

And what he did to Dasan and Aviram sons of Eliav. (11:6)

Noticeably, the Torah mentions only Dasan and Aviram concerning the Korach rebellion against Moshe *Rabbeinu's* leadership. It seems to gloss over Korach, the leader of the rebellion. He was the scoundrel who attempted to usurp Moshe's authority. In *Parashas Pinchas* (*Bamidbar* 26:9-11), the Torah does, likewise, mention Dasan and Aviram who were part of Korach's congregation, but falls short of mentioning Korach. The *Ramban* (commentary to *Devarim* 11:6) asks this question. The *Ohr HaChaim* (commentary to *Parashas Pinchas*) explains that while Korach was the leader and the one whose name is identified most with the controversy, it was Dasan and Aviram who set him up to it. They convinced him, spurring him to go up against Moshe and Hashem. Thus, the Torah mentions them here and previously in *Parashas Pinchas*, because they were the ones who influenced Korach's demagoguery. They were the ones behind the scenes who were responsible for the treachery that pervaded Korach and the two hundred-fifty heads of the *Sanhedrin*. To paraphrase *Ohr HaChaim*, "Hashem wants to expose the wicked people who were the cause of the wickedness that a larger group perpetrated." Furthermore, he explains, that this is the reason that the Torah writes, *U'bnei Korach lo meisu*, "The sons of Korach did not die." Their father's sin neither influenced nor impacted them, because the seditious sway of Dasan and Aviram influenced their father.

Horav Meir Tzvi Bergman, Shlita, wonders why Dasan and Aviram's influence should mitigate Korach's sin. He had been a distinguished leader, one of those who were charged with carrying the *Aron HaKodesh*; he possessed *Ruach HaKodesh*, Divine Inspiration. Someone of his caliber should not have fallen prey to the spurious influence of two such miscreants. The serpent persuaded Chavah to sin. Was she blamed any less? A sin is a sin, and, when one sins, especially if he is a leader to whom people look up, it is that much more egregious. Why should Korach receive a "free pass" just because he fell victim to Dasan and Aviram's beguiling effort?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that, unquestionably, Korach was fully responsible for his own sins. He led the rebellion which undermined Moshe's authority and denounced the validity of *Torah m'Sinai*. The fact that he was easy prey in the hands of such seasoned *reshaim* as Dasan and Aviram speaks volumes about his character. A person whose commitment is solid, whose devotion to Hashem is inarguable, would not easily capitulate. Yet, the Torah appears to gloss over his ignominy. The *Rosh Yeshivah* cites the *Mishnah* in *Bava Metzia* (58B), "Just as there is *onaah*, exploitation, in buying and selling, so, too, there is *onaas devarim*, exploitation in statement, i.e., verbal mistreatments, hurting someone with words." One of the cases quoted by *Chazal* is if someone goes next to a *baal teshuvah*, penitent, and says, "Remember your earlier deed." It is prohibited to sting someone with words. Indeed, anyone who has ever spoken publicly knows how important it is to know the crowd, their makeup, if people are dealing with specific, sensitive issues which the speaker may touch upon and, consequently, cause pain to some of his listeners. The Torah was sensitive to Korach's sons. He deserved no sympathy; they, however, were not responsible for their father's actions. As a result, they were not eternalized in the Torah. *Kavod ha'brios*, respect for people, is part and parcel of a Jew's daily mission in life. Whatever we must

do to further our spiritual growth should never be at the expense of someone's feelings.

Shielding the innocent from undeserved shame, especially when they carry the name or legacy of someone who erred, is a moral and emotional imperative. It is important to underscore one's positive qualities – if they exist, anything to maintain his children's dignity: attributing his faults to be the result of an inner struggle that he underwent. Even when someone has acted inappropriately, especially when he has hurt members of a community, it is essential that the dignity of his family (and even their own dignity) be protected, whenever possible.

I may add that not mitigating a father's misdeeds does not mean rewriting history, but rather, writing with humility, recognizing that, while the truth must be told, it should be told with compassion, with care, not to shame someone who is undeserving.

Someone once spoke disparagingly about the *Brisker Rav*, *zl*. *Horav Aharon Kotler, zl*, convened an *asifah*, gathering, to issue his protest against this person. (Apparently, the disparager was someone who had clout and whose negative words impacted people.) *Rav Aharon* issued a scathing criticism of anyone who would audaciously speak against the *gadol hador*, the *Brisker Rav*. Never once did he mention the name of the person who had slandered the *Rav*. He explained that the *asifah* was convened to emphasize the shamefulness of the man who spoke up against the *Rav*. He explained that the man had grandsons who studied in the *yeshivah*. It is forbidden to cause them unnecessary pain over their grandfather's actions.