

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בְּשִׁיטְיָחָא



אור ישראל  
**Self Inspired**

PARSHAS  
KORACH

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN  
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## A SECRET SUPERPOWER

**T**o his terrible detriment, we find Korach, an influential member of *Shevet Levi*, challenging the authority of Moshe and Aharon. With persuasive arguments, he convinced other members of *Klal Yisrael* that *Moshe Rabbeinu* was actually concocting his own commandments, and passing them off as Hashem's!

Despite his charisma and confidence, Korach ultimately failed, when the earth itself opened up and swallowed him and his followers.

Korach is described as a particularly intelligent man,<sup>1</sup> but this futile effort to overthrow Moshe indeed seems foolish. What led Korach astray? Rashi<sup>2</sup> explains that Korach saw with *ruach hakodesh* that the illustrious *Shmuel HaNavi*, who was considered as great as Moshe and Aharon, was to be a descendant of his. Korach reasoned that with a descendant like this, he would certainly be victorious in his uprising.

Where, then, did Korach go wrong? Rashi continues — Korach didn't realize that his children would do *teshuvah*. Thus, while Korach and his men would perish, Korach's children would survive, and generations later, Shmuel would be born.

R' Henoah Leibowitz<sup>3</sup> (1918–2008) points out that the answer given in Rashi doesn't seem to answer the question. If Korach was so smart, how did he miss the obvious possibility that his children might do *teshuvah*?

R' Henoah concludes that Korach must have assumed that his children were so invested, and so entangled in his mission, there was no way they would do *teshuvah* and return to Hashem. Since there was no possibility for Shmuel to come from him other than through Korach's victory, Korach concluded he would win this battle. Yet, to Korach's shock, his children did indeed do *teshuvah*!

Based on this, R' Henoah points out the power of the Jewish soul — Korach, with all of his intelligence and keen insight, and despite his deep understanding of the power of *teshuvah*, could not fathom his children, mired in rebellion as he was, would ever have the ability to turn their life around. Yet, the Jewish soul knows no bounds, and they indeed admitted their mistakes, and joined the ranks of Moshe and Aharon.

1 *Medrash Tanchuma on Korach*, 5

2 *Bamidbar* 16:7, s.v. לַכֶּם

3 *Chidushei HaLev*, *ibid.*

**His children were so entangled in his mission, there was no way they would do teshuvah and return to Hashem.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Changing one's ways is hard, there is no way around it. However, our mental approach to this process can make it even harder.

If we are convinced that we'll never change, that we've done things that we can never recover from, we are already setting ourselves up for failure.

An excellent approach is to clear our minds, and think about our situation from Hashem's perspective. Hashem knows our successes and failures, He knows our true desire is to be close to Him, despite our struggles, questions, and falls.<sup>1</sup>

But perhaps the most compelling aspect of looking at ourselves through the lens of Hashem is knowing that He is rooting for us.<sup>2</sup>

He wants us to succeed more than we do! And He is cheering us on, every step of the way.

The awareness of the delight and joy we bring Hashem every time we pick ourselves up off the floor can boost our spirits, and give us the energy to truly change our bad habits.

1 *Berachos* 17a

2 *Yechezkel* 33:11



**Do not think that teshuvah is only for aveiros that are done through one's actions. One must also do teshuvah for one's bad middos.** - Rambam, *Hilchos*

*Teshuvah*, 7:3

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# YOU CAN DO IT!

"Hi, Rabbi Zigler?"

Rabbi Chaim Yosef Zigler affirmed that it was indeed he on the phone. Despite being a very busy *rav*, he tried to make time for people who had *halachic* questions to ask. Priority went to those of his *shul*, but it was not uncommon to receive calls from far-flung areas, and this call was one of those.

"My name is Donny Shmidman, I'm not sure if you remember me..."

Donny's voice trailed off as Rabbi Zigler desperately tried to place the name, but to no avail.

"I don't think you would. The last time we spoke, which was about six or seven years ago, I didn't introduce myself. But I'm calling back now to thank you for saving my life."

Surprised, Rabbi Zigler responded, "Please excuse me, I have no recollection of saving anyone's life, ever!"

"Oh, but you saved mine. Like I said, we spoke a couple of years back. I called you because I had a difficult *sheilah*. Not difficult to answer, I don't think, but difficult for me to deal with.

"I had a close friend who was getting married. He wanted me to be one of the *eidem*, I was to sign my name to the *kesubah* and I knew that I couldn't!"

As Donny continued speaking, Rabbi Zigler suddenly remembered the story, with all of the details. It was one of the more offbeat questions he had dealt with, and he often wondered what became of the young man.

"...and because of those *aveiros*," Donny was saying, "I knew I would not be a valid witness. But I couldn't tell my friend! How was I to get out of it? I just didn't know what to do.

"And that's when I called you. And I'll never forget what you said. You heard me out, you didn't berate me, and amongst other things, you explained that I should do *teshuvah*."

At this point, Donny's voice began to crack. "And I told you that I couldn't! I said that I was too far gone, and that I couldn't change. But your response..." Donny took a moment to compose himself.

"You started crying, Rabbi Zigler. You cried, and then I cried. We both cried on the phone. And then your voice came through, cutting through my tears. You said, 'My dear, sweet young man. You know that I don't know you. But I know *teshuvah*, and I know Hashem. There is no person who is too far gone, there is no person that Hashem doesn't desperately seek at His side. You can do it, *you can do it!* And I'll be *davening* for your success.'

"Rabbi Zigler, you were right. I did do it. It took effort, but it was finally time to call you back. Your words pierced my heart, and I thank you."

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- *Teshuvah* was created before the first day of Creation.<sup>1</sup> This was necessary, because without *teshuvah*, the world would not last one generation.<sup>2</sup>
- Before the destruction of the first *Beis HaMikdash*, the Jewish people had done so many terrible *aveiros*, they thought *teshuvah* would not work. Hashem sent *Yechezkel HaNavi* to specifically tell them that *teshuvah* always works.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Pesachim* 54a

2 *Orchos Tzadikim*, Gate of Repentance

3 *Yechezkel* 33:10-11, Rashi *ibid.* s.v. כן אמרתם

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