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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.

On The Parsha

In this week’s Parsha, Hashem commands that the Korban Pesach (Paschal Sacrifice) be brought in the second year since the exodus of Egypt, in the month of Nisan. Rashi notes a chronological problem: The book of Bamidbar begins with a command to count the Bnei Yisrael. That command was given in Iyar, the second month, yet here, three Parshas into Bamidbar, the Torah records a command given in Nisan, the first month — earlier in time. From this, Rashi derives the principle that there the Torah does not necessarily record things in the chronological order in which they occurred (Ein Mukdam Um'uchar BaTorah).

Rashi asks why the Torah presents this episode out of order—why the command of Korban Pesach does not appear at the start of Bamidbar, where it belongs chronologically. He answers that the passage reflects something embarrassing about Bnei Yisrael: during the entire forty years in the wilderness, this was the only time they were commanded to bring the Korban Pesach. The Torah therefore moved the episode from its chronological place so that Bamidbar would not begin with something embarrassing about Bnei Yisrael.

It is important to note that the Torah does not conceal the embarrassing fact: it records plainly that there was only one Pesach in forty years, and Rashi states this openly. Nothing is hidden or denied. Only the placement of where it is recorded in the Torah is changed, to preserve the dignity of Bnei Yisrael. Truth must be

told with sensitivity, considering the dignity of the person affected by it, as the Torah does here by recording the command of the Korban Pesach in this week's Parsha rather than at the beginning of Bamidbar when it occurred.

Perhaps one can also say that the Torah did not place this embarrassing fact about Bnei Yisrael at the opening of Bamidbar because order itself carries meaning: what comes first is often given undue weight and may shape how everything that follows it is perceived. Here, the Torah's arrangement protects Bnei Yisrael from having their wilderness history unduly defined at the outset by an embarrassing detail.

The lesson we see is that truth and integrity are not only matters of whether each statement is true. They are also matters of arrangement, emphasis, and proportion — what one states first, what one allows to dominate, what one records faithfully but does not amplify. A person can speak nothing but the truth and still mislead, by ordering his statements so that a single failure overshadows everything, or so that a single lapse becomes the headline of an entire account.

Chizuk - Inspiration

During World War II, the Germans established a factory in the Lodz ghetto to manufacture boots for soldiers fighting the Russians in bitter winter conditions. Because they needed boots that were both warm and durable, they demanded only highly skilled shoemakers. Anyone discovered to have lied about such qualifications would be executed on the spot.

The Germans took over a warehouse for the factory and stationed teams of shoemakers throughout the building. Each team consisted of ten men under a foreman and was responsible for the entire process of making a boot from beginning to end.

Rav Yisrael Zev Shkop knew nothing of shoemaking. Yet he understood that entry into one of these groups might mean the difference between life and death. He approached a foreman and asked to be taken on. When asked whether he had any experience, he answered truthfully that he did not, and the foreman sent him away. He tried again with four or five other groups, and each time he was asked he gave the same honest reply. Fearful for their own lives, none of the foremen would risk accepting a man who lacked the required shoemaking experience.

As his options ran out, Rav Yisrael Zev decided to try one more group and answer honestly. If that failed, he would consider claiming shoemaking experience to the next group. He approached another foreman with clear urgency. When asked, "Do you have experience with shoes?" he again told the truth. But instead of turning him away, the foreman said, "Listen, young man, here is a bucket of black dye. We need someone to keep stirring it so it does not harden. Sit here, put your hands in the dye, and keep mixing." Rav Yisrael Zev began stirring the dye with his hands—just in time.

Moments later, a Nazi stormed into the room in search of an impostor, someone who had falsely claimed to be a shoemaker. Rav Yisrael Zev realized that the soldier might be looking for him, and it seemed that death was only seconds away. Then the foreman spoke: "The man you are likely looking for is here in my group. However, you have been misinformed, look at his hands covered in black dye—he is an excellent shoemaker." The guard examined him, accepted the explanation, and left as suddenly as he had entered.

Later, Rav Yisrael Zev was asked, "Why did you not tell the first foreman that you were a shoemaker? Why did you not say the same to the others, instead of only considering it when you felt you had no other choice?"

His answer was brief, but it revealed the depth of his honesty and character: "Because I am not a shoemaker."

*"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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