

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

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הרהור תשובה Mere Transformative Power of

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | דב בעריש בן פסח צבי
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In this week's Parsha the Pasuk says, "and the children of Korach didn't die". The Medrash comments, "This Parsha was said to tell you the power of Teshuva. The children of Korach were originally aligned with their father against Moshe and Aharon. They ended up having thoughts of doing Teshuva, and Hashem saved them, and set them up in a place in Gehinom on three pillars so that they would be protected from the heat of the fire. They began to sing Shirah, and it is explained to be referring to them in Tehillim when it says (45:1), **למנצח על שושנים לבני קרח**, their hearts became soft like a rose, and they began to say, 'My heart whispers a good thing, I say the actions of the king'.

We can glean from this Medrash the tremendous power that a mere thought of Teshuva has to elevate and transform a person. If we look at this Medrash in the context of what Rashi says in Parshas Korach (16:7), a powerful insight can be derived. "How did Korach, who was so wise, come to do something so foolish (as to challenge Moshe Rabbeinu)? He saw through prophecy that greatness would come from him... He said, 'Is it possible that so much greatness would come from me and I should be quiet?' Korach reasoned, Moshe said everyone will be destroyed and one will be saved...He was mistaken because his sons did Teshuva." In summary, Korach thought that it must be he will survive, and that he is therefore correct, because he saw great descendants coming from him. Rav Henoch Lebowitz ZT"l asked on this Rashi, if Korach was so wise, why didn't he think of the possibility that his sons would do Teshuva, and that in fact he was wrong? The Rosh Yeshiva answered that Korach must have felt that since his sons were so deeply entrenched in this argument, it was impossible that they would do Teshuva. Korach's fatal mistake was underestimating the power of a person to change.

You see from this Rashi that Korach's sons were so firmly engaged in this argument that Korach could not imagine them doing Teshuva. Clearly they were so far gone. Yet the Medrash tells us that they had a mere thought of Teshuva, and this thought completely transformed them. The mere thought of Teshuva softened their heart and caused them to say "My heart whispers

a good thing...", to which Rashi learns, is referring to praising and honoring Talmidei Chachamim, and the Seforno says it is referring to the king of Moshiach. One moment they were involved in the ultimate rebellion, the next moment they had a thought, 'We were wrong' and this elevated them to great heights. We see from here the great power of Teshuva, and we should never underestimate a person's ability to change completely.

Another insight regarding Teshuva can be derived from the following Medrash, "What merit did the sons of Korach have to be saved? This is because, when they were sitting near Korach, their father, they saw Moshe. They looked down and they said, 'If we stand up for Moshe Rabbeinu it will be a disgrace to our father, and we are commanded in **כיבוד אב ואם**. However, if we don't stand up, we are violating the Mitzvah of **מפני שיבה תקום**.' They concluded that it is better to stand up before Moshe Rabbeinu despite the fact that it will be an insult to their father. At that moment they started having thoughts of Teshuva." The Medrash goes on to explain that their Teshuva was accepted and they were saved.

It is difficult to understand how Korach's sons standing up for Moshe ignited a spark to do Teshuva. The Medrash says they stood up for Moshe based on the Pasuk of **מפני שיבה תקום**. They felt that due to his age, it was proper to stand up for him. They accorded Moshe an honor that they would have given to anyone who was deserving of it, and it was not specific to Moshe. Additionally, they were not standing up for him due to his position as the leader of Klal Yisrael. This honor that they expressed was not in any way an admission to Moshe's side of the argument. It is therefore puzzling how this expression of honor was able to generate thoughts of Teshuva in people who were so deeply entrenched in their position?

There is a powerful lesson to be learned from here; if a person has an ever so slight positive connection to the one he is arguing with, that can cause him to rethink his whole position. This holds true even when that positive connection is not directly related to the argument, and the argument seems irresolvable. Clearly, although a situation may appear to be so far gone, hope is not lost.