

THE ART OF AN APOLOGY

Background

In the time of the Gemara, it was commonplace for a *talmid chacham* to leave his wife for extended periods and go to the yeshiva to learn. Nevertheless, it seems from this Gemara that it was because of this act that he died.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת
כתובות דף סב/ב

כי הא דרב רחומי הוה שכיח קמיה דרבא במחוזא הוה רגיל דהוה אתי לביתה כל מעלי יומא דכיפורי יומא חד משבתיה שמעתא הוה מסכיא דביתהו השתא אתי השתא אתי לא אתא חלש דעתה אחית דמעתא מעינה הוה יתיב באגרא אפחית איגרא מתותיה ונח נפשיה

Rav Rachumei, a student of Rava, was a Torah scholar. He went to the Yeshiva of Rava to learn and would return to his wife every Erev Yom Kippur. One year, the shiur went longer than expected and he was not able to make the journey home in time for Yom Kippur. His wife, unaware of this, was waiting for him. Whenever she heard someone approach, she would say to herself, "Now he has arrived." After a while, it was apparent that he wasn't coming. She gave up, and a tear came from her eye. At that moment, her husband, Rav Rachumei, was sitting on an upper level. The floor collapsed under him, and he died.

Questions

What was Rav Rachumei's sin? And what was so severe about it that it should cost him his life?