

## Numbers Chapter 16

Verses 16:1 – 17:13: This portion contains a group of stories that establish Aaron's role as high priest (16:1-35), the rebellion of Korah (16:36-50), Aaron halts the plague (17:1-13), Aaron's rod budded.

Verses 1-3: A Levite named "Korah" and two Reubenites named "Dathan and Abiram" were jealous of Moses' and Aaron's positions among the people. A faction rose up, claiming these divinely designated leaders had exalted themselves, and unrest spread throughout the camp.

Verses 1-2: The leaders of the rebellion included a group headed by Korah and composed principally of Levites who were offended by the setting apart of the family of Aaron for the duties and privileges of the priesthood (verse 10). The other group, headed by Abiram and Dathan, felt that they, rather than Moses, should have the preeminence in the nation, since they are the leaders of the tribe descended from the firstborn son of Jacob (Reuben). Thus, a rebellion against religious authority and another against political authority were associated, and the strength of each was greatly enhanced by cooperation with the other. Korah was a member of the Kohathite branch of the tribe of Levi, the branch to which Moses and Aaron belonged. With him were three outstanding members of the tribe of Reuben and 250 leaders of the congregation.

**Numbers 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]:"**

"Korah": Korah was descended from Levi through Kohath. Being a son of Kohath, he already had significant duties at the tabernacle (see 4:1-20). However, he desired further to be a priest (see verse 10).

Korah was the leader of this group of rebellious Levites, the sons of Eliab, and the son of Reuben.

**Numbers 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:"**

To his face, openly and publicly, in a bold and audacious manner. With impudence, as the Targum of Jonathan.

"With certain of the children of Israel": Some out of the several tribes, but perhaps chiefly of the tribe of Reuben, as Jarchi.

"Two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly": Or "congregation", who were princes in the several tribes to which they belonged. Heads of houses and families of their fathers, rulers of thousands, hundreds, etc.

"Famous in the congregation": Or "called" to the tabernacle of the congregation. Who, when the great men among the people were gathered together to consult about any affair, were called, as Ben Melech observes.

"Men of renown": Or "of name". In high esteem among the people for their birth and rank, their wealth and riches, wisdom and prudence. And were so before they came out of Egypt, as Aben Ezra remarks. So that the persons concerned in this rebellion were not the mob and dregs of the people, but men of the greatest figure and fame, and therefore was likely to be of bad consequence.

Each of these princes were leaders of thousands.

Numbers 1:16 "These [were] the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel."

These were well known leaders of the various families. These 250 men were from just about every tribe of the 12. To say they rose up before Moses, means against Moses.

**Numbers 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 the LORD [is] among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?"**

They asserted that all members of the congregation were "holy", and therefore that Moses and Aaron had no right to take supremacy over them.

It appears, a great deal of jealousy has arisen among these men against Moses and Aaron. They regarded Moses as the spiritual and secular leader of all of the Israelites. They certainly had that right. The thing they were in error about, was who elevated Moses to that position. They accused Moses of elevating himself to that position of authority, when in fact, God elevated Moses to that position. They felt they were just as capable as Moses, since they too, were from the chosen family of God. The LORD truly was among them in the cloud by day, and the fire by night. It was God, however, who called Moses to such a position of leadership. Moses had not even asked for the job.

Verses 4-11: Moses called upon Korah and his followers to appear "before the Lord tomorrow", together with Aaron, in order that God Himself might decide who was in the right.

**Numbers 16:4 "And when Moses heard [it], he fell upon his face:"**

What they said, their complaint against him, for setting up Aaron for a high priest, and against Aaron for taking this honor to himself.

"He fell upon his face": Through shame, as the Targum of Jonathan. Blushing at their sin, in opposing the ordinance of God. And through fear of the divine displeasure, and of the wrath of God coming upon them for such wickedness. And in order to pray to God for them to make them sensible of their sin. And give them repentance for it, and pardon of it. And avert his judgments from them such a conduct called aloud for.

Moses fell upon his face, not for himself, but for them. He knew this would anger God.

**Numbers 16:5 "And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even tomorrow the LORD 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."**

The two hundred fifty princes that were with him. What follows was said to them apart from Dathan and Abiram, who seem not to be present at this time. And this was after Moses had finished his prayer to God, and had received instructions from him. By an impulse on his mind, what he should say unto them, and was now risen up from the earth he fell upon.

"Saying, even tomorrow the Lord will show who are his": His priests, whom he had chosen, and put into that office. This he would make known so clearly and plainly, that there would be no room left to doubt of it, and which was revealed to Moses while upon his face in prayer to God.

"And who is holy": Or whom he has separated to such a holy office and service.

"And will cause him to come near unto him": And do his work as a priest, without fear of danger, and without any hurt, which is suggested would befall others. And they may expect it, who intrude themselves into such an office, and engage their hearts in a bold audacious manner, to draw nigh to God in it.

"Even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him": Meaning Aaron with his sons, whom the Lord would make to appear that he had chosen, and put into the office of priesthood. And that it was not what Moses did of himself.

Korah was a close relative of Moses and perhaps, because he was of the same tribe as Moses, he felt he was as close to God as Moses. It can easily be assumed from this, that Korah actually wanted to be high priest. Korah's pride has gotten him, and all of his followers, in trouble. God, throughout the Bible, has separated those who are His, like he did for Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Always, those who are separated out, who do not belong to God are killed.

**Numbers 16:6 "This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;"**

Vessels to put incense in to offer, which was the business of the priests.

"Korah, and all his company": The two hundred fifty princes that were with him. For so many we read took censers, and offered incense (Num. 16:18).

Only priests could burn the holy oil to God. Perhaps, this is why Moses chose this particular test. If God does not kill them for impersonating a priest, then they are right. The smoke that came from the censers symbolized the prayers that rise to heaven.

**Numbers 16:7 "And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and it shall be [that] the man whom the LORD doth choose, he [shall be] holy: [ye take] too much upon you, ye sons of Levi."**

Into the censers.

"And put incense in them": On the coals of fire in the censers.

"Before the Lord": Not at the altar of incense in the holy place, into which none but Aaron and his sons might come. But at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, where the glory of the Lord appeared (Num. 16:18). And this they were to do;

"Tomorrow": The day following that on which the insurrection was made. And in the morning of that day, which was the usual time of judgment. This was delayed until "to morrow", that they might have opportunity to reflect upon what they had done, and repent of their sin, and consider what they were to do. And the danger which might attend it; as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, who, though sons of the high priest, yet offering strange fire, were consumed by fire (Num. 10:1). And so might they for assuming the priesthood, and officiating in any part of it, which did not belong to them.

"And it shall be, that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy": Meaning Aaron, with his sons": For though the Lord had already chosen him, and ordered him and his family to be separated from the rest of the Israelites, to exercise the priestly office. And he was actually invested with it, and had entered upon it. Yet he would at this time, in a visible way and manner, make it manifest that he had done it, and therefore should be as it were afresh set apart for holy service, and be continued in it.

"Ye take too much upon you": Moses here adopts the language of Korah in (Num. 16:3). The meaning appears to be, as more fully explained in (Num. 16:9-10). That it ought to have sufficed Korah and the other Levites that they had been chosen from amongst their brethren to discharge the inferior offices of the sanctuary.

Moses tells them here, that God chooses who the priests are. They cannot proclaim themselves as priests. If they think Moses and Aaron have taken this authority for themselves, what do they think they are trying to do?

Verses 8-11: "Korah" and his fellow Levites had decided they were not content with the role God gave them and wanted to exalt themselves to higher positions. Yet as Moses said, their ministry at the "tabernacle" was already highly favored for having been selected from among all Israel, so their assault was on the Lord Himself, the One who had sovereignly appointed only

Aaron's family as priests. "Sons of Levi" in this context refers to Levi's descendants. It is no "small thing" to be assigned to any work when a person is assigned by the Lord.

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

"Sons of Levi": Other Levites were involved in this rebellion with Korah.

They are warned by Moses here, to listen carefully. He recognizes them as sons of Levi, it appears it is a prayer from Moses for them to change their minds, before they get in serious trouble.

**Numbers 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 the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?"**

It should not; for it was a great thing which the Lord had done for them. And with which they should have been satisfied, and for it thankful.

"That the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel": This was a special favor, and ought to have been esteemed such. That God, who was the God of the whole people of Israel in common, should separate the tribe of Levi from all the rest of the tribes of Israel.

"To bring you near to himself": Next to the priests their brethren of the same tribe, to be joined to them, and assist them in their service. And officiate in the court of the tabernacle, where the divine Majesty dwelt.

"To do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord": To watch it, and guard it, and keep out persons until to enter into it. To take it down and set it up, as occasion required, and bear and carry the holy things in it, and take care of them.

"And to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?" Which Jarchi interprets of their singing in the desk songs of praise before them. But Aben Ezra, better, of the service they did for them, when they brought their offerings and sacrifices. Which they took of them, and carried to the priests to offer for them.

It appears they had thought the job God had given them to be of lesser importance, than the job He had given Moses and Aaron. God Himself, had called them to the job they had been doing. It is as if, they are questioning God.

**Numbers 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?"**

To be in his courts, to watch in his house, and wait on his priests, for which an ample provision was made by tithes. Korah is there personally addressed.

"And all thy brethren, the sons of Levi, with thee": The whole tribe of them, excepting Aaron and his family, who were advanced to be priests.

"And seek ye the priesthood also?" The high priesthood, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan. This opens the true cause of their discontent and rebellion. They could not be satisfied with being the ministers of the priests, but wanted to be priests themselves, and Korah perhaps to be high priest.

God had set them aside from the entire congregation for the job He had called them to do. They believe themselves to be above doing the menial labor of carrying the tabernacle from place to place. They want to take the top position of priest.

**Numbers 16:11 "For which cause [both] thou and all thy company [are] gathered together against the LORD: and what [is] Aaron, that ye murmur against him?"**

For gathering together against his ministers, whom he had put into office to act under him. And endeavoring to overturn a constitution of his erecting, and resisting and not submitting to an ordinance of his. Is interpreted gathering against him, and acting in opposition to him (see Rom. 13:1).

"And what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?" What is his transgression? what has he done? as Aben Ezra paraphrases it. He is not chargeable with any fault; he did not take upon him the office of high priest of himself. God called him to it, and put him in it. He is only his minister, and by no means to be blamed. And therefore, it is unreasonable to envy him, or murmur against him. And indeed, murmuring against him is murmuring against the Lord.

Moses says, "It is alright to murmur against me, but why Aaron"? The Israelites gathered here, made up their mind that the priesthood belonged to all Israelites.

Verses 12-14: Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, but, filled with bitter hatred, they reviled him and refused to appear.

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

"Dathan and Abiram": These two men of the tribe of Reuben despised Moses, blaming him for taking Israel out of the land of Egypt and failing to bring them into the land of Canaan. Because of Moses' perceived failure, they attacked him, joining with Korah in the rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

They are showing no respect for Moses, or his office. Perhaps Moses thought they were part of the problem, and sent for them. Perhaps, he thought they might be able to stop the uprising. Why he wanted them is not explained here. They were not part of the 250 however.

**Numbers 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?"**

Meaning Egypt, as the Targum of Jonathan expresses it. Which, though a plentiful country, never had, nor deserved to have this epithet given it. Which is peculiar to the land of Canaan, and is here given, in opposition to the description of that land, which the Lord himself had so described. And argues great impudence and want of reverence of the divine Being. As well as great ingratitude to Moses, the instrument of their being brought out of Egypt, where they labored under bondage intolerable servitude. And yet here represent it as an injury done to them, and as if the intent and design of it was purely to destroy them. For they add;

"To kill us in the wilderness": With want of food, of which they had plenty in Egypt, they suggest. Referring, it may be, to what the Lord by Moses had said to them, that their carcasses should fall in the wilderness. But that would not be for want of provisions, but because of their sins. It was bad enough, they intimate, to be brought out of such a plentiful country, into a barren wilderness. But what was still worse, the despotic and tyrannical government of Moses, as they represent it, they were brought under.

"Except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?" Ruling in an arbitrary way, making laws, and setting up offices and officers at pleasure. So that it is more eligible to be in bondage in Egypt than under thy government. Aben Ezra takes their meaning to be, as if the end of bringing them out of Egypt was to assume and exercise such rule and authority over them. His words are, "hast thou brought us up out of Egypt, that thou mayest exercise dominion over us as a prince? Yea, many dominions, thou and thy brother? "And who also observes, that Egypt lay to the south of the land of Israel, so that one that came from Egypt to the land of Canaan may be truly said to come up, that part of Canaan lying higher than Egypt.

They are blaming Moses with not going into the Promised Land of milk and honey. They forget their spies advised against it, and angered God. They are aware that they will die in the wilderness, because God told the entire congregation. I am sure Moses did not want to rule over them at all. The position of leadership was thrust upon him by the LORD.

**Numbers 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."**

The words which the Lord had spoken to Moses (Exodus 3:8), concerning the deliverance from Egypt. And the bringing of the people into a land flowing with milk and honey, had been communicated by Aaron to the people (Exodus 4:30). Dathan and Abiram reproach Moses, as though he was responsible for their protracted sojourn in the wilderness.

"Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?" Hebrew, those men. The same expression is employed in its literal signification in regard to Samson (Judges 16:21). It is probably used here in the same manner. Or, it may be, to denote an alleged attempt on the part of Moses to blind the eyes of the

people to the violation of promises solemnly made to them. And to impose upon them a law of blind obedience to his own arbitrary injunctions.

They fear that Moses will blind the 250 who did come up, and they do not want to be punished, the same as them. They are complaining however, that they did not get their promised inheritance.

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

Moses' words, "I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them", show his brokenness at being accused of expecting preferential treatment. This is the reaction of someone whose leadership truly was not based on personal demands or privilege.

"Neither have I hurt one of them": Moses pled his innocence before the Lord, claiming to have been a true servant-leader. This confirms that (Num. 12:3), could have been written by Moses.

As absolute ruler of these people, Moses could have taken everything they owned, but he did not. The ass was the least valuable of all the animals. That is why he said, he had not taken even an ass. Moses was angry, because of the false accusations against him. Moses, in his anger, asks God not to accept their offerings.

Verses 16-35: God judged those who rebelled against Moses and Aaron by putting them to death.

**Numbers 16:16 "And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow:"**

Who was still with him, when the messenger returned from Dathan and Abiram. And who heard what Moses said in his own defense.

"Be thou and all thy company before the Lord": At the tabernacle, at the door of it. The Targum of Jonathan is, at the house of judgment, the court of judicature, where this affair was to be tried. And that was at the tabernacle, as appears by what follows.

"Thou, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow": The day after Moses had sent to Dathan and Abiram. On the morning of the next day; which as it was the time of sitting in judgment. So, of offering incense; meaning Korah and his company, the two hundred fifty men with him, and not Dathan and Abiram. And Aaron also, he was ordered to appear, whom they opposed, and with whom the trial was to be made.

After Moses has finished speaking with the Reubenites, he goes back to the same statement as before. Come tomorrow, and let God judge between those He has chosen as leaders.



**Numbers 16:17 "And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each [of you] his censer."**

Which they were to bring with them the next day from their own tents. And these might be censers which they had in their several families. And which they had used in them before the order of priesthood was set up in Aaron's family, and limited to that. Or they might be a sort of chafing dishes, or vessels like censers, and would serve the present purpose. They were ordered to put fire into them, that was to be taken from the altar of burnt offering. For strange fire might not be used.

"And bring ye before the Lord every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers": According to the number of the men that were gathered with Korah.

Thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer": Korah and Aaron were to bring each their censers, between whom lay the contest concerning the high priesthood. Which was to be determined by their offering incense before the Lord, and by his approbation or disapprobation of it.

How each man had a censer, I do not know. This perhaps was something they used as a censer; some bronze metal pan, where fire could burn the oil. Notice 250 of them brought their censers and Aaron brought his censer. This is to determine who is priest.

**Numbers 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."**

That is, they came the next morning, according to order, prepared with their censers and incense. And they took fire from off the altar of burnt offering. Which stood in the court of the tabernacle.

"And laid incense thereon": Upon the fire in their censers, and so burned it.

"And stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation": Not in the holy place, where the altar of incense was, for that would not hold them. Nor indeed in the court of the tabernacle, but at the door of it, or the outside of it. That so they might be seen by all the people who came to be spectators and witnesses of this affair. And they stood;

"With Moses and Aaron": In a bold and presumptuous manner, as if they were their equals. Disputing their authority, and putting themselves upon their trial before the Lord about it. The Targum of Jonathan says, these men stood on one side (of the door of the tabernacle), and Moses and Aaron stood on the other side of it.

They had become so filled with themselves, that they were not afraid to burn the incense in the censers. They came to the door of the tabernacle, as Moses had requested.

**Numbers 16:19 "And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation."**

Korah gathered the congregation, that they might be witnesses of the event. And, upon their success, which they doubted not of, might fall upon Moses and Aaron with popular rage, and destroy them. And it seems by this that the people were generally incensed against Moses, and inclined to Korah's side.

"The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud, which then shone with greater brightness and majesty. As a sign of God's approach and presence (see Exodus 16:7, 10; Lev. 9:6, 23; Num. 20:6).

All of the congregation gathers around the door of the tabernacle, and God appears to them all. His glory meant that He was surrounded by fire and smoke, so the people saw the smoke. This will leave no doubt that the separation is by the LORD Himself.

**Numbers 16:20 "And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,"**

Out of the cloud.

"Saying": As follows.

Even though the congregation is there, the LORD speaks to Moses and Aaron.

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

The Lord answered Moses' intercession by calling the people to depart from the tents of the rebels so that only they would be judged.

God wants Moses and Aaron to move away from the people, so He can kill all of them.

**Numbers 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?"**

"God of the spirits of all flesh": This phrase appears only here and in (27:16). Moses called on omniscient God who knows the heart of everyone to judge those who had sinned, and those only.

This is Moses and Aaron who fell on their faces, and begged for the congregation's lives. Notice, the God of the spirits of all flesh. It is our spirit that worships God. Moses asks God to kill the leader of this uprising, and let the others live.

**Numbers 16:23 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"**

When on his face in prayer, and bid him rise up. And told him he had granted his request, and then spoke to him.

This means that instantly the LORD answered Moses.

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

Not to Korah's company, but to the people of Israel. Of the several tribes that were assembled together.

"Saying, get ye up from about the tabernacle of Korah, and Dathan, and Abiram": Which was either the same with their tents (as in Num. 16:26). Though, as they were of different tribes, Korah of the tribe of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram of the tribe of Reuben, their tents must be in distinct and different places. Though both encamped on the same side of the tabernacle, and pretty near to each other. The camp of Levi was nearest the tabernacle, and the camp of Reuben next to it. It may be, there was a single tabernacle erected on this occasion, for all these men to meet at when they judged it necessary. Aben Ezra is of opinion, Korah had a tent for his men and substance, at a distance from the camp of the Levites, and to his tent joined the tents of Dathan and Abiram.

Korah was the one who instigated this uprising, and came, and accused Moses. Dathan and Abiram were those rebellious, who refused to come when Moses called them to the tabernacle. The Lord said, "everyone get away from them".

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

Either from the ground, upon which he fell on his face. Or from the seat on which he sat at the door of the tabernacle. Though he seems to have stood there. It may be, it only signifies that he obeyed the divine order, and went about it directly. As often in Scripture persons are said to arise, when they go about any thing they are directed, or choose to do.

"And went unto Dathan and Abiram": To endeavor to convince them of their evil, and bring them to repentance for it. And to reclaim them from their folly.

"And the elders of Israel followed him": Either some principal persons of the tribes, called elders, both from their age and prudence. Or the seventy elders lately chosen to assist Moses in the affairs of government. As Aben Ezra thinks these followed him to show their respect unto him. And their approbation of his conduct, and for vindication of his character, which had been aspersed by those men. And to give the more weight to what should be said unto them, for their conviction and reformation.

If they would not come to Moses, Moses went to them. These elders were the 70 men God had chosen to help Moses.

**Numbers 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."**

To the people of Israel assembled together on this occasion. Some, out of ill will to Moses and Aaron. Inclining to the side of Korah and his accomplices. And some out of curiosity to see the issue of this affair.

"Saying, depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men": These turbulent, seditious, and ill-designing men. Disturbers of the commonwealth and church of Israel. Enemies to the peace of its civil and ecclesiastic state. And when Moses desires the people to depart from their tents, he means not only that they would remove in person, and stand at a distance, but such who had their tents, and families, and substance near them, would take care to remove. Lest they should be destroyed with them.

"And touch nothing of theirs": Not carry off anything belonging to them along with their own, being all devoted to destruction.

"Lest ye be consumed in all their sins": Lest partaking of their sins they should of their plagues, and die in their sins, as they would, or for them.

This was absolute separation from them, and everything they own. All of it is doomed.

**Numbers 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."**

The place where they met together and made their general rendezvous. This it seems was encompassed on all sides by people out of the several tribes. Who either wished them well in their undertaking, or were curious to know how it would issue.

"And Dathan and Abiram came out": Out of the tabernacle of Korah, and went to their own tents. And came out of them.

"And stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children": In an audacious manner, as not fearing God nor man. They carried their heads high, and were not in the least daunted at what they were threatened with. And by their looks and gestures bid defiance to Moses and the elders with him.

The congregation fled from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram's tents. Only those of their immediate family were left with them.

Verses 28-34: In verse 30 is a splendid use of the Hebrew verb meaning "to create something new or remarkable" (Gen. 1:1, 21, 26). The "new thing" was a new judgment: the divine

sinkhole that opened suddenly and swallowed Abiram, Korah, and Dathan and their “household”, along with “all their goods”. This should have left no doubt as to who was God’s appointed leader in Israel. Scripture is careful to note that Korah’s sons did not join the rebellion (26:11).

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

To bring the people of Israel out of Egypt, to exchange the firstborn for the Levites. To make Aaron and his sons priests. To give the Levites to them, and to set Elizaphan over the Kohathites. Things which these men found fault with, and questioned his authority for doing them.

"For I have not done them of my own mind": Or "not out of my heart"; he had not devised them himself, and done them of his own head. And in any arbitrary way, without the will of God or any authority from him, as these men suggested.

All of those who are chosen to do a specific task for God, are not operating in their own power. It is God working through them. All they do is submit to the will of God in their lives. Now, God will prove to everyone that Moses is His leader upon the earth.

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

Or "as every man dies", or the generality of men, who for the most part die of one disease or another. As a fever, and the like, or through old age.

"Or if they be visited after the visitation of all men": With such visitations as men in all ages for their sins are visited with, meaning public calamities, such as pestilence, famine, and sword.

"Then the Lord hath not sent me": It may be concluded that I had no mission nor commission from the Lord to do what I have done. But may be reckoned a deceiver and an impostor. And I am content to be accounted so, should either of the above things be the case of these men.

Moses sets the rules for believing these men. If they live a full life, and do not die suddenly, then they are of God. If they do not die suddenly, then God did not send Moses.

**Numbers 16:30 "But if the LORD 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 the LORD."**

“Make a new thing”: This supernatural opening of the earth to swallow the rebels was a sign of God’s wrath and the vindication of Moses and Aaron.

The new thing, here, is speaking of instant expulsion from this earth. They have angered God. The reason it is important for their entire family to be destroyed, is so the entire uprising will stop.

**Numbers 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:"**

As soon as he had finished his discourse, which was addressed to the congregation. And, according to Josephus, after a long prayer to God, which that writer gives at large. Immediately so it was;

"That the ground clave asunder that was under them": On which they stood. Not from any natural cause, as by subterranean volcano, forcibly making their way and bursting the earth, and so getting vent, which has been thought to be the cause of earthquakes. But this was by the immediate hand and almighty power of God. And came to pass just as Moses suggested it would. And as soon as he had uttered his words, which made it the more observable.

Verses 32, 35: The Lord ultimately killed "all the men that appertained unto Korah ... and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense". It was true that all the congregation was holy (Exodus 19:6), but they failed to recognize that Moses and Aaron were God-appointed leaders. Jude 11 describes the "rebellion of Korah" in the context of "ungodly men" who have "crept in unawares" into the church.

**Numbers 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."**

All the men. Not his sons (see Numbers 26:11), but all belonging to him who had associated themselves with him in this rebellion.

This was similar to an earthquake, but since it was on the request of Moses, it is supernatural. The ground just opens up where these evil people are. The area, which each of the three men ruled just went into a giant hole in the ground. The people, and everything perished instantly.

## **Numbers Chapter 16 Questions**

1. Who was the leader of this rebellious group?
2. Who were with him in this rebellion?
3. How many princes came with him?
4. What did they accuse Moses of?
5. They regarded Moses as the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ leader.
6. How was the LORD with them?

7. Why did Moses fall upon his face?
8. Korah was a close relative of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. What is another example of God destroying those who are not His?
10. Only \_\_\_\_\_ could burn incense.
11. When they burn the incense, they are \_\_\_\_\_ the priest.
12. Moses recognizes them as sons of \_\_\_\_\_.
13. What had God called them to do?
14. When they want to do another job, they are \_\_\_\_\_ God.
15. What were they really wanting from Moses?
16. What two men did Moses call to the tabernacle?
17. Did they come?
18. What accusation did these two make against Moses?
19. They were fearful Moses would \_\_\_\_\_ the 250.
20. What time did God put on the test?
21. When they burned the incense, what was determined?
22. Where did God meet with them?
23. Who did God speak to?
24. Why did God want Moses to separate from the congregation?
25. Who went with Moses to Dathan and Abiram?
26. What did Moses tell the congregation to do?
27. What would prove these men to be of God?
28. What would prove that they were not on God's side?
29. What happened to them?