

# Dying With Jealousy

PARSHA INSIGHTS - KORACH (5757)

## DASAN AND AVIRAM - "Moshe's Men"

"And Moshe sent to call Dasan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and they said 'We will not come up (to make peace with you)!' " (*Perek Tes Zayin, Pasuk Yud Bais* [chapter 16, verse 12]). "And Moshe arose and went to Dasan and Aviram, and the elders of Israel went after him" (just thirteen *psukim* [verses] later - *Pasuk Chof Hey* [verse 25]). In both cases, as Korach and his rebellious company dug themselves deeper into the abyss from which they would not ascend, Dasan and Aviram, members of the uprising, refused to consider a reconciliation with Moshe. This was quite ironic, since we will soon discover that these two insurgents owed their very lives to Moshe. Who were Dasan and Aviram, and why did Moshe seem to have a special interest in saving their souls and bodies?

Let us begin from the lineage of these men. As stated in the very beginning of our *parsha* [Torah portion], they were from *Shaivet* [the tribe of] Reuven. In *Parshas Pinchas, Bamidbar Perek Chof Vav* [Numbers 26], we learn that Reuven had Palu, who had Eliav, who had **Dasan and Aviram**. What did Reuven Ben Yaacov do to deserve such great-grandchildren?

A solution to this is found in a *Ba'al Haturim* in *Parshas Mikaitz*. In *Beraishis Perek Mem Bais, Pasuk Lamid Zayin* [Genesis 42:37], Reuven was attempting to persuade his father, Yaacov, to allow his youngest son Binyamin to return to Egypt with the brothers to purchase food. After all, the viceroy, Yosef disguised as *Tzafnas Panaiach*, had warned them not to even see his face again if Binyamin was not present. The tactic used by Yaacov's first born son, Reuven, to convince Yaacov to send Binyamin, was to offer the lives of his own two sons if Binyamin would not return safely. This powerful argument was meant to assure Yaacov *Avinu* [Jacob our forefather] that Binyamin would certainly return safely.

In trying to persuade Yaacov, Reuven said "You should kill (*TAMIS*) my two sons if I don't bring him (Binyamin) back to you..." The *Ba'al Haturim* points out a startling fact. The exact word "*tamis*" [will kill] is found only two times in the entire *Tanach*. The other occurrence is in *Iyov* [Job] 5:2, in regard to the trait of envy. That *pasuk* says that "envy will kill (*TAMIS*) the simpleton". What is the connection? The *Ba'al Haturim* quotes a *Midrash Shochar Tov* on *Tehillim* [Psalms] 106:16 that this *mida* [character trait] of *kinah* [jealousy], which kills the fool, was said in reference to Dasan and Aviram. Korach's rebellious cohorts were jealous of Moshe and Aharon; they wanted to replace Moshe with Dasan and Aharon with Aviram. Please see *Shochar Tov* page 79 plus *Sanhedrin* 110A (a different approach) for a detailed analysis of this. The point is that Reuven brought it upon himself to have Dasan and Aviram come out of him, when he said "you should kill - *tamis* - my two sons". The *mida* which is connected with the word "*tamis*", the trait of jealousy, was present in his two sons - his two descendants, Dasan and Aviram, and it did, in fact, kill them! To summarize, Reuven Ben Yaacov brought a sort of curse upon himself by saying the word "*tamis*" about two of his sons. As a result, the effect of "*tamis*" - envy will kill - was found in his two great-grandsons.

This gives us some insight into the power of words and the effect parents can have on their progeny. But why was Moshe so concerned about Dasan and Aviram in particular? Why did he pursue peace with them so vigorously?

Perhaps an answer to this can be found in a *Midrash Hachefetz*, quoted by the *Oznaim L'Torah* on *Parshas Beshalach, Shmos Perek Tes Zayin, Pasuk Chof* [Exodus 16:20]. The Torah says that *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] were not allowed to leave *mon* [manna] over from one day to the next. That was part of the purpose of the *mon*, to teach the Jews to trust in Hashem for their daily sustenance. The Torah records that some men did leave over from it, disobeying the *mitzvah* [commandment] given to them by Moshe. "*Vayosiru anashim mimenu...*" [and men left over from it] - from the *mon* (*Pasuk Chof*) - that is the simple meaning. Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin wonders why the words weren't written in a more understandable order - "*vayosiru memenu* [and they left over from it - (from the *mon*)] *anashim*". Instead, it says "*anashim mimenu*"; this can hint that the men were "*mimenu*" - of Moshe! In other words, it does say "*vayosiru anashim mimenu*" - and they left over, men of HIS - Moshe's men. This indicates a special relationship between Moshe and Dasan and Aviram, who were, in fact, the ones who left over the *mon* for the next day (*Rashi* on *Chof*).

There is no license to say such an explanation, that these two were “Moshe’s men”, without the following words of the *Midrash Hachefetz*. Hashem had planned to kill Dasan and Aviram during the three days of darkness in Egypt, along with the rest of the *reshaim* [wicked people]. The *Midrash* teaches that at that point, Moshe *davened* [prayed] on behalf of these people, begging G-d not to let them die in Egypt. Hashem responded that He would allow two of them to remain alive - Dasan and Aviram - but Moshe would eventually see what *tzaros* [troubles] they would cause him and all of the Jews. Perhaps these two were chosen to live because they were *shotrim* [officers] who were beaten by Egyptian taskmasters since they would not force their Jewish brethren to perform slave labor. See *Shmos* 5:14 and 5:20 with *Rashi*, plus *Midrash Rabba* on *Shmos* in the end of 5:20. Thus, Dasan and Aviram did have a merit - that of being beaten rather than abusing other Jews. This, together with Moshe’s prayer, saved them from dying during *choshech* [the plague of darkness] in Egypt. However, as we know well, these two caused an immeasurable amount of trouble for *Bnai Yisroel*. The bottom line is that Dasan and Aviram could be referred to as “*anashim mimenu*” [men of his] - men of Moshe, who had saved them with his *tefila* [prayer]. These are the very same ones who exhibited the epitome of ingratitude by blatantly violating the *mitzvos* [commandments] given to the Jews from Hashem through Moshe. They are the ones who left over from the *mon* for the next day, they are the ones who went out to collect *mon* on *Shabbos* (brought by *Oznaim L’Torah* on *Beshalach* 16:27 from the *Sefer Hamatamim*, plus *Ta’amai Haminhagim* page 531, paragraph 98), and they are the ones who were finally swallowed up by the earth in our *parsha*.

We have gotten to know Dasan and Aviram - their lineage, justification for remaining alive so long, underlying reason for their trait of envy, and some of their rebellious acts. We also understand why Moshe had a unique interest in their fate, and he repeatedly attempted to make peace with them in our *parsha*. They were HIS men. What can we all learn from them? I once heard that in a certain sense, the trait of ingratitude is the worst *mida*. This was proven, perhaps, by the violent, supernatural, publicized death of Korach, Dasan and Aviram. We can be inspired by this to show *hakaras hatov* [gratitude], to all those who bestow good upon us. This is what Dasan and Aviram should have done for Moshe. Of course, we are to behave in a favorable manner to all people, with very rare exceptions (genuine *reshaim* are excluded from this, but they are few and far between), even if we haven’t received favors from them. All the more so must we recognize and remember our benefactors. There is no doubt that this will promote and increase *shalom* [peace] among us.

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