

will ever be able to make me sin against G-d!"

The *Baal Shem Tov* was awestruck. Now he understood everything. Every bite of food Yaakov took and every move he made with the axe was to cause a *Kiddush Hashem* - Sanctification of G-d's Name!

TORAH GEMS

éèlâ àç÷éâ øîàl 'à äâø øùà äøåúä ú÷ç úàæ
(á-èé) 'àââ íâî äâîèà øùà äîéîú äîââä äøô

Rashi tell us that the *mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah* is called a "אֶלֶּם", which in the context of the *posuk* has two implications: It is explained as a decree issued by *Hashem* Himself and cannot be understood by human intelligence. It also refers to something that exists forever. We must understand: what is the connection between these two very different and diverse interpretations?

R' Simcha Wassemán ZT"l gives us a penetrating yet extremely logical explanation. Any *halacha* or law for which the reason remains unknown, cannot possibly become null and void. By virtue of the fact that a comprehensive understanding of every facet of the *halacha* is impossible, it thus cannot be disproved nor uprooted. Were the underlying reasoning for a "פְּסָק" to be fully revealed, then the decree itself could become void if its underlying reason were no longer to apply.

In truth, though, every *mitzvah* that a Jew is commanded to perform - even the most logical and understandable - is really a "אֶלֶף", in the sense that we do not truly understand the hidden and underlying reasons behind it, and because of this concealment it is impossible for the *Torah* to ever become void. The hidden purpose behind the *mitzvos* of the *Torah* is the very reason for its eternal existence. This, then, is the connection between the two explanations of the word "אֶלֶף": a hidden *mitzvah* which enables it to exist eternally.

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The **Ramba"m** writes that *Moshe Rabbeinu's* sin

for which he was punished by not being permitted to enter *Eretz Yisroel* was that he became angry and defamed the Jewish people, calling them "îéôîă" - "*Defiant ones*." The obvious question is, why was *Moshe Rabbeinu*, the most devoted servant of *Hashem*, who repeatedly sacrificed himself for his people during the forty years of their sojourn in the wilderness, punished so severely as to be denied his one and only wish; to enter into the holy Land of Israel? We are taught that *tzaddikim* are held to higher standard - êâçë äøòüă - *Like a (deviation of a) strand of hair* - yet were there no other possible punishments that *Hashem*, in His eternal wisdom, could have meted out to impart the desired lesson, while at the same time allowing *Moshe* to realize his single most important desire and longing?

The answer, says **R' Abraham J. Twerski Shlit" a**, is that *Hashem* wishes us to learn that no matter what, there is one thing on which there is no room for compromise: losing one's composure. Although *Moshe Rabbeinu* used a similar term when admonishing *Bnei Yisroel* later on in *Sefer Devorim*, that was not said in anger, but as part of a calculated criticism. But here, it wasn't necessarily the words that were wrong, but the fact that he said them with uncontrolled anger. Even a grievous sin committed with deliberation would not merit such a harsh punishment and *Chazal* even use the expression that when in anger, one is under the dominance of the forces of the *satan* himself. Thus, the Ramba"m is imparting the lesson that we must learn from this incident that a person should never allow anger to turn into rage that will deprive him of his complete self-control.

[illegible]

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מעשה אבות... סימן לבנים

(áé-ë) 'ǎǎ ìàøùé éǎá éǎéòì éǎùéǎ÷ǎì éá í ú ô î àǎ àì ìòé

In *Chassidishe* circles, a famous story is recounted regarding the founder of *Chassidus*, the holy and saintly **R' Yisroel Baal Shem Tov ZT"L**. The *Baal Shem Tov* had a tremendous desire to know who would be sitting beside him in the World to Come. He prayed for many days that this information be revealed to him from on high. And eventually it was revealed to him that the person who is to sit next to the *Baal Shem Tov* in *Gan Eden* - paradise, would be a certain individual - Yaakov ben Yosef - who lived far away in a distant village.

This bit of knowledge sparked a curiosity and longing to meet this man. R' Yisroel traveled to the village and made inquiries about a *tzaddik* by the name of Yaakov ben Yosef, but alas, no one had ever heard of such a *tzaddik*. At long last, he was told that there was a Yaakov ben Yosef, but he was no *tzaddik* - far from it. This Yaakov ben Yosef was instead a rather uncouth woodcutter living on the outskirts of the village.

Well, now the *Baal Shem* was even more interested in meeting him. He went to his house and asked to meet with R' Yaakov. He did and it was a rather unremarkable encounter. Now, however, the *Baal Shem* was certain that Yaakov was a *tzaddik* concealing his true identity. He remained a bit longer but after spending several days with him, the *Baal Shem Tov* realized that Yaakov was indeed a crude, ignorant person. And oddly, Yaakov ate tremendous amounts of food. It seemed that he had a ravenous and unsatiable appetite. Politely, R' Yisroel asked him about this.

Yaakov, who all this time had not even realized who is esteemed and holy guest was, shrugged innocently and replied, "My father, of blessed memory, was once traveling to a nearby village together with a number of individuals. Suddenly, the group was attacked by highway bandits. After taking the people's belongings, the bandits chose to make sport of the Jews, and threatened to kill them unless they kissed the crucifix. Many of the people caved in to the demands of the bandits, but not my father. He was a very strong man. He broke off a thick branch and attacked the robbers. He risked his life but would not, G-d forbid, kiss the crucifix."

R' Yisroel nodded in understanding. "Yes, my dear Yaakov, but you haven't answered my question. What does this have to do with your appetite?"

Yaakov's face hardened, taking on an expression of serious devotion. "I realized that I must be very strong so if I am ever challenged to kiss a crucifix, I will be able to defend myself like my father. As a result, I eat to be strong. When I cut down trees, the chopping action makes my muscles strong. No one