

וַיִּקַּח לְרַחֵם בְּנֵי יִצְחָר בְּנֵי קֵהָשׁ בְּנֵי אֶלְיָב וְאֵוֹן בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן: "And Korach the son of Yitzhar the son of Kehas a descendant of Levi, took, along with Dasan and Aviram, sons of Eliav, and On son of Peles, descendants of Reuven." (Bamidbar 16:1). Who was Dasan?

Dasan is not mentioned in the Torah previous to this. He is the son of Eliav. Eliav is mentioned. Eliav is the *nasi* prince—chief family elder—of shevat Reuven. (Ibid 1:9). He represented the entire Reuven in giving the korban at the Mishkan's inauguration. (Ibid 7:29). His Korban was given third and it matched the previous two exactly. Eliav was a man of *achdus*, unity. He was also not one of the spies. The spy from Reuven was Shammua son of Zachur. (Ibid 13:4). Therefore, it is likely that unlike the spies that died out immediately after their report, Eliav was still alive. Even though Eliav was righteous, he had two treasonous sons, Dasan and Aviram.

Dasan and Aviram joined Korach to challenge Moshe. From the pasuk it appears that Korach persuaded them. They must have had a gripe and grumblings as they are singled out as joining Korach (along with On, who remains a mystery). They stood in front of their father and challenged leadership. This adds another layer to their treason and it diminishes their position. If they had an honest challenge, then it would be their father's challenge—or at least on behalf of their father. It was on their own behalf, and they were bought by Korach. Their flaw was joining up in someone else's fight of which they had little to gain—even if it was for a compensation.

Dasan is not mentioned in the Torah previously, so where did he come from? The Midrash makes Dasan famous when it mentions him as the villain in the Torah. And Moshe "went out on the second day, and behold, two Hebrew men were quarreling, and he said to the wicked one, "Why are you going to strike your friend?" (Shemos 2:13). The Midrash says this is Dasan. (Shemos Rabbah 1:29). It says that the Mitzri that Moshe killed was a man that engaged in adultery with Dasan's wife. (Ibid). What is further confounding is that the Midrash says Dasan was actually fighting with and striking Aviram, his brother. (Ibid 1:30). And yet, later we see that Dasan and Aviram joined

together to spread the manna and joined the Korach rebellion together. Why would Dasan strike his own brother? This is questionable, especially if a Mitzri is the one that had the affair. What was Dasan's fight with Avriam?

The Midrash says, besides for Dasan was fighting with Aviram, Dasan and Aviram rebelled at the Yam Suf (Shemos 14:11), left over the manna until morning (Ibid 16:20) and searched for it on Shabbos (Ibid 16:27), they demanded to return to Mitzrayim (Bamidbar 14:4), and joined the Korach rebellion. (Shemos Rabbah 1:30).

If Dasan and Avriam were so involved in these rebellions and disputes, why did they deserve to leave Mitzrayim by the geula and why did the Torah not mention them by name? The Midrash also says, Dasan and Aviram intended to kill each other. (Shemos Rabbah 1:31). How does this fit with their joining together later on? Where are the hints that these incidents are Dasan and Aviram?

By the Yam Suf the rebellion was: "They said to Moshe, 'Is it because there are no graves in Mitzrayim that you have taken us to die in the desert? What is this that you have done to us to take us out of Mitzrayim? Isn't this the thing about which we spoke to you in Mitzrayim, saying, *Leave us alone, and we will serve the Egyptians, because we would rather serve the Mitzriim than die in the desert.*'" (Shemos 14:11-12). The complaint was their not wanting to leave Mitzrayim and instead continue to be enslaved, rather than go into the unknown. If so, then they should never had left Mitzrayim. Clearly even those that did not want to leave left. This is a *tzarech iyun* on the Midrash that says four-fifths of the Ivrim remained in Mitzrayim, unworthy to leave. (Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 13:19). The response to this complaint was: "And Yisroel saw the great hand, which Hashem had used upon the Mitzriim, and the people feared Hashem, and they believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant." (Shemos 14:31). It appears the dispute was resolved and they became believers.

The hint to it being Dasan and Aviram is the Midrash Mechilta. The reference to the complaint in Mitzrayim was said when Moshe and Aharon failed with Pharaoh and Pharaoh demanded bricks without straw. (Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 14:11). "And they said to them, "May Hashem look upon you and judge, for you have brought us into foul

odor in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants, to place a sword into their hands to kill us." (Shemos 5:21). This was a complaint as to Moshe and Aharon failing as leaders.

While there it may be derived that the complainers were Dasan and Aviram – as said in the Midrash, albeit circuitously – others not so easily. Moshe commanded Bnei Yisroel not to leave over the manna until morning. (Ibid 16:19). Yet, some men did and Moshe became angry. (Ibid 16:20). Then they searched for it on Shabbos even though they were told not to. (Ibid 16:27). However, no punishments came from this incident. Instead, Moshe taught them about Shabbos. (Ibid 16:29). The Torah does say that Hashem said to Moshe, "How long will they refuse to obey my commandments?" (Ibid 16:28). However, the connection to Dasan and Aviram is not readily apparent.

After the spies it says, "And they said one to another, 'Let us go back to Mitzrayim.'" (Bamidbar 14:4). However, it was the entire Bnei Yisroel that were complaining here. (Ibid 14:1).

While the manna incident and complaints after the spies does not fit, there is a reason to say Dasan had it out for Moshe. "And he retorted, 'Who made you a leader, a prince, and a judge over us? Do you plan to slay me as you have slain the Mitzri?'" (Shemos 2:14). The evil man who Moshe stopped from quarreling challenges Moshe and asks him: *who made you a leader or prince over me?* This is the same complaint Dasan had when he joined Korach's rebellion to challenge Moshe and Aharon as leaders.

Here he asked how Moshe can be a judge over him. Then he and his brother, apparently reconciled, and they demand that Hashem judge Moshe and Aharon for their failing. (Shemos 5:21). Moshe and Aharon had their first failing as leaders. Then by the Yam Suf they demand to return to Mitzrayim, basically saying they knew Moshe and Aharon would fail as leaders and that would lead to their deaths in the treacherous desert. This is why it was so easy for them to be paid to join Korach. Korach knew of Dasan's hatred of Moshe and his constant questioning of Moshe's leadership. Korach saw in Dasan a malcontent who can rally more support.

If we look further at Dasan, we see he – or his namesake – is indeed mentioned in the Torah. Yoseph is sent by Yaakov to look for his brothers, who were tending the family sheep. Yoseph encounters a man and “And the man said, ‘They have traveled away from here, for I overheard them say, *Let us go to Dosan.*’” So Yoseph went after his brothers, and he found them in Dosan.” (Bereishis 37:17). Dosan was the place where the brothers threw Yoseph in a pit which led to his eventual sale into slavery. Dosan is hinted as a place of malcontent and contention. The issue the brothers had with Yoseph was on account of “Will you reign over us, or will you govern us?” (Ibid 37:8). The brothers challenged Yoseph’s rule over them. Thus, Dasan, is the challenger to leadership.

Now it is understandable why Dasan fought with Aviram. Avriam was his younger brother. He must have felt that Aviram was in his way, real or perceived. Whatever the dispute, they wanted no part in anyone else telling them what to do. Evil joins evil and the malcontents joined together against a greater adversary: Moshe. Why did Dasan left Mitzrayim only to complain much and cause a lot of trouble and grief. This is because every hero needs a villain. A hero is only as great as the adversary that he has to overcome. Moshe constantly was at odds with Dasan. He finally defeated him and put an end to him with the Korach rebellion.