

Date: 29 Tammuz 5786 (July 14, 2026)

Torah Portion: Devarim

Topic: Lawlessness and the Cooling of Love, Part 1

Yehoshua declares, “And because lawlessness shall increase, the love of many shall become cold” (Matt. 24:12). These words are sobering, but they are also deeply compassionate. Yehoshua is not merely describing the condition of the world; He is warning His disciples about the condition of the heart. He knows that when darkness increases around us, something within us can begin to grow tired. Repeated disappointment can become cynicism. Betrayal can become suspicion. Injustice can become bitterness. Fear can slowly close the heart. And so Yehoshua gives this warning not to frighten us, but to help us guard what is most precious.

How is lawlessness and the cooling of love connected? The Greek word translated “lawlessness,” *anomia*, carries the sense of living without or against law. Within the world of Yehoshua, this naturally resonates with a departure from Torah—not merely the breaking of individual commandments, but the abandonment of YHWH’s ordering of life. Torah, properly understood, is not the enemy of love. It teaches love how to walk. It gives love form, discipline, direction, and faithfulness. Without covenantal faithfulness, love may remain little more than a feeling; but covenant teaches us to continue loving when love becomes difficult and to remain faithful when loyalty becomes costly.

This relationship between Torah and love is woven deeply into our prayer. The **Shema** joins the sovereignty of YHWH directly to the commandment of love: “Hear, O Yisrael: YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is one. And you shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your might” (Deut. 6:4–5). This love is not left as a private emotion. The words of YHWH are to remain upon the heart, be taught to children, spoken in the home, and remembered morning and evening. The Torah therefore treats love as something that must be remembered, practiced, and continually renewed.

This gives hope to the warning of Matthew 24:12. **If love can grow cold, then love can also be rekindled.** The answer to a cold heart is not always to force ourselves to feel more. Sometimes the answer is simply to return—to the words of YHWH, to prayer, to gratitude, to acts of kindness, and to the practices that once kept the heart awake. The Torah understands this human weakness. The heart forgets, so we remember again. The soul wanders, so we return again. Love grows tired, so we place ourselves once more before the Source of love.

The prayers surrounding the Shema express this beautifully. **Ahavah Rabbah**, “With Abundant Love,” remembers the great love with which YHWH loves His people and asks for understanding to learn and fulfill His Torah. **Ahavat Olam**, “With Everlasting Love,” likewise joins the enduring love of YHWH to Torah and the commandments. The order is important: before we are commanded to love, we are reminded that we have been loved. The heart is warmed by remembering that even when the world becomes cold, YHWH has not become cold toward us. His covenantal love remains.

The **Amidah** offers another response to spiritual coldness. In the prayer *Hashivenu*, the worshiper asks, “Return us, our Father, to Your Torah; draw us near, our King, to Your service; and bring us back to You in complete repentance.” The language is tender: **Return us**. There are times when we know that our hearts have become tired but do not know how to awaken them. The prayer gives us permission to ask YHWH to help us come home. *Teshuvah*, repentance, is fundamentally a return—the turning of the heart back toward its true center.

As humanity moves farther from YHWH, it also moves farther from the neighbor. When reverence for Elohim weakens, it becomes easier to forget the dignity of the person standing before us. The stranger becomes a threat, the neighbor becomes a competitor, and even the brother may become an enemy. Yet the opposite is also true. When the heart returns to YHWH, it can begin to see others differently again. Prayer restores sight. Repentance softens what bitterness has hardened. Mercy received becomes mercy given.

Shalom.