

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

When two of Aaron's sons brought strange fire too close to God's Presence, they were killed. God said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to enter, at whim, the inner Sanctuary behind the curtain where I speak in a cloud above the Ark of God's Ten Commandments lest he be killed. Instead, Aaron shall only enter the holiest space after immersing in natural waters and dressing in his special white linen garments. On this designated day, he shall bring to God from his herd, his own bull Sin Offering and ram Burnt Offering to make atonement for himself and his household. The Israelite community shall bring, from their livestock, two goats for the Sin Offering and a ram for a Burnt Offering.

After making his own offerings, Aaron shall take the Israelites two goats and stand them before God at the entrance of God's Tabernacle Tent. He shall place two lots on the two goats: one lot marked "For God" that will be used as a Sin Offering, and the other one marked "For Azazel" who will live. Aaron shall lay both his hands upon this live goat and confess over it all the sins of the Israelite people. Then you will designate a man to take the goat to an inaccessible place in the wilderness and set it free.

On this Day of Atonement, this is the law for each Israelite for all time: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial. On this Atonement Day, Yom Kippur, you and no-one else around you shall do any manner of work. It shall be a Sabbath of complete rest and a day of fasting. For this is the day that atonement shall be made for you and clean you of all your sins. It is a law for all time. The anointed priest shall wear white sacred garments and make atonement for all the people and the community. Once a year, priests are to make atonement for the Israelites for sins in the Sanctuary, rebellious acts, and accidental misdeeds.

Moses, said to the Children of Israel, "God said, 'I am God. Do not follow the ways of Egypt where you once lived, nor of Canaan where I am bringing you. Follow My laws and be careful to keep my decrees, since it is only by keeping them that a person can truly live. *No blood is to be eaten in any manner, for the life of the flesh is in the blood. *No person shall approach a relative sexually. Do not commit incest. Nothing sexual is to be done with any parent, brother, sister, cousin, aunt, uncle, grandparent, in-law, any close relative. *Do not have sexual relations with any animal. * Do not corrupt yourself with these perverted practices and other sexual offenses, for you will be spiritually cut off from your people and this is the very reason that I am casting out the people who are in the land of Canaan before you. I the Lord, am your God.'"

Questions: 1) How does keeping God's Laws help a person truly live? 2) How helpful is it to have a day set aside for atonement each year? 3) How do communities sin?

Illustration Ideas: The High Priest Aaron wearing white for the Day of Atonement, placing his hands upon the goat and with it the sins.....letting the goat go free in the wilderness...