

Portion Achare Mot Vayikra - Leviticus - (16.1-18.30)

On God's behalf, Moses and Aaron are teaching the Israelites how to be a holy people. They have just taught the Israelites the strict rules regarding leprosy, how to make sacrifices, and the differences between clean and unclean food. Since two of Aaron's sons drew too close to the presence of the Lord they died. Aaron is very sad about their death but continues to serve God. God says to Moses, "Tell Aaron that he must be clean and dressed in his sacred garments before entering the holy shrine. He shall take animal offerings to make atonement for himself and his household. He shall purge the Holy Shrine and the Tent of Appointed Meeting of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins, and make it holy."

"After making the shrine holy again," God says, "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of a live goat. He shall confess over this goat all the sins of the Israelites, then have a designated man take the goat to an inaccessible place in the wilderness and set it free." God then continues, "For each individual this shall be the law for all time: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial. On this Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, you and no-one else around you shall do no manner of work. It shall be a Sabbath of complete rest. On this day atonement shall be made for you to clean you of all your sins. It is a law for all time."

"On this day, the priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as priest shall wear sacred garments and make atonement for all the people in the congregation. This shall be a law for priests in all generations to make atonement for the sins of the Children of Israel once a year."

The Lord then commands Moses to tell all the Israelite people not to copy what other people do but to just follow God's laws. The law says that no blood is to be eaten in any manner, for the life of the flesh is in the blood. The laws says there shall be no incest among families. This means that the nakedness of a parent or brother or sister or cousin or aunt or uncle or grandparent shall not be uncovered or explored. Do not have sexual relations with any animal. Do not make yourself unclean for this is the very reason that I am casting out the people who were in the land before you. I the Lord, am your God.

Questions: 1) Is Yom Kippur, The Annual Day of Atonement, the only day you can atone for your sins? Why or why not? 2) How do you confess your sins to God? 3) Why is seeing a family member naked something that would concern God?

Illustration Ideas: Aaron making atonement in holy shrine...placing the sins upon the goat...letting the goat go free in the wilderness...