HILKHOT TESHUBA 2:10: Unilateral forgiveness

Yesterday we explained that when somebody apologizes for an offense or for a wrong thing he or she did to us, we should be willing to forgive and also forget. After all, we are asking from God to forgive *us*: taking the fist step will be the best way to demonstrate that we deserve to be forgiven (see **here**).
I was asked by a reader of HOTD yesterday: *Can we unilaterally forgive or should we wait for a request for forgiveness?*
There is a fundamental difference between asking forgiveness and granting forgiveness. As the reader (D.A.) hinted, granting forgiveness can be done unilaterally. It is nice if the offender comes and apologizes. But sometimes people have too much psychological barriers or pride (i.e., low self esteem) or shyness, which impairs them from the possibility of taking charge and ask forgiveness.
And then, we still can forgive.
How and why?
In the Talmud, Megila 28a, we read that R. Nechunya ben haQana, who was very old, was asked by his disciples: "In virtue of what have you reached such a good old age? He quoted the verse. 'Nor did the curse of my fellow go up on my bed with me'. This is illustrated by Mor Zutra, who, [every night] when going to bed would say: I forgive all those who have offended me".
This unilateral and unrequested forgiveness released Rabbi Nechunya from hatred and resentment and it impacted positively the length (and I would guess also the quality) of his life.
I'm sure it might work for us as well!
There is a beautiful prayer, inspired by the example of Mor Zutra, found in any prayer book which is recited as part of the reading of the Shema Israel before going to sleep. When said with the proper understanding it helps us to cultivate the habit of forgiveness and prepares us emotionally for such a difficult task. (See below).
I must clarify once again that I'm referring particularly to

social and personal offenses, i.e., when a friend, a family member, a colleague, a neighbor, etc. did or say something wrong. Political forgiveness or criminal cases are a more complicated matter which can not be addressed in these brief lines.

The prayer *RIBBONO SHE OLAM HARENi MOCHEL VESOLEACH* to say before we go to sleep.

"Master of the Universe; Behold, I forgive anyone who angered or offended me, whether it was directed toward my person or my money or my honor or anything which pertains to me. [I forgive them] whether the action was performed by total accident or willingly, through neglect or premeditation, whether it was done through speech or physical action. [I forgive them and I request You]: may no person be punished because of me…"