

TO REMOVE ONE'S COVERING-THE REBELLION

Korah's Rebellion

This is no doubt one of the most famous portions of the entire Torah cycle. Let's dive into the story and see exactly what lessons we can learn from how Korah, Moses, and the congregation acted under such circumstances.



It's been over a year since they left Egypt. They crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, heard the voice of Yahweh from the mountain called Sinai, saw the face of Moses glow, saw 3,000 of their brethren get killed over the golden calf incident, ate manna from heaven and quail until it flowed out of their nostrils, and the twelve spies just got back and gave their reports. Ten gave a slanderous (evil) report and paid for it with their lives and two (Joshua and Caleb) gave a good report, believing that taking the land would be no problem with God's help, just as He'd promised.

After all the drama and miraculous events witnessed by the people of Israel in the under two years that they had been following Moses, you would think that no one in their right mind would challenge his authority. But...in true human nature and in their desire to be in control and in the

spotlight...it happened. Korah started a major rebellion that would end in earthquakes, crispy fried leaders, and almost 15,000 dead.

Read all of Numbers 16.

Let's put ourselves in the text so as to better understand what prompted it. We sometimes read the text as if those who lived it had the text to read. They didn't. They were living it. They didn't have the luxury we do of peaking behind the curtain and reading all that Yahweh said to Moses face-to-face. The people didn't hear God speak to Moses or Aaron at all. It was only from the base of Mount Sinai that they last heard him with their own ears, and they couldn't stand it. After that, they just trusted that Moses was telling the truth. So, look how it must have appeared to Korah. Yahweh leads them out of Egypt and goes up on a mountain with a hurricane over the top of it. They hear His voice, see some fireworks, and that's about it. Then, all of the sudden, Moses' BROTHER gets appointed as high priest. *Hmmm....sounds a little suspect.* And as if *that* wasn't enough, the firstborn priestly status is taken away from them and given to the SONS of Aaron? Sure looks like Moses is padding the family tree. No one hears Yahweh tell Moses that Aaron and his sons are to be the priests. (Everyone else that was from the tribe of Levi would be the assistants of the priests and ministers, cleaners, worship artists, etc... of the tabernacle.) They just trust him. But anyone with any jealousy is sure to have those seeds watered through all of this. And that is, in fact, what happened.

Korah was Moses' cousin and was the firstborn son, as were all of the 250 men that were leaders of their respective tribes. Bingo...motive. They all felt gipped because, as firstborns, *they* were supposed to be the priests. But after the golden calf party, they lost that right. So Korah and company were already upset from losing their birthright, but this latest loss pushed them over the top. What was the event that pushed them to challenge Moses? (Discuss.)

What did it? The consequences of the slanderous report from the twelve spies. Because of their disbelief, every single person over the age of twenty, except Joshua and Caleb, was banned from their inheritance. They were not allowed to go into the Promised Land which, of course, was the entire reason they set out from Egypt to begin with. They received the consequence of their own mouths. They got their wish...to die in the wilderness. All this aroused their flesh to such a boiling point that felt they had to do something about it. So they did.

Can you think of another story in the bible that is almost identical in nature?

How about Jacob and Esau? Esau first lost his birthright and the inheritance of the blessing and he responded the exact same way. He wanted it back and was willing to kill for it. What's the difference between those two stories? (Discuss.)

The differences are just as astounding as the similarities. In the Korah account, Moses was appointed by Yahweh and this was ratified by the fruit of His ministry (the miracles, lives changed, the presence of God, signs, and wonders, etc...). In the story of Esau, Jacob cheated his brother out of his inheritance through deceit. He and his mother couldn't wait for the promise of Yahweh to manifest itself. They couldn't see how He was going to do it, so they tried to help him out. Doing so cost Jacob much pain and turmoil. Jacob was acting like Korah. He was not given

the authority because he was not the firstborn. His mistake was that he *assumed* that he **should** receive the inheritance and he very carnally chose a route that was not approved by God. This only worked out in the long run because Yahweh had already chosen Jacob from the womb and the promise was originally given to his grandfather Abraham. He was already in line to be given that authority. Korah was *not* in line and had no promise that he was trying to fulfill other than his own self-absorbed opinions that he should be the one in charge.

But this was not the first time the family tree manifested this problem of distrust in Yahweh and usurping the authority given to them by trying to go around Him. Where do you think this generational curse started in this family tree? (Discuss.)



I believe it started with Abraham and Sarah. They were given the promise that Yahweh was going to bring them a son. As the years passed, Sarah began to get impatient and thought maybe they were supposed to "help" God out by going the logical route: employing Hagar to be a second wife and have the son. Bad idea. This lack of trust and carnal nature was passed through the family tree right into Korah himself, Moses' cousin, from the tribe of Levi.

Can you think of any common sinful traits that you have that your ancestors also struggled with? How have you dealt with them? Have you renounced that trait from your bloodline and taken steps to repeal the power of the enemy over you and your family in that area? If not, I encourage you to do so. I also would encourage you to watch *The Great Deception*, a video we have available on this topic, on our YouTube channel.

Now that we have a motive and understand why Korah and his followers were so upset, let's look at the characteristics of a rebel. First of all, Korah was able to persuade 250 other very well-known leaders of their tribes and clans to join him in this challenge before he went to Moses. This is what rebels do. They do not go directly to the person they have issues with to go through

their concerns and questions. Instead, they go to other prominent people and try to enlist them to join them and support them in their rebellion. They want to have the appearance that they are not the only ones who disagree. Rebels want to show that the other person is in the minority, and "everyone" disagrees with them, specifically the other leadership. Rebels are cowards. Korah did not have enough courage to go to Moses alone and challenge him. He had to have a posse with him to back him up.

Another key characteristic of a rebel is that they wait for the right time to strike when the majority of the people will follow them. After all, if they don't have enough support, they could be killed for treason. To make sure that the hostile takeover works, they always have to lobby key people to support them. And when is the best time to strike? When the leader is weak, either physically, politically, or when there is some sort of controversy, they can use it to their advantage.

Korah chose the latter. It was perfect. Moses' poll numbers were not very high because all the firstborns had been stripped of the priesthood and everyone was just told that they were camping in hot sand for the rest of their lives. And no one had heard Yahweh declare any of this. They only heard Moses *SAY* that God told him so. No one ever questioned Moses' authority while everything was going well, but the second he was surrounded by controversy and the "giants" were before them with what appeared to be no way out, everyone and their brother started to question whether Moses was actually still fit to lead. Instead of basing their decision on the fact that it was Yahweh that put Moses in charge of His people, they based their decisions on circumstance, logic, and man's constant self-motivated desire for control.

How should have Korah handled the situation? What scriptures would you use to support your answer?

If Korah was alive today and had all the counsel of God on the matter, both the Torah and the New Covenant explanation of the rules of conflict, he would have known that he should have gone to Moses privately with his concerns. (See Mt. 18:15)

Under no circumstances was he allowed to gossip, gain support, slander, or share his feelings with anyone outside of those involved. If it was a sin issue, then Korah's job was to try to get Moses to see it so that he could repent, and everything could be restored.

If Moses was not in sin, but Korah just believed he should not be the leader and had concerns about how he was running things, that is a completely different matter. Moses was to graciously listen as if Yahweh Himself were speaking through the man and then politely thank him for bringing his concerns to him. Korah was then to walk away and pray for him, never to bring it up again. If Moses did not take his advice but continued to operate the way he believed was best and Korah did not like it, Korah was to leave the congregation. In no way, under any circumstances, should Korah try to drum up support for himself and try to take over Moses' position, a position Yahweh put him in.

Read **Romans 13:1**: *"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore*

whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."

This scripture only applies to those authorities that are in line with the word of God. If an authority, **any** authority, tells you to do something that is against the law of Yahweh, Yahweh comes first. For instance, if a believer discovered that their friend was stealing from their employer and the company policy said that if you find such a person, you need to "quickly, swiftly and promptly" bring them to justice or you will be fired, what would you do? According to the law of God, you are to go directly to them **FIRST** and in **PRIVATE** and try to get them to see their sin and make it right. God's law **always** trumps man's law. Our motive is not to turn our brother in, even if he is found in sin. Our motive is to restore our brother and elevate him spiritually.

Let's get back to the steps Korah should have taken, steps that are clearly lined out in Matthew 18:

1. He should have gone to Moses privately. If it is not a sin issue, he leaves his opinion on the doorstep and walks away, knowing that he did what was in his heart to do and that it's now between Yahweh and Moses. If it *is* a sin issue and Moses will not listen, he goes to step 2.
2. Korah brings one or two witnesses back to Moses so that the matter can be established that Moses is not listening to the word of God. If it is sin, there will be chapter and verse to reference and Moses will not just be ignoring Korah at this point but also the Torah.
3. If Moses will not listen to any of them, then they are to call for the elders of the congregation. It is at this point that things are serious and a formal courtroom-type proceeding is held. Moses will be required to step down as lead "pastor" and other elders that are respected will preside over the case. They will hear testimony and arguments from both sides and then make their judgment just like in the civil courts, which were formed from the laws and instructions of the Torah. According to the Torah, from which Mathew is quoting in chapter 18, the smallest panel of judges is three, and two out of those three have to agree to whatever judgment. Once the judgment is rendered by "two or three that are gathered in His name (authority)," whatever they bind or loose shall be bound or loosened. These are Hebrew idioms that mean to "restrict" (bind) or "release/permit" (loose). Whatever the judges say, Yahweh will support it. If it is a wrong judgment, because there is no appeals process due to a lack of organized government like the one they had in the first century, the individual is to trust Yahweh to work it all out in the back end.

If the individual remains unrepentant throughout the process or refuses to go through the process at all (which is very likely with people that don't want to face their sins), they are to be put out of the congregation and treated as a "heathen and a tax collector." Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** is an individual that has committed a great sin in the congregation that has either refused to come before the elders to deal with the situation or has not repented through the process of the proceeding, **ever** allowed to return to the congregation. To allow such a person back into the congregation is to not only break scripture, but it is also to violate the entire law of God that is

set up for the purpose of revealing what is right and what is wrong with regard to both God and man.

Unfortunately today, there are too many pastors that turn a blind eye to sin and take the position of "tolerance" out of what they call "love and kindness," thinking that if they love the brother and ignore the sin somehow the individual will come to repentance and make things right. This kind of "**sloppy agape**" is what has caused Christianity to abandon the Torah to begin with. It puts feelings ahead of what Yahweh clearly says about a matter. It justifies and compromises in its efforts to "**build bridges.**" One author put it this way: "*Maybe instead of building bridges between people, maybe we should be burning them down and rebuilding their bridges to Christ.*" Building bridges will, in virtually every case, lead to compromise and the watering down and breaking of God's word. But when we stand on the solid ground of scripture and do what it says through the love of Christ while helping the sinner build the bridge to Yeshua, **THEN** that bridge will lead to repentance and restoration within the body. Unfortunately, this line of thinking is not prevalent in enough pulpits across the globe. To some it feels "mean" and too "**authoritative.**" It feels "un-Christ-like." The reality is that it was Christ that made the rule to begin with. And for a good reason. Wolves love to eat sheep and they will stop at nothing to dress up like one to have dinner. Real love has boundaries that it maintains. The minute we go beyond the scriptural boundaries He set, we fall into the trap of disobedience.

Have you ever had someone that offended you and because you followed the steps correctly you had to distance yourself from them? If you stayed in love, then you did the right thing. From that point, always leave the door open to resume talks and seek restoration if at all possible. After all, Yeshua does that for us. His arms are open wide, but if we do not repent, we cannot enter the congregation of heaven.

Wow, there is a lot in this week's Torah Portion. Let's move on to a different part of the buffet.

Korah's big issue was that he wanted to be in charge and he was not happy with how Moses was leading things. He believed that he heard from Yahweh as much as Moses had. He did not understand that while all believers are the same as far as essence, not all believers are the same as far as role and authority. Inside the congregation of Israel, the pattern for all future congregations, they were all Israelites, but not all were firstborn males who had certain responsibilities and benefits to compensate for those responsibilities. All were Israelites but not all were Levites, priests, etc. The mere fact that Moses was the one that was used to bring them out of Egypt and was the one used to lead them *proves* that **he** was the one chosen by God. Even though the Israelites were Yahweh's people, they were Moses' ministry. When Korah challenged him and told him that it wasn't his ministry but God's and that he was taking over because we're all the same in God's eyes he had no idea that he was going up against Yahweh Himself. Because there was no sin issue, Korah simply had no leg on which to stand. His challenge was a rebellion against Yahweh, which is witchcraft, which leads only to death or banishment. Treason is never smiled upon in the scriptures.

What's interesting is how Moses responded to the challenge. He did not do what most men would do, sticking out his chest getting ready to brawl. No. Instead, he fell to his face before his aggressor, going straight to his King in prayer. This action allowed him to get the right attitude

and God's perspective on the situation. What he came up with when he stood up could have only been inspired by Yahweh himself because it was ingenious.

What did Moses tell them to do in Numbers 16:3? He told them to all get censors and put fire on them. See, here's the deal. The leaders that were Levites were not satisfied with the position that God had given them. They wanted the priesthood. They didn't just want to be assistants to the priests. The rest had just been put under Korah's spell and were along for the booty that might come out of the deal. None of them probably had a clue that when they went and grabbed a censor and offered fire before Yahweh, they were signing their own death certificates because ONLY a priest was allowed to do such a thing. This was like playing Russian roulette with censors. If God looked at them as priests, He would accept their fire. If not...gulp...crispy critters. Yahweh set them up basically saying, "Fine. Do you want to be priests? Here you go. Do the duty of a priest without My support and see what happens." All 250 of them were killed for offering profane fire before the Lord.

There is much to learn from this. First of all, we are all given tasks to do for the Lord. We are all running in a lane in this race toward the finish line. We are to stay in our lane and never get jealous of the person running next to us. The minute we get out of our lane, we've lost the race. The person with the yellow jersey is no more important than the person with the brown jersey. We all are members of the same body. We are all needed, but we must all play our part and stay in our lane. The second Korah tried to take over the lane Moses was running in, everyone following Korah switched lanes and the whole thing fell apart. This is why rebellion is dealt with so severely in the scriptures because it causes the entire congregation to sin.

By the time we get to chapter 17, we see another interesting miracle: the miracle of the blossoming almond staff. This comes right after Korah and company have been deep fried, swallowed up, and the people are perplexed by everything that has happened. They know Korah was wrong because they saw a supernatural earthquake swallow only Korah and his rebel friends. But they didn't see the 250 die. And for all they knew, Moses had them killed of his own accord. So to settle the issue once and for all, all the tribes bring up their staffs, put the leaders' names on them and put them in the tabernacle. When Aaron's rod came out with almond fruit in full bloom, there was no more doubt as to who Yahweh had chosen to be the administrator at His temple.

What About Today?

So how do we apply this for today? Easy. In Luke 6:44, Yeshua said that "every tree is known by its fruit." All you have to do is be a fruit inspector. That's all Moses did. He went into the tabernacle and looked for fruit. Whichever staff had the fruit, that was the person with whom Yahweh had chosen to partner.

In English, when we think of a staff we think of maybe a scepter, a strong stick, or the word "power" or "authority." But in Hebrew, that is not really a proper understanding of the shepherd's staff, or the king's staff, for that matter. In ancient pictograph Hebrew, the letter Lamed, the tallest letter in the alphabet that stands watch over all the other letters, is one of the symbols of the staff. It carries the idea of "instruction" or "correction." I have personally

witnessed this "correction" and "instruction" from a real shepherd tending his sheep in Israel in the same valley in Bethlehem in which Ruth gleaned from the fields of Boaz. The shepherd did not beat his sheep, swing at them, or take any other kind of harsh action. Instead, he would stick his staff out to the side of the sheep causing him to go the way he wanted him to go. If a sheep was obstinate, he would take the end of his staff (rod) and actually touch it in its rib cage, creating resistance. There is no doubt that the sheep did not like this, but had no idea that it was for his own good. Still, the sheep complied every time. In one instance, there were quite a few sheep all packed in together and the shepherd actually had to come out from behind them and press his entire body against the one that was being pushed by the others! What an amazing sight!

Sometimes the one getting that face-to-face discipline from the Father is not actually the one causing the problems, but it is the ones influencing that sheep that is causing him to come out of alignment. However, the Good Shepherd Yeshua is right there, lovingly giving us the discipline we need with his rod of correction. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says that the chastisement of the Lord produces the "peaceable fruit of righteousness." Did you catch that?! ***Fruit only comes through discipline and struggle!*** When did the rod of Aaron bring forth fruit? During the adversity and struggle! If you are experiencing struggle, pain, and feel like you're being stretched, praise your King because you are about to sprout forth new fruit!

By the way, this is a good time to explain the scripture in Proverbs that says, "**Do not spare the rod of correction.**" This is a Hebrew idiom that has a dual meaning. There are many that interpret this as some parent beating their kids with a stick. And while there can be no doubt that discipline was not frowned upon in the bible, that was not the deeper meaning of the phrase. The "rod" is the same rod of Aaron that budded, the same staff of the gentle shepherd, and the same rod and staff of comfort from Psalm 23. Are we to believe that David was saying that he was comforted by Yahweh beating him with a stick? No. And I'm certainly not saying spankings are not necessary, because I believe God gave us a thickly-padded behind for more than just sitting! But the real "rod" is the letter Lamed. It is the instruction of Yahweh. It is "Torah." It is the word of God that comforts David. It is the word of God that gently pushes into our rib cage when we are out of line. It is the word of God that has authority. There is no other spiritual authority outside of that "staff." If you "spare the rod" (Torah), you hate your children. When you teach Torah, you are training your children up in the way that they should go and, in the end, they will not depart from it. This is why in most congregations, the pastor or teacher is the one that has the anointing. It's not the person that is anointed. It's the "staff." The word of Yahweh is the power source, the real authority, and the one who knows and practices it is the one who gets to hold that staff. If it is held properly, it will produce fruit just as quickly as the rod of Aaron. So what is a minister today? Just a sheep that has been given His staff. The more of the word of God you "hear and do," the greater staff He gives you.

How much of the word do you have in your heart? Do you feel like you have learned and memorized the amount of scripture that He has desired you to learn? Do you desire to be used by Yahweh? Would you put someone in charge of something who doesn't know your heart or the rules you have made? The Lord of the Harvest is looking for those He can send into the harvest, but they have to know how to run the combine first. I encourage you to start memorizing

scripture and studying His "rule book" with all your heart. There are other sheep that are depending on you.

At the end of the day, we all have a little Moses in us and we all have a little Korah. Sometimes we're righteous and sometimes we're rebellious. Sometimes we follow the rules and sometimes we seek our own gain. This is why knowing the Book and being a people of the Book is so critical. Many times we are acting out the position of Korah and we don't even know it because we don't know His word well enough to realize that we have broken it and are leading other sheep right off the proverbial cliff with us. Our opinions and feelings get mixed in with the "staff" of God and that is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Our feelings are powerful and are the #1 instrument that both Yahweh and HaSatan use to move us. The only thing that separates Korah from the Moses inside us, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, if you will, is the sword of the Spirit, that word of God that was created to be our source of correction *and* our source of comfort. Only when our feelings are put up against the word can we really know if we are being Korah or Moses.

Know the Book. Love the Book. Live the Book. Your life and the life of every sheep around you depend on it.

Shalom,

Jim Staley