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## Halacha – Jewish Law

**QUESTION:** Before I go to sleep, I say “Krias Shema al haMita (prayer upon going to sleep for the night)”. I also say the introductory words to the prayer, “I hereby forgive and absolve anyone who has angered or provoked me or sinned against me, physically or financially or by failing to give me due respect, or in any other matter relating to me, involuntarily or willingly, inadvertently or deliberately, whether in word or deed: let no one incur punishment because of me.”

So what is my question? Before I graduated high school, I had the unfortunate experience of two of my teachers who yelled at me harshly. It left me with a horrible feeling at my graduation and with a very unnerving feeling about my whole education. I feel that they could have made their point without yelling at me. I have tried to forgive them and to move on, but I cannot seem to let go of my resentment. Accordingly, when I say the introductory words of Krias Shema al haMita (“Krias Shema”), I do not feel like I am telling the truth when I declare that I forgive everyone. What should I do?

**ANSWER:** Dovid HaMelech writes in Tehillim 101:7, “He will not dwell within My house. He who practices deceit, who speaks lies, will not be established before My eyes.” Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul in his Ohr L’Tzion Vol. II 15:13 indicates clearly that one should not recite this section of the Kriyas Shema, if one cannot clear his mind of ill-feelings to others. Rav Yisroel Salanter ZT”L advocated for the use of Tachbulos (psychological strategies) to help us serve Hashem properly. In this instance, perhaps you can use a Tachbulah of imagining that members of Hamas are chasing after you and these teachers who you harbor resentment for, were able to save you. Would they come to your rescue? Of course! So if you do believe that these teachers care for you and would come to your aid, consider it in your mind as if it had already happened. Perhaps this will help you clear the resentment you have in your heart for them. Perhaps you can think of another

Tachbulah that will help you muster the ability to overcome the situation and be Mochel (forgive) your teachers. In any event, if you are really not Mochel your teachers, you should not be saying that you forgive everyone in the introductory words of Kriyas Shema.

## Chizuk - Inspiration

A certain fellow who had entered the business world came to speak to Rav Henoch Leibowitz ZT”L, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim. He confided in Rav Henoch that he felt little satisfaction with his life and what he felt was an unproductive career. Rav Henoch said, “Why don’t you go into a form of Kiruv (bringing secularized Jews closer to Judaism)?” The man responded, “I can’t. It just won’t work for me.” Rav Henoch countered, “That is not what I mean. When you go to work, view it as Kiruv. You are going to work for the express purpose of ‘being a Mensch’ and acting with Emes - honesty and integrity. You perform Kiruv when you serve as a shining example of integrity and stand up for what is right. You do Kiruv when you do not cut corners even when your manager is not around. You do Kiruv through these acts of Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of Hashem’s name) and make Yidden want to come closer to Yiddishkeit and follow your example. Realizing that through your honesty and integrity in the workplace that you have an opportunity to create large, frequent Kiddush Hashems will give you great satisfaction and will definitely lift your spirits.”

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## On The Parsha

Professor Martin Seligman from the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Daniel Kahneman A"H of Hebrew University, Dr. Steven Pinker of Harvard University, Dr. Jordan Peterson of the University of Toronto, and Dr. Paul Ekman, formerly of University of California - San Francisco are among the top five leading psychologists in the world. They have won many awards, promulgated innovative theories, and have changed the course of research within their specialties and subspecialties.

Now imagine that these five men are in a leading psychiatric facility examining, testing, interviewing and questioning one of the most famous villains in history. Just who are they examining? They are probing the mind of a brilliant man who led a revolution – albeit a failed one. They are examining Korach. What were his motivations in starting a rebellion against Moshe? Was he woefully misguided or were his actions purposeful?

Fortunately, we do not need these psychologists to probe the mind of Korach. We have Rashi and Chazal (on BaMidbar 16:1) commenting on the first verse in the Parsha to do that for us. Rashi says, "And what induced Korach to quarrel with Moshe? He was jealous of the princely dignity held by Elitzaphan the son of Uzziel (Midrash Tanchuma, Korach 1) whom Moshe had appointed prince over the sons of Kehas although this was by the express command of Hashem (BaMidbar 3:30). Korach reasoned as follows: 'My father and his brothers [the sons of Kehas] were four in number [Amram, Yitzhar, Hebron and Uzziel]. Regarding Amram, the eldest, his two sons had themselves assumed high positions, one as king (Moshe) and the other as the High Priest (Aharon). Who is entitled to receive the second-tier leadership (as a prince)? Is it not "I" who is the son of Yitzhar, who is the second oldest brother? And yet he (Moshe) skipped over me and appointed as prince, the son of Uzziel who was the youngest brother of all of them! I hereby protest against Moshe and will undo his decision.'"

The Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 18:3) and Rashi elsewhere both tell us that Korach was a brilliant and highly spiritual individual. He was also endowed with Ruach HaKodesh (Divine inspiration). Accordingly, how could Korach actually believe that he was doing the right thing by leading a rebellion against Hashem's most trusted servant, Moshe?

We have the answer as referenced above. He resented

Moshe and was jealous of his cousin Elitzafan who was picked to be the prince when he felt it should have been him. However, as we have said above, Korach was a great man, so the jealousy that he felt must have been very subtle – barely detectable on almost any scale. Indeed, Korach himself could not detect it.

We learn from the incident of Korach that even a very subtle, small amount of jealousy (or perhaps any other emotion) can lead us to self-deception of epic proportions!

Many of these self-deceptions are part of the everyday lives of many people – such as the student who did not study enough but blames the teacher for not passing the test, or the person who continues down a path that in his heart-of-hearts knows is wrong, but is too prideful to admit that he has made a mistake. The result of these self-deceptions is that people often do not advance and accomplish what they are destined to do because of the false narratives that they tell themselves and the all too human emotions that fuel them.

But there is hope. Hashem has given us the capacity to be introspective and determine the true inner motivations for our behavior (which would have served Korach well, had he chosen to do so). This can be seen from a fascinating Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 94:5) which discusses Yaakov examining his inner motivations for leaving Israel and going down to Egypt during the famine. He asked himself, was he doing it to feed himself and his earthly desire for more or better food when he should really be staying in Israel and making do with the food that he has? Alternatively, were his motivations pure and was he genuinely concerned that there wasn't sufficient food to feed him and those that he was responsible for? The Midrash quotes this for our own benefit and development. If we engage in this type of introspection, we can detect the subtle motivations that may be leading us astray and preventing us from serving Hashem properly.

*"May I back out of a school carpool that I have already committed to?"  
"Should I report a co-worker who is acting dishonestly?"*

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