

# SICHA ESSAY

*Chelek 27, Acharei 2*

## Remaining Within the World

The Torah portion of Acharei begins<sup>1</sup> with G-d instructing Moshe — after Aharon's two elder sons died as a result of their unauthorized entry into the Holy of Holies — to warn his brother against making the same mistake and entering the Holy of Holies whenever he wanted; he could do so only on Yom Kippur.

In the earlier portion of Shemini, where the demise of Aharon's two sons is described at length, G-d warns Aharon and his descendants against serving in the Sanctuary in a drunken state, as did Aharon's two older sons.<sup>2</sup>

What lessons can we derive from these two exhortations?

The sin of Aharon's two sons was not a sin in the simple sense.<sup>3</sup> This can readily be understood from the fact that, after their passing, Moshe told Aharon that they were on an even higher plane than Moshe and Aharon themselves.<sup>4</sup> Rather, their "sin" lay in the fact that they allowed their desire to cleave to G-d to become so great that it caused their souls to leave their bodies.

This was considered a sin for them, for although a Jew should desire that his divine service release him from all aspects of physicality, he is also expected not to desire to leave this world. Rather, he should yearn to fulfill his mission of transforming the world itself into a dwelling fit for G-d — something that can be accomplished only when the soul is within the body.

There are two opposite motives that may lead a Jew to divorce himself from the physical world: The person's comprehension of and passion for G-dliness can be so great that he does all he can to enhance his attachment to G-d, up to and including divorcing himself from the world.

Alternatively, a person may find corporeality so repugnant that he flees from it with all his might, perceiving it as a hindrance in his quest for holiness. His flight may become so extreme that he divests himself of this world entirely.

Generally, these two motives are related to the two categories of full-time Torah scholar and business person. A person wholly involved in Torah study need not flee the lowliness of the corporeal world, inasmuch as he finds himself in quite a different “world” to begin with — the world of Torah.

This individual must be forewarned against concluding that, since Torah transcends the world, the only way to be absolutely involved in Torah is to leave this world. He is therefore told that true mastery of Torah is achieved in this world,<sup>5</sup> by a soul within a body, since Torah must be understood with the intellect as well.

Business people, however, must be cautioned against going to the other extreme. They may say to themselves that to be involved in worldly affairs means to be constantly subject to the temptations and blandishments of corporeality. They might thus mistakenly assume that it would be best for them to forsake any dealings with the physical world and flee it for a higher realm.

They are therefore told that the ultimate purpose of existence lies not in escaping from the world, but in making the world an edifice for G-dliness. And, since G-d demands no more of an individual than he is capable of,<sup>13</sup> it follows that G-d has given him the strength to withstand all worldly trials and temptations.

Herein lies the difference between the two commands related in connection with the demise of Aharon’s sons: The scholar can become intoxicated with his Torah study, and is told that he should keep his bearings and remain in this world. The business person may be inspired to lose himself in the “Holy of Holies” and flee this world, so he is reminded that not every day is Yom Kippur, when entering the Holy of Holies is permitted. His task lies in transforming the world itself into a “Holy of Holies.”

*Based on Likkutei Sichos, Vol. XXVII, pp. 116-122*

1. Ibid. 10:8-9 and commentary of Rashi, *ibid.*, verse 2.
2. See Or HaChayim beginning of Acharei.
3. Shemini 10:3 and commentary of Rashi.
4. See Bava Metzia 59b; Shabbos 89a.
5. Bamidbar Rabbah 12:3.

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