

Date: 1 Av 5786 (July 15, 2026)

Torah Portion: Devarim

Topic: Lawlessness and the Cooling of Love, Part 2

This is why the communal confession of **Al Chet** is so powerful. Again and again the worshiper confesses, “For the sin which **we** have committed before You.” The prayer reminds us that spiritual coldness is not only an individual problem. Fear can spread. Hatred can become normal. Indifference can become respectable. Yet communal coldness can also be answered by communal repentance: *We have become hard; teach us tenderness again. We have become suspicious; teach us wisdom without hatred. We have become tired of caring; renew our compassion.*

The **Selichot** prayers and the Yom Kippur liturgy repeatedly appeal to the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy: YHWH is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth. These words become especially important when the world grows harsh. One of the greatest dangers of living in a cruel environment is that we may slowly become like what we oppose. When surrounded by hatred, we may justify our own hatred. When betrayed, we may become permanently hardened. Thus lawlessness achieves its greatest victory not merely when it harms the righteous, but when it reproduces itself within the heart of the righteous.

Yehoshua therefore calls us to something greater than survival. He calls us to remain faithful when betrayal becomes common, compassionate when cruelty becomes normal, truthful when deception becomes profitable, and loving when the world grows cold. The answer to an increasingly cold world is not a colder community of believers. The answer to lawlessness is not lovelessness, and the answer to hatred is not sanctified hatred.

Read through the spiritual rhythm of the Scripture, Matthew 24:12 becomes more than a prophecy about moral decline. It becomes a warning about the preservation of the heart. The central question is not merely whether lawlessness is increasing around us, but whether lawlessness is succeeding in extinguishing love within us.

The biblical tradition answers this danger through a sacred rhythm: **remember, return, confess, receive mercy, practice obedience, seek peace, and begin again**. The Shema is repeated because love must be renewed. The Amidah is repeated because the soul continually needs to return. Confession is repeated because hardness quietly reenters the heart. The plea for peace is repeated because the world continually teaches the language of conflict.

Thus, when Yehoshua says that “the love of many shall grow cold,” He is not merely giving His disciples information about the future. He is warning them to guard the fire. The person who endures to the end is not simply the one who survives tribulation. It is the one whose **love survives tribulation**. He may be wounded, but he does not surrender to hatred. He may be betrayed, but he does not abandon faithfulness. He may witness lawlessness, but he does not become lawless.

In this sense, Matthew 24:12–13 may be read as one continuous teaching: “Because lawlessness shall increase, the love of many shall grow cold; but the one who endures to the end shall be saved.” What must endure? Certainly faith and obedience. But within the flow of Yehoshua’s words, we may also hear a deeply personal question: **Will your love endure?**

The Scripture answers by continually returning us to the same center: Hear, O Yisrael. YHWH is One. Love YHWH with all your heart. Remember His words. Return to His Torah. Seek His mercy. Pursue peace. And when the world grows cold, do not allow its coldness to become your own.

Guard the flame. For the love that YHWH has kindled within the heart was never meant merely to survive the darkness. It was meant to shine within it.

Shalom.