and sinned before You,
as it is written in the Torah of your servant Moshe, saying:
'For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you;
from all your sins be clean before the Holy One⁶***

And then the High Priest would pronounce on behalf of all the people the *Name of the Holy One*. And He would say:

***The Holy One! The Holy One! A merciful and gracious God,
slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth,
keeping lovingkindness for thousands,
forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin;
and that will by no means clear the guilty,
visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children's children,
on the third and on the fourth generation."***

Then all the priests and all the people standing in the Temple Court, when they heard the Wonderful Name spoken from the mouth of the High Priest, would fall on their faces and cry:

"Blessed be His Name whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever."

Wow! What a ceremony! But what – or who - is *Az-azel*? Rashi states that *Az-azel* is a mountain or a high cliff. That is appropriate – as that is what the goat that seemingly ‘won’ the lottery gets pushed off of. Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch of blessed memory expounded on this by calling upon his students to imagine the thoughts of the *seir l’Azazel* [goat for Azazel]. He pictures the goat, if it could talk, saying something like this, as it sees the other goat [the one that ‘lost’ the lottery] getting its throat cut:

WHEW!!! I can't believe what I just saw...

⁶ Leviticus 16:30.

*Talk about a close call... That could have been my neck.
My lucky day that I didn't draw his lot!
50-50 chance...*

Poor guy... and I had taken a bit of a liking to him... ~

Then, after *seir l'Azazel* was led out of the *Mish'kan* [or in later days the Temple] toward the mountains, Rabbi Hirsch pictured the same goat having these thoughts:

*Ahhhh ... boy, am I glad to be out of that place ... It gave me the creeps.
Now I can relax and take a deep breath. Nothing like the country air.
I sure am glad I was able to walk out on my own two feet...
Beautiful scenery - this is the life...*

Then Rabbi Hirsch portrayed the *seir l'Az-azel* as thinking - as he is unknowingly [according to Hebrew legend] about to be pushed off the mountain to his death:

*What a panoramic view! Incredible, absolutely incredible!
Talk about a Kodak moment! ~*

Oh, I get it, you want a shot [photo] with the mountains in the background...

Now imagine the way it might end:

*I'll step back a little so you can get a better shot. Tell me "when".
You want me to keep going? Isn't that dangerous?
You will let me know when I am getting close to that ledge, won't you?
Aiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii..... ..!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*

On Yom Kippur we all learn *the lesson of the two goats*. We each have *decisions to make and paths to choose*. Often one path – the one dedicated to the Holy One – seems at first glance to be the one wrought with sacrifice and pain, while the other path – the one that *looks like* freedom - seems to be the one that is blissful and serene.

Beware, Dear Reader - things are not always what they seem. Just ask the *seir l'Az-azel*!

The Annual Prophetic Presentation of Blood and Incense in the Holy of Holies

Perhaps the most widely known of the *Yom Kippur* ceremonies which the Holy One designates to be performed by the *Kohen Gadol* is the once-a-year excursion into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the 'mercy seat' and present incense. When there was a *Mish'kan* or a Temple with an ark and a 'mercy seat' in the midst of the people of Israel, here is how Torah describes what Aharon [and his successors] were to do in their once-a-year visit behind the Veil. First, there is the 'service of fire'. For the Holy One says of Aharon:

V'lakach melo ha-machtah gachalei-esh

He is to take a fire pan full of burning coals

umelo chofnav k'toret samim dakah

along with a double handful of finely pulverized perfume incense,

v'hevi mibeyt l'parochet

and bring [them both] into the [inner sanctuary] beyond the cloth partition.

V'natan et ha-k'toret al-ha-aish lifnei Adonai

There, he is to place the incense on the fire, before the Face/Presence of the Holy One,

V'chisah anan ha-k'toret et ha-kaporet

so that the smoke from the incense covers the ark cover

asher al ha-edut v'lo yamut

over the testimony. Then he will not die.

After the service of fire Aharon is to proceed to the service of blood. Here is how Torah describes it:

V'lakach midam ha-par

He is to take some of the bull's blood,

v'hizah v'etzba'o al-penei ha-kaporet kedmah

and, with his forefinger, sprinkle it [once] above the east side of the ark cover.

V'lifnei ha-kaporet yazeh sheva-pe'amim min ha-dam b'etzba'o

He is to [then] sprinkle with his forefinger seven times toward the ark cover.

v'shachat et-se'ir ha-chatat asher l'am

He is then to slaughter the people's sin offering goat,

v'hevi et-damo el-mibeyt l'parochet

and bring its blood into [the inner sanctuary] beyond the cloth partition.

v'asah et-damo ka'asher asah l'dam ha-par

He is to do the same with this blood as he did with the bull's blood,

v'hizah oto al ha-kaporet v'lifnei ha-kaporet

sprinkling it both above the ark cover and directly toward the ark cover.

V'chiper al ha-kodesh mitum'ot b'nei Yisra'el

With this, he will make atonement for the Israelites' defilement [tamei status]

umipish'eihem l'chol-chatotam

as well as for their rebellious acts and all their inadvertent misdeeds.

v'chen ya'aseh l'Ohel Mo'ed

He is then to do the same [ritual] for the Communion Tent,

ha-shochen itam betoch tum'otam

which remains with the [Israelites] even when they are tamei.

In the Herodian Temple period, when our rabbi Yeshua taught and ministered on the earth, there was no Ark of the Covenant. There was no 'mercy seat'. The holy of holies in the gaudy monstrosity that Herod built for his own glory was just another empty chamber. Herod was, you see, far more concerned with what was on the outside than what was on the inside. But did this stop the remembrance of Yom Kippur? Not at all. The historical writings of the Hebrew people indicate that the Yom Kippur ceremony was nevertheless conducted each year on 10 Tishri just as if the ark and mercy seat were present. After passing through the Veil the High Priest would put a shovel of embers down directly in front of where the Ark of the Covenant once sat. He then would fill his hands with incense, which he would place on the hot embers. He would remain in the Holy of Holies until the chamber was filled with fragrant smoke. After leaving the Holy of Holies he would say a short prayer for the welfare of the people of the Covenant – and the nations of the world.

There is, in our day, not only no physical ark or mercy seat; there is not even a physical *Mish'kan*, a physical Temple, or a functioning Aharonic priesthood. Now, therefore, to connect with the eternal truths revealed by the Yom Kippur liturgy we must trust the priestly service of Messiah Yeshua, who ever intercedes for us in Heaven. Concerning the priesthood of Yeshua the writer of Hebrews stated:

*"Messiah came as High Priest of the good things to come,
with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.
Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood
He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

* * *

*For Messiah has not entered the holy places made with hands,
which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself,
now to appear in the presence of God for us;
not that He should offer Himself often,
as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another- He then would
have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once
at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."*

[Hebrews 9:11-26]

In tomorrow's study - the Holy One willing - we will focus more intently on the blood of *kafar*/atonement and what it means Hebraically. Before we leave today's aliyah however it behooves us to consider just what 10 Tishri is to mean to us today - in light of the Heavenly ministry of Messiah Yeshua and the destruction of the Temple. I believe a good part of the secret lies in the instructions of the Holy One as to what ordinary individuals in the Community of the Redeemed – as opposed to the High Priest - are to do on this very special day of appointment with the Creator of the Universe.

Yom Kippur and the Redeemed Individual

We have heretofore considered only what the Holy One said was to go on in the *Mish'kan*, involving the High Priest on *Yom Kippur*. We have not as of yet considered what the Holy One said was to be done on this special day by ordinary *individuals* within the Redeemed Community.

Today it is a traditional practice among Hebrew people to spend *erev Yom Kippur* and the entire day of Atonement in prayer and meditation. On the eve of *Yom Kippur* many congregations recite *Kol Nidre* - a declaration annulling all vows entered into presumptively during the course of the year. It has also become traditional on the evening before *Yom Kippur* for friends and acquaintances to seek out, and ask for and accept forgiveness from, one another for past offenses – because in Hebraic thought obtaining forgiveness from the Holy One is related to making peace with one's fellow men. Many dress in a white garment analogous to a burial shroud. Most go to *shul*. But these are mere traditions of men. What does the Holy One have to say? How does the Holy One tell us, as individuals, to spend *Yom Kippur*? There are two over-riding instructions – the call *to fast*, and the call *to refrain from all work*.

1. The Call For Every Redeemed Individual to ‘Afflict His/Her Soul’

In today's aliyah as well as in the *Yom Kippur* instructions found in Leviticus 23:26-32, the Holy One calls upon all members of the redeemed community to ‘*afflict our souls*’. Here is the way in which the Holy One says it in today's aliyah:

V'hayetah lachem l'chukat olam

This shall be an eternal instruction for you.

b'chodesh ha-shvi'i b'asor l'chodesh te'anu et-nafshotechem ...

[Each year] on the 10th day of the 7th month you must afflict your souls

These instructions are amplified in Leviticus 23:27-32, where we are told:

"The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement.

***Make a miqra kodesh and afflict your souls,
and present korbanot made to the Holy One by fire.***

Anyone who does not afflict his soul on that day will be cut off from his people.

It is a sabbath of rest for you, and you are to afflict your souls.

In Biblical Hebrew the expression "*to afflict your souls*" means "to fast" The Hebrew phrase translated as "afflicting the soul" appears in a number of Biblical passages, from which it is clear that this expression signifies fasting. See e.g. the following passages from Psalms:

...I afflicted my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

[Psalms 35:13]

...I wept, and afflicted my soul with fasting - that was to my reproach.

[Psalms 69:11]

Hence the main feature of the observance of *Yom Kippur* by individuals is abstention from food, drink, and pleasurable activities. By tradition, the fast begins at sundown on the tenth day of Tishri [*i.e.* as the sun sets to conclude the 9th day of Tishri and begin the tenth day of Tishri], and continues from that point forward for 25 hours - until 1 hour after sundown on the eleventh day of Tishri.

Yom Kippur is, first and foremost, a day assigned for us all to fast. The Holy One has spoken it by His own Mouth. And His Word is eternal and unchanging. He that has ears to *sh'ma*, let him *sh'ma*.

2. The Call to Treat the Day as a Special Sabbath

In the same verse that tells us we are to 'afflict our souls' on *Yom Kippur* the Holy One makes it equally clear that we are to **do no work whatever** on that day. Here is how the Holy One states it:

... v'chol-melachah lo ta'asu

and not do any creative work.

Ha-ezrach v'ha-ger ha-gar b'tocheichem

[This is true of both] the native born and the foreigner who dwells with you.

In Leviticus 23 the Holy One will spell this out even more clearly:

I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on that day.

You are to do no work at all.

This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

It is a sabbath of rest for you, and you must deny yourselves.

***From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening
you are to treasure and carefully guard your sabbath."***

That 'lasting ordinance' and 'for the generations to come' and 'wherever you live' language has certainly got my attention. I think I'll take the day off – and deny myself - on *Yom Kippur*. How about you?

Meanwhile, let us ponder on why a day like *Yom Kippur* is even necessary, and why we, like Nadav and Avihu, are so drawn to things that are profane – like 'strange fire' – and so undiscerning of and hungry for that which is holy.

Questions For Today's Study

1. The following are basic introductory questions to parsha *Acharei Mot*. As you begin your journey into the Torah this week, keep in mind the two key elements in walking with God - the first is *to love and cling to the Holy One, with all your heart*; the second is a natural consequence of the first: *to hate sin and to want to*

see it eradicated from your thought life, your speech, your actions, and every part of your life, from your home, from all your relationships, from your city, from your nation, and from the Holy One's Creation. If you focus on the sin issue *without first loving and clinging to the Holy One*, you become judgmental on the one hand, and yet full of hypocrisy on the other - condemning others while justifying yourself. This is to *hate sinners yet love (for yourself) their sin*. This is not God's way. He is the One who has the correct and effective antidote for sin - humankind only offers vindictive retribution.

[A] What is the name of this week's first Torah parsha?

[B] In English, that means "*after the death ...*" Whose death did the giving of these teachings on Divine Protocol follow?

2. The initial subject matter of this week's parsha is "*how to come near to the Holy One*". To start off the discussion of this subject, read each of the following passages of Scripture:

Daniel 7:9-10,
Hebrews 12:18-29,
Hebrews 4:14-16, and
Revelation 4:1 - 5:7.

Based upon your reading of each of these Scriptures what do you think the throne room of Heaven is like?

3. In *Vayikra* 16 the Holy One establishes for the Redeemed Community a single day specifically set aside to make *kippur* for the Community. What was that day?

4. Three classifications of wrongdoing are to be atoned for on this day, according to *Vayikra* 16:23.

[A] List the three classifications in English;

[B] Look up these words in Strong's and Gesenius [hint: you will have to use the words as written in the KJV];

[C] Write the Hebrew words and their definitions;

[D] What is the difference between these three types of wrongdoing?

5. Who was the first person for whom the High Priest was to make atonement?

6. In today's Haftarah the Holy One is speaking to 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]). It was a city which had, by the time of Ezekiel, for many generations refused the Holy One's antidote for sin – atonement. It 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.

*Moreover the word of the Holy One came to me, saying,
“You, son of man, will you judge? Will you judge the bloody city?
Then cause her to know all her abominations.*

*You are to say, This is what the Holy One Adonai says:
‘A city that sheds blood in the midst of her, that her time may come,
and that makes idols against herself to defile her!’
You have become guilty in your blood that you have shed,
and are defiled in your idols which you have made;
and you have caused your days to draw near, and are come even to your years:
that is why I have I made you a reproach to the nations,
and a mocking to all the countries.*

*Those who are near, and those who are far from you, will mock you,
you infamous one [and] full of tumult.*

[Ezekiel 22:1-5]

[A] For what two sins is Ezekiel told to “judge” Jerusalem?

[B] What does the Holy One say He is going to do to Jerusalem in verse 4?

7. In the B’rit Chadasha reading for today, Shaul of Tarsus lists groups of people who will not receive the Kingdom of God as their inheritance - who will forever reject the Holy One’s antidote for sin.

*... Don't you know that the unrighteous [Hebrew, **resha'im**]
will not inherit the Kingdom of God?*

*Don't be deceived. Neither the sexually unchaste, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,
nor male prostitutes, nor those who indulge homosexual lusts,
nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards,
nor slanderers, nor extortioners, will inherit the Kingdom of God.*

*Such were some of you, but you were washed [made **tahor**].
But you were sanctified [made **k'dosh**]. But 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]

[A] List the groups who will not inherit the Kingdom.

[B] Shaul indicates that Yeshua and *Ruach HaQodesh* have done 3 things in believers. What are the 3 things?

[C] In Strong’s, look up the words our English Bibles translate as “washed”, “sanctified”, and “justified”. Write the Greek words for each of these three things, and define each of the concepts in Greek thought.

[D] Search out the Hebrew verbs that were probably in the mind of Shaul, the self-acclaimed “Hebrew of Hebrews” instead of these Greek words. Write the Hebrew verbs, in Hebrew letters with appropriate vowel points, then find the first Biblical usage for each of the verb roots, and read Gesenius’ notes on that verb root. Then, describe the Hebraic word picture you see developing around these

three verbs.

*May you meet the Holy One in His throne room, and receive atonement
through the eternal korban of Messiah.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Monday's Study

Psalm 84 [A Psalm by the sons of Korach]

*How lovely are your dwellings, O HOLY ONE of Hosts!
My soul longs, and even faints for the courts of the Holy One.
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.*

*Yes, the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young, near your altars, O HOLY ONE of Hosts,
my King, and my God.*

*Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are always praising you. Selah.
Blessed are those whose strength is in you;
who have set their hearts on a pilgrimage.*

*Passing through the valley of Weeping, they make it a place of springs.
Yes, the autumn rain covers it with blessings.
They go from strength to strength.
Every one of them appears before God in Tziyon.*

*O HOLY ONE, God Tzva'ot, hear my prayer.
Listen, God of Ya`akov. Selah. Behold, God our Shield; look at the face of your anointed.
For a day in your courts is better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

*For the Holy One God is a sun and a shield; the Holy One will give grace and glory.
He withholds no good thing from those who walk blamelessly.
O HOLY ONE of Hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in you.*