

**Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation**  
(Under same management for over 5785 years)

## **SHABBAT SERVICE**

**July 28th - 10:30AM Lolo Community Synagogue**



### **12:30PM Oneg Shabbat & Torah Discussion**

Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai.  
Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart.

**Romans (from a Jewish perspective)**  
**via Zoom Tuesdays 7-8:30 PM**

### **Parsha Korach -- Numbers 16 - 18**

וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח בֶּן־יִצְחָר בֶּן־קָהָת בֶּן־לֵוִי  
וַיִּקַּח קֹרַח בֶּן יִצְחָר בֶּן קָהָת בֶּן לֵוִי

**Va-yikach Korach ben-Yits'har ben-K'hat ben-Levi**

And took Korach, son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi

וַדָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם בְּנֵי אֱלִיאָב וְאֹן בֶּן־פִּלֶת בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן: וַיָּקֻמוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה

וַדָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם בְּנֵי אֱלִיאָב וְאֹן בֶּן פִּלֶת בֶּן רְאוּבֵן וַיָּקֻמוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה

**v'Datan va-Aviram b'nei Eliav v'On ben-Pelet b'nei R'uven va-yakumu lifnei Moshe**

and Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab and On, son of Peleth, sons of Reuben,

And they rose up to the face of Moses.....

וַיִּקְהָלוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב-לָכֶם פִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה

וַיִּקְהָלוּ עַל מֹשֶׁה וְעַל אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב לָכֶם כִּי כָל הָעֵדָה

Vayikahalu al-Moshe ve'al-Aharon vayomeru alehem - rav-lachem ki chol-ha'edah

And they assembled together against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone far enough

כֻּלָּם קָדָשִׁים וּבְתוֹכָם יְהוָה וּמִדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשָּׂא עַל-קֹהֶל יְהוָה:

כֻּלָּם קָדָשִׁים וּבְתוֹכָם יְהוָה וּמִדּוּעַ תִּתְנַשָּׂא עַל קֹהֶל יְהוָה

kulam k'doshim uv'tocham Adonai umadua tit'nase'u al-k'hal Adonai.

(for) all of them (the congregation) are holy and God is among them;  
why do you exalt yourself above God's congregation?

### Haftarah — 1 Samuel 11:14 - 12:22

14) Then Samuel said to all Israel, "Behold I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me, and I have appointed a king over you. 13) Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the Lord has set a king over you. 14) If you will fear the Lord and serve Him and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the Lord, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God. 15) And if you will not listen to the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the command of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers. 22) For the Lord will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the Lord has been pleased to make you a people for Himself. 24) Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

### B'rit Chadashah – Ephesians 4:1-3

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.



**The Punishment of Korah & The Stoning of Moses and Aaron  
Sandro Botticelli -- Sistine Chapel -- Vatican -- 1482**

### **In the Wilderness: Continued Rebellion, Judgment, and God's Vindication**

God decreed that for ten incidences of rebellion against Him, the numbered generation of His people, whom he freed from Egyptian slavery, would die in the wilderness apart from the "promised land" (**Numbers 14: 22,29**). The root cause for their rebellion was their disbelief. God's destiny for all His people was that they would enter into His rest in the land promised to them. Their disbelief in God's provision and leadership separated them from Him and therefore from His will for their lives. "How long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?" **Numbers 14:11**. One might think that after such a judgment of God, the people would cry out to God in repentance, confessing their sin. But no! There was every indication that God's people continued to grumble, complain, and disobey His commands for the next 38 years, despite God's severe judgment of sin, until the whole generation had died in the wilderness. In the Parsha from last week, just after God's decree of punishment and instructions to turn South, the people decided for themselves to disobey Him. After a quick confession of sin, they decided they could go to possess the land anyway. Disregarding the pleas of Moses, they fought against the Amalekites and Canaanites. They did not believe God and suffered the consequences! **Numbers 14:43-45**. The application for God's people today is quite clear: **Separate yourself from God's provision and direction for your life and you separate yourself from His will for you!** Stating this more positively: **If you want to take the way of life that God has planned for you, accept His provision of atonement from sin, the Messiah, Yeshua, obey His "rules of the road" found in Scripture, and enter into His faith/rest life.** How will you know you've arrived? **You will be content with all that life brings!**

## Let Contentment Reign within the Congregation

Cicero said, "To be content with what we possess is the greatest and most secure of riches." **This Torah parsha will amply illustrate that man is not capable within himself of contentment. Only by living a Godly life can one find contentment, putting the focus of one's life on serving God, rather than serving one's own appetites.**

### **Mutiny on the Bounty – Clark Gable & Charles Laughton – 1935**



#### **Dr. Jeffrey Seif -- T'was a Mutiny!**

Ever heard the title *Mutiny on the Bounty*? On April 28, 1789, Lieutenant Fletcher Christian seized control of HMS Bounty, and set Captain William Bligh adrift in a small boat on the open sea. I mention it here, because we're looking at one of the Hebrew Bible's versions of a mutiny—in this case, against Moses not Bligh. This week we're told Korach (or Korah) "rose up against Moses" (16:1–2a, TLV). It wasn't simply a personal dispute, however. It was political. With a mind to put checks on Moses' authority, and garner more and more authority for himself and his associates, Korach "took two hundred and fifty men" with him, all of whom were "men of renown" (16:2, TLV). "You've gone too far! All the community is holy—all of them—and Adonai is with them," was their battle cry. "Who do you think you are, Moses?" they exclaimed, and "We don't need you telling us what to do" (paraphrase). The charge closes with a question: "Why do you exalt yourself above the assembly of Adonai?" (16:3, TLV). **Sounds like a mutiny to me—on the open sand**, not the open sea. The HMS Bounty left England in 1787. The crew had a five-month layover in Tahiti, during which time they settled and co-mingled with the islanders. Crew members became lax, prompting the captain to impose disciplines on his crew—adjudged to be his prerogative. Chagrined by Bligh's (mis)management, Lt. Christian rebelled, and the better part of the crew with him. **T'was a mutiny!** As noted, Captain Bligh was put off on a small boat and set adrift on the open seas. That was Bligh's situation. What of Moses' back-story?

Moses had been walking down a rough stretch of highway for some time, before Korach actually took him on. In 10:11, the people left Sinai and disembarked for Canaan. In 11:1ff, their **kvetching** over lack of provisions invoked Moses' ire. In 12:1-2, Moses' sister Miriam expressed chagrin over her sister-in-law, Moses' wife. Aaron was



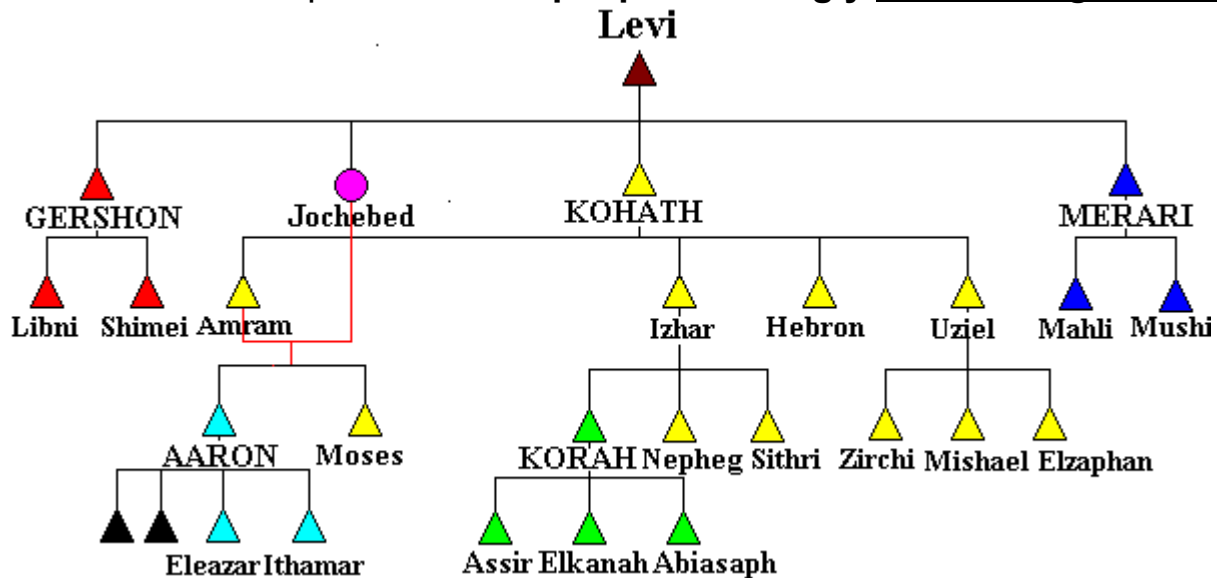
drawn into her consternation, and together they uttered a comment that appears later—on the lips of Korach: **“Has Adonai spoken only through Moses? Hasn’t he also spoken through us?”** (12:2, TLV). The Hebrews were restless while en-route to Canaan, and it only got worse when they arrived. Our last parasha, *Sh’lach l’cha*, told how a **reconnaissance mission** into Canaan, launched from Kadesh-Barnea, turned into a **feasibility study**—one with dire consequences (Num. 13:1ff). Spies assessed Canaan, and returned with various pieces of information. The spies processed the data but **offered unsolicited advice** along with it: **“we cannot attack these people because, they are stronger than we,”** was the upshot of their report (13:31, TLV). In sum, Israelites were disconcerted by circumstances they happened upon en-route to Canaan, and they were chagrined by their prospects for success in a soon-coming war with the intimidating Canaanites. “Enough already!” was Korach’s response. He and others believed political change was necessary.



### **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks -- The Strategy of Koach**

Korach understood the three ground rules. **First** you have to be a populist. **Play on people’s discontents** and make it seem as if you are on their side against the current leader. “You have gone too far!” he said to Moses and Aaron. “The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord’s assembly?” **Second, assemble allies**. Korach himself was a Levite. His grievance was that Moses had appointed his brother Aaron as high priest. Evidently, he felt that **as Moses’ cousin – son of Yitzhar, the brother of Moses’ and Aaron’s father Amram** – he felt that the position should have gone to him. He thought it unfair that both leadership roles should have gone to a single family within the clan. Korach could hardly expect much support from within his own tribe. The other Levites had nothing to gain by deposing Aaron. Instead, he **found allies** among two other disaffected groups: the Reubenites, Dathan and Aviram, and “250 Israelites who were men of rank within the community, representatives at the assembly, and famous.” **The Reubenites were aggrieved that as descendants of Jacob’s firstborn, they had no special leadership roles.** According to Ibn Ezra, the 250 “men of rank” were upset that, after the sin of the Golden Calf, leadership had passed from the firstborn within each tribe to the single tribe of Levi. The revolt was bound eventually to fail since their grievances were different and could not all be satisfied. But that has never stopped unholy alliances. **People with a grudge are more intent on deposing the current leader than on any constructive plan of action of their own.** “Hate defeats rationality,” said the sages. Injured pride, the feeling that honour should have gone to you, not him, has led to destructive and self-destructive action for as long as humans have existed on

earth. Third, choose the moment when the person you seek to depose is vulnerable. Ramban notes that the **Korach revolt took place immediately after the episode of the spies and the ensuing verdict that the people would not enter the land until the next generation.** So long as the Israelites, whatever their complaints, felt that they were moving toward their destination, there was no realistic chance of rousing the people in revolt. Only when they realized that they would not live to cross the Jordan was rebellion possible. **The people seemingly had nothing to lose.**



**Chapter 16** describes a revolt against the religious and political leadership of Moses and Aaron led by Korah. You will remember in the last parsha the grumbling and complaints of the leaders of the tribes of Israel, minus the Levites, that led to the spies making their own choice to leave the direction of God leading them into their promised land and to appoint their own leader to take them back to Egypt. This week we observe the same human mentality, **"I can do it my way,"** from the Levites too.

**Korah was from the tribe of Levi and from the clan of Kohath.** From **Numbers 3:19** and **30**, we find that **Korah was the son of Izhar, the second eldest son of Kohath.** **Amram was the eldest son of Kohath.** Amram's sons, Aaron and Moses were appointed by God to lead the people to their "promised land." **Korah took umbrage that Moses appointed Elzaphan, the son of Uzziel, the youngest son of Kohath** to be "leader of the fathers' households of the Kohathite families," **by-passing Korah.** Korah felt that he was next in line to inherit leadership. Not content with his role as a member of the special tribe of Levi, Korah sought to elevate himself by fomenting a revolt against the leadership of Moses. Korah did not seem to appreciate that by setting himself against Moses, whom God had appointed, he was setting himself against God's leadership.

Perhaps Korah had heard how Jacob had elevated Joseph over his eldest son, Reuben to family leadership. **The Reubenites were aggrieved that as descendants of Jacob's firstborn, they had no special leadership roles.** According to **Ibn Ezra**, the 250 "men of rank" were upset that, after the sin of the Golden Calf, leadership had passed from the firstborn within each tribe to the single tribe of Levi. **Reuben was by-passed and never regained the status due the eldest son.** Perhaps Korah's

discontentment led to complaining to the Reubenites, who also camped on the South side of the tabernacle alongside Korah's clan, the Kohathites (Numbers 2:10; 3:29).

**Study Questions:** 1) How is Lashon Hara spread today through close association with other disgruntled people?

2) What effect on the people was their witnessing the challenge to Moses from Aaron and Miriam?

Korah "rose up before Moses" accompanied by two leaders from the tribe of Reuben, Dathan and Abiram, along with 250 other leaders of the people. This was a revolt by some of the sub-leaders of the people. One might ask, why would some sub-leaders think they could protest against the leadership of Moses? Besides the continuing, contagious complaining (lashon hara) of the people, they had witnessed other sub-leaders, Aaron and Miriam, challenge the leadership of Moses (Numbers, Chapter 12). **Miriam was older than Moses** and had even safeguarded him as a baby in the bull rushes of the Nile. **Aaron was the first-born son** and was by-passed, when God appointed Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. Even God's vindication of Moses and His judgment of Miriam did not deter Korah and his followers from challenging the leadership of God's appointed servant, Moses. One might speculate that their complaining exacerbated their discontent to the extent that they were blinded to God's vindication of Moses. **Their total focus was on themselves and their plight of being passed over for leadership.** **Korah choose the moment when he thought Moses was most vulnerable.** Ramban [Rabbi Moses ben Nachman Gerondi, known by the abbreviation RaMBaN, and to the non-Jewish world-as Nachmanides. He was called Gerondi after his native town Gerona, Spain, where he was born in the year 1195.] notes that **the Korah revolt took place immediately after the episode of the spies** and the ensuing verdict that the people would not enter the land until the next generation. So long as the Israelites, whatever their complaints, felt that they were moving toward their destination, there was no realistic chance of rousing the people in revolt. Only when they realized that they would not live to cross the Jordan was rebellion possible. **The people seemingly had nothing to lose.**

As a Levite from the clan of Kohath, Korah would have been allowed to have carried the holy, covered objects from the Tabernacle. Some of his other Levitical duties might have included teaching and singing, and all Levites were excluded from battle. The Levites had already been elevated as a special tribe to serve God, but only direct descendants of Aaron were allowed to be priests. If Aaron was to lead the priests, should not Korah, as the first-born son of the second eldest brother be appointed to lead the Kohath clan? Instead he was by-passed by Moses in favor of Elizaphan. Korah figured he could redress the "injustice" done to him by Moses by challenging the authority of Moses. His argument was a classic misapplication of God's word to attain his own ends. His immediate goal was to eliminate the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

**Study Question:** Do we ever see this occurring today? Can you recall when our media has either lied or presented a partial truth to try to sway public opinion?

Korah presented the following argument from scripture to make his point, "...why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?" If all of the congregation are holy (set apart to serve God), (**Exodus 19:6**), then there was no need for a special priesthood superintended by Moses and Aaron. God's will for His people was that they live holy (set apart) lives, serving Him as His light to the surrounding Gentile, pagan nations. Like many today who **argue from half-truth**, **Korah conveniently left out verse 5**: "...IF you will indeed OBEY My voice and KEEP My covenant, THEN you shall be My own possession...and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Rebellion against God by revolting against His appointed authority (Moses) was hardly obeying His voice and keeping His covenant. It was, after all, God, who appointed Moses and who set up the priesthood as a special class to serve Him within the tabernacle. While God did set apart His people from all other people groups to serve Him, obviously not all God's people were spiritually based. Moses understood that the revolt of Korah and his followers was really a revolt against the duly constituted authority structure set up by God.

In his blind arrogance, Korah had evidently forgotten the fairly recent demise of Aaron's two eldest sons, who had offered "strange fire" before the Lord (**Leviticus 10:1-2**). No one can come ("draw near") into the presence of God, except, as God allows, according to His rules! God's rules do not allow any layman ("stranger," non-priest) to come into His presence to offer worship on behalf of the congregation. Only His appointed priests could make intercession for the congregation. **Even today, only God's appointed High Priest, Yeshua, can make intercession in behalf of sinners.** "....He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (**Hebrews 7:25**).

In the challenge of Moses to Korah, "...THE LORD will show who is His, and who is holy (set apart by God to serve Him), and will bring him near to Himself" (to lead in worship). **[Note: Moses did NOT say, "I will show you..." exalting himself]** Moses allowed Korah and his company of rebels to play priest....for a short time. Moses called for the Reubenites - Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to come, saying that Moses had taken them..."out of a land (Egypt) flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness..." Again, we see **another half-truth using scripture that mocked God**, who called the land of Israel the land that flowed with milk and honey. While it was true that they were led out of Egypt, which was a productive land, and that they would die in the wilderness, it was God who led them out of slavery in Egypt, and it was their disbelief in God's leadership that would result in their death in the wilderness. Ironically, it would be the children - the second generation - who would possess the promised land of Israel; the land that God said flowed with milk and honey.

Moses is called the most humble of men in Numbers 12:3, but humility does not mean that one should be meek, especially when faced with such rebellion that mocked God's authority. Moses became angry, asking God not to accept the offering of the rebels. The example for us, who live in a world where so many mock God's authority, is clear. **We must take a stand for Godly principles, even where the odds might be 250:1.**



**Taken from Rebellion and Its Cure**  
**James Burling, US Navy Chaplain, Kehilat Ariel, San Diego**

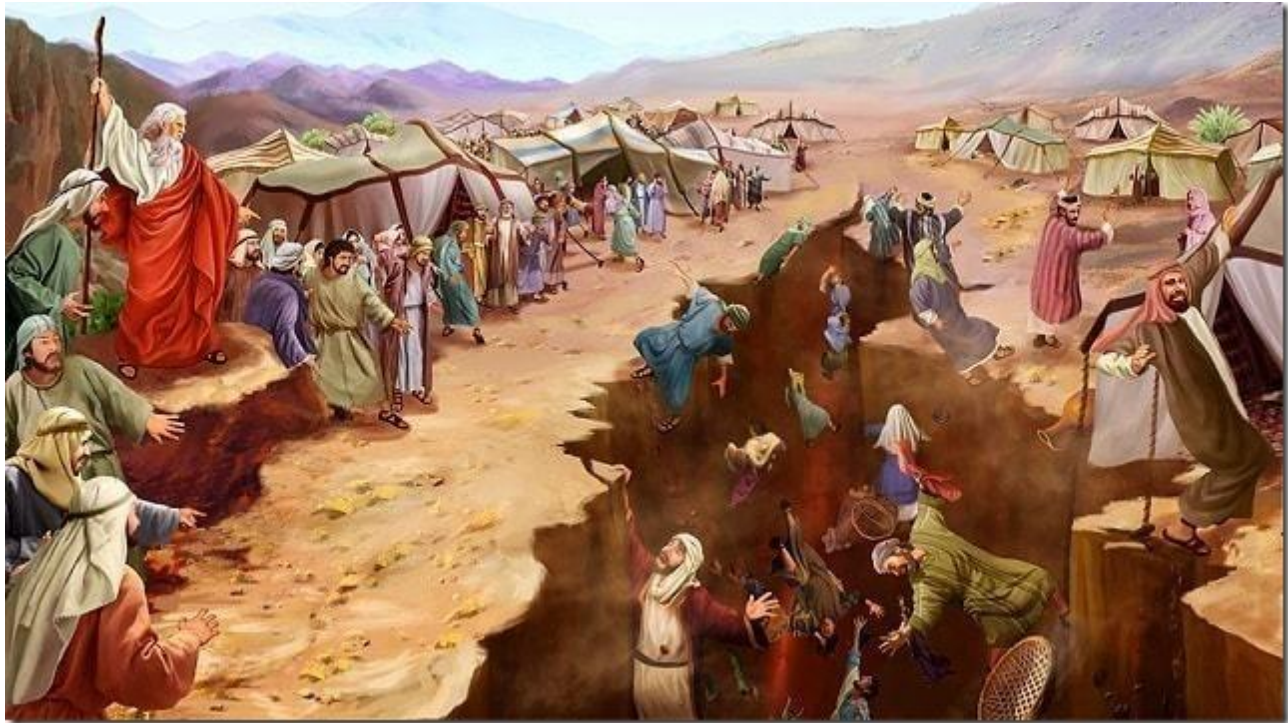
[Rebellion is a default human posture and attitude, and even more so, it's our condition. We continually fall short in our deeds and thoughts. The cure is to turn, perhaps face down first, make repentance, and reverently seek God's face for forgiveness in all directions. James explains in his writings this conception and evolution of sin: "But each one is tempted when he is dragged away and enticed by his own desire. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is full grown, it brings forth death." (James 1:14-15)]

Korach was caught up in his own desires. Sin clouds our world and personal perception. It arises from the **Yetzer hara**, the evil inclination that we all battle, and leads us to fall short, then making us enemies of God with the help of pride. Pride ensures separation from God after we have sinned. We notice that when Moses was confronted and accused by Korah and his clan, Moses didn't hastily defend himself or his position; he didn't explain himself. Rather, "When Moses heard this, he fell on his face" (Num 16:4). This action is synonymous with worship, repentance, reverence, and sincerity. By prostrating himself, Moses is denying his own face (vanity and pride) to receive favor from the Lord's face.]

Moses issued the above challenge to Korah. The next day the 250 followers of Korah assembled with censers filled with incense (**ketoret**) against Moses and Aaron at the door of the tabernacle to offer worship to God, as priests would do; **250 unauthorized "priests" against one man (Aaron), chosen by God.** The Lord saw these **unconsecrated laymen** about to enter into His presence in the Tabernacle and told Moses and Aaron to separate teive the favor of themselves from them.

**Study Question: Should not we also separate ourselves from those who publicly sin against God? How do we live in our present world and yet remain separate?**

Moses and Aaron interceded for the rest of the congregation to spare them from God's wrath. The Lord replied to Moses that he should tell everyone present to separate themselves from the leaders of the rebellion, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. As Moses went to the rebels, the elders of Israel followed him as witnesses and to show support for him. Moses issued the "**cherem**" curse, making the rebels, their families, and all of their possessions "totally devoted to destruction." They would be what scripture calls "**contagiously unclean.**" Anyone partaking of anything that pertained to them would be "swept away in all their sin" (vs.26). God's protocol applies to us today as well. **We cannot take into our lives uncleanness that produces the seeds of destruction and not be swept away by it!**



Moses announced to the congregation that if God "created a new creation," and the ground swallowed up all of the rebellious leaders and their possessions, then they would know that the Lord had appointed Him leader of the people. Just as Moses finished speaking, **the ground opened and swallowed up all the tents, the rebels and their families, and their possessions. Then it closed up over them, leaving no evidence of them.** Korah's punishment perfectly reflected his sin. He sought to swallow up Moses to advance his own status. Ironically, the earth swallowed him alive - measure for measure. God acted forcefully but also in love for His people, eliminating the contagious evil of Korah and the other rebels, who intended to infect all of His people. Sometimes the most loving thing we can do for our children and those we love is to discipline them. One should note that the sons of Korah did not all die (Numbers 26:11). Evidently at least some of them did not follow their father's divisiveness and were content with the leadership of God through Moses. Psalms 42,44-49,84-85,87-88 are all attributed to the sons of Korah. **Sons can learn from the mistakes of their fathers and succeed in areas, where their fathers failed.**

At the same time, fire came down from the Lord and burned up all 250 laymen offering unauthorized incense to Him. God had vindicated the leadership of Moses and rejected worship led by anyone except His appointed priests. Moses instructed Eleazar to collect their censers, which had come into contact with God's fire and had therefore become holy. He had them hammered into thin sheets to cover the altar, as a reminder to the whole congregation that **no unconsecrated layman could come into God's presence** to offer incense to the Lord.

## **Arguments for the Sake of Heaven**

**\*\* What should we today learn from the example set for us by Korah?** Korah's attempted rebellion against Moses and Aaron is considered in **"Ethics of the Fathers" 5:17** to be an example of an argument that is **not for the sake of heaven.** Their

rebellion was motivated **NOT** by their desire to serve God but instead by **their desire to serve and promote only themselves**. We must always remember that although brothers in Messiah may see things differently and may fervently argue in favor of their positions, we should always do so with contextual scriptural underpinning. **We should be open to the contextual scriptural views of others**, remembering that our desire is to **serve God by sublimating our views to His views**, as revealed in scripture. As “iron sharpens iron” we can argue. **Then as brothers we come together in love.**

**\*\*** The following is taken from **Jonathan Sacks** article, “**How not to Argue:**” For three years there was a dispute between the schools of **Shammai** and **Hillel**. The former claimed, ‘The law is in agreement with our views,’ and the latter insisted, ‘The law is in agreement with our views.’ Then a Voice from heaven (*bat kol*) announced, ‘These and those are the words of the living God, but the law is in accordance with the school of Hillel.’ Since both ‘these and those are the words of the living God’, why was the school of Hillel entitled to have the law determined in accordance with their rulings? Because **they were kind and modest, they studied both their own rulings and those of the school of Shammai, and they were even so humble as to mention the teachings of the school of Shammai before their own**. This is a beautiful portrait of the rabbinic ideal: **we learn by listening to the views of our opponents, at times even before our own**. I believe that what is happening at universities, turning the **pursuit of truth into the pursuit of power, demonizing and no-platforming those with whom people disagree**, is the **Korach phenomenon of our time**, and very dangerous indeed. An old Latin motto says that to secure justice, *audi alteram partem*, “**Listen to the other side**.” It is through listening to the other side that we walk the path to truth.

**Did such an extraordinary display of God's justice and power have the effect of repentance on the people? No! The next day, they again complained against Moses**, saying that **he was the cause of the deaths of their leaders**. As the men of the congregation assembled against Moses and Aaron at the tent of meeting, God's shekinah glory appeared. The Lord told Moses and Aaron to get away from them, so they would not be harmed, when He sent **a plague** to kill the people. Again, Moses quickly began intercession for the people. Having sinned, they deserved God's judgment. Nevertheless, Moses told Aaron to grab his censer, fill it with incense and **run towards the people to make atonement** for them, **appeasing God's wrath (propitiation)**. We must note that **while the improper use of incense resulted in the deaths of those 250 participants, the proper use of incense by God's authorized priest, Aaron, resulted in the sparing of life**. As God's plague began to execute His judgment, killing the people, Aaron ran out in front of those still alive, offering atonement as the plague approached. Those people behind him received atonement and were spared. Yet about 2.5% (14,700 of 603,550 - **Numbers 1:46**) of the total population died. **Having again experienced God's judgment, had the people learned that even in the wilderness, they must follow God's rules and God's appointed leaders? No!**



**Thought Questions:** 1) Why do you think Aaron was told to run **towards the people**, rather than to run **towards the plague** to stop the plague ?

2) Why do you think that God's people **continued to complain** and **continued to fight against obeying God's rules**, even though they had witnessed God's judgment?

Does this occur today?

The **Talmud in Sanhedrin 110a** admonishes us that anyone who engages in divisiveness transgresses a divine prohibition; that his end be not as Korah and his company.



AARON'S ROD THAT BUDDED.—Num. 17 : 8, 9.

**Chapter 17** described God's response to another incident of unbelief. The people were again grumbling against Moses and therefore against God, disputing the priestly leadership of Aaron and the Levites. You will note from verse 10 that **God declared those grumbling to be "rebels."** While God had set apart the tribe of Levi for His service in the Tabernacle, as substitution for the first-born males from all the other tribes, those from some of the other tribes objected to the elevated status of the Levites. God decided to vindicate His choice of the Levites by having a leader from each tribe bring his rod to Moses. Moses wrote the name of every leader on their own rod, including Aaron's name on his rod. He put all the rods next to the presence of God beside the ark in the Tabernacle. Moses told the people God said ...**"the rod of the man whom I choose will sprout."** The next day the rod of Aaron sprouted and produced buds, blossoms, and ripe almonds (showing all the stages of fruitfulness simultaneously.... something obviously that only God could have accomplished). As each of the leaders reclaimed his unsprouted rod, he would have acknowledged that God had chosen the



Levites, as the priestly tribe. Even so, God instructed Moses to keep the sprouted rod of Aaron with the ark just in case anyone else decided to grumble against Him by confronting Aaron's authority as priest.

**Thought Question:** Even though the dispute regarding the authority of the Levites had been settled, why do you think Moses kept Aaron's rod? Should we keep God's words in our hearts to combat grumbling against Him?

**Chapter 18** reconfirmed for Aaron that the Levites were God's gift for the external support of Tabernacle functions. However, only those Levites who were direct descendants of Aaron could be priests and participate in functions within the Tabernacle. The Levites are to be sustained by the offerings of the rest of the tribes, who were to bring their "best" gifts to be used in support of God's work. The concept of **mattanot k'hunah** (priesthood gifts) means that **a person dedicates the choicest portions of the yield of his material labors to a spiritual cause.** The term "everlasting covenant of salt" was applied to this principle that God's appointed servants, the Levites, were to be sustained by the offerings of all the rest of God's people, as a permanent ordinance. A tithe was taken for the support of the Levites, and a tithe from the Levites was taken for the support of the priests and the priestly functionings. God's admonition concerning these offerings concluded the chapter: "And you shall bear no sin.....when you have offered the best of it." **Today we should follow the example of God, who gave His best offering, His Son, to atone for the sin of those who receive Him in faith!!**

# SHABBAT SHALOM



PEACE through STRENGTH