

Korah: Opposing God's Anointed

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Passage

Numbers 16: Rebellion Against Moses and Aaron

¹Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *men*;

²and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.

³They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "*You take* too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation *is* holy, every one of them, and the LORD *is* among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

⁴So when Moses heard *it*, he fell on his face;

⁵and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who *is* His and *who is* holy, and will cause *him* to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him.

⁶Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company;

⁷put fire in them and put incense in them before the LORD tomorrow, and it shall be *that* the man whom the LORD chooses *is* the holy one. *You take* too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!"

⁸Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi:

⁹*Is it* a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them;

¹⁰and that He has brought you near *to Himself*, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also?

¹¹Therefore you and all your company *are* gathered together against the LORD. And what *is* Aaron that you complain against him?"

¹²And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up!"

¹³*Is it* a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us?

¹⁴Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!" ¹⁵Then Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them."

¹⁶And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD -- you and they, as well as Aaron.

¹⁷Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each *with* his censer."

¹⁸So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron.

¹⁹And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.

²⁰And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

²¹"Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

²²Then they fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?"

²³So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁴"Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'"

²⁵Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

²⁶And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins."

²⁷So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.

²⁸And Moses said: "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for *I have not done them* of my own will.

²⁹If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, *then* the LORD has not sent me.

³⁰But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD."

³¹Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them,

³²and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods.

³³So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.

³⁴Then all Israel who *were* around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up *also!*"

³⁵And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

³⁶Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

³⁷"Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away.

³⁸The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the LORD, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel."

³⁹So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar,

⁴⁰*to be* a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who *is* not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the LORD, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the LORD had said to him through Moses.

Complaints of the People

⁴¹On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD."

⁴²Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

⁴³Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.

⁴⁴And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁴⁵"Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces.

⁴⁶So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense *on it*, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has begun."

⁴⁷Then Aaron took *it* as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people.

⁴⁸And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.

⁴⁹Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident.

⁵⁰So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.

Who is Korah?

- Name means “baldness”
- Great grandson of Levi
- Cousin of Moses and Aaron
- Extraordinarily wealthy:
 - discovered one of the treasures which Joseph had hidden in Egypt
 - worked in Pharaoh’s palace in Egypt and amassed a great fortune
- Both he and Haman (Esther) were the two richest men in the world in their separate times, but both perished on account of their greed, and because their riches were not a gift from heaven
- Described as a wise man in Rabbinical Literature

Who is Korah?

- Influential and respected among the people: gathered 250 leaders from all the tribes
- One of the Kohathites who carried the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders

Cause of the Revolt

- Elizaphan, instead of Korah, was chosen prince of the Kohathites
- Aaron was chosen high priest
- “Kohath had four sons. The two sons of Amram, Kohath's eldest son, took for themselves the kingdom and the priesthood. Now, as I am the son of Kohath's second son, I ought to be made prince over the Kohathites, whereas Moses gave that office to Elizaphan, the son of Kohath's youngest son”

Cause of the Revolt

- The Levites will be inferior to the Aaronides
 - Simply assist them
 - Have no territory in the Promised Land: limiting wealth
 - Will be granted cities, but the Aaronides get a proportionately larger share

Korah Challenges Moses

- “Does a tallit made entirely of blue wool need fringes?”
- “The blue color of the tallit does not make it ritually correct, yet according to your statement, four blue threads do so”

"Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners." (Num 15:38)



Korah Challenges Moses

- “Does a house filled with the books of the Law need a mezuzah?”



*“You shall write them on
the doorposts of your
house and on your
gates.”(Deut 6:9)*



“The presence of the whole Torah, which contains 175 chapters, does not make a house fit for habitation, yet you say that one chapter of it does so. It is not from God that you have received these commandments; you have invented them yourself.”

Revolt Begins

- Korah assembled 250 other men from among the leaders of the different tribes
- Held a banquet for them
- Dressed them in Tallitot of blue wool without fringes
- Aaron's sons arrived for their priestly share
- Moses heard and arrived to reconcile the two sides

Revolt Included Korah's Family

- Korah's wife encouraged him to revolt
- "See what Moses has done. He has proclaimed himself king; he has made his brother high priest, and his brother's sons priests; still more, he has made you shave all your hair in order to disfigure thee."

"Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean." (Num 8:7)

Revolt Included Korah's Family

- Korah replied that Moses did so to his own sons, as well (Moses himself was of the tribe of Levi)
- "Moses hated you so much that he was ready to do evil to his own children provided the same evil would be done to you"

Korah's Parable

“A widow, the mother of two young daughters, had a field. When she came to plow it, Moses told her not to plow it with an ox and a donkey together (Deut. 22:10); when she came to sow it, Moses told her not to sow it with mingled seeds (Lev. 19:19).

At the time of harvest she had to leave unreaped the parts of the field prescribed by the Law, while from the harvested grain she had to give the priest the share due to him.

Korah's Parable

The woman sold the field and with the proceeds bought two sheep. But the first-born of these she was obliged to give to Aaron the priest; and at the time of shearing he required the first of the fleece also (Deut. 28:4).

The widow said: 'I cannot bear this man's demands any longer. It will be better for me to slaughter the sheep and eat them.' But Aaron came for the shoulder, the two cheeks, and the maw.

Korah's Parable

The widow then vehemently cried out: 'If you persist in your demand, I declare them devoted to the Lord!' Aaron replied: 'In that case the whole belongs to me' (Num. 18:14), whereupon he took away the meat, leaving the widow and her two daughters wholly unprovided for."

Opposing God's Anointed

- Who are God's Anointed?

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.”
(Rom 13:1)

Opposing God's Anointed

- Church
- Clergy
- Coordinators
- Civil Authorities
- Managers at work

Lessons from Korah (1)

Avoid Craving Power and Authority

- Wasn't satisfied with his responsibility
 - One of the Levites
 - One of the Kohathites
- I don't want to be counted as just one of the servants or one of the deacons
- Preparing lessons, calling and visiting my kids, etc. is for beginners;
I am now a senior servant/deacon/kitchen helper/whatever



Lessons from Korah (2)

Beware of the Sense of Entitlement

- Outside recognition and wealth do not dictate levels of service at the church
- My success at school or the workplace or my bank account do not entitle me to a greater say at the church



Lessons from Korah (3)

Using Justifications Rather Than Reasons

- Outside appearance of care for people in order to hide hidden lust for authority, power, responsibility, etc.
- Appearing to be representing others while really not caring at all about them

Lessons from Korah (4)

Succumbing to Blindness

- Eventually, we become blind to the true reality and create our own
- We really believe the reality we have formed in our minds, even if it is the furthest thing from the truth
- We get to the point that we cannot be pulled out of the sea we are drowning in because we refuse counsel
- The reason being that the guidance we are receiving is putting the blame on us



Lesson from Korah (5)

Avoid the Victim Mentality

- “No one understands what my intentions were”
- “I am being unfairly blamed”
- “I am suffering consequences because I am disliked and misunderstood”



Lesson from Korah (6)

Frustration at the Elevation of Others

- What is our reaction when someone is appointed a responsibility?
- Frustration? Envy? Begin attacking the decision?



Lessons from Korah (7)

Becoming a Stumbling Block to Others

- Our “revolts” or “rebellious attitudes” can cause an enormous offense to others: 14,700

⁴¹ On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of the LORD.”

⁴² Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.



Lessons from Korah (7)

- 43 Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.
- 44 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
- 45 “Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”
- And they fell on their faces.

Review

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Review

- Lessons from Korah:

1. Avoid Craving Power and Authority
2. Beware of the Sense of Entitlement
3. Using Justifications Rather Than Reasons
4. Succumbing to Blindness
5. Avoid the Victim Mentality
6. Frustration at the Elevation of Others
7. Becoming a Stumbling Block to Others