

Participant Notes: The Covenant of the Priesthood: The Rebellion of Korah

Korah, a Kohathite, would have been one of those appointed to care for the articles of the temple.

Numbers 3:30-31 NKJV 30 And the leader of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. 31 Their duty included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the work relating to them.

The children of Israel turned back and dwelt in the wilderness at Kadesh after failing to enter the Land.

Deuteronomy 1:46 NKJV 46 "So you remained in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you spent there.

The Jewish sages teach that their stay at Kadesh was equal to their time of wandering in the wilderness.

Korah was unhappy with his role as servant to his cousin Aaron and Aaron's sons.

Numbers 16:1-2 NKJV 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.

The New King James Version: took men.

The Stone Edition Chumash: separated himself

The New American Standard version: he took action.

The New International Version: he became insolent.

Metaphorically, Korah took, or tried to take, that which he was not entitled.

Numbers 16:3 NKJV 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 assembly of the LORD?"

Korah's co-conspirators were all descendants of Reuben; they were camped together.

Discussion Question: How could the fact that the Reubenites and Kohathites were encamped near each other contribute to the rebellion? What jealousies may have contributed to the rebellion of Korah? (Numbers 16:3 and 12-14)

Korah asserted that all of the children of Israel were holy and that the LORD is among all of them.

Exodus 19:6 NKJV 6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Moses demonstrated his humility by falling on his face and inviting them to take their grievance to God.

Numbers 16:4-5 NKJV 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.

Since wanted the priesthood, Moses told them to go ahead and bring incense to the LORD.

Numbers 16:6-7 NKJV 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!"

Moses reminded Korah that he was among those chosen for service to God.

Numbers 16:8-10 NKJV 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?

They should have remembered Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu!

Leviticus 10:1-2 NKJV 1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Why was the offering of the incense chosen as the test for who would be holy or set apart to the LORD?

1 Chronicles 6:49 NKJV 49 But Aaron and his sons offered sacrifices on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, for all the work (*service*) of the Most Holy Place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.

Work: "mel-aw-kah," #4399 meaning deputyship, ministry.

"me-lakh," #4397 meaning a deputy, messenger, or angel.

The "work" of making atonement for Israel was the culmination of all the other duties of the priesthood.¹

The offering of the incense on the golden altar was one of the duties specifically allotted to Aaron.

¹ Our video teaching "The Sweet Scent of Incense" on March 14, 2017 covers the importance of the incense and the incense altar in more depth.

Exodus 30:7-8 NKJV 7 "Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. 8 "And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.

The invitation was that the LORD would choose who He would allow to draw near to Him.

Numbers 16:17-18 NKJV 17 "Let 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." 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.

In order to show that God had indeed sent Moses, Korah would be destroyed in a manner that only God could accomplish.

Numbers 16:28-30 NKJV 28 And 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."

Discussion Question: Korah questioned whether or not Moses was sent by God to do all these works. Who questioned that Yeshua was sent by God do all His works? How is the fate of those who reject that God sent Yeshua similar to the fate that God sent Moses?

God demonstrated His choice that only Aaron and his descendants could offer the incense.

Numbers 16:34-35 NKJV 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.

The censers with which they were prepared to offer incense now became a "devoted thing" to the LORD.

Numbers 16:38-40 NKJV 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." 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.

Discussion Question: God said that the 250 men sinned against their souls. What does that mean? (Proverbs 20:2)

The next morning the congregation of Israel accused Moses and Aaron of killing the people of the LORD.

Numbers 16:41-42 NKJV 41 On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured 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.

God appeared once again in the tabernacle and determined to kill the entire congregation. Moses instructed Aaron to make atonement for them quickly so they would not all die.

Numbers 16:46-48 NKJV 46 So 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." 47 Then 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. 48 And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.

Aaron stood between the dead and the living.

Discussion Question: How does Yeshua, our high priest, stand between the dead and living for us? How does this incident remind us that we need our high priest to mediate between us and God?