

And Moshe became angry at the officers of the army...and Elazar the Kohen told the soldiers going to war, "This is the statute of the Torah that Hashem told Moshe. (31:14)

One should do everything possible to contain his anger. Perhaps, if one seriously considers the devastating effect of anger, he would exert more effort to control himself. This seems to apply only in the event the anger is unfounded. What about situations in which one feels his anger is justified -- or if it really is justified?

Rav Chaim claims that the detrimental results of anger, the loss of one's wisdom and stature, apparently occur regardless of the nature of the anger. Indeed, by taking into account the tragic effects of anger, one might quite possibly deter the anger from developing. Why does anger produce such a damaging effect upon a person? First, we must understand that this effect is not a punishment for a sin, but rather a natural consequence. Moshe was certainly appropriate in his response to the soldiers, but this did not preclude the loss of some of his wisdom as a consequence of his anger.

We still may wonder why wisdom which had already been acquired and stored in a person's mind should also have disappeared? We can understand how anger transforms a person's character, decreasing his stature, but how does it effect wisdom which he already possesses?

We may understand this anomaly once we take into consideration that all forms of wisdom are not equal. There is secular wisdom, and there is a higher form of wisdom - *Torah* wisdom. Secular knowledge does not assimilate into one's psyche. It does not relate to the personality or character of its possessor. Hence, one may be uncouth or obnoxious and yet be a scholar. *Torah* is spiritual knowledge. This means its source is Hashem, Who has imbued it with a special essence. *Torah* knowledge establishes itself only in a person who can be a proper vessel for it. One must maintain a refined character in order to be a true *talmid chacham*, a student of wisdom, inclined to absorb the *Torah* into every aspect of his personality. One who lacks spiritual integrity is no longer qualified to retain *Torah*. One who becomes unfit to retain *Torah* loses even that knowledge that he has already acquired. It no longer has a "home" in this individual. The knowledge that he already had did not become contaminated, rather the person has changed. He ceases to be an appropriate vessel for containing *Torah*.

Rav Chaim's thesis sheds light on why we find individuals who at one time had been *talmidei chachamim*. As they steered their *Torah hashkafah*, perspective/philosophy, to the left, their *seichel ha'yashar*, ability to think correctly, seems to have been affected. Individuals who had been capable of expounding *Torah* and were proficient in its profundities suddenly seem to have lost their ability to analyze the logic of *Torah*. They conjure up *svaros*, logical deductions, that make sense only to themselves and their misguided followers. Why? It is because their spiritual character has been sullied. They no longer reflect the *Torah* that they expound in their spiritual

demeanor. *Torah* shapes a person's moral and spiritual character. When a change transpires in one's character it indicates that he is not ascribing to the *Torah* with the same intensity he had previously.