

Numbers 16:1-40 **Korah's Rebellion against Moses**

Korah Rebels

¹ Now 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; ² and 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. ³ They 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 congregation of the LORD?"

Moses' Advise

⁴ So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face; ⁵ and 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. ⁶ Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; ⁷ put 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!"

⁸ Then 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; ¹⁰ and 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? ¹¹ Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD. And what is Aaron that you murmur against him?"

Dathan and Abiram refused call

¹² And 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? ¹⁴ Moreover 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!"

Moses righteous response and instructions for decision from God

¹⁵ Then 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." ¹⁶ And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD--you and they, as well as Aaron. ¹⁷ Each of you 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."

¹⁸ So 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. ¹⁹ And 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.

God's answer of decision and Moses' intercession

²⁰ And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ²¹ "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." ²² Then 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?"

God's final answer and Moses' instructions

23 So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 24 "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'" 25 Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. 26 And 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." 27 So 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.

28 Then 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. 29 If 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. 30 But 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."

Results of God's final decision

31 Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. 33 So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the congregation.

34 Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also!" 35 And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

Yehowah's instructions concerning the censers

36 Then 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. 38 The 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."

Memorial of Judgment

39 So 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. NKJV

Facts Revealed:

- ✧ God does not accept people who attempt to take upon themselves the role of leadership which God Himself has placed upon others. [Matthew 23:14, Mark 12:38-40, Luke 20:46-47, Hebrews 5:4, James 3:1]
- ✧ God had taken Aaron and his sons from the tribe of Levi to be priests. [Exodus 28:1-4]
- ✧ The rest of the tribe of the Levites were taken to assist in the ministry of the Tabernacle of Meeting. [Numbers 4:1-49]
- ✧ **Korah rebelled** against Moses

- ✧ (Korah was a Levite the son of Kohath whose tribe among the Levites was responsible for transporting the Holy furnishings of the Tabernacle). [\[Numbers 4:1-20\]](#)
- ✧ Korah's associates were of the tribe of Reuben, Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth with 250 leaders of the congregation representing all the tribes of Israel, all of them men of renown. [\[Numbers 16:1-2\]](#)
- ✧ The rebels said to Moses, "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 congregation of the LORD?" [\[Numbers 16:3\]](#)
- ✧ Moses fell on his face, then he said to Korah, "Tomorrow morning The Lord will show who is His, who is holy and may come near to Him." [\[Numbers 16:4-5\]](#)
- ✧ Moses said to Korah and all his company, "Do this, take censers, put fire in them and put incense in them before Yehowah tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom Yehowah chooses shall be the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!" [\[Numbers 16:6-7\]](#)
- ✧ Moses said to Korah, "Hear now you sons of Levi! 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, that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? Are you seeking the priesthood also? You and all your company are gathered together against the LORD. What is Aaron that you murmur against him?" [\[Numbers 16:8-11\]](#)
- ✧ Moses called Dathan and Abiram forward, but they refused to come saying, "We will not come up! 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? Moreover 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!" [\[Numbers 16:12-14\]](#)
- ✧ Moses instructed them all, including Aaron, to bring censers with fire and incense in them before The Lord.
- ✧ Moses prayed and said to the Lord, "Do not respect their offering, I have not taken one donkey from them nor have I hurt any of them." [\[Numbers 16:15\]](#)
- ✧ Moses instructed Aaron and all the company of 250 men with Korah to present themselves before Yehowah tomorrow with their censers and incense. [\[Numbers 16:16-17\]](#)
- ✧ They all brought their censers with fire and incense to the door of the Tabernacle of Meeting and stood with Moses and Aaron. Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the Tabernacle. [\[Numbers 16:18-19\]](#)
- ✧ The Glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation, [\[Numbers 16:19\]](#)
- ✧ The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment [\[Numbers 16:20-21\]](#)
- ✧ Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and prayed saying, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, will you be angry with all the congregation because one man sinned? [\[Numbers 16:22\]](#)
- ✧ The Lord told Moses to speak to the congregation and tell them to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. [\[Numbers 16:23-24\]](#)
- ✧ Moses told the congregation to get back away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the congregation withdrew from them. [\[Numbers 16:25-27\]](#)
- ✧ Moses said, "This is how you will know if The Lord has sent me or if I have done these things of my own will. If these men die naturally the Lord has not sent me, but if the earth opens its mouth and swallows them alive, you will know that they have rejected the Lord." [\[Numbers 16:28-30\]](#)

- ✧ The ground split open under them and swallowed them alive with their households and all their goods, then the ground closed over them and they perished. [\[Numbers 16:31-34\]](#)
- ✧ Fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men who had their censers and incense. [\[Numbers 16:35\]](#)
- ✧ The Lord commanded Moses to have Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest to gather the censers out of the blaze, scatter the fire some distance away, and make a covering for the altar from the censers. The censers are holy because they presented them before the Lord, they will be a sign to the Children of Israel. [\[Numbers 16:36-38\]](#)
- ✧ The covering for the altar made from the censers is to be a memorial to the Children of Israel to remind them that no outsider who is not a descendant of Aaron should come near to offer incense before the Lord. It is a warning lest they come to the same **fate as Korah and his companions**. [\[Numbers 16:39-40\]](#)
- ✧ The things done before became an example to us to encourage us to be careful in our lives so we may be pleasing in the sight of God to Whom we must all give account. [\[1 Corinthians 10:1-11, 2 Corinthians 5:9-11, Hebrews 4:11, 2 Peter 2:4-11, Jude 1:5-7, Matthew 12:36-37, Romans 4:10, 14:2, Hebrews 4:13, 1 Peter 4:1-6\]](#)