

## Numbers 16:1-50 When Leaders Rebel

Leadership amongst the Israelite Tribes was established with the Instructions that YeHoVaH gave to Moses as recorded in the early Chapters of Numbers.

Apparently, some of the leaders were not satisfied with their leadership positions and desired more authority than had been allotted them. The sentence of wandering in the wilderness for forty years and not being able to enter the Promised Land presented an opportune time for several of the leaders to confront Moses. They did not expect what would come next.

- Leaders are individuals that people look to for a variety of reasons.
- Leaders can be formal or informal.
- Leaders can be ordained or not ordained.
- Leaders can be placed in a position of authority or not.
- Leaders are influential people that influence the decisions of those who look to them as examples to follow.

When leaders follow their leaders, they set a good example for the people who look to them. When leaders rebel against their leaders, they set a bad example for the people who look to them.

Remember, Moses went up into the mountain to receive the Torah alone. The people had to accept what Moses said as if YeHoVaH said it because they did not hear the words from YeHoVaH's mouth but from Moses' mouth.

Those who rose up against Moses assumed and accused Moses of setting himself over them as a ruler.

Korah was one of the Kohathites in charge of carrying the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle furnishings.

Korah took the lead, based on the language of this Chapter, and instigated a rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

Nu 16:1 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *men*:

Nu 16:2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:

Nu 16:3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation *are* holy, every one of them, and YeHoVaH *is* among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of YeHoVaH?

They accused Moses and Aaron of lifting themselves over the congregation.

Nu 16:4 And when Moses heard *it*, he fell upon his face:

Nu 16:5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even tomorrow YeHoVaH will show who *are* his, and *who is* holy; and will cause *him* to come near unto him: even *him* whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

Nu 16:6 This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;

Nu 16:7 And put fire therein, and put incense in them before YeHoVaH tomorrow: and it shall be *that* the man whom YeHoVaH doth choose, he *shall be* holy: *ye take* too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.

Korah appeared to have rallied other Levites to stand with him based on how Moses' addressed them, "You sons of Levi ..."

Nu 16:8 And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi:

Nu 16:9 *Seemeth it but* a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of YeHoVaH, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?

Numbers 16:10 reveals their desire for the Priesthood. Korah and the other Levites he rallied were not satisfied being a servant of the Priests but wanted to be a Priest.

Nu 16:10 And he hath brought thee near *to him*, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee:

**and seek ye the priesthood also?**

Nu 16:11 For which cause *both* thou and all thy company *are* gathered together **against YeHoVaH**: and what *is* Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

Moses informed them that they were gathering against YeHoVaH.

**The sons of Reuben rejected Moses' invitation to come up.**

Nu 16:12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

Nu 16:13 *Is it* a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, accused Moses of

- Taking them out of the land of milk and honey: Egypt
- Desiring to blind them by gouging out their eyes
- Making himself a ruler over them
- Not bringing them into the land of milk and honey

Their former slavery was, at the moment, being viewed as a land of milk and honey compared to their present conditions.

Nu 16:14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.

Moses asked YeHoVaH to not respect their offerings.

Nu 16:15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto YeHoVaH, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

A Reminder of Numbers 12:3

Nu 12:3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.)

Moses, a very meek man became very wroth.

## A Trial by Censer, Fire, and Incense

Nu 16:16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before YeHoVaH, thou, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow:

Nu 16:17 And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before YeHoVaH every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each *of you* his censer.

Nu 16:18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

Nu 16:19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of YeHoVaH appeared unto all the congregation.

Nu 16:20 And **YeHoVaH spake unto Moses and unto Aaron**, saying,

Nu 16:21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

Nu 16:22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

Nu 16:23 And **YeHoVaH spake unto Moses**, saying,

Nu 16:24 Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Dathan and Abiram would not come to Moses, so Moses went to them. The elders of Israel followed Moses.

Nu 16:25 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

Remove yourself from wicked people.

Nu 16:26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, **Depart**, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.

Depart – **05493** סוּר suwr {soor} or שׁוּר suwr (Hos 9:12) {soor}

**Meaning:** 1) to turn aside, depart 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to turn aside, turn in unto 1a2) to depart, depart from way, avoid 1a3) to be removed 1a4) to come to an end 1b) (Poel) to turn aside 1c) (Hiphil) 1c1) to cause to turn aside, cause to depart, remove, take away, put away, depose 1c2) to put aside, leave undone, retract, reject, abolish 1d) (Hophal) to be taken away, be removed

**Usage:** AV - (put, take,...) away 97, depart 76, remove 35, aside 29, take 14, turn 12, turn in 9, take off 6, go 3, put 3, eschewed 3, misc 14; 301

Nu 16:27 So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

Nu 16:28 And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that YeHoVaH hath sent me to do all these works; for *I have not done them* of mine own mind.

Nu 16:29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; *then* YeHoVaH hath not sent me.

Nu 16:30 But if YeHoVaH make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that *appertain* unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked YeHoVaH.

Nu 16:31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that *was* under them:

### YeHoVaH does a new thing as specified by Moses.

Nu 16:32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their **houses**, and all the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all *their* goods.

Houses – **01004** בַּיִת bayith {bah'-yith}

**Meaning:** 1) house 1a) house, dwelling habitation 1b) shelter or abode of animals 1c) human bodies (fig.) 1d) of Sheol 1e) of abode of light and darkness 1f) of land of Ephraim 2) place 3) receptacle 4) home, house as containing a family 5) household, family 5a) those belonging to the same household

5b) family of descendants, descendants as organized body 6) household affairs 7) inwards (metaph.) 8) (TWOT) temple adv 9) on the inside prep 10) within

**Usage:** AV - house 1881, household 54, home 25, within 22, temple 11, prison 16, place 16, family 3, families + 01 2, dungeon 2, misc 23; 2055

### Buried Alive

Nu 16:33 They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

Pit – **07585** לֵאֲשֹׁמֶל she'owl {sheh-ole'} or לֵאֲשֹׁמֶל sheol {sheh-ole'}

**Meaning:** 1) sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit 1a) the underworld 1b) Sheol - the OT designation for the abode of the dead 1b1) place of no return 1b2) without praise of God 1b3) wicked sent there for punishment 1b4) righteous not abandoned to it 1b5) of the place of exile (fig) 1b6) of extreme degradation in sin

**Usage:** AV - grave 31, hell 31, pit 3; 65

Nu 16:34 And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up *also*.

All of Israel feared that the earth that swallowed Dathan, Abiram, Korah, and their families would also swallow them.

A fire consumed the 250 princes.

Nu 16:35 And there came out a fire from YeHoVaH, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

- Imagine seeing whole families with their little ones swallowed up.
- Some who were swallowed up were probably good friends, possibly betrothed, to some who remained.
- Feelings and emotions of pity, sorrow, anger, and bitterness developed as a result of what the people had experienced.
- They, for whatever reason, did not see the hand of God responding to the rebellion of the wicked. They most likely did not consider those who rebelled as wicked at all, simply individuals who were addressing their grievances with leadership.
- Justification of one's behavior does not make their behavior righteous or excuse away their behavior.

- People are responsible for their words and deeds regardless of who they blame for THEIR words and deeds, or the situation they find themselves in because of the actions of others.
- YeHoVaH's Word doesn't change because of your situations or circumstances.
- The decision these men made cost them their lives and the lives of their wives, sons, and little ones. All their possessions were buried with them.
- It is important for wives and children to encourage their husbands and fathers to obey YeHoVaH's Commandments.
- It is equally important that wives and children submit to and honor the husbands and fathers that obey YeHoVaH's Commandments!

Nu 16:36 And YeHoVaH spake unto Moses, saying,

The censers of the wicked were made a covering of the altar as a sign to the people.

Nu 16:37 Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed.

Nu 16:38 The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates *for* a covering of the altar: for they offered them before YeHoVaH, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel.

Nu 16:39 And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad *plates for* a covering of the altar:

Brasen – **05178** נְשִׁינָה nechosheth {nekh-o'-sheth}

**Meaning:** 1) copper, bronze 1a) copper (ore), bronze (as copper alloy) 1b) fetters (of copper or bronze) 1c) copper (as value) 2) lust, harlotry 2a) meaning dubious

**Usage:** AV - brass 103, brasen 28, fetters 4, chain 3, copper 1, filthiness 1, steel 1; 141

Nu 16:40 To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which *is* not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before YeHoVaH; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as YeHoVaH said to him by the hand of Moses.

The memorial was for those who aspired to be Priests but were not of the seed of Aaron.

You would think that those who were not destroyed would have learned the lesson from those who had been destroyed for murmuring against Moses and Aaron and thus would stop murmuring.

Nu 16:41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of YeHoVaH.

The people accused Moses of killing the people.

Did the people think Moses had power to open the earth and swallow all those families?

Did the people actually think Moses sent fire and destroyed the 250 princes?

If they thought Moses had that kind of Power, why do the same thing again?

Nu 16:42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of YeHoVaH appeared.

Nu 16:43 And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

Nu 16:44 And YeHoVaH spake unto Moses, saying,

Nu 16:45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

YeHoVaH sent a plague amongst the people before Moses could talk Him out of it.  
All Moses could do was try to stop the plague from spreading by having Aaron make an atonement for the people.

Moses instructs Aaron to atone for the sins of the people by putting fire and incense in a censer.

Nu 16:46 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from YeHoVaH; the plague is begun.

Nu 16:47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

Nu 16:48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

Nu 16:49 Now they that died in the plague were **fourteen thousand and seven hundred**, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

Fourteen thousand and seven hundred people died in the plague, besides the 250 princes who were killed by fire, in addition to the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who went down to the pit.

Nu 16:50 And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

The people rebelled against Moses, but ultimately rebelled against the ONE who called Moses: YeHoVaH.