

## Go to Pharaoh in the morning – behold! He goes out to the water. (7:15)

*Rashi* explains the purpose of Pharaoh's daily jaunt to the Nile as going to the place in which he regularly relieved himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god, and he would say that he has no need to relieve himself – as humans do. He would, therefore, arise early in the morning, go out to the Nile River and secretly tend to his body's needs. We derive from here, comments *Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita*, the strength of the power of the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. Pharaoh lied to his entire country. He sold the lie that he was a god to anyone who would believe it. So wrapped up was he in his lie that he actually fooled himself. He began to believe his own lie – even though deep down he knew that it was untrue. He was not a god.

This is the power of insidious prevarication. It begins with a small white lie, a tinge of deceit, which festers and grows until it becomes a full - scale deception. It, however, does not stop at this point, because none of us is beyond deceiving him/herself. Indeed, everyone has a little bit of "Pharaoh" in himself. Deceiving others leads to self-deception, which, in its most extreme and pathological form, is deemed as delusional. It is a condition that is much more pervasive than we think. We begin to twist the truth until we become convinced of its veracity. We dismiss certain facts that are incompatible with our myth of ourselves in favor of those that are less threatening and more corroborative. We become so "good" (or bad) at this distortion of facts that we begin rewriting our self-history for the purpose of preserving our (flawed) self-image. This was Pharaoh. He was a wise man, but not as smart as the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, which helped him along with his self-deception until it (in his cognitive dissonant state) became his (distorted) reality.