

Shimon and Levi are brothers... cursed be their anger for it is fierce and their fury for it is hard."(49:5,7)

Rashi notes that even during his reproach to Shimon and Levi, Yaakov designated only their anger as inappropriate. Their action and resulting consequences were not Yaakov's focus. Rather, he deplored their origin. Unrestrained fury ignited their fiery response to their sister's debasement. Indeed, anger is viewed by the *Arizal* as the ultimate contaminant of morality. When anger begins to direct a man's conduct, the sparks of holiness which permeate his soul depart from him, only to be replaced by the powers of spiritual impurity.

Countless times *Chazal* have described the consequences suffered by a person who becomes angry. Although this is ever true regarding the common man, it is especially significant when a *Torah* scholar falls prey to this disgraceful trait. The most pronounced result of anger is that one loses all of his dignity and spirituality. *Chazal* cite many examples to validate this point.

One can attempt to control his anger by focusing on the possible calamitous consequences of anger. *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, z.l.*, explains that, unlike the purveyor of many other character traits, one who is angry usually feels that his anger is an appropriate response. The effect of anger is such that one deceives himself into believing that his response is justifiable. *Horav Shmuelevitz* states that the way to overcome this problem is to understand that anger, however legitimate, has a harmful influence upon a person. His reasoning is that anger's effect should not be viewed only from within the framework of retribution for a sin, but rather as its natural consequence.

Torah differs from all forms of wisdom. In contrast to other forms of wisdom, *Torah* directly relates to the character of one who accepts its precepts. A G-d-given profundity, *Torah* takes root only in one who is morally fit to carry the mantle of *talmid chacham*, *Torah* scholar. One whose personality has become sullied by base character traits is unfit to serve as a vessel for the transmission of *Torah*.