



# AHARON AND THE TWO DOCTORS

Parshas Acharei tells us how “Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of the two sons of Aharon,” with the instruction that Aharon “should not enter the *kodesh hakadashim* at all times.”

Why is it necessary to mention that this directive was said after the death of Aharon’s two sons?

Rashi explains this with a parable of a doctor who visited a patient and told him, “Don’t eat cold food and don’t sleep in damp places.” Then, another doctor came and said, “Don’t eat cold food and don’t sleep in damp places, for you may die just like so-and-so.” Obviously, the words of the second doctor were a greater deterrent than those of the first. Similarly, Hashem didn’t merely instruct Aharon to refrain from entering the *kodesh hakadashim*, but added that if he would, he would die just as his sons had.

There are a number of questions on Rashi’s commentary here:

Firstly, a parable is only necessary when something isn’t easy to comprehend; when an idea is clearly apparent, no parable is necessary. The advantage of adding an example to a plain warning seems to be quite logical. What is so difficult to understand about this that warrants a parable?

Moreover, if Rashi does find it necessary to bring a parable, why does he use one that involves an ill person? If a healthy individual wished to do something dangerous, mentioning past victims would also have a greater effect than just a plain warning. In fact, such an example would seem more appropriate here, since Aharon was healthy, and only committing this forbidden act would put him in danger. So why compare him to a sick man instead of a healthy one?

And finally, why the reference to cold food and damp places? Why these two harmful activities out of all the possible examples?

## SICK WITH LOVE

The Rebbe explains that Rashi was bothered by a simple question: Didn’t Aharon always obey Hashem’s instructions, without the need for such dire warnings? Nowhere else do we find that Hashem gave examples of victims when giving directions to Aharon!

In fact, we see this with regard to this very topic—the death of Nadav and Avihu. According to one opinion, Nadav and Avihu died because they had entered the *mikdash* while drunk. Yet, when Hashem instructed Aharon to refrain from drinking wine or alcohol when entering the *mikdash*, He did not add, “so that

you will not die as your sons did.” The reason no example was given was presumably because Aharon had no need for one. That being the case, why is the example of their death used here, when instructing Aharon not to enter the *kodesh hakadashim* at all times?

To answer this question, Rashi presents the parable of an ill man. People who are sick typically have a body temperature that is warmer than normal. Due to the strength of the fever, sick people have

a strong desire to alleviate the heat through eating cold foods and sleeping in damp places. Therefore, when a doctor arrives and declares that cold things are dangerous, even if the patient is ordinarily obedient, he might ignore the doctor’s warning. Hence, in the parable, cautionary tales of previous victims are necessary.

Likewise, Aharon in fact was sick. He was “sick with love,” overcome with an intense desire to draw closer to Hashem. This was especially so after the seven days of *milu’im*, the special rituals involving the *Mishkan*; all he wanted was to experience more *Elokus*. Where would he be able to find that? In the *kodesh hakadashim*.

Now, while Aharon was unquestionably G-d-fearing and

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normally obeyed everything he was commanded, there was the possibility in this instance that since he was “sick with love,” he would be unable to restrain himself, and might enter the *kodesh hakadashim* when it was forbidden to do so.

In this way, he would be similar to his sons, who likewise died due to *klos hanefesh*. The *possuk* says, “after the death of the two sons of Aharon, who drew close to Hashem and died,” and the Ohr Hachayim explains that the death of Nadav and Avihu was a result of their excessive closeness to Hashem.

Hashem therefore found it necessary to add a warning, telling Aharon that if he would not obey, he might die just as his sons did, since he “suffered” from the same “sickness” they did. In this way, Aharon was similar to a patient who would ordinarily heed his doctor’s orders, but due to his illness might be disinclined to listen.

## COLD FOOD AND A DAMP BED

In the parable of a patient, Rashi gives the two examples of cold food and damp places. Between the two, there’s a greater thirst for cold food, since it enters the body, providing greater relief. At the same time, it also presents a greater danger. By contrast, the desire to sleep in a damp place is not as strong, as its effect in alleviating the heat is weaker, and the resulting danger is smaller as well.

These two details correspond to the two parts of Hashem’s command to Aharon. Firstly, Aharon was never to enter the *kodesh hakadashim*, except on Yom Kippur with the *korbanos*. In other words, those same *korbanos* should not be brought in an attempt to enter throughout the year. And secondly, when entering on Yom Kippur, Aharon was told that he may only do so with these *korbanos*. Thus there are two warnings: not to enter

with the *korbanos* (at the wrong time), and not to enter without the *korbanos* (even on Yom Kippur).

These two directives correspond to eating cold food and sleeping in a damp place, respectively. Eating cold food is comparable to entering with *korbanos*, which are called “*lachmi*,” food, both for Hashem and for the *kohanim* who offer it, and their effect is *bipnimityus*, in an internal way.

By contrast, entering the *kodesh hakadashim* without *korbanos* would be the equivalent of sleeping in a damp place, where the cold is not internalized, rather it surrounds the person (the equivalent of the Chassidic term *ohr makif*). And so Aharon was first warned not to enter all the time, even with *korbanos* (“eating cold food”), and then he was instructed to be sure to bring *korbanos* when he does in fact enter (avoiding to be in a “damp place”).

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We should thirst to draw closer to Hashem and connect so deeply with Him, that we must be warned to avoid *klos hanefesh*!


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## WHAT TYPE OF WARNING DO YOU NEED?

On Yom Kippur, we read the portion of Parshas Acharei that discusses the *avodah* of Aharon on this day, beginning with the *possuk* describing Hashem’s warning to Aharon.

This teaches us a lesson regarding the level we should strive to attain on this holiest day. We should aspire and thirst to draw closer to Hashem and connect so deeply with Him, that we must be warned to avoid *klos hanefesh*!

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos* vol. 7, pp. 117ff.



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