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Chizuk - Inspiration

It began with the sudden crack of a car door against our vehicle.

A woman had parked beside us and flung her door open at the exact moment we passed, striking our car with a force that left the damage staring back at us. But instead of apologizing, she turned the blame on us. She claimed we had driven into her door and threatened to take us to court. I was burning with anger. I told my husband we could not simply let this go—we had to fight, to defend ourselves, to demand justice. But he would not. My husband does not avoid conflict out of fear. He does it from strength. He chooses peace when pride demands a battle. “Let it go,” he said quietly, and kept driving. Out of respect for him, I swallowed my protest. But inside, the ache for justice did not leave me.

So I did the only thing left to do: I prayed. I asked Hashem to make it right in another way. Perhaps, I thought, someone else would hit that very same spot, and then the repair would somehow be covered. It was an unusual prayer—almost too strange to say aloud—but I meant every word. The very next day, something astonishing happened. As I was driving, a car beside me suddenly swerved without warning—no signal, no reason—and crashed into the exact same place. The driver, a young woman named Liora, rushed out in distress, apologizing again and again. She explained that she was new behind the wheel and desperately hoped to avoid involving insurance. “I’ll pay whatever it costs,” she promised. In that moment, it felt as though Heaven had answered me directly. We exchanged information, and I told her I would speak with my husband. But when I told him what had happened, he looked at me gently and said, “You know we can’t take anything from her. That area was already damaged. If we cannot clearly identify what harm she caused, we cannot accept payment.” I was stunned. Everything had seemed to fall perfectly into place. My heart screamed,

“This is your chance. Take it!” But my conscience would not let me rest.

The decision weighed on me more than I expected. At last, I called Liora and told her she owed us nothing. For a moment, the line was silent. Because the incident had happened around Tisha B’Av time, she finally said, deeply moved, “You are the most honest person I have ever met. Because of you, I promise I will fast next year on Tisha B’Av.” I did not know whether she would keep that promise. But a year later, as the fast was ending, I turned to my husband and said, “I wish I knew if Liora kept her word.” Just then, my phone lit up with a message from her. She had fasted on Tisha B’Av—and even more, she had begun keeping Shabbos. “All because of your honesty,” she wrote.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: I told a negative story about “Rivkah”, that would normally be considered Lashon Harah (slander) if I had mentioned her name. The problem is, the person that I told the story to, responded with, “I know who you are talking about! It’s Rivkah, isn’t it?!” I did not want to violate the prohibition of Lashon Harah so I lied and said, “No, I was actually talking about someone else.” Was I allowed to lie in this circumstance?

ANSWER: This is an excellent question! I found a similar scenario cited in She’ailas Rav, Vol. I - Page 103 where Rav Chaim Kanievsky ZT”L responds that it is, “Quite possibly permitted,” and family members of Rav Chaim have informed me that whenever he would give that response, he meant that it wasn’t, “possibly” permitted, but that it was indeed permitted.

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?

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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