KORACH: Four Words That Could Save Your Life

UBNE KORACH LO METU

It isn't enough just to learn the meaning of this verse of the Torah (pasuq). I'd recommend you memorize it. Or print it out and keep it in your pocket, your purse, or your wallet. It's a very short pasuq, one that belongs to the parashah we'll read in a few weeks, Pinchas, but it refers to what happened in our parashah, Korach. The pasuq consists of just four simple words: "UBNE KORACH LO METU," which literally means "And the sons of Korach did not die." In other words, they survived.

What is this brief text pointing to?

Sons vs. Father

Driven by ambition, envy, and bad counsel, Korach decided to rebel against Moshe and Aharon to strip them of their political leadership. Korach wasn't alone: more than 250 people joined him in his rebellious venture. His end was horrific: he died swallowed by the earth. And everyone who stood with him met the same fate. Yet, as this pasuq tells us, the sons of Korach were the exception –and they survived! Why? The sons of Korach, who were already grown men, had joined the rebellion led by their father and taken part in the protests and demonstrations against Moshe. But "at the last moment," when the hour of the final confrontation arrived, they snapped out of it. They realized that what they were doing was an act of madness, and that if they didn't turn back right then and there, the damage would be irreparable! The sons of Korach survived because they repented just in time, in the final minute.

I think of the moral challenges all of us face every day.

Rage and Anger

Sometimes we're carried away by rage and we're about to raise a hand to hurt someone physically, or to wound them deeply with cruel words. These impulsive acts of violence –physical violence especially– can have irreversible consequences for the victim and for the perpetrator alike. In an impulsive act that lasts only a few seconds, a person can condemn himself to live with the consequences for the rest of his life.

Fatal Impulses

Other times we're carried away by our passions. We get involved with the wrong person, our common sense clouds over, and so, in one brief moment, we let instinct drag us along –ready to ruin "forever" our honor, to stain our good name and our children's, and to destroy our family.

Texting and Losing Everything

It happens that a person is about to send a message written in anger, pouring out all his frustration with no filter. We do it more to vent than to actually communicate something, and we don't stop to gauge how the person receiving it will react. There are famous cases of prominent figures who lost their jobs over a single inappropriate tweet that, once sent and captured by just one follower, they could never take back. In the age of WhatsApp and Snapchat, you can wreck another person's life –or your own– just by sending one inappropriate photo. Incredibly, we don't always grasp how serious and how irreversible our actions are. Why? I think it's because, unconsciously, we assume that grave things with far-reaching consequences must be hard to carry out… and clicking "send" seems so easy!

The Last Resort

The striking thing is that, in several famous cases of impulsive acts or inappropriate messages, the people who make

the mistake realize what they've done just a few seconds later!

In every one of those cases, our name, our family, our reputation, and our life can be saved by remembering this pasuq: "AND THE SONS OF KORACH SURVIVED." The sons of Korach, who were on the verge of ruining their lives and losing everything, realized what they were about to do a brief moment before –they turned back, and they were saved.

I recommend memorizing these four little words. And if ever, □"□, someone is about to fall into the destructive trap of his own impulses, let him say this pasuq to himself and remember that the wisdom of turning back at the last minute saved the lives of the sons of Korach. And it can save yours.

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And the sons of Korach survived!

Bamidbar 26:11