

# Numbers 16 Commentary

PREVIOUS [Numbers: Journey to God's Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission](#)

NEXT

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS "Wilderness Wandering"								
WALKING Numbers 1-12			WANDERING Numbers 13-25			WAITING Numbers 26-36		
Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	<a href="#">Aaron</a> & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		
Old Generation			Tragic Transition			New Generation		
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai <a href="#">Mt Sinai</a>			To <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Hor</a>			At <a href="#">Moab</a> <a href="#">Mt Nebo</a>		
En Route to <a href="#">Kadesh</a> (Mt Sinai)			En Route to Nowhere <a href="#">(Wilderness)</a>			En Route to <a href="#">Canaan</a> (Plains of Moab)		
A Few Weeks to 2 Months			38 years, 3 months, 10 days			A Few Months		
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)								
Author: <a href="#">Moses</a>								

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

BGT Numbers 16:1 κα λησεν Κορε υ ς Ισσααρ υ ο Κααθ υ ο Λευι κα Δαθαν κα Αβιρων υ ο Ελιαβ κα Αυν υ ς Φαλεθ υ ο Ρουβην

NET Numbers 16:1 Now Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, who were Reubenites, took men

NLT Numbers 16:1 One day Korah son of Izhar, a descendant of Kohath son of Levi, conspired with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, from the tribe of Reuben.

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

NIV Numbers 16:1 Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites--Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth--became insolent

KJV 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:

YLT Numbers 16:1 And Korah, son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, taketh both Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, sons of Reuben,

LXE Numbers 16:1 And Core the son of Isaar the son of Caath the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiron, sons

of Eliab, and Aun the son of Phaleth the son of Ruben, spoke;

- Korah: Nu 26:9,10 27:3 Ex 6:18,21 Jude 1:11
- sons of Reuben: Ge 49:3,4 1Ch 5:1,2
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Family Tree of Kohath - Click to Enlarge (Logos.com)

## KORAH THE "RINGLEADER" OF THE REBELLION!

**NET NOTE** - There are three main movements in the story of ch. 16.

1. The first is the rebellion itself (Nu 16:1–19).
2. The second is the judgment (Nu 16:20–35).
3. Third is the atonement for the rebels (Nu 16:36–50).

The whole chapter is a marvelous account of a massive rebellion against the leaders that concludes with reconciliation.

**Keep the immediate context in mind** -- While we do not know how much time transpired between Numbers 15 and Numbers 16, one thing is certain. God had just decreed the penalty for high handed sin (stoning in the case of the Sabbath breaker!) God had just instructed His people to wear a tassel of blue to remind them to be holy! (Nu 15:38-41) O, how quickly these Levites forgot the clear instructions to look at the blue tassel which may have prevented them from committing **"high handed"** sin! (See Nu 15:30-36+)

**Matthew Henry** - Presently after new laws given (Numbers 15) follows the story of a new rebellion, as if sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceedingly sinful

Both Moses and Korah were descended from Kohath (see Family Tree above), but by different sons (Moses through Amram [Numbers 26:58–59], and Korah through Izhar).

**THOUGHT** - Just because you are related does not mean your relatives will not rebel against you!

**Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben** - Korah was a cousin of Moses. So much for family ties and family loyalty! Nearness of relation was no impediment to diminish the power of this man's lusting flesh. "Think it not strange if a man's foes be those of his own house." (M Henry) Recall that the sons of Kohath had the more important duties in the tabernacle, including setting it up and taking it down when Israel changed locations in the wilderness (Nu 4:1-20+). But the Kohathites were still clearly a notch below the Aaronic priests. **On's** name drops out of the story, after this verse. Some writers say it was because he repented, but that is conjecture.

**Guzik** - The name Korah means "baldness." Old baldy was going to give Moses a tough time!

**Matthew Henry** - The Kohathites encamped on the same side of the tabernacle that the Reubenites did, which perhaps gave Korah an opportunity of drawing them in, whence the Jews say, Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour, who is in danger of being infected by him.

**Mattoon** - There is a religious revolt by Korah who stood against the priesthood. There is also a political revolt by Dathan, Abiram, and On. They were Reubenites who opposed the leadership of Moses as the chief prince. They rallied 250 leaders in this revolt. Rebels run in packs. Rebellion has a rippling effect, so don't run with rebels. Korah means "hail or ice." His name reminds us of the coldness of his heart. Sin will do this to your heart.

**Took action**, Heb. va-yikah, from lâkah, to take. This verb is the first word of the verse, and though in the singular number, yet it evidently includes the several nominatives that follow. Translated - NLT = conspired; NIV = became insolent; KJV = took men:

What's the beef with Reuben - **Steven Cole** suggests "Reuben had forfeited his preeminence as Jacob's firstborn when he slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah (Gen. 35:22; 49:4). The Levites and the tribe of Reuben shared adjoining campsites on the south side of the tabernacle (Num. 2:10; 3:29), which may account for their collusion here. Korah may have appealed to the Reubenites, "Because you're descendants of Jacob's firstborn, you should have a higher role in Israel than Moses has given to you. He just wants preeminence for himself! We're organizing a group to confront him and his arrogant brother. Please join with us!" (Steven Cole's sermon [Numbers 16:1-50 Serving God Wrongly or Rightly?](#))

Mattoon adds that "Reuben was the firstborn son of his family, yet, he and his descendants did not enjoy the rights of the firstborn

because of Reuben's sin with Bilhah. 1 Chronicles 5:1-2—*Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. 2 Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.* Sin has a rippling effect in our lives and upon others.

**Believer's Study Bible** - The three central books of the Pentateuch emphasize different aspects of Israel's worship. Exodus stresses the sanctuary, Leviticus the sacrifices, and Numbers the priesthood. Chapters 16-19 deal with the privileges and responsibilities of the priesthood. The section begins with a divine affirmation of the Aaronic priesthood and Mosaic authority (16:1-17:13). Dissatisfied with being just a Levite, Korah led a rebellion of 250 leaders against the authority of Moses in order to usurp leadership of the priesthood from Aaron (vv. 3, 10; Heb. 5:4). The involvement of the Reubenites and others appears to have been motivated by jealousy of Moses' authority (cf. Gen. 49:3, 4) and blaming him for their loss of the Promised Land (vv. 12, 13; cf. v. 41).

**Bush** - A part of the conspirators were of the tribe of Reuben, which had been subordinated to that of Judah in the recent arrangements, and they would naturally aim to regain the precedence which they deemed their birthright. ([Numbers 16](#))

**Brian Bell** - How do you handle criticism? It seems like someone's always waiting to criticize!. Like the 2 men who were standing looking in a window at a taxidermy shop at a bird on a limb. And one man said, "That's a poor job of mounting a bird!" Just then the bird flew down from the perch. Korah was 1st cousin to Moses & Aaron. He was camped close to Reuben & thus their association in this rebellion. (Brian Bell's sermon notes - [Numbers 16](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Korah in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Reuben in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What can we learn from the tribe of Reuben? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 16:2 and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown.**

BGT Numbers 16:2 καὶ ἠγέρθησαν ἄντι Μωϋσέως καὶ ἄνδρες τινες ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ πεντήκοντα καὶ διακόσιοι ῥηγῶνες συναγωγῆς ἐκκλησιῶν βουλῆς καὶ ἄνδρες νομαστοῦ

NET Numbers 16:2 and rebelled against Moses, along with some of the Israelites, 250 leaders of the community, chosen from the assembly, famous men.

NLT Numbers 16:2 They incited a rebellion against Moses, along with 250 other leaders of the community, all prominent members of the assembly.

ESV Numbers 16:2 And they rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, 250 chiefs of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men.

NIV Numbers 16:2 and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council.

KJV 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:

YLT Numbers 16:2 and they rise up before Moses, with men of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty, princes of the company, called of the convention, men of name,

LXE Numbers 16:2 and rose up before Moses, and two hundred and fifty men of the sons of Israel, chiefs of the assembly, chosen councillors, and men of renown.

ASV Numbers 16:2 and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation, called to the assembly, men of renown;

- Nu 26:9 Ge 6:4 1Ch 5:24 12:30 Eze 16:14 23:10
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

(Jude 1:11+) Woe to them! For they have gone the way of **Cain**, and for pay they have rushed headlong into

the error of **Balaam**, and perished in the rebellion of **Korah**.

Korah Confronts Moses

## KORAH ET. AL. IN THE FACE OF MOSES!

**And they rose up before Moses** - Normally **rose up** ([qum](#)) means simply to stand up, but in this context speaks figuratively of taking a position as an adversary of Moses (cf 1Sa 22:8; Hab1:6). The Lxx uses the verb [anistemi](#) which means to rise up antagonistically (cf similar antagonistic uses in Acts 5:17, Acts 5:36, Mk 3:26, Acts 20:30). **Before** is [panim/paniym](#) which literally means face which in turn reminds us of the modern idiom "[in your face of](#)" Korah was literally in the face of Moses! Woe! What a short memory Korah had! He seems to have completely forgotten what God did to Miriam when she "**rose up before Moses**"! (see Nu 12:2, 9+)

**Bush on rose up** - Heb. va-yâ-kumu, they rose up rebelliously or mutinously; they made an insurrection. As the verb in this case follows its nominatives occurring in the preceding verse, it assumes the plural form.

**THOUGHT** - Motive is *everything* in our service for the Lord. *Why* do you do what you do for Him? Often your true motives are uncovered when you feel that you should have a higher position of service or more recognition than the church has given to you. You resent those in leadership and think that you could do a better job if you only had the chance. We serve God wrongly when we desire power and prestige for ourselves, but rightly when we're content with the gifts He has entrusted to us, using them to serve Him. ([Steven Cole](#))

**Together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation** - This was not just Miriam and Aaron coming against Moses as in Numbers 12 but was a large cadre of complainers! This number is amazing. They too have forgotten what happened to Miriam! How can they possibly think they will escape a similar fate or worse? The reason is clear -- they were clearly deceived which is at the very root of all sin -- it is deceitful and will deceive the sinning person! And as I always tell my children, by definition, when a person is deceived, they don't know they are deceived! Hebrews is very clear describing the "**deceitfulness of sin**" (Hebrews 3:13+). Jeremiah also helps understand the spiritual dynamic that would lead these men to such a foolish, presumptuous decision, for as Yahweh says through His prophet "The **heart is more deceitful than all else** and is desperately sick; who can understand it? "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds." (Jer 17:9-10) Indeed, the following passages will illustrate Jehovah searching the hearts of Korah and his gang, and then giving to EACH man according to his ways!

**Guzik** - It was significant this accusation was made publicly, in front of two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation ... men of renown. Men like Korah are always playing to an audience, always trying to draw a following after themselves—after Moses has already gathered the nation and led them this far, of course!

**Chosen in the assembly**, Heb. "The called ones of the congregation." **KJV** has "famous in the congregation, men of renown." **Chosen** (famous)([qariy](#)) means one who has been called out, so these men have been separated from the others in the congregation and thus these were men of renown (men of reputation), those who were well-known, prominent leaders.

**Men of renown** - Heb. "Men of name." These are in stark contrast to the complaining "mixed multitude" of Nu 11:4KJV+! They should have know better! The original phrase occurs with respect to the giants, Ge 6:4. These men of renown wanted more renown for they had fallen prey to what John called "the boastful pride of life." (1 Jn 2:16+)

**Matthew Henry** - "The pride, ambition, and emulation, of great men, have always been the occasion of a great deal of mischief both in churches and states....The fame and renown which they had did not content them; they were high, but would be higher, and thus the famous men became infamous."

**Guzik** - The "Korahs" of the ministry are difficult enough to deal with, but the people who follow them—the two hundred and fifty leaders ... representatives ... men of renown—who lack the discernment to oppose the "Korahs" can be even more painful.

**Brian Bell** -GOD'S SINKHOLE! MINE, MINE MINE! (1-19) [Seagulls on Finding Nemo!] Paul teaches us "Godliness with **contentment** is great gain!" (1 Tim 6:6) ("**Godliness** is great gain because when you have **contentment**, you have an inward satisfaction and sufficiency that keeps you at peace in spite of your outward circumstances." - Mattoon) When you're not content with your gifts, you really not content with your calling; & when you're not content with your calling, you're really not content with God's calling; & when you're not content with God's calling, you're really not content with God. Remember God made tabernacle appointments...not Moses! Four men who desire to promote themselves. They were not content to assist, they wanted to

serve as a priest! Korah aspired to priestly privilege not being content with sacred duties.

**LASB** - Korah and his associates had seen the advantages of the priesthood in Egypt. Egyptian priests had great wealth and political influence, something Korah wanted for himself. Korah may have assumed that Moses, Aaron, and his sons were trying to make the Israelite priesthood the same kind of political machine, and he wanted to be a part of it. He did not understand that Moses' main ambition was to serve God rather than to control others.

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**Cyril Hocking** - Although we may tend to pay little attention to Korah and his conspiracy, Jude includes him with two other sinful characters, Jude 1:11, not in chronological order, to illustrate and warn against spiritual declension at the end of the age: Cain acted in self-will, Balaam sought self-enrichment, and Korah aimed at self-exaltation. Besides the prophetic warning, there is also a practical one from Korah for us: do not aspire to do work that the Lord has not allocated to you!

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In his book, *God in the Wasteland*, David Wells laments, "It is one of the defining marks of our time that God is now weightless. I do not mean by this that he is ethereal, but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests on the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable." The "weightlessness" of God in our age is like the refusal of the Israelites to treat God as holy, recorded here in Numbers 16. What was apparently a showdown between rival leaders for Moses' and Aaron's positions—a conspiracy motivated by self-ish ambition and pride—was at its core a rejection of God's authority. (Today in The Word)

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**Larry Richards** - The Levites Korah, Dathan, and Abiram challenged the spiritual leadership of Moses and Aaron. They based the challenge on the very truth emphasized by the blue cord: the whole community is holy. Like others today, however, they emphasized one truth at the expense of others. The whole community was holy, but God had chosen Moses for leadership and Aaron's family for the priesthood. We need to be careful of those who base their views on one line of biblical teaching and ignore other truths intended to provide balance.

Psychologically, it's fascinating that this rebellion was led by Levites, for they enjoyed far greater spiritual privileges than the majority of the Israelites. Yet these Levites were upset that they could not serve as priests. Even today some with almost nothing are more thankful than those who have almost everything. It seems that when we have almost everything, the little we lack is most likely to create discontent.

This challenge to the leaders was yet another expression of unbelief. Korah and his coconspirators refused to acknowledge that God had spoken clearly, and often, through Moses.

Their sin too was met with immediate, spectacular judgment. Fire consumed those who dared to approach God with incense in violation of His law, while the earth opened to swallow Korah and the rest of his followers. (365 Day Devotional)

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**Ken Totton** - The lessons here for our consideration are several. We must never seek place or position beyond that for which the Lord has fitted and enabled us. His way is perfect, 2 Sam. 22:31, and His ways are not our ways, Isa. 55:8. Further, in God's assembly, rebellion against those the Lord has placed in authority is never warranted or approved by the Lord. Rebellion may be the very spirit of the day in which we live, but it is never God's way.

We are a 'kingdom of priests', Rev. 1:5–6, and a 'holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ', 1 Pet. 2:5. What Korah and his fellow-rebels wanted and could never have under the law, what they died trying to gain, we now enjoy as a gift through grace. What a place! What a position! Let us never take lightly these offices we have, purchased by the blood of Calvary's Lamb. As believers, we can enter His presence unafraid, bidden to come, invited to stay, because of the finished work of the Saviour. May we never take this for granted! (Day By Day)

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Numbers 16:1-3

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy (Acts 13:45).

Envy and jealousy are feelings of discontent and resentment aroused by thinking about another person's desirable qualities or possessions and wanting them for ourselves. Here are some classic examples: Rachel envied Leah because she bore children (Gen. 30:1); Joseph's brothers resented him for his dreams (Gen. 37:11); Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and two hundred fifty princes envied Moses (Num. 16:1-3); Saul was jealous of David because the women praised him (1 Sam. 18:7-9); and in Acts 13:45, the Jews opposed Paul's preaching for the same reason—envy.

Any advantage held by another—intelligence, good looks, a slim figure, popularity, a good job, or even a person's spiritual insight—may trigger this feeling. The most devout Christian is not immune to its subtle attack. When F. B. Meyer first held meetings at Northfield, Massachusetts, large crowds thronged to hear his stirring messages. Then the great British Bible teacher G. Campbell Morgan came to Northfield, and the people flocked to hear his brilliant expositions of Scripture. Meyer confessed that at first he was

envious.

He said, "The only way I can conquer my feeling is to pray for Morgan daily—which I do."

A negative reaction toward anyone who possesses what we lack quenches the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts. That's why we must root out all envy and jealousy from our lives. We know we are gaining victory when we desire good for the one we envy. — R.W.D. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## **James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE DESTRUCTION OF KORAH AND HIS COMPANY Numbers 16**

"When Thou seest passion in me burn,  
Upon me, Lord, Thy meek face turn;  
Such vision, giving me of faith,  
So touching me with Thy soft breath  
That I shall not impatient be,  
But find myself conformed to Thee."

Pride goeth before a fall. When envy enters the heart it soon becomes a hotbed for the rank weeds of discontent, impatience, and presumption.

**1. See the sinners.** The three leaders of this rebellion against Moses and Aaron the saint of the Lord (Psa. 106:16) were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; their followers were 250 princes, famous men of renown. Great men are not always wise. The voice of the people is frequently the voice of the devil. Korah seems to have been the ringleader. His name means ICE, and he answers to his name. Only a man with an icy, cold heart and frozen feelings could have acted such an ungracious part toward the "meekest man on the face of the earth." Where love is thin faults are thick. When professing Christian workers become icy in their manner, you may soon expect them leading the opposition. Such icebergs are a terrible danger to Gospel ships.

**2. See their sin. It was very great, and was the growth of time, as all great sins are.** A backslider is one who is sliding back, slowly it may be, but surely, into the mire of open sin. The down grade from uncharitableness leads to the engulfing of the whole character in the pit of iniquity. Its—

1. ROOT WAS UNBELIEF. They had ceased to believe that Moses and Aaron were still the special representatives among the congregation. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. Begin to doubt God's will, and you begin to fall.
2. BRANCH WAS ENVY. "Wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation?" (v. 3). The Lord had lifted Moses and Aaron up, but it was they that were lifting themselves up. It was Socrates who said, "Envy is the daughter of pride, the beginner of secret sedition, and the perpetual tormentor of virtue." This witness is true.
3. BLOSSOM WAS PRESUMPTION. "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them" (v. 3). As if all the people were as gracious and saintly as Moses and Aaron. Their sin is ripening. There is a growing blindness to the good in others, and to their own sinfulness.
4. FRUIT WAS DEATH. Lust bringeth forth sin, and sin brings forth death, just as surely as night follows day.

**3. See them separated.** "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them" (vs. 21–24). It is an ominous sign when the representatives of a government are called out from among a nation. The calling out of Lot meant the destruction of Sodom. The calling up of the Church indicates coming judgments (2 Thess. 1:7–10; Jer. 51:6; Rev. 18:4).

This separating reminds us that—

1. THERE ARE TWO CLASSES. Those for God and those against Him. The wheat and the tares, growing together now, but must finally be separated.
2. A SEPARATION IS NEEDED. God will not judge the righteous with the wicked. Before God could accomplish His purpose with Sodom Lot had to be dragged outside. Separation is needed now if we, as the followers of Christ, would escape the judgment of the world through lust (2 Cor. 6:17).
3. GOD IS RIGHTEOUS. In calling for a separation He shows His special regard for His own. "Come out of her, My people." Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? None perish that trust in Him.

**4. See them swallowed up.** "The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up" (vs. 31–35). The means of vengeance are always at the hand of God. The powerful opposition is easily overcome when the arm of God is made bare. The judgment of these gainsayers (Jude 11) was—

1. UNEXPECTED. "The ground clave asunder that was under them" (v. 31). Their foundation gave way. They have no standing in the judgment (Ps. 1:5). Only the ground between them and the pit, instead of the promise of God.
2. SUDDEN. "They went down alive into the pit" (v. 33). He that hardeneth his neck, having been often reprov'd, shall suddenly perish, and that without remedy. They say, Peace, peace, then suddenly destruction cometh.
3. COMPLETE. "They, and all that appertained to them, went down" (v. 33). God's destroying work is as perfect as His saving work. "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?"

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## Passing Judgment

"Then the whole congregation ... murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness (Exodus 16:2).

Fred Grimm, a Christian probation officer, told of a father who made a scapegoat of his son by blaming him for family conflicts. Although the man and his wife had been fighting for years, the father told his son, "It's always because of your big mouth that your mother and I fight. If I leave you and your mother, it will be your fault." The youngster's problems were compounded when the father died suddenly from a stroke and the mother accused her son of having caused his father's death. The boy was devastated.

Blaming others for our problems is not only unjust and cruel, it's displeasing to the Lord. The children of Israel did this in the wilderness shortly after their deliverance from the land of Egypt. When food and water were short, they panicked and blamed Moses and Aaron for getting them into their predicament. They made scapegoats of their leaders. Yet God mercifully overlooked their lack of faith and unfair criticism of His servants in those two incidents. Later, though, when the Israelites committed the same sin again, He judged them severely (see **Numbers 16**).

Scapegoating can do great damage. Instead of looking for someone else to blame for our problems, we need to analyze our situation, acknowledge our failures, and ask God for forgiveness and help.—H. V. Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**We won't get closer to God by passing judgment on others.**

**Numbers 16:3 They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"**

BGT Numbers 16:3 συν στήσαν π Μωυσ ν κα Ααρων κα ε παν χτω μ ν τι π σα συναγωγ π ντες γιοι κα ν α το ς κ ριος κα δι τ καταν στασθε π τ ν συναγωγ ν κυρ ου

NET Numbers 16:3 And they assembled against Moses and Aaron, saying to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, seeing that the whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the community of the LORD?"

NLT Numbers 16:3 They united against Moses and Aaron and said, "You have gone too far! The whole community of Israel has been set apart by the LORD, and he is with all of us. What right do you have to act as though you are greater than the rest of the LORD's people?"

ESV Numbers 16:3 They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

NIV Numbers 16:3 They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! 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?"

KJV 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?

YLT Numbers 16:3 and they are assembled against Moses and against Aaron, and say unto them, 'Enough of you! for all the company -- all of them are holy, and in their midst is Jehovah; and wherefore do ye lift



yourselves up above the assembly of Jehovah?’

- **assembled together against:** Nu 16:11 12:1,2 14:1-4 Ps 106:16 Ac 7:39,51
- **all the:** Ex 19:6 Ezr 9:2 Isa 1:11-16 Jer 7:3-12 Mt 3:9,10 Ro 2:28,29
- **the LORD:** Nu 14:14 35:34 Ex 29:45,46 Ps 68:17
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 19:6+ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a **holy nation**.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

### THEIR PATHETIC PRETEXT

A **pretext** is something put forward to conceal the true motive. **Pretext** is an excuse to do something or say something that is not accurate. Pretexts may be based on a half-truth or developed in the context of a misleading fabrication. Pretexts have been used to conceal the true purpose or rationale behind actions and words. Notice how they put forth **All the congregation**. The truth is that these men wanted power and prestige in **All the congregation**..

**Matthew Henry** calls this "the Rebel's **Remonstrance** (expression of protest)."

**They assembled together against Moses and Aaron** - Niphal passive = "were gathered together." Lxx has "They rose up against Moses and Aaron." NLT = "They united against Moses and Aaron." Look at the odds - 2 against thousands! God likes those odds, for then He can show Himself mighty of behalf of His servants. Perhaps the "odds" are against you in some issue which in your heart you know is God's will. If so, you can know that God is for you, regardless of the immediate outcome (the story isn't over till it's over! Some "chapters" will be written in the world to come!).

**Bush** - The above named company assembled in a body against Moses and Aaron as the usurpers and arbitrary dispensers of all preferment.

**THOUGHT** - Significantly, "Kohath", to whose family Korah belonged, means "assembly", and "Korah" seemed to be dead in spirit, whilst his three Reubenite associates, descendants of the rejected firstborn, were malcontents. Sadly, sometimes in assembly life today, some carnally-minded members are disloyal, as Korah was, and others are discontented as the Reubenites were, both of whom are disruptive. (Cyril Hocking)

**and said to them, "You have gone far enough** - Hebrew literally "Too much to you!" **NET** - "You take too much upon yourselves." Too much what? Probably too much power, authority and prestige which festered in Moses' cousin Korah and birthed a spirit of resentment and jealousy.

**NET Note** - Sol. Jarchi paraphrases the passage, "Ye have taken to yourselves greatness much more than enough." "The meaning of רַב־לָכֶם (rab-lakhem) is something like "you have assumed far too much authority." It simply means "much to you," perhaps "you have gone to far," or "you are overreaching yourselves." He is objecting to the exclusiveness of the system that Moses has been introducing."

**Guzik** adds "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: This was a clever attack. Korah acted as if he is represented the people and fought for their interests. The truth was that he desired a following and a position for himself. "Moses, you shouldn't be the leader. Let everyone be a leader. God can speak to everyone." Rebels and divisive persons have always used such words for their cause.. Significantly, Korah proclaimed the holiness of the people (all the congregation is holy) and regarded strong leadership as unnecessary (You take too much ...) at the very time when the nation was not holy and desperately needed strong leadership! Korah, like many rebels and divisive persons, completely misread the state of the "flock"—because he was not a true shepherd.

**For - Term of explanation.** Now Korah explains why they are accusing Moses of "going too far."

**All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst** - NLT - "Everyone in Israel has been set apart by the LORD, and He is with all of us." By saying they **are holy** they are implying that all are as fit to be employed in offering sacrifice as Aaron is! In theory, they were not incorrect for in Exodus 19:6+ God made it clear Israel was a **'holy nation**." That was their position, but sadly was all to infrequently their actual practice! What Korah et al are implying is that there is no justifiable grounds for distinction between the Aaronic priesthood and the laity for they were all **holy**! The congregation may have been **'holy**" (set apart from the pagan nations and unto God) in their position but, as stated, they were far from holy or set apart in their behavior!



Just recall their unholy actions in Numbers 14 which resulted in a wilderness funeral march for all except Joshua and Caleb!

**Matthew Henry on all are...holy** - Small reason they had to boast of the people's purity, or of God's favour, as the people had been so frequently and so lately polluted with sin, and were now under the marks of God's displeasure, which should have made them thankful for priests to mediate between them and God; but, instead of that, they envy them.

**Irving Jensen** on Korah's argument - Their justification for claiming that spiritual leadership was not needed any more was that (1) all the congregation were holy, "every one of them" (Nu 16:3), and (2) Jehovah was in their midst. The latter statement was an accurate one; in fact, it was to be demonstrated shortly when this same Jehovah, dwelling in their midst, would identify sin and consume the sinners, Korah and his company. The former justification was a false one, as the events of the next day would show when God would consume "in a moment" those whom Korah called holy (Nu 16:21). (EvBC-Nu)

**Steven Cole** writes "Like all heretics, Korah and his fellow rebels emphasized one legitimate truth to the exclusion of other truths (Gordon Wenham, Numbers [IVP], p. 134) (**ED**: aka [pretext](#)). It was true that all Israel was to be holy unto the Lord (Ex. 19:6+; Lev. 11:44+; Nu 15:38-41); but it was also true that God had appointed Moses to be the leader over Israel and Aaron and his sons to serve as the officiating priests. Israel was to be a nation of priests before the Lord (Ex. 19:6+), but that did not exclude Moses as God's appointed mediator and Aaron as the appointed high priest. So their appeal for "equality" for all the people sounded right, but was out of balance. So Korah and the rebels **disguised their real motive** for wanting to serve in more prestigious positions by claiming, "*We just want to follow the word of the Lord, that we're all holy in His sight.*" But the real reason they demanded more preeminence was jealousy and the desire for **more power and prestige** for themselves. ([Sermon](#))

He who hates disguises it with his lips,  
But he lays up deceit in his heart.  
-- Proverbs 26:24

**THOUGHT** - The most important place where you can be is where God puts you. Use your ability and gifts for Him. Don't go through life in a mutiny against the divine destiny and will for your life. If it's God's will for you to lead, then lead. He will open the door. If God wants you to serve and follow, then do it. Many times, God's leaders come from those who have faithfully served Him and others. Leaders come from the ranks of good followers. (Rod Mattoon)

**Bush** - Korah and his associates reasoned that were as worthy the office of ruler and priest as Moses and Aaron. This, however, was a direct encroachment upon a divine institution, for the office of priesthood was an honor which no man was to take to himself, "but he that was called of God as was Aaron," Heb. 5:4. Under the Christian dispensation the priesthood, properly so termed, is abolished, as all Christians constitute "a holy nation, a royal priesthood;" but still it does not follow from this that all the men of the church are equally qualified to discharge the functions of leaders and teachers. This depends upon their spiritual gifts, which are the true basis of ministerial character.

**Bush on the LORD is in their midst**- That is to say, the Lord, by the sublime symbol of his presence, dwells among the congregation at large, and not merely among the tents of Moses and Aaron and the Levites. This was in itself true, but it did not authorize them to aspire to an office which the Lord had specially appropriated to another party.

**So why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?**- **NLT** = "What right do you have to act as though you are greater than anyone else among all these people of the LORD?" Moses had not exalted himself, God had. In fact from the beginning Moses had tried to back out of the responsibility to lead the people.

How do you respond when people question what God has asked you to do?

The writer of Hebrews has a comment that clearly refutes Korah's claim...

And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.  
(Hebrews 5:4+)

**Bush** - As we are, in fact, upon a level, no one portion of the people standing higher in the Lord's sight than another, why do you arrogate to yourselves such a lofty superiority over your brethren?

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Summary of Israel's Complaints (Source: Ryrie Study Bible)

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**Question:** [What was the significance of the rebellion of Korah?](#)

**Answer:** The story of the rebellion of [Korah](#) is recorded in Numbers 16. The rebellion of Korah demonstrates the grim consequences of usurping the authority of God and of those whom He has chosen to be leaders of His people.

Korah was the oldest son of Izhar, who was the son of Kothath of the tribe of Levi. Korah, then, was of the same tribe as Moses and Aaron. He led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of exalting themselves above the congregation of the Lord (Numbers 16:1-3). Korah was not alone in his charge. He gathered 250 other men to challenge Moses' authority as well: "You have gone too far! 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?" (Numbers 16:3).

Obviously, Korah thought that he could do a better job leading the people than Moses was doing. But by leading this revolt against God's divinely appointed leaders, Korah was actually revolting against God (Numbers 16:11). Moses proposed a test to prove the source of his authority. Korah and his followers did not pass the test, and God opened up the earth and swallowed the rebels, their families, and all their possessions. Furthermore, "fire came out from the LORD" and consumed the other 250 men who were party to Korah's rebellion. The rest of the Israelites were terrified and fled (Numbers 16:31-35).

The following day, instead of being convinced that God had vindicated Moses and Aaron, the congregation began complaining that they had "killed the LORD's people." For this act of rebellion, God threatened to destroy the whole congregation and sent a plague among them. However, Moses and Aaron interceded for the rebels and averted a complete catastrophe. In the end, 14,700 Israelites had died (Numbers 16:41-50).

Some 1,500 years later, Jude records a strong warning about such men who come into the church as false teachers, arrogating to themselves the authority of God and His Word: "Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error *and perished in Korah's rebellion*" (Jude 1:11, emphasis added). The characteristics of false teachers within the church include pride, selfishness, jealousy, greed, lust for power, and disregard for the will of God. Just like Korah, today's false teachers disregard God's plan and are insubordinate to God's appointed authorities. Their end will be the same as Korah's. Thus the warning: "Woe to them!"

To lead His people Israel, God had selected men of His own choosing. God had no interest in holding a popularity contest, collecting résumés, or letting someone appoint himself to the position of prophet, priest, or leader. Korah's problem was not that he was unqualified, humanly speaking, for the position, but that he was arrogant, stiff-necked, and self-promoting. Korah, attempting to install himself as the leader, ironically claims that Moses "set [himself] above the LORD's assembly." It's a classic case of the guilty person accusing someone else of his own misdeed. But God did not call Korah; He called Moses (Exodus 3-4). God calls whom He chooses and equips them for service.

God's true leaders, the elders and pastors of the church who shepherd the flock with humility and care, have an accurate understanding of the Scriptures (see Malachi 3:18; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:10-11). Such men submit themselves in humble adoration of Christ and His lordship (see Matthew 16:16; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16). They recognize the truth of Jesus' proclamation, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Most importantly, the true leaders of the church are called by God to their office. False teachers, on the other hand, are "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15; cf. Acts 20:29) who choose the fate of Korah over the life of Christ. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### Numbers 16:4 When Moses heard this, he fell on his face;

BGT Numbers 16:4 καὶ κοσὰς Μωυσὶς πέσεν πρὸς ὦπον

NET Numbers 16:4 When Moses heard it he fell down with his face to the ground.

NLT Numbers 16:4 When Moses heard what they were saying, he fell face down on the ground.

ESV Numbers 16:4 When Moses heard it, he fell on his face,

NIV Numbers 16:4 When Moses heard this, he fell facedown.

KJV Numbers 16:4 And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face:

YLT Numbers 16:4 And Moses heareth, and falleth on his face,

LXE Numbers 16:4 And when Moses heard it, he fell on his face.

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 14:5+ ( Then Moses and Aaron **fell on their faces** in the presence of all the assembly of the

congregation of the sons of Israel.

Numbers 20:6 Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and **fell on their faces**. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to them;

Joshua 7:6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and **fell to the earth on his face** before the ark of the LORD until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.

## MOSES FALLS ON HIS FACE

Imagine what was going through Korah's mind! Uh oh, he's going to Yahweh!

**When Moses heard this, he fell on his face** (See Numbers 16:45<sup>+</sup>). Presumably Aaron joined him. **Fell on face** is a key phrase in Numbers 16 - Nu 16:2, Nu 16:22<sup>+</sup>, Nu 16:45<sup>+</sup>. Only 2 more times in entire book of Numbers (Nu 14:5<sup>+</sup>, Nu 20:6<sup>+</sup>). Moses was a man and had manifested his anger before, so surely heat was rising in his bosom and yet he delays an immediate response to the rebels. Instead he falls on his face indicative of (1) his humility (2) his willingness to confess his anger (3) his desire to hear from God what to say and do.

**THOUGHT** - MOSES GIVES A GOOD PATTERN FOR US ALL TO EMULATE. In essence Moses gives us a real-time illustration of the passage in James 1:19-10+ which says "this you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger, for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

**Bush** - Aware of the aggravated nature of the offence, and fearful of the tremendous judgment it would be likely to incur, they fell prostrate before God, both to deprecate his displeasure in behalf of the people, and to seek direction in what manner to proceed in this trying emergency. A Jewish commentator says upon this passage, "*He was abashed, and cast down his face on the ground unto prayer, and then it was said unto him what he should say unto Korah.*"

**John Barry** - Every leader faces power struggles—from those who follow the leader and from those the leader follows. If there isn't some sort of struggle, the leader probably isn't doing his or her job well. It's simple: those who make everyone happy probably aren't pushing people to be better, and pushing will—at times—frustrate both the leaders and the followers.....Moses could have defended himself by insisting upon the special nature by which God had revealed Himself to him. Or he could have noted to Korah that he is only out of Egypt—and thus able to call Moses into question—because Moses was obedient to God. He even could have noted that Korah was only in leadership at all because Moses listened to God and appointed him. But instead, he insisted on bringing it before God. He did, though, follow up by telling Korah that he had plenty of authority and shouldn't be so greedy (Num 16:8–11). This event demonstrates the kind of faith that we should all have in what God asks us to do. (Connect the Testaments)

**Brian Bell** - The opposition was staggering! 250 men, all united against Moses & Aaron. Most people aren't content with rebelling alone! Here we have Mutiny in the Desert!. Yet Moses was not intimidated; he took the matter to the Lord & let Him be the judge! (4,5) [good advice!] **How to deal with Criticism Practically! Expect it** - It came Jesus way. He was lied about, slandered, blasphemed, & openly ridiculed; & it all finally ended w/a cross. Expect it! Satan will use criticism as a weapon to batter us; God will use it as a tool to build us. **Evaluate** it - Consider the source. Not all criticism is bad. Tozer, "If the critic is right, he has helped you. If the critic is wrong, you can help him. Either way, someone gets helped." **Watch out for Praise/flattery** - It's a general rule that the person who is encouraged by praise will be devastated by criticism. "Grant me prudently to avoid him that flatters me, and to endure patiently him that contradicts me." Thomas `a Kempis. Wait on the Lord - Not, phone a friend; not, gather forces.. Prov.27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. Look beyond the Critic - See God on the throne; see the big picture; see how many friends love you; see the purposes God wants to achieve. (Excerpts from Warren Wiersbe; In Praise of Plodders; pg. 15-19)(3) A successful leader is often accused of exalting himself, especially by those who are jealous of him & want to take his place! . (4) Moses fell on his face, that is, he stepped aside so that the rebels should stand face to face with God. We need to act similarly, when we're unjustly attacked.. 2 Cor.10:18 For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends. It's true that all of God's people are set apart by Him & for Him. But it is also true that God calls some of His people to be leaders in special places of service. (W/o leadership = chaos) Same is true of the church today: all saints are beloved of God, but some have been given spiritual gifts & spiritual offices for the work of the ministry. We are to desire spiritual gifts(1 Cor.14:1), but not to covet another person's spiritual office.. If a believer wants a place of spiritual leadership, let him prove himself worthy of it by his character & conduct. (Warren Wiersbe)

**Numbers 16:5 and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself.**

BGT Numbers 16:5 καὶ ἠλθεν πρὸς Κορε καὶ πρὸς πάντας τοὺς συναγωγὰς ἡγῶν πσέπται καὶ γινώθεις τοὺς νόμους αὐτοῦ καὶ τοὺς νόμους καὶ προσήγγετο πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ οὗς ἔελξατο αὐτὸς προσήγγετο πρὸς αὐτὸν

NET Numbers 16:5 Then he said to Korah and to all his company, "In the morning the LORD will make known who are his, and who is holy. He will cause that person to approach him; the person he has chosen he will cause to approach him.

NLT Numbers 16:5 Then he said to Korah and his followers, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show us who belongs to him and who is holy. The LORD will allow only those whom he selects to enter his own presence.

ESV Numbers 16:5 and he said to Korah and all his company, "In the morning the LORD will show who is his, and who is holy, and will bring him near to him. The one whom he chooses he will bring near to him.

NIV Numbers 16:5 Then he said to Korah and all his followers: "In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him.

KJV Numbers 16:5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew 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.

YLT Numbers 16:5 and he speaketh unto Korah, and unto all his company, saying, 'Morning! -- and Jehovah is knowing those who are his, and him who is holy, and hath brought near unto Him; even him whom He doth fix on He bringeth near unto Him.

LXE Numbers 16:5 And he spoke to Core and all his assembly, saying, God has visited and known those that are his and who are holy, and has brought them to himself; and whom he has chosen for himself, he has brought to himself.

- Lord: Mal 3:18 2Ti 2:19
- **who is holy**: Nu 16:3 Lev 21:6-8,12-15 Isa 61:5,6 1Pe 2:5-9 Rev 1:6 5:9,10
- **will bring**: Ex 28:43 Lev 10:3 Ps 65:4 Eze 40:46 44:15,16 Eph 2:13 Heb 10:19-22 12:14
- **even**: Nu 17:5 Ex 28:1 Lev 8:2 1Sa 2:28 Ps 105:26 Joh 15:16 Ac 1:2,24 Ac 13:2 15:7 22:14 2Ti 2:3,4
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES ANNOUNCES A DIVINE "POP TEST"

and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His- Show is [yada](#) which normally is translated "know" and here conveys the truth that they will know by observing and experiencing what Yahweh does! They will understand who is holy but it will be too late.

His company - Lit., "his congregation," as though he were "attempting to set up a rival 'Israel'"

**Who are His** recalls Paul's words in Second Timothy

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, **"The Lord knows those who are His,"** and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness." (2 Ti 2:17+)

**and who is holy** - That is who is the one who is truly set apart.

**Bush** - Who is pure, consecrated, pious, ,pertaining to being unique in the sense of superior moral qualities. "That is, the one who is solemnly set apart and consecrated, by divine appointment, to the sacred office of priesthood." (Bush)

**and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself**- NLT = "The LORD will allow only those whom he selects to enter his own presence." The repeated emphasis is the person who God will **bring near**, in proximity, in intimacy. The verb **choose**, conveys even a sense of testing or examining involving a careful, well thought out choice. God would not make a mistake! Both verbs used in Ps 65:4 (see below)

**Choose** (0977) ([bahar/bachar](#)) in most contexts means to choose or to select. Lot choose Sodom (Ge 13:11). Moses chose able men (Ex 18:25). "Theologically, bāchar asserts the sovereignty of God in all of life. It affirms

divine omnipotence and capacity for choice and in so doing declares that purpose and personality, expressing itself in agape love, lie at the heart of reality." (Gilbrant) TWOT adds that bahar/bachar is often "used to express that choosing which has ultimate and eternal significance."

Psalm 65:4 How blessed is the one whom You **choose** and **bring near** to You To dwell in Your courts. We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple.

**Spurgeon** - After cleansing comes benediction, and truly this is a very rich one. **It comprehends both election, effectual calling, access, acceptance, and sonship.** First, we are **chosen** of God, according to the good pleasure of his will, and this alone is blessedness. **Then**, since we cannot and will not come to God of ourselves, he works graciously in us, and attracts us powerfully; he subdues our unwillingness, and removes our inability by the almighty workings of his transforming grace. This also is no slight blessedness. **Furthermore**, we, by his divine drawings, are made nigh by the blood of his Son, and brought near by his spirit, into intimate fellowship; so that we have access with boldness, and are no longer as those who are afar off by wicked works: here also is unrivalled blessedness. **To crown all**, we do not come nigh in peril of dire destruction, as Nadab and Abihu did, but we approach as chosen and accepted ones, to become dwellers in the divine household: this is heaped up blessedness, vast beyond conception. But dwelling in the house we are treated as sons, for the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth ever. Behold what manner of love and blessedness the Father has bestowed upon us that we may dwell in his house (1 Jn 3:1+), and go no more out for ever. Happy men who dwell at home with God. May both writer and reader be such men.

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**Numbers 16:5 Our Daily Homily F B Meyer** The Lord will show who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto Him.

It was on these words that the Psalmist founded his exclamation,

"Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee." (Psalm 65:4 - see "Related Devotional by Spurgeon" immediately following)

This is what we all need. We often endeavor to approach unto God, but meet with many disappointments. Thomas Welsh said, on one occasion, that he had been wrestling to obtain access from six in the morning until nine! There is something better. If you are his, you may humbly count on God to cause you to come near; believing his promise: "Draw nigh to God, and God will draw nigh to you."

In your morning prayer, or at any other time which you set apart for devotion, let this be the cry of your soul: **My God, cause me to come near.**" When for long you have been dwelling afar off, and the distance threatens to become chronic or permanent, let this again be your petition: "**Cause me to come near.**" And throughout the rush of daily life, let your dependence be on Him who alone can cause you to come near so that you may dwell in his courts.

But God cannot do this unless the soul is utterly surrendered to be his; for "if we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We must be unanchored and unbeached if the tide is to bear us on its bosom. We must be free from the touch of other hands if we are to respond to his. We must sit loosely by the things of the earth to feel the drawing of heaven. This is, in part, the meaning of holiness. "Who are his, and who is holy?" Those who have experienced separation to God and sin. Give us this, O Lord; then draw us near to Thyself, and we will run after Thee!

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**Related Devotional from Spurgeon:** Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee. After cleansing comes benediction, and truly this is a very rich one. It comprehends both election, effectual calling, access, acceptance, and sonship. First, we are chosen of God, according to the good pleasure of his will, and this alone is blessedness. Then, since we cannot and will not come to God of ourselves, he works graciously in us, and attracts us powerfully; he subdues our unwillingness, and removes our inability by the almighty workings of his transforming grace. This also is no slight blessedness. Furthermore, we, by his divine drawings, are made nigh by the blood of his Son, and brought near by his spirit, into intimate fellowship; so that we have access with boldness, and are no longer as those who are afar off by wicked works: here also is unrivalled blessedness. To crown all, we do not come nigh in peril of dire destruction, as Nadab and Abihu did, but we approach as chosen and accepted ones, to become dwellers in the divine household: this is heaped up blessedness, vast beyond conception. But dwelling in the house we are treated as sons, for the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever. Behold what manner of love and blessedness the Father has bestowed upon us that we may dwell in his house, and go no more out for ever. Happy men who dwell at home with God. May both writer and reader be such men.

That he may dwell in thy courts. Acceptance leads to abiding: God does not make a temporary choice, or give and take; his gifts and calling are without repentance. He who is once admitted to God's courts shall inhabit them for ever; he shall be

**"No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home."**

Permanence gives preciousness. Terminating blessings are but half blessings. To dwell in the courts of the Great King is to be ennobled; to dwell there for ever is to be emparadised: yet such is the portion of every man whom God has chosen and caused to approach unto him, though once his iniquities prevailed against him.

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### **G Campbell Morgan Life Applications**

The Lord will show who are His, and who is holy- Num. 16.5.

This chapter gives the account of a strong and organized opposition to Moses and Aaron; and in these words we have the appeal which Moses made for a Divine decision. The attitude taken up by those who organized the movement was plausible and popular. It was democratic in its expression: "All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them." It was a plea for equal rights, and for independence of action. Moses chose the only method of reply to such an attitude. It was that of calling for the submission of the case to God, Whose authority was called in question. The answer was immediate. When presently the censers of the offending men were beaten out into a covering for the altar, a provision was made for a perpetual witness to the danger of intruding upon service in any other way than that of the Divine appointment. The whole story serves to show how false may be the most apparently popular movements. The voice of the people is by no means always the voice of God. The declaration that all men have equal rights may be entirely false. It is fundamentally true that all men have an equal right to direct dealings with God, and to receive the law of life from Him. But within that law are provisions which give to each man his service, and no man has any right to serve in any way not directly appointed by God. We have no right to choose the place or character of what we shall do. Therefore we sin against God when we rebel against the exercise by any man of an authority which has been given him by God.

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### **P G Matthew - The LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy.—Numbers 16:5**

The kingdom of God is the rule of God. This rule and order extends over the family, the church, and the state. To this end, the Lord commissions delegated authorities to govern on his behalf and in his name. Those who despise and disobey duly established authorities therefore despise the sovereign God who ordained them. Numbers 16 graphically illustrates God's response to such insolence.

Ambition, arrogance, insolence, jealousy, and rebellion—these words describe the heart of Korah, a Kohathite. Not satisfied with his God-given station in the Levitical system, Korah coveted the priesthood. His complaint, though cloaked in the politically correct argument that all God's people are holy, was really an accusation against God. Korah challenged God's appointing Aaron and Moses over himself. He would pay a very high price for his self-centered ambition.

We read that Moses became very angry at Korah and his followers. But we do well to note who else became hot with righteous indignation: the Lord God Almighty himself. Those who murmur and rebel against delegated authorities, whether they are fathers or pastors or teachers or elders, are, in fact, guilty of treating God himself with contempt. But he will not let us shame him or despise his authority and glory.

The glory of the Lord appeared to the entire assembly (v. 42). In a dramatic, miraculous fashion, divine judgment was meted out to Korah and all his co-conspirators. The earth swallowed Korah and his household, and fire consumed the 250 rebels. In fact, if not for the mediatorial intercession of Moses and Aaron, the entire Israelite congregation would have been destroyed.

Let us not think we can play games with the living, almighty, all-holy God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is ever-present in the midst of his church, and he opposes those who dishonor him. Korah did not care for his wife, family, and fellow Israelites, and they all suffered terribly for his arrogance. So, too, our sins bring harm to our community, beginning with our family. Let us therefore fear God, walk humbly with him, and show proper respect to God's delegated authorities.

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### **Numbers 16:6 "Do this: take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company,**

BGT Numbers 16:6 το το ποι σατε λ βετε μ ν α το ς πυρε α Κορε κα π σα συναγωγ α το

NET Numbers 16:6 Do this, Korah, you and all your company: Take censers,

NLT Numbers 16:6 Korah, you and all your followers must prepare your incense burners.

ESV Numbers 16:6 Do this: take censers, Korah and all his company;



NIV Numbers 16:6 You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers

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

YLT Numbers 16:6 This do: take to yourselves censers, Korah, and all his company,

LXE Numbers 16:6 This do ye: take to yourselves censers, Core and all his company;

- Nu 16:35-40,46-48 Lev 10:1 16:12,13 1Ki 18:21-23
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Do this: take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company** - A censer was a pan for live coals, a fire pan. No description is given of a censer, and we are left in doubt as to its form and appearance. Note the phrase **all your company**, a clue that Korah's actions would effect his entire family! Woe!

**NET NOTE** on **all your company** - Heb "his congregation" or "his community." The expression is unusual, but what it signifies is that Korah had set up a rival "Israel" with himself as leader.

**THOUGHT** -Dad's listen up -- our behavior will have repercussions in our family (whether we like it or not)! For good or for bad.

#### Related Resources:

- Torrey Topical Textbook [Censers](#)
- American Tract Society [Censer](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Censer](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Censer](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Censer](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Censer](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Censer](#)
- King James Dictionary [Censer](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Censer](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Censer](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Censer](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Censer](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Censer](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Censer](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Censer](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Censer](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Censer](#)

**Numbers 16:7 and put fire in them, and lay incense upon them in the presence of the LORD tomorrow; and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the one who is holy. You have gone far enough, you sons of Levi!"**

BGT Numbers 16:7 κα π θετε π α τ π ρ κα π θετε π α τ θυμ αμα ναντι κυρ ου α ριον κα σται ν ρ ν κλ ξηται κ ριος ο τος γιος κανο σθω μ ν υ ο Λευι

NET Numbers 16:7 put fire in them, and set incense on them before the LORD tomorrow, and the man whom the LORD chooses will be holy. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!"

NLT Numbers 16:7 Light fires in them tomorrow, and burn incense before the LORD. Then we will see whom the LORD chooses as his holy one. You Levites are the ones who have gone too far!"

ESV Numbers 16:7 put fire in them and put incense on them before the LORD tomorrow, and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the holy one. You have gone too far, sons of Levi!"

NIV Numbers 16:7 and tomorrow put fire and incense in them before the LORD. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!"

KJV 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.



YLT Numbers 16:7 and put in them fire, and put on them perfume, before Jehovah to-morrow, and it hath been, the man whom Jehovah chooseth, he is the holy one; -- enough of you, sons of Levi.'

LXE Numbers 16:7 and put fire on them, and put incense on them before the Lord to-morrow; and it shall come to pass that the man whom the Lord has chosen, he shall be holy: let it be enough for you, ye sons of Levi.

- that the man: Nu 16:3,5 Eph 1:4 2Th 2:13 1Pe 2:9
- too much: Nu 16:3 1Ki 18:17,18 Mt 21:23-27
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## INCENSE ASCENDS TO THE LORD

**and put fire in them, and lay incense upon them in the presence of the LORD tomorrow-** The word **incense** (perfume - qetoreth) is from a verb (qatar) meaning to cause to rise up in smoke. **Incense** was a symbol of prayer as is beautiful prayed in Ps 141:2 "May my prayer be counted as **incense** before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering." In the presence of is

**And the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the one who is holy-** For emphasis Moses repeats the idea of God's choosing ([bahar/bachar](#)) in Nu 16:6. This one would be confirmed as priest.

**You have gone far enough, you sons of Levi!"** - NLT paraphrases it "You Levites are the ones who have gone too far!" Clearly Moses knows who God will choose. But it was the fault of Korah for forcing this "test by fire." Moses uses the same phrase they used of him in Nu 16:3! Centuries later our Lord Jesus declared "by your words you shall be condemned." (Mt 12:37+)!

**Mattoon** writes "We tend to be blind to our own sins that we condemn in others. God wants us to examine ourselves and deal with our own faults first before dealing with others about their errors. See Matthew 7:3-5+.

**Bush** - You accuse me of taking too much upon myself; it is precisely this charge which I bring against you; the result will show with how much justice." So Elijah retorted upon Ahab the charge of troubling Israel, 1 Kings 18:17, 18.

**THOUGHT** - The application for us is: Constantly guard your motives for why you serve the Lord! It's easy to cover pride under the guise of, "I just want the Lord's kingdom to increase under my ministry!" But when you peel away the veneer, the real reason you want your ministry to grow is that you want more power and prestige for yourself. Certainly, we all should strive to do our best in whatever God has called us to do, but be careful not to do your best to promote yourself. God looks on our hearts. John the Baptist's well known statement when his disciples were worried that Jesus was gaining more disciples than John is always appropriate (John 3:30): "He must increase, but I must decrease." ([Cole](#))

**Numbers 16:8 Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi,**

BGT Numbers 16:8 κα ε πεν Μωυς ς πρ ς Κορε ε σακο σατ μου υ ο Λευι

NET Numbers 16:8 Moses said to Korah, "Listen now, you sons of Levi!

NLT Numbers 16:8 Then Moses spoke again to Korah: "Now listen, you Levites!

ESV Numbers 16:8 And Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi:

NIV Numbers 16:8 Moses also said to Korah, "Now listen, you Levites!

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

YLT Numbers 16:8 And Moses saith unto Korah, 'Hear ye, I pray you, sons of Levi;

LXE Numbers 16:8 And Moses said to Core, Harken to me, ye sons of Levi.

ASV Numbers 16:8 And Moses said unto Korah, Hear now, ye sons of Levi:

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TIME TO MEET

## YOUR MAKER!

Then Moses said to Korah, "**Hear** now, you sons of Levi - Literally "Hear, I pray you." **Hear** is a command and not a suggestion and conveys not only hearing sounds but hearing with reverence and giving obedient assent to what has been heard. Korah has been instructed and now is to heed what he heard. You can imagine that Korah is beginning to squirm and feel somewhat [squeamish](#) (sickened, nauseated, frightened)! As Cole says "Moses unmasks them with the truth (Num. 16:8-11):"

**Numbers 16:9 is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of 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 to them;**

BGT Numbers 16:9 μ μικρὸν σπιν το το μν τι δι στείλεν θες Ισραηλ μς κ συναγωγς Ισραηλ κα προσηγ γετο μς πρς αυτ ν λειτουργε ν τς λειτουργας τς σκηνς κυρ ου κα παρ στασθαι νανπι τς συναγωγς λατρε ειν α το ς

NET Numbers 16:9 Does it seem too small a thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the community of Israel to bring you near to himself, to perform the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the community to minister to them?

NLT Numbers 16:9 Does it seem insignificant to you that the God of Israel has chosen you from among all the community of Israel to be near him so you can serve in the LORD's Tabernacle and stand before the people to minister to them?

ESV Numbers 16:9 is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do service in the tabernacle of the LORD and to stand before the congregation to minister to them,

NIV Numbers 16:9 Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them?

KJV 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?

YLT Numbers 16:9 is it little to you that the God of Israel hath separated you from the company of Israel to bring you near unto Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of Jehovah, and to stand before the company to serve them? --

LXE Numbers 16:9 Is it a little thing for you, that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, and brought you near to himself to minister in the services of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the tabernacle to minister for them?

ASV 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 Jehovah, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them;

- **is it not enough** Nu 16:13 Ge 30:15 1Sa 18:23 2Sa 7:19 Isa 7:13 Eze 34:18 1Co 4:3
- **separated:** Nu 1:53 3:41-45 8:14-16 18:2-6 De 10:8 2Ch 35:3 Ne 12:44 Eze 44:10,11 Ac 13:2
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## INGRATITUDE FOR GOD'S GIFT

**is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the congregation of Israel-** Moses seems to be trying to reason with the rebels, but they have gone too far! NLT = "Does it seem insignificant to you that the God of Israel has chosen you from among all the community of Israel to be near Him." To these Levites who were not priests but were called to service the Holy Tabernacle Moses is saying "Do you regard it as something less than becomes you?"

**Guzik** - Moses knew that the rebellion of Korah was rooted in **ingratitude**. They were not thankful for the wonderful ministry God

gave them to do. He rebuked the pride and self-seeking that prompted their challenge.

**Mattoon** - The Kohathites were guardians of the temple treasures and were God's guardians of the Ark, the holy vessels, and sacred furniture of the Tabernacle. This was a very important responsibility, but it was not good enough for Korah. It did not meet his expectations. The attitude of his life was "not thy will, but my will be done."

**Bush** - He appeals to them to consider how ungrateful a part they were acting towards the Lord for the honor done them in selecting their tribe to minister at his tabernacle and serve him as his own domestics. He would have them reflect how unworthily they demeaned themselves by thus contemning the honorable post assigned them, and mutinously aspiring to an office previously bestowed upon others. How weak and foolish, moreover, was their spite at Aaron, who was but passive in the case, and appointed a superior minister with his family under him, by the Lord's special direction.

**THOUGHT** - What is one of Korah's basic problems? Failure to be content with what he already had! Is this not a frequent visitor to each of our hearts, prompting sinful, selfish thoughts "If I only had \_\_\_\_\_." (fill in the blank with people, places, things, position, etc). **Contentment** "is an inner sense of rest or peace that comes from being right with God and knowing that He is in control of all that happens to us. It means having our focus on the kingdom of God and serving Him, not on the love of money and things." (Steven Cole) Only genuine believers can be truly, fully content, for in the final analysis, **contentment** is not a **natural attainment** but a **supernatural gift** from our heavenly Father to His children (Jas 1:17+). To say it another way, a believer's degree of contentment in this present passing world is a reflection of our degree of contentment regarding the everlasting world to come! The more the invisible, eternal realities grip our heart (cf Col 3:1+, Col 3:2+, see "Vertical Vision"), the less the visible, temporal things of the world will have power to cause discontent. We all need a "Moses' Mindset" - "considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was **looking** (cf "Vertical Vision") to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen (cf "Vertical Vision") (Hebrews 11:26-27+) . **Henrietta Mears** said that "The man who keeps busy helping the man below him won't have time to envy the man above him." **Spurgeon** adds "If you are not **CONTENT** with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled!" **Thomas Watson** writes that "There is no better antidote against coveting that which is another's than **BEING CONTENT** with that which is our own." The more content we are with what God has given us, the less we crave what we don't possess. On the other hand, the more we get the more we want. When we focus on material things, our **HAVING** will never catch up with our **WANTING**! I am so convicted as I write this — how often I want something more or something other than what God has already generously given me! Oh, that we all might have a heart saturated with the sweetness of His sufficient provision in Christ, always confident that "God is able to make **ALL** grace abound to (us), that always **HAVING ALL SUFFICIENCY IN EVERYTHING**, (we) may have an abundance for **EVERY** good deed" (2Cor 9:8+)

**to bring you near to Himself to do the service** (Heb. "To serve the service") **of the tabernacle of the LORD** - They were daily nearer to Yahweh in their service than any of those in the 12 tribes. This was not enough. They did not really desire greater intimacy with Yahweh, but greater renown with the people! Isn't that usually the way the "cookie crumbles?"

**Bush** - "They were not, indeed, brought so near as the priests, but still nearer than all other men, being the constant assistants of the priests in their duties."

**and to stand before the congregation to minister to them** - Moses reminds them of their lofty, privileged position, with which they should have been content.

**Bush** - Standing is a sign of service, and occasionally used for it, as where the sacred writer in one place, Jer. 52:12, says of Nebuzar-adan, that he "stood before the king;" in the parallel history, 2 Kings 25:8, it is said he was "a servant of the king." Accordingly the "standing" of the Levites, Neh. 12:44, is equivalent to their "serving" or "waiting," and as they are said, Deut. 10:8, to "stand before the Lord to minister unto him," so here it is said, "to stand before the congregation to minister unto them," thus acting with a twofold reference, to the Lord and to the people, as servants to both.

**Cole** writes "The point is, God has assigned gifts and roles to each person and they are to view those positions as gifts, entrusted to each one to be used in serving the Lord. That's exactly the point that Paul made to the Corinthians, who were boasting in their gifts, rather than humbly using them to build up others in the body. He told them (1 Cor. 4:7), "For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" Later, he reminded them that God had given each person different gifts to serve the church, much as the human body has many different parts that serve for the overall well-being of the person. He wrote (1 Cor. 12:4-7): *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* So we shouldn't be jealous of the prestige of those who have

more popular ministries than we have, but rather rejoice that the gospel is being preached and the body of Christ is being built up. And we shouldn't despise or neglect the gifts that God has entrusted to us, but use them to serve Him with thankful hearts.

**Numbers 16:10 and that He has brought you near, Korah, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking for the priesthood also?**

BGT Numbers 16:10 κα προσηγ γετ σε κα π ντας το ς δελφο ς σου υ ο ς Λευι μετ σο κα ζητε τε ερατε ειν

NET Numbers 16:10 He has brought you near and all your brothers, the sons of Levi, with you. Do you now seek the priesthood also?

NLT Numbers 16:10 Korah, he has already given this special ministry to you and your fellow Levites. Are you now demanding the priesthood as well?

ESV Numbers 16:10 and that he has brought you near him, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? And would you seek the priesthood also?

NIV Numbers 16:10 He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too.

KJV 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?

YLT Numbers 16:10 yea, He doth bring thee near, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee -- and ye have sought also the priesthood!

LXE Numbers 16:10 And he has brought thee near and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee, and do ye seek to be priests also?

ASV Numbers 16:10 and that he hath brought thee near, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee? and seek ye the priesthood also?

- **And are you seeking:** Pr 13:10 Mt 20:21,22 Lu 22:24 Ro 12:10 Php 2:3 3Jn 1:9
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**and that He has brought you near, Korah, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you?** - **Brought you near** repeats the truth expressed in the previous passage, emphasizing Korah's, et al, nearness to Yahweh! The idea of **brought you near** is picked up in the NLT paraphrase "He has given this special ministry only to you and your fellow Levites." They did not come near based on any personal merit but by Yahweh's sovereign choice to bring them near! This should generate gratitude, not discontent!

**Has brought...near** (07126)(**qarab**) means to come near or approach. It is a verb which basically indicates coming physically closer. Moses was told "**Do not come near** here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (Ex 3:5+). And so qarab was used to describe approaching God as in the present passages in Numbers 16 (cf Dt. 4:11; 5:23, 27; Isa. 48:16; 1Sa. 14:36). The Lxx has **prosago** (**pros** = toward + **ago** = to go) which describes someone's being introduced or given access to another. This is the same verb used by Peter to describe the high privilege of ALL believers, Peter writing "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He **might bring us** (**prosago**) to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." (1 Peter 3:18+)

**And are you seeking for the priesthood also?** - NLT has "but now you are demanding the priesthood as well!" "Not content with the privileges and honors already conferred upon you, do ye aspire also to the office of the priesthood, which the Lord holds at his own disposal, and which he has otherwise bestowed?" (Bush)

**THOUGHT** - Like Korah, we often desire the special qualities God has given others. Korah had significant, worthwhile abilities and responsibilities of his own. In the end, however, his ambition for more caused him to lose everything. Inappropriate ambition is greed in disguise. Concentrate on finding the special purpose God has for you instead of wishing you were in someone else's shoes. (LASB)

**NET NOTE** - Moses discerned correctly the real motivation for the rebellion. **Korah wanted to be the high priest** because he saw how much power there was in the spiritual leadership in Israel. He wanted something like a general election with himself as the candidate and his supporters promoting him. The great privilege of being a Levite and serving in the sanctuary was not enough for him—the status did not satisfy him. Korah gave no rebuttal. The test would be one of ministering with incense. This would bring

them into direct proximity with the LORD. If God honored Korah as a ministering priest, then it would be settled. But Moses accuses them of rebellion against the LORD, because the LORD had chosen Aaron to be the priest.

**Numbers 16:11 "Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD; but as for Aaron, who is he that you grumble against him?"**

BGT Numbers 16:11 ο τως σ κα π σα συναγωγ σου συνηθροισμ νη πρς τ ν θε ν κα Ααρων τς σιν τι διαγογγ ζετε κατ α το

NET Numbers 16:11 Therefore you and all your company have assembled together against the LORD! And Aaron— what is he that you murmur against him?"

NLT Numbers 16:11 The LORD is the one you and your followers are really revolting against! For who is Aaron that you are complaining about him?"

ESV Numbers 16:11 Therefore it is against the LORD that you and all your company have gathered together. What is Aaron that you grumble against him?"

NIV Numbers 16:11 It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?"

KJV 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?

YLT Numbers 16:11 Therefore, thou and all thy company who are met are against Jehovah; and Aaron, what is he, that ye murmur against him?"

LXE Numbers 16:11 Thus it is with thee and all thy congregation which is gathered together against God: and who is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

ASV Numbers 16:11 Therefore thou and all thy company are gathered together against Jehovah: and Aaron, what is he that ye murmur against him?

- **against:** Nu 16:3 1Sa 8:7 Lu 10:16 Joh 13:20 Ro 13:2
- **as for Aaron:** Ex 16:7,8 17:2 Ac 5:4 1Co 3:5
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **KORAH ET AL AGAINST YAHWEH!**

**Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD** - Make no mistake -- coming against Moses and Aaron was tantamount to coming against Jehovah who had appointed them to their positions. NLT = "The one you are really revolting against is the LORD!"

**But as for Aaron, who is he that you grumble against him** - Aaron did not seek the priesthood but was given the honor by the LORD, thus there is no grounds for grumbling against him. They are grumbling that Aaron is the spiritual leader and thus challenging his leadership. Of course to grumble against Aaron is in effect to grumble against Yahweh Who had appointed him to be high priest!

**THOUGHT** - We need to be very careful when we criticize or grumble against our pastors, for if they are truly God called and God ordained (and hopefully they indeed are!), then our grumbling is against the LORD! And look what happens when we grumble against the LORD!

**Grumble** (03885)(**lun**) in context means to murmur, making complaining noises or remarks under one's breath - 14x - Ex 15:24; Ex 16:2; Ex 16:7; Ex 16:8; Ex 17:3; Nu 14:2; Nu 14:27; Nu 14:29; Nu 14:36; Nu 16:11; Nu 16:41; Nu 17:5; Jos. 9:18; Ps. 59:15 The **Septuagint** translates **lun** with the verb [diagogguzo](#) which means to [murmur](#), [mutter](#), make complaining remarks or noises under one's breath. [Diagogguzo](#) is an [onomatopoeic](#) word derived from the sound made when murmuring or muttering in a low and indistinct voice with the idea of complaint.

**Numbers 16:12 Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come up.**

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BGT Numbers 16:12 καὶ πείλειεν Μωυσὺς καλεῖσαι Δαθὰν καὶ Ἀβιρῶν υἱοὺς Ἐλιαβ καὶ ἐπῆν οἱ κοινάβανον

NET Numbers 16:12 Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up.

NLT Numbers 16:12 Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they replied, "We refuse to come before you!

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

NIV Numbers 16:12 Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. But they said, "We will not come!

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

YLT Numbers 16:12 And Moses sendeth to call for Dathan and for Abiram sons of Eliab, and they say, 'We do not come up;

LXE Numbers 16:12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab; and they said, We will not go up.

ASV Numbers 16:12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; and they said, We will not come up:

- Pr 29:9 Isa 3:5 1Pe 2:13,14 Jude 1:8
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Proverbs 29:9 When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.

Jude 1:8+ Yet in the same way **these men** (cf **Dathan and Abiram**), also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and **reject authority**, and revile angelic majesties.

### REBELS REFUSE MOSES' SUMMONS

**Summons** is a call by an authority to appear, come, or do something. An order or process directing a person, especially a defendant in a case, to appear in court. In a very real sense this summons by Moses was analogous to an order to appear at the judicial hearing in the court (courtyard) of the LORD. They were in effect "in contempt of court" and it would not just be a fine but would cost them dearly as they would be sentence to [infernai](#), eternal punishment!

**Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab** - **Eliab's** name means "God is father," but the sons were hardly living up to their father's name! On the other hand Abiram does live up to his name which come from a Hebrew word (rum) which means to lift up oneself," and so it means something like "father of loftiness," this name reminding us of pride, and indeed in pride he lifted himself up! The ironic twist is that this one who lifted himself **UP** would soon go **DOWN**! The Hebrew text (**sent a summons**) does not mean Moses simply casually called them ("come on up if it is convenient") but more accurately that he was commanding them to make an appearance. And what would that entail if they responded? That would signify that they were submitting to Moses' authority, which their reply makes clear they absolutely would not do.

Pride goes before destruction,  
And a haughty spirit before stumbling.  
-- Proverbs 16:18

**THOUGHT** - Be careful when you are not willing to submit to God's authoritative Word in your life, either as you read it in the Word or hear it from some godly, Spirit filled, wise counselor!

**but they said, "We will not come up** - Korah's co-conspirators would not come. They were like those in Jude 1:8+ men who **"reject authority."** The irony of this passage is because of their refusal to COME UP, they would end up GOING DOWN!



The desire for position and power destroys many men in the service of God.

When a man is intoxicated by alcohol, he can recover,  
but when he is intoxicated by power, he seldom recovers  
-- Rod Mattoon

**NET NOTE** on **not come up** - The imperfect tense נֹאֲלֶה (na'aleh) expresses their unwillingness to report: "we are not willing," or "we will not." The verb means "to go up." It is used in the sense of appearing before an authority or a superior (see, e.g., Gen 46:31; Deut 25:7; Jdg 4:5).

**Numbers 16:13 "Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but you would also lord it over us?"**

BGT Numbers 16:13 μ μικρ ν το το τι ν γαγες μ ς κ γ ς εο σης γ λα κα μ λι ποκτε ναι μ ς ν τ ρ μ τι κατ ρχεις μ ν ρχων

NET Numbers 16:13 Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of the land that flows with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness? Now do you want to make yourself a prince over us?

NLT Numbers 16:13 Isn't it enough that you brought us out of Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us here in this wilderness, and that you now treat us like your subjects?

ESV Numbers 16:13 Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you must also make yourself a prince over us?

NIV Numbers 16:13 Isn't it enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert? And now you also want to lord it over us?

KJV 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?

YLT Numbers 16:13 is it little that thou hast brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to put us to death in a wilderness that thou also certainly makest thyself prince over us?

LXE Numbers 16:13 Is it a little thing that thou hast brought us up to a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, and that thou altogether rulest over us?

ASV Numbers 16:13 is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, but thou must needs make thyself also a prince over us?

CSB Numbers 16:13 Is it not enough that you brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness? Do you also have to appoint yourself as ruler over us?

- a small: Nu 16:9
- out of a: Nu 11:5 Ex 1:11,22 2:23
- to kill: Nu 20:3,4 Ex 16:3 17:3
- thou make: Ex 2:14 Ps 2:2,3 Lu 19:14 Ac 7:25-27,35
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## OUT OF THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY!

**Is it not enough** - **NET** is more literal "Is it a small thing?" Their question was not to get an answer but was rhetorical to make their point that this was actually a big thing in their mind.

**That you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey**- Did you catch that? Egypt, **a land of milk and honey**??? This statement shows exactly where their hearts were at! They blame Moses but he was only doing what the Lord God directed so ultimately they are rebelling against Yahweh.

**Mattoon** - People who rebel against God blame everyone and everything but the real problem.... themselves. These folks would not accept responsibility for their disobedience. Because they were playing the blame game, were rebellious, and would not take responsibility for their actions



**NET NOTE** - The modern scholar who merely sees these words as belonging to an earlier tradition about going up to the land of Canaan that flows with milk and honey misses the irony here. What is happening is that the text is showing how twisted the thinking of the rebels is. They have turned things completely around. Egypt was the land flowing with milk and honey, not Canaan where they will die. The words of rebellion are seldom original, and always twisted.

**THOUGHT** - One of the easiest ways to fall away from following God is to look at our present problems and exaggerate them. Dathan and Abiram did just that when they began to long for better food and more pleasant surroundings. Egypt, the place they had longed to leave, was now looking better and better-not because of slavery and taskmasters, of course, but because of its mouthwatering food! **These two men and their followers had completely lost their perspective. When we take our eyes off God and start looking at ourselves and our problems, we begin to lose our perspective as well. Overrating problems can hinder our relationship with God. Don't let difficulties make you lose sight of God's direction for your life. (ED: HE IS LEADING YOU TOWARD THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY, NOT AWAY FROM IT! DON'T BE A DATHANITE!)(LASB)**

**to have us die in the wilderness** - Here they come back to the favorite topic, dying in the the wilderness. In Nu 14:2 they even "prayed" "would that we had died in this wilderness!" This was their prayer which God answered affirmatively in Nu 14:28 "Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing (THEIR "PRAYER" IN Nu 14:2!), so I will surely do to you; 29 your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me." So yes, they will die in the wilderness, but it was what they had asked for and it was a consequence of their sin. Moses had no part in this divine judgement, and in fact the only reason they are alive to rail at him now is because he had plead with Yahweh to pardon them! These men are not just forgetful but they are completely deceived. This is not uncommon for people who begin to experience the consequences of their sin, to begin to blame others for what they themselves are solely to blame!

**Currid** - All of this is leading up to the major complaint of the rebels, which is that Moses has no true authority **you would also lord it over us**); his leadership is illegitimate. He is making himself a prince over the people without any divine authority. This accusation had been made many years earlier against Moses in Exodus 2:14, and at that time it appears to have had some validity. But it is not so in the present situation. It may also be a sarcastic remark against Moses' former status as a prince of Egypt.

**but you would also lord it over us** - **NET** has "Now do you want to make yourself a prince over us?" Hebrews "That thou makest thyself a prince over us, even making thyself a prince." The doubling of the clause has the effect to intensify the charge. The implication is, that Moses, without the divine sanction, and prompted solely by his own presumption, was only, wholly, and continuously intent upon self-aggrandizement." (Bush)

**NET NOTE** on **lord it over us** - The verb הִשְׁתַּרֵּר (histarar) is the Hitpa'el infinitive absolute that emphasizes the preceding תִּשְׁתַּרֵּר (tistarar), the Hitpa'el imperfect tense (both forms having metathesis). The verb means "to rule; to act like a prince; to make oneself a prince." This is the only occurrence of the reflexive for this verb. The exact nuance is difficult to translate into English. But they are accusing Moses of seizing princely power for himself, perhaps making a sarcastic reference to his former status in Egypt. The rebels here are telling Moses that they had discerned his scheme, and so he could not "hoodwink" them (cf. NEB).

**Cole** -- One telltale sign of people who are not in submission to proper authority is that they blame the leaders for problems that they (the people) have brought on themselves. The rebels ask Moses (Num. 16:13), "Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but you would also lord it over us?" They're calling Egypt, where they were enslaved and mistreated, "a land flowing with milk and honey"! Incredible!

**Numbers 16:14** "Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!"

BGT Numbers 16:14 ε κα ες γ ν ουσαν γ λα κα μ λι ε σ γαγες μ ς κα δωκας μ ν κλ ρον γρο κα μπελ νας το ς φθαλμο ς τ ν νθρ πων κεων ν ξ κοψας ο κ ναβα νομεν

NET Numbers 16:14 Moreover, you have not brought us into a land that flows with milk and honey, nor given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Do you think you can blind these men? We will not come up."

NLT Numbers 16:14 What's more, you haven't brought us into another land flowing with milk and honey. You haven't given us a new homeland with fields and vineyards. Are you trying to fool these men? We will not come."

ESV Numbers 16:14 Moreover, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up."

NIV Numbers 16:14 Moreover, you haven't brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out the eyes of these men? No, we will not come!"

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:14 Yea, unto a land flowing with milk and honey thou hast not brought us in, nor dost thou give to us an inheritance of field and vineyard; the eyes of these men dost thou pick out? we do not come up.'

LXE Numbers 16:14 Thou art a prince, and hast thou brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, and hast thou given us an inheritance of land and vineyards? wouldst thou have put out the eyes of those men? we will not go up.

ASV Numbers 16:14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.

- Moreover: Nu 36:8-10 Ex 3:8,17 Lev 20:24
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards** - Of course Moses had not done this because God had decreed that they would never inherit those fields and vineyards because of their continual grumbling, rebellion and unfaithfulness to their covenant promises made in Exodus 24:3, 7 where they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" They had blatantly broken their promises again and again, and now they are so deceived that they try to blame Moses for their self-wrought misfortune!

**Guzik** - The foolishness of this shows how, against all reason, rebels and divisive people often assign every evil intention to the heart of leaders like Moses.

**Would you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up-** NLT picks up the idea of this phrase = "Are you trying to fool these men? " "The original is peculiarly strong; tenakkēr, wilt thou dig out, or, bore out, q. d. "Dost thou think so absolutely to blind us, that none of us shall discern thy craft and ambition? Thinkest thou that thou wilt be able to hoodwink us, and to lead us about at pleasure, like blind men, under pretence of bringing us to a rich and fertile country?" Alas, their language and their conduct showed that they were most grievously blinded by the operation of their discontented, proud, and rebellious spirits. They could not see that they were altogether in fault, while accusing Moses, and were quarrelling with their Maker in rejecting the authority of his servants. " (Bush)

**Merrill on put out the eyes of these men** - Lit., "Will you gouge out the eyes of these men?" This was a punishment for runaway slaves, rebellious vassals, or prisoners of war (Judg 16:21; 2 Kgs 25:4–7; Jer 39:4–7; 52:7–11), but here, "this idiom means 'hoodwink' and corresponds to the modern idiom 'throw dust in the eyes' (Gray 1903:201) or 'pull the wool over the eyes' " (Milgrom 1989:134). In Deut 16:19, taking a bribe blinds the eyes of officials and judges. If Moses understood the accusation in this way, that might explain his answer, "I have not taken so much as a donkey from them" (16:15). (CBC-Nu)

**NET NOTE** on **put out the eyes** - Heb "will you bore out the eyes of these men?" The question is "**Will you continue to mislead them?**" (or "hoodwink" them). In Deut 16:19 it is used for taking a bribe; something like that kind of deception is intended here. They are simply stating that Moses is a deceiver who is misleading the people with false promises.

**Cole** - By "putting out the eyes of these men," the rebels are exaggerating, claiming that Moses wants to blind men to his true intentions (Allen - EBC). So they're blaming Moses for not bringing them into the Promised Land when it was they who sided with the ten faithless spies, resulting in God's judgment that they would all die in the wilderness.

**THOUGHT** - It is unbelievably easy for the Korahs of this world to sit back and say, "If I was leading the nation at Kadesh Barnea, I would have done thus and so." But Korah was not leading the nation, and men of his type rarely do. God rarely puts the Monday-morning quarterbacks, the backseat drivers, in positions of real leadership—except as a chastisement, to show them just how difficult leadership really is—and that perfect leadership, like perfect anything, is impossible.. Leaders should expect to be held to a higher standard; but it is patently unfair to hold a leader to a perfect standard. (Guzik)

**Numbers 16:15** Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, "Do not regard their offering! I have not taken a

single donkey from them, nor have I done harm to any of them."

BGT Numbers 16:15 κα βαρυθ μῆσεν Μωυς ς σφ ὄρα κα ε πεν πρ ς κ ριον μ προσχ ς ε ς τ ν θυσ αν α τ ν ο κ πιθ μῆμα ο δ εν ς α τ ν ε ληφα ο δ κ κωσα ο δ να α τ ν

NET Numbers 16:15 Moses was very angry, and he said to the LORD, "Have no respect for their offering! I have not taken so much as one donkey from them, nor have I harmed any one of them!"

NLT Numbers 16:15 Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, "Do not accept their grain offerings! I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, and I have never hurt a single one of them."

ESV Numbers 16:15 And Moses was very angry and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, and I have not harmed one of them."

NIV Numbers 16:15 Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, "Do not accept their offering. I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them."

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:15 And it is very displeasing to Moses, and he saith unto Jehovah, 'Turn not Thou unto their present; not one ass from them have I taken, nor have I afflicted one of them.'

LXE Numbers 16:15 And Moses was exceeding indignant, and said to the Lord, Do thou take no heed to their sacrifice: I have not taken away the desire of any one of them, neither have I hurt any one of them.

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

- very wroth: Nu 12:3 Ex 32:19 Mt 5:22 Mk 3:5 Eph 4:26
- Respect: Nu 16:6,7 Ge 4:4,5 Isa 1:10-15
- 1Sa 12:3,4 Ac 20:33,34 1Co 9:15 2Co 1:12 7:2 12:14-17 1Th 2:10
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES' RIGHTEOUS ANGER

**Then Moses became very angry** - Paul even commands righteous anger in Eph 4:26 saying '**BE ANGRY** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

**Bush** on Moses anger - implies a glowing indignation. The anger, however, excited on this occasion we do not look upon in the light of a sinful infirmity, or as the ebullition of a personal resentment on the part of Moses, but as a holy indignation stirred up in his mind in view of the indignity and insult cast upon the Lord. It was, we suppose, the working of a devout and active zeal for the Lord of hosts, similar to that which was kindled within him when he came down from the mount and found the people engaged in the worship of the golden calf, by which he was prompted to throw down and break to pieces the two tables of stone. A truly good man will be incensed at a dishonor put upon God, when he would meekly forgive an injury done to himself.

**and said to the LORD, "Do not regard their offering!"** - Heb. "Turn not to their offering." That is, turn not Your face towards them; bestow not You favorable regards upon them! This is what you might call an imprecatory prayer (see below).

**NET NOTE** on **Do not regard** - The verb means "to turn toward"; it is a figurative expression that means "to pay attention to" or "to have regard for." So this is a prayer against Dathan and Abiram.

**Bush** - It was a prayer that the Lord would treat their offering with the same want of respect that he did that of Cain as compared with that of Abel. The sin could not admit of any palliation, and therefore the sinners could not hope for any acceptance. The original for "offering" is [minchah](#), meat or meal-offering,

**I have not taken a single donkey from them, nor have I done harm to any of them-** Moses appeals to the LORD to assess his integrity as a leader.

Centuries later Paul would defend himself with similar words...

Acts 20:26-27; 33; 35+ "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27"For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God....33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or

clothes.....35 "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**THOUGHT** - When a leader is troubled by rebellious and divisive persons, there is something glorious about a clean conscience. (Guzik)

**Bush** - This was an appeal to the Lord on the part of Moses whether he had ever in any, even the slightest particular, abused his power, or encroached upon the rights or the property of any person. He was accused by the conspirators of usurpation, which would of course imply oppression and extortion. But as he had committed neither oppression nor extortion, he can boldly affirm his innocence of the charge of usurpation. So far was he from this, that he declares before God that he had not taken, i. e. received by gift or reward, even the vilest beast; much less had he appropriated any thing of the kind by violent seizure.....Despotic power all over the East, and from the earliest ages, has always asserted itself by imposing the most galling burdens of tribute and taxation. Comp. 1 Sam. 8:16.

#### **Related Resources:**

- Integrity - A Whole Heart
- Give Me An Undivided Heart

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#### **Question:** [What is imprecatory prayer?](#)

**Answer:** First of all, let's define imprecatory prayer. To imprecate means "to invoke evil upon or curse" one's enemies. King David, the psalmist most associated with imprecatory verses such as Psalm 55:15, 69:28, 109:8, often used phrases like, "may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them" (Psalm 35:6) and "O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!" (Psalm 58:6).

Psalms 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 109, and 139 were written by David to ask God to bring judgment upon his enemies. (The other two imprecatory psalms, 79 and 137, were written by Asaph and an unknown psalmist.) These prayers were written not so much to exact revenge upon one's enemies, but rather to emphasize God's abhorrence of evil, His sovereignty over all mankind, and His divine protection of His chosen people. Many of these prayers were prophetic and could be seen taking place later in the New Testament in actual historical events.

When David prayed for God to shatter the teeth of his enemies, likening them to young lions pursuing him to his death, he was making the point that God is holy, righteous, and just, and He will ultimately judge the wicked for the evil they do. Jesus quoted some of the imprecatory psalms during His earthly ministry. In John 15:25, Jesus quotes Psalm 35:19 and 69:4. Paul also quoted an imprecatory prayer in Romans 11:9–10, which is a quote of Psalm 69:22–23. Since Jesus and Paul quoted verses from these imprecatory psalms, it proves those psalms were inspired by God and counters any allegation that they were sinful or selfish prayers of revenge.

Using imprecatory prayers from the Psalms today should only be done against our spiritual enemies (Ephesians 6:12). Praying imprecations on human foes is unjustifiable, as it would require taking these prayers out of context. In the New Testament, Jesus exhorts us to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44–48; Luke 6:27–38), but praying for their death or for bad things to happen to them isn't what He meant. Instead, we are to pray for their salvation first and foremost, and then for God's will to be done. There's no greater blessing than a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and that's what Jesus means by praying for and blessing those who curse us.

Praying in that manner allows God to work in our own lives to soften our hearts toward our enemies so that we'll have compassion on them for their eternal destiny, and to remove bitterness and anger from our hearts. Praying for God's will to be done means we agree with God and are submitting ourselves to His divine sovereignty, despite not always understanding perfectly what He's doing in a particular situation. And it means we have given up the idea that we know best and instead are now relying on and trusting in God to work His will. If a personal wrong has truly been done to us, we seek God in prayer about it, and then leave room for God's judgment and trust Him to do what is best. That is the way to be at peace with God and all men (Romans 12:17–21). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Numbers 16:16** Moses said to Korah, "You and all your company be present before the LORD tomorrow, both you and they along with Aaron.

σ κα α το κα Ααρων α προν

NET Numbers 16:16 Then Moses said to Korah, "You and all your company present yourselves before the LORD— you and they, and Aaron— tomorrow.

NLT Numbers 16:16 And Moses said to Korah, "You and all your followers must come here tomorrow and present yourselves before the LORD. Aaron will also be here.

ESV Numbers 16:16 And Moses said to Korah, "Be present, you and all your company, before the LORD, you and they, and Aaron, tomorrow.

NIV Numbers 16:16 Moses said to Korah, "You and all your followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow--you and they and Aaron.

KJV Numbers 16:16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow:

YLT Numbers 16:16 And Moses saith unto Korah, 'Thou and all thy company, be ye before Jehovah, thou, and they, and Aaron, to-morrow;

LXE Numbers 16:16 And Moses said to Core, Sanctify thy company, and be ready before the Lord, thou and Aaron and they, to-morrow.

ASV Numbers 16:16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before Jehovah, thou, and they, and Aaron, to-morrow:

- Be thou: Nu 16:6,7
- before: 1Sa 12:3,7 2Ti 2:14
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **TOMORROW WILL BE THE CENSER TEST**

**Moses said to Korah, "You and all your company be present before the LORD tomorrow, both you and they along with Aaron** - Before the LORD is at the door of the tabernacle. The rebellion was against God and before God Moses would take his case. (Always a good rule to apply when unfairly or unjustly criticized!).

**Numbers 16:17 "Each of you take his firepan and put incense on it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and fifty firepans; also you and Aaron shall each bring his firepan."**

BGT Numbers 16:17 κα λ βετε καστος τ πυρε ον α το κα πιθ σετε π α τ θυμ αμα κα προσ ξετε ναντι κυρ ου καστος τ πυρε ον α το πεντ κοντα κα διακ σια πυρε α κα σ κα Ααρων καστος τ πυρε ον α το

NET Numbers 16:17 And each of you take his censer, put incense in it, and then each of you present his censer before the LORD: 250 censers, along with you, and Aaron— each of you with his censer."

NLT Numbers 16:17 You and each of your 250 followers must prepare an incense burner and put incense on it, so you can all present them before the LORD. Aaron will also bring his incense burner."

ESV Numbers 16:17 And let every one of you take his censer and put incense on it, and every one of you bring before the LORD his censer, 250 censers; you also, and Aaron, each his censer."

NIV Numbers 16:17 Each man is to take his censer and put incense in it--250 censers in all--and present it before the LORD. You and Aaron are to present your censers also."

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:17 and take ye each his censer, and ye have put on them perfume, and brought near before Jehovah, each his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; and thou and Aaron, each his censer.'

LXE Numbers 16:17 And take each man his censer, and ye shall put incense upon them, and shall bring each one his censer before the Lord, two hundred and fifty censers, and thou and Aaron shall bring each his censer.

ASV Numbers 16:17 and take ye every man his censer, and put incense upon them, and bring ye before Jehovah every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each his censer.

- 1Sa 12:7
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CONFRONTATION IS "HEATING UP!"

This would prove to be a "test by fire." (Nu 16:29, 30, 35).

**Each of you take his firepan and put incense on it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and fifty firepans; also you and Aaron shall each bring his firepan** - Where they would have obtained 250 censers is uncertain, for Korah and the group did not themselves possess censers (which only belonged to the priests). The rationale for the "censer test" is that this was the duty of the true priesthood and others would offer it only at the risk of their own lives.

**Guzik** - God used the censers with fire and incense in this test for a good reason. A censer is a metal pot used to burn incense, and they were used in the priestly worship of God. Since Korah and his companions questioned Moses and Aaron's right to lead the nation and conduct the priesthood, each group would come to the LORD as worshipping priests—and God would show which group He accepted. Moses made the rebels take the position they desired—the position of priest. Often the best judgment on the divisive and rebellious is to let them lead. Humanly speaking, the odds were not good. It was Moses and Aaron stand alone against all the congregation. Yet God would make this choice, and not popular opinion.

**Numbers 16:18 So they each took his own censer and put fire on it, and laid incense on it; and they stood at the doorway of the tent of meeting, with Moses and Aaron.**

BGT Numbers 16:18 κα λαβεν καστος τ πυρε ον ατο κα πθηκαν π ατ πρ κα πβαλον π ατ θυμ αμα κα στησαν παρ τ ς θ ρας τ ς σκην ς το μαρτυρ ου Μωυ ς κα Ααρων

NET Numbers 16:18 So everyone took his censer, put fire in it, and set incense on it, and stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting, with Moses and Aaron.

NLT Numbers 16:18 So each of these men prepared an incense burner, lit the fire, and placed incense on it. Then they all stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle with Moses and Aaron.

ESV Numbers 16:18 So every man took his censer and put fire in them and laid incense on them and stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting with Moses and Aaron.

NIV Numbers 16:18 So each man took his censer, put fire and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:18 And they take each his censer, and put on them fire, and lay on them perfume, and they stand at the opening of the tent of meeting, with Moses and Aaron.

LXE Numbers 16:18 And each man took his censer, and they put on them fire, and laid incense on them; and Moses and Aaron stood by the doors of the tabernacle of witness.

ASV Numbers 16:18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood at the door of the tent of meeting with Moses and Aaron.

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So they each took his own censer and put fire on it, and laid incense on it; and they stood at the doorway of the tent of meeting, with Moses and Aaron** - 250 men plus Korah minus Dathan and Abiram. As alluded to it was a dangerous thing for a person who was not a priest to offer incense. King Uzziah found out by personal experience

But when he (KING UZZIAH) became strong, his **heart was so proud** that he acted corruptly, and **he was unfaithful** to the LORD his God, for **he entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of**



**incense.** 17 Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the LORD, valiant men. 18 They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, **"It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God."** 19 But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, **the leprosy broke out on his forehead** before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the altar of incense. 20 Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was **leprous on his forehead**; and they hurried him out of there, and he himself also hastened to get out because the LORD had smitten him. 21 **King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and he lived in a separate house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the LORD.** And Jotham his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land. (2 Chr 26:16-21)

**THOUGHT** - today believers are a KINGDOM, PRIESTS and can "BURN INCENSE" in the A.M., P.M. and all times in between = WITHOUT CEASING. Lord, please show me what PRAYER means to you, how important it is for me, and how it is part of fulfilling my role as Your priest on earth, Your "go between" so to speak, interceding for sinful men and women. Lord, I want to know what prayer means (Written 1/14/97 stimulated by insights He revealed as I was studying Rev 8:3 and the golden censer. Awesome. PTL. Amen and Amen.)

This "Censer Test" reminds us of the tragic event in Leviticus 10:1-2+ involving men who were legitimate priest but offering incense in an illegitimate manner....

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and **after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire** before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 And **fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them**, and they died before the LORD.

**Bush** - This was not of course the usual place where incense was to be offered, which was within the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. But as that room was not sufficiently large to contain so great a number, and as the occasion was extraordinary, the scene of the trial was transferred to the court of the Tabernacle. As this event was of such a nature as to require to be witnessed by the people in general, which it could not have been within the Tabernacle, therefore a place was chosen which would give it the utmost publicity. So Moses, on another important occasion, Nu 16:46, 47, offered incense "in the midst of the congregation."

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the meaning of the strange fire in Leviticus 10:1? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who were Nadab and Abihu? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 16:19 Thus Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.**

BGT Numbers 16:19 κα πῖσυν στήσεν π α τ ο ς Κορε τ ν π σαν α τ ο συναγωγ ν παρ τ ν θ ρων τ ς σκην ς το μαρτυρου κα φθη δ ξα κυρ ου π σ τ συναγωγ

NET Numbers 16:19 When Korah assembled the whole community against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting, then the glory of the LORD appeared to the whole community.

NLT Numbers 16:19 Meanwhile, Korah had stirred up the entire community against Moses and Aaron, and they all gathered at the Tabernacle entrance. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to the whole community,

ESV Numbers 16:19 Then Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.

NIV Numbers 16:19 When Korah had gathered all his followers in opposition to them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the glory of the LORD appeared to the entire assembly.

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:19 And Korah assembleth against them all the company unto the opening of the tent of meeting, and the honour of Jehovah is seen by all the company.



LXE Numbers 16:19 And Core raised up against them all his company by the door of the tabernacle of witness; and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation.

ASV Numbers 16:19 And Korah assembled all the congregation against them unto the door of the tent of meeting: and the glory of Jehovah appeared unto all the congregation.

- **Korah:** Nu 16:1,2
- **and the glory:** Nu 16:42 Nu 12:5 Nu 14:10 Ex 16:7,10 Lev 9:6,23
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## REBELLION SPREAD TO ALL THE CONGREGATION

**Thus Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the doorway of the tent of meeting-** NLT = "Meanwhile, Korah had stirred up the entire community against Moses and Aaron, and they all assembled at the Tabernacle entrance." Korah appears to rally most of Israel behind him. Now the rebellion has grown from a couple hundred to a couple million! (cf "all the congregation...grumbled" in Nu 16:41).

**And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation-** The [Shekinah glory cloud](#) appeared. This recalls the previous episode when Moses' life was in danger for "all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel." (Nu 14:10+, cf Yahweh's sudden intervention in Nu 12:4,5+)

Now picture this scene - 250 men who are not authorized to offer incense and God (the one to Whom incense is rightly offered) makes an appearance. What did most holy people in the Bible do when they saw such a visitation? They were on their faces with an appropriate reverential fear of God. Not these rebels. Why not? As Paul said in Romans 3:18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES." He was quoting David in Psalm 36:1

"Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; **There is no fear of God before his eyes.**" (Ps 36:1<sup>±</sup>).

Spurgeon comments - Men's sins have a voice to godly ears. They are the outer index of an inner evil. It is clear that men who dare to sin constantly and presumptuously cannot respect the great Judge of all. Despite the professions of unrighteous men, when we see their unhallowed actions our heart is driven to the conclusion that they have no religion whatever. Unholiness is clear evidence of ungodliness. Wickedness is the fruit of an atheistic root. This may be made clear to the candid head by cogent reasoning, but it is clear already and intuitively to the pious heart. If God be everywhere, and I fear him, how can I dare to break his laws in his very presence? He must be a desperate traitor who will rebel in the monarch's own halls. Whatever theoretical opinions bad men may avow, they can only be classed with atheists, since they are such practically. Those eyes which have no fear of God before them now, shall have the terrors of hell before them for ever.

**Bush** -This supernatural symbol of the Divine presence was made on these occasions to assume some new and striking phase, to which Moses gives the name of the "Glory of the Lord," and out of this appearance now issued a voice, addressing itself to Moses and Aaron, and uttering the words that follow.

**Numbers 16:20 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,**

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying** - Could everyone hear this conversation? Probably not (cf Nu 16:24)

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

BGT Numbers 16:21 ποσχ σθητε κ μ σου τ ς συναγωγ ς τα της κα ξαναλ σω α το ς ε ς παξ

NET Numbers 16:21 "Separate yourselves from among this community, that I may consume them in an instant."

NLT Numbers 16:21 "Get away from all these people so that I may instantly destroy them!"

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

NIV Numbers 16:21 "Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once."

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

YLT Numbers 16:21 'Be ye separated from the midst of this company, and I consume them in a moment;'

LXE Numbers 16:21 Separate your selves from the midst of this congregation, and I will consume them at once.

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

CSB Numbers 16:21 "Separate yourselves from this community so I may consume them instantly."

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

NRS Numbers 16:21 Separate yourselves from this congregation, so that I may consume them in a moment.

NAB Numbers 16:21 "Stand apart from this band, that I may consume them at once."

NJB Numbers 16:21 'Get away from this community. I am going to destroy them here and now.'

GWN Numbers 16:21 "Move away from these men, and I'll destroy them in an instant."

- **Separate:** Ge 19:15-22 Jer 5:16 Ac 2:40 2Co 6:17 Eph 5:6,7 Rev 18:4
- **that I may:** Nu 16:45 Nu 14:12,15 Ex 32:10 Ex 33:5 Ps 73:19 Isa 37:36 Heb 12:28,29
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JUDGMENT DAY COMETH!

**Separate yourselves from among this congregation** - NLT = "Get away from these people so that I may instantly destroy them!"

The **Lxx** has the rare verb **apochizo** in the [aorist imperative](#) (Do it now! Do not delay! is the idea) which means to split or cleave off, severe, detach from and in the passive (as in this passage) it means to be parted from (it was used of a river, to be parted from the main stream; of a tribe, to be detached from its parent stock). The only other use is of King Uzziah after God struck him with leprosy and "he was cut off from the house of the LORD." (2 Chr 26:21, also used in Nu 16:26).

**Bush** - "The address was made to all those who were disposed to give heed to it. A discrimination was to be made, and all those who would be found on the Lord's side are here commanded to withdraw from a position where they would be in danger of sharing in the impending destruction."

**that I may consume them instantly** - Heb. "May eat or devour them." This is the third time Yahweh threatens to consume the entire congregation (Ex 32:10+, Nu 14:12+) and in all three occasions Moses interceded.

**Bush** - The language is fearfully emphatic, as if the judgment was just ready to burst upon the culprits, and scarcely knew how to brook delay, when yet at the same time it is evident that as wrath did not come upon Sodom till Lot and his family were removed, so here, also, was an impediment until the commanded separation should take place. His arm is withheld while the possibility of salvation for any remains.

**Instantly** is *regā* which means a wink (of the eyes), a very short space of time, in an instant or moment. The **Lxx** has hapax meaning "at once!" "This generation is already under a death sentence (14:29–30), but here God declares that it will happen in a mere moment." (Currid)

**Numbers 16:22 But they fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?"**

BGT Numbers 16:22 κα πέσαν π πρ ὡπον α τ ν κα ε παν θε ς θε ς τ ν πνευμ των κα π σης σαρκ ς ε νθρωπος ε ς μαρτεν π π σαν τ ν συναγω γ ρ γ κυρ ου

NET Numbers 16:22 Then they threw themselves down with their faces to the ground and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all people, will you be angry with the whole community when only one man sins?"

NLT Numbers 16:22 But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground. "O God," they pleaded, "you are the God who gives breath to all creatures. Must you be angry with all the people when only one man sins?"

ESV Numbers 16:22 And they fell on their faces and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation?"

NIV Numbers 16:22 But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, "O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?"

KJV 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?

YLT Numbers 16:22 and they fall on their faces, and say, 'God, God of the spirits of all flesh -- the one man sinneth, and against all the company Thou art wroth!'

LXE Numbers 16:22 And they fell on their faces, and said, O God, the God of spirits and of all flesh, if one man has sinned, shall the wrath of the Lord be upon the whole congregation?

ASV 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?

- they fell: Nu 16:4,45 Nu 14:5
- the God: Nu 27:16 Job 12:10 Ec 12:7 Isa 57:16 Zec 12:1 Heb 12:9
- one man sin: Ge 18:23-25,32 Jos 7:1-26 2Sa 24:1,17 Ro 5:18 1Co 13:7
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 14:5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel.

### ON THEIR FACES... AGAIN!

**Fell on face** is a key phrase in Numbers 16 - Nu 16:2, Nu 16:22<sup>+</sup>, Nu 16:45<sup>+</sup>. Only 2 more times in entire book of Numbers (Nu 14:5+, Nu 20:6+).

**But they fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirits of all flesh"** ("all mankind" also in Nu 27:16+), **when one man sins** (aka Korah), **will You be angry with the entire congregation?"** - What a manifestation of their selfless love and compassion! **NLT** - "O God, the God and source of all life," they pleaded. "Must you be angry with all the people when only one man sins?" The first time Moses fell on his face was in Nu 16:4 after which he described the "divine trial" to determine who was righteous before the LORD (Moses must have heard from Yahweh while he was prone in prayer!). Now he and Aaron intercede with Jehovah.

How ready they were to intercede! How free from any trace of a revengeful spirit!  
-- C H Spurgeon

**NET NOTE** on **when one man sins** - The words clearly show that Moses is interceding for the congregation. The appeal in the verse is that it is better for one man (Korah the leader of the rebellion) to die for the whole nation than the whole nation for one man (see John 11:50).

**Currid** - They then ask God a deep theological question. Shall the entire congregation suffer for the actions of one man—that is, the main culprit, Korah? They are raising the question of collective guilt over against individual responsibility.

**Brian Bell** - Once again, the love & intercession of Moses saved the very people who had created problems for him. Wow, almost sounds like Jesus advice in Mt.5:44ff+ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

**Bishop Hall** - "The same tongue that prayed against the conspirators, prays for the people. Korah had so far prevailed, that he had

drawn the multitude to his side. God, the avenger of treason, would have consumed them all at once. Moses and Aaron pray for the rebels. Although they were worthy of death, and nothing but death could stop their mouths, yet their merciful leaders will not buy their own peace with the loss of such enemies. Oh rare and admirable mercy! The people rise up against their governors; their governors fall on their faces to God for the people. So far are they from plotting revenge, that they will not endure God should revenge for them."

**Bush on God of the spirits of all flesh** - Moses, with a beautiful propriety, gives to the Most High this title, in acknowledgment of his power to save or to destroy, as he had threatened to consume all Israel. It implies a strong motive to urge the divine compassion: "O God, the father and creator both of the souls and bodies of men, and who hast therefore the power of preserving as well as of destroying; deign to display that power in the exercise of mercy towards this people. Thou, the Searcher of hearts, knowest the authors of this sedition, and distinguishest them from those who have been made, through weakness and credulity, their dupes. Have mercy upon the latter!"

**Currid on God of the spirits of all flesh** - They begin by using a title for God that is found only here and in Numbers 27:16 in the entire Old Testament. The name '**the God of the spirits of all flesh**' is commonly used of Yahweh in the intertestamental period, and it seems to bear the idea that because he is Creator, then he has the right to do as he pleases with animate life. Moses and Aaron are acknowledging his sovereign right to dispose of people how he sees fit.

**Gilbrant** - Moses' pleading with "God, the God of the spirits of all flesh" reminds one of Abraham's plea for Sodom, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Ge 18:25). Here, in the Hebrew, two different words for God (El and Elohim) are used for emphasis. (CBL)

**Believer's Study Bible** - Cf. Nu11:2; 12:13; 14:5, 13-20; 16:45-50; 21:7. The intercession of Moses and Aaron foreshadowed that of Christ (cf. Isa. 53:12; Luke 23:34; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).

**Numbers 16:23 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Numbers 16:24 "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.'"**

BGT Numbers 16:24 λ λησον τ συναγωγ λ γων ναχωρ σατε κ κλ π τ ς συναγωγ ς Κορε

NET Numbers 16:24 "Tell the community: 'Get away from around the homes of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'"

NLT Numbers 16:24 "Then tell all the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."

ESV Numbers 16:24 "Say to the congregation, Get away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."

NIV Numbers 16:24 "Say to the assembly, 'Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.'"

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

YLT Numbers 16:24 'Speak unto the company, saying, Go ye up from round about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'

LXE Numbers 16:24 Speak to the congregation, saying, Depart from the company of Core round about.

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

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**GET BACK!  
OR BE GONE!**

**Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram** - **KJV** has "the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram." **NLT** - ""Then tell all the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."

If we would escape from the doom of the wicked, we must flee from their company  
- Spurgeon

**Brian Bell** -Stay clear of the troublemakers if you want to continue living. Sounds like Rev.18:4,5. "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **"Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues"** for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."

**Numbers 16:25 Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him,**

BGT Numbers 16:25 καὶ ἤγειρεν Μωϋσῆς καὶ ἦλθεν πρὸς Δαθὰν καὶ Ἀβιρὼν καὶ συνεπορεύθησαν μετὰ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ

NET Numbers 16:25 Then Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel went after him.

NLT Numbers 16:25 So Moses got up and rushed over to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, followed by the elders of Israel.

ESV Numbers 16:25 Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

NIV Numbers 16:25 Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

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

YLT Numbers 16:25 And Moses riseth, and goeth unto Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel go after him,

LXE Numbers 16:25 And Moses rose up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and all the elders of Israel went with him.

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

- Nu 11:16,17,25,30
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES DEALS WITH DATHAN AND ABIRAM

**Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram** - **Then** indicates there was some time for the people to get back from the rebels. During this time Moses would address the other two rebels face to face. Since they refused to come to him, he would go to them.

**Bush** - Having proclaimed the preceding order first at the Tabernacle to the people that followed Korah and his party, Moses then went in person to the camp where **Dathan and Abiram** still persisted in remaining, after having treated so contemptuously the summons sent them. He went, accompanied by a train of elders, and gave notice to all that dwelt round about, to remove themselves and all they had from the dangerous vicinity, lest they also should share in the coming doom of the rebels.

**With the elders of Israel following him** - Presumably these were the 70 men who were from the elders and whom God anointed with the Spirit (see Nu 11:16–30+). God had given Moses these men to help him bear the burden and here they go with Moses in his confrontation with Dathan and Abiram.

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**Question:** [Who was Dathan in the Bible?](#)

**Answer:** Dathan was one of four ringleaders who incited a rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron while the Israelites journeyed in the [wilderness](#) (Numbers 16). Dathan was the son of Eliab, from the tribe of Reuben. He, his brother Abiram, a fellow Reubenite named On, and a Levite named Korah brought 250 Israelite leaders to challenge Moses' right to lead them. They said, "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" (verse 3)?

Moses was distraught at this challenge and the rebelliousness behind it, and he ordered Dathan and the other men to appear before him the next morning with censers full of incense and hot coals to offer to the Lord. Offering incense was to be performed only by God's priests, but these men claimed that they should have the same right as Moses and Aaron to be leaders. Moses' plan would let the Lord show them the foolishness of their demand. Dathan and the other malcontents, along with the high priest, Aaron, would offer their incense, and the Lord would publicly choose His priest.

Moses tried to reason separately with Korah, reminding him that as a [Levite](#) he was already chosen by the Lord for special service (Numbers 16:8–11). But Korah would not listen. When Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, they defied his command and issued a surly response: "We will not come! Isn't it enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness? And now you also want to lord it over us! Moreover, you haven't brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Do you want to treat these men like slaves? No, we will not come!" (Numbers 16:12–14).

None of the rebels were willing to listen to Moses' appeals. The next morning, Dathan and the others came to the tabernacle with censers in hand. The Lord was so angry at their insolence that He wanted to destroy all of the Israelites, and He told Moses and Aaron to step aside so He could. Moses pleaded with the Lord for mercy, so the Lord brought judgment only on the ones who had incited the rebellion. Dathan, Abiram, and Korah stood with their families and possessions at the entry to their tents, and the Lord caused the ground to open and swallow them (Numbers 16:31–33).

At the same time, the Lord sent fire to consume the 250 men who held the censers, incinerating the rebels. Later, God told Eleazar the priest to collect the censers, scatter the coals, and "hammer the censers into sheets to overlay the altar, for they were presented before the Lord and have become holy" (Numbers 16:38). The bronze overlay was to "be a sign to the Israelites" of God's wrath against sin and the importance of accepting God's choice.

Because Korah was a Levite, the tribe already chosen by God to lead the people in worship, the Lord seems to have held him most responsible for this rebellion. Jude 1:11 refers to this event as "[Korah's rebellion](#)." However, Dathan and his cohorts received the same punishment that God gave Korah. While the judgment may seem severe to us, God was showing His people Israel that He was holy and would not tolerate their defiance of His decrees. They could not approach His presence and offer to Him whatever they chose, but they must obey Him in everything, including the offering of sacrifices (Numbers 15:40).

We can learn from Dathan's sin that the Lord requires more from those to whom more has been given (Luke 12:48). He holds us responsible for the knowledge, callings, and opportunities He gives us. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram serve as reminders that God takes seriously our disregard for His holiness and that a terrible fate awaits those who reject His choice of a Savior (Revelation 21:8). [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 16:26 and he spoke to the congregation, saying, 'Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin.'**

BGT Numbers 16:26 καὶ ἄφησεν πρὸς τὴν συναγωγὴν λέγων ποσὴ σθητε πρὸς τὴν σκηνὴν τῶν νῆρων τῶν σκληρῶν τοῦτων καὶ μὴ πτεσθε ἐκ πάντων ὧν σπινὰ τοῦς συνὰπλησθε ἐκ σὺν μαρτύρων

NET Numbers 16:26 And he said to the community, "Move away from the tents of these wicked men, and do not touch anything they have, lest you be destroyed because of all their sins."

NLT Numbers 16:26 "Quick!" he told the people. "Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and don't touch anything that belongs to them. If you do, you will be destroyed for their sins."

ESV Numbers 16:26 And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart, please, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be swept away with all their sins."

NIV Numbers 16:26 He warned the assembly, "Move back from the tents of these wicked men! Do not touch anything belonging to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins."

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:26 and he speaketh unto the company, saying, 'Turn aside, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and come not against anything that they have, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.'

LXE Numbers 16:26 And he spoke to the congregation, saying, Separate yourselves from the tents of these



stubborn men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, lest ye be consumed with them in all their sin.

ASV 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.

CSB Numbers 16:26 He warned the community, "Get away now from the tents of these wicked men. Don't touch anything that belongs to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins."

- Nu 16:21-24 Ge 19:12-14 De 13:17 Isa 52:11 Mt 10:14 Ac 8:20 13:51 2Co 6:17 1Ti 5:22 Rev 18:4
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Isaiah 52:11 **Depart, depart**, (DOUBLE COMMAND!!!) go out from there, Touch nothing unclean; **Go out** of the midst of her, purify yourselves, You who carry the vessels of the LORD. (**NET** = Leave! Leave! Get out of there! Don't touch anything unclean! Get out of it! Stay pure, you who carry the LORD's holy items!)

2 Corinthians 6:17 "Therefore, **COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE**," says the Lord. "**AND DO NOT TOUCH** WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.

**THOUGHT** - Do you feel far from the Lord? Perhaps you need to do inventory regarding the three preceding commands as to what you have been doing, watching, saying, etc. God desires to welcome you into His presence, into intimate fellowship with Him -- EVERY DAY BELOVED! But your part is to come out, be separate and not touch the unclean things of this godless, God hating world! Read and put into practice the truth of 1 John 1:6-7+

**And he spoke to the congregation, saying, 'Depart now from the tents of these wicked men** - NLT = "'Quick!" he told the people. "Get away from the tents of these wicked men." **Separate** from these divisive, argumentative, contentious people! That's good advice for any church today! Their divisive spirit can be infectious and "toxic"! **Depart** is a command and is the same verb [aposchizo](#) used in Nu 16:21 in the see Lxx and again is in the [aorist imperative](#) meaning "Do it now! Do not delay!" Moses says nothing to Dathan and Abiram per se, but only to the congregation gathered around their tents. Dathan and Abiram did not have ears to hear for they had gone too far and there was no forgiveness for them. Wicked (see below) is translated in Lxx with [skleros](#) which literally means hard and figuratively describes these men as unyielding in their behavior and manifesting a stubborn attitude (from a "hard heart").

**THOUGHT** - One can become so steeped in sin, so hardened, so stiff-necked, that God eventually lets that individual (like Dathan) have their own way and suffer their just fate. They cannot blame God for the consequences and/or punishment! No one in Hell can blame God for their eternal punishment!

**Wicked** (07563) ([rasha'](#)) is an adjective meaning unrighteous, unjust, an evil person, wrong wicked, guilty (legally not innocent of a violation of the law - Ex 23:1, Ps 109:7), in the wrong, criminal, transgressor. **Rasha'** often describes unbelievers, who hate God and are habitually hostile toward Him. The **wicked/ungodly** conduct their lives as if God does not exist and with no regard for Him. **Rasha'** describes someone as evil with a focus on their being guilty or in the wrong (2Sa 4:11). **Rasha'** is the opposite of righteous (06662).

**NET NOTE** on **rasha** - The word רָשָׁע ([rasha'](#)) has the sense of a guilty criminal. The word "wicked" sometimes gives the wrong connotation. These men were opposing the LORD, and so were condemned as criminals—they were guilty. The idea of "wickedness" therefore applies in that sense.

**NET NOTE** is interesting - The impression is that the people did not hear what the LORD said to Moses, but only what Moses said to the people as a result. They saw the brilliant cloud, and perhaps heard the sound of his voice, but the relaying of the instructions indicates they did not hear the actual instruction from the LORD himself.

**And touch nothing that belongs to them or you will be swept away in all their sin**- NLT = "don't touch anything that belongs to them. If you do, you will be destroyed for their sins." **Swept away** means to be snatched away, captured, destroyed and in the Lxx is translated with sunapollumi from [apollumi](#) meaning not to cease to exist but to come to ultimate ruin, losing all purpose for which a person was created (Which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever!) Refusing to obey God's warnings or refusing to believe God forces God to punish sinners in their sin.

**Bush** - As they themselves had become unclean and execrable, they accordingly communicated a kind of pollution to every thing with which they came in contact, bringing it under an anathema or curse. Accordingly **everything** perished together, as we learn from Nu 16:32. Comp. taking nothing that is under the "ban" (devoted to destruction) in Deut. 13:16, 17.



**Guzik** - The New Testament also speaks along this same principle: Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. (Titus 3:10–11) Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. (Romans 16:17–18)i. Remember a divisive, contentious person will never claim to be divisive and contentious—they always consider their work a noble cause. Therefore Christians need some discernment and to look at what others do, not only at what they say.

**Bishop Hall** - “God and Moses knew how to distinguish betwixt the heads of the faction and the train; though neither be faultless, yet the one is plagued, the other forgiven. God’s vengeance, when it is at the hottest, makes differences of men. Even before common judgment there is a separation.”

**THOUGHT** - Moses clearly stated what God intended to do to the rebels (Nu 16:28-30). He did this so that everyone would have to choose between following Korah or following Moses, God’s chosen leader. When God asks us to make a fundamental choice between siding with wicked people or siding with him, we should not hesitate but commit ourselves to be 100 percent on the Lord’s side.

**Numbers 16:27 So they got back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the doorway of their tents, along with their wives and their sons and their little ones.**

BGT Numbers 16:27 καὶ πῆλθεσαν ἀπὸ τῶν σκηνῶν Κορε καὶ καὶ Δαθὰν καὶ Αβιρῶν ἐξ ἑκαστοῦ καὶ ἐστέκεισαν παρὰ τῶν θύρας τῶν σκηνῶν αὐτῶν καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ προσκευά αὐτῶν

NET Numbers 16:27 So they got away from the homes of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram on every side, and Dathan and Abiram came out and stationed themselves in the entrances of their tents with their wives, their children, and their toddlers.

NLT Numbers 16:27 So all the people stood back from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrances of their tents, together with their wives and children and little ones.

ESV Numbers 16:27 So they got away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, together with their wives, their sons, and their little ones.

NIV Numbers 16:27 So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing with their wives, children and little ones at the entrances to their tents.

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:27 And they go up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, from round about, and Dathan, and Abiram have come out, standing at the opening of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their infants.

LXE Numbers 16:27 And they stood aloof from the tent of Core round about; and Dathan and Abiram went forth and stood by the doors of their tents, and their wives and their children and their store.

ASV Numbers 16:27 So they gat them up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood at the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little ones.

- **stood:** 2Ki 9:30,31 Job 9:4 40:10,11 Pr 16:18 18:12 Isa 28:14
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So they got back from around the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram**- One of the few times Israel had obeyed Moses. Why now? I am not sure, but the presence of the glory of the LORD must have instilled some degree of fear.

**Bush** - “Had Korah removed his tent near to those of Dathan and Abiram? As a Kohathite, his tent could not properly be in the camp of Reuben, and still less could the tents of Reubenites be in the camp of the Levites. The present direction seems to imply that the tents were together; yet further on, we only read of Dathan and Abiram; and it does not from this chapter appear, unless by inference, that Korah’s tent was swallowed up; and that it actually was not, would appear from the fact, that whereas the children of

the Reubenite rebels perished with their parents, those of Korah did not (see Nu 26:11, 1 Chr. 6:22–38 for Korah's genealogy)

**and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the doorway of their tents, along with their wives and their sons and their little ones** - Notice the wives and little ones will suffer for the leaders sins!

**Guzik** - We may be uneasy seeing the families destroyed also, but it clearly shows that the families of the rebellious, divisive, contentious people suffer also—often greatly.

**NET NOTE** on **came out standing** - The verb נִצָּבִים (nitsavim) suggests a defiant stance, for the word is often used in the sense of taking a stand for or against something. It can also be somewhat neutral, having the sense of positioning oneself for a purpose.

**Bush** - “**Came out standing;**” implying an easy, unconcerned, and sauntering kind of air; they came out and stood in a leaning or lounging way at the door of their tents, as if to see what or whether any thing would take place. Those who were not actually partners in the conspiracy appear to have taken timely warning and fled; while the rest, with astonishing recklessness, came forth with their families and put themselves in the very jaws of destruction.

**Bishop Hall** has an interesting thought - “Moses had well hoped that when these rebels should see all the Israelites run from them, as from monsters, and looking affrightedly upon their tents, and should hear that fearful proclamation of vengeance against them, their hearts would have misgiven. But, lo, these bold traitors stand impudently staring in the door of their tents, as if they would out-face the revenge of God; as if Moses had never wrought a miracle before them; as if no one Israelite had ever bled for rebellion. Those that shall perish are blinded. Pride and infidelity obdure the heart and make even cowards fearless.

**Numbers 16:28** **Moses said, "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not my doing.**

BGT Numbers 16:28 κα ε πεν Μωυς ς ν το τ γν σεσθε τι κ ριος π στειλ ν με ποι σαι π ντα τ ργα τα τα τι ο κ π μαυτο

NET Numbers 16:28 Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will.

NLT Numbers 16:28 And Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things that I have done-- for I have not done them on my own.

ESV Numbers 16:28 And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord.

NIV Numbers 16:28 Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea:

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:28 And Moses saith, 'By this ye do know that Jehovah hath sent me to do all these works, that they are not from my own heart;

LXE Numbers 16:28 And Moses said, Hereby shall ye know that the Lord has sent me to perform all these works, that I have not done them of myself.

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

- Hereby: Ex 3:12 4:1-9 7:9 De 18:22 Zec 2:9 4:9 Joh 5:36 11:42 14:11
- of mine: Nu 24:13 1Ki 18:36 Jer 23:16 Eze 13:17 Joh 5:30 6:38
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES IS SIMPLY CARRYING OUT YAHWEH'S JUSTICE

**Moses said, "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these deeds-** Moses was a mediator between God and man. What he had done was at the behest of the Yahweh.

**Bush on all these deeds** - The works to which he here especially alludes were the institution of the priesthood, the appointment of the Levites, and other matters of government; to which we may add also the ordering of Korah and his company to appear with censers on this occasion.

**For this is not my doing** -- Chald. "Not of my own will, or pleasure." Gr. "Not of myself." Vulg. "That I have not forged them of my own head." Hebrew = "and that not out of my heart." NLT = "done--for I have not done them on my own." In other words this punishment was not from a heart of vengeance or retaliation in Moses.

**NET NOTE**- The Hebrew text simply has כִּי־לֹא מִלִּבִּי (ki-lo' millibbi, "for not from my heart"). The **heart** is the center of the will, the place decisions are made (see H. W. Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament). Moses is saying that the things he has done have not come "from the will of man" so to speak—and certainly not from some secret desire on his part to seize power.

**Bush** - I did it not from any ambitious promptings tending to my own aggrandizement, nor from any private affection or favoritism towards my brother.

**Heart (03820)(leb)** sometimes refers to a literal heart (Ex 28:29, 1Sa 25:37, 2Ki 9:24), but most often is used figurative to refer to what I term the "control center" of our being. Think of an Air Traffic Controller and how dysfunctional, even destructive it is when the controllers fail to function as they should. Just as a healthy human heart is at the center of the body and absolutely essential for physical life and health, so too a healthy spiritual heart (intellect, emotion, will) is at the center of one's inner being (soul) and is vital for a healthy soul, serving as the "fountain" of all moral attitudes and actions. Our spiritual heart thus controls out **actions** and our actions determine our **habits**, which in turn determine our **character**. When God measures the "worth" of a man's life He puts the measuring tape around his heart, not around his head. Be a man after God's Own heart (Acts 13:22+) We must continually "post a guard" at the doorway of our heart, so that every avenue for sin's entry is blocked.

**Numbers 16:29 "If these men die the death of all men or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me."**

BGT Numbers 16:29 ε κατ θ νατον π ντων νθρ πων ποθανο νται ο τοι ε κα κατ π σκεψιν π ντων νθρ πων πισκοπ σται α τ ν ο χ κ ριος π σταλκ ν με

NET Numbers 16:29 If these men die a natural death, or if they share the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me.

NLT Numbers 16:29 If these men die a natural death, or if nothing unusual happens, then the LORD has not sent me.

ESV Numbers 16:29 If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me.

NIV Numbers 16:29 If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me.

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:29 if according to the death of all men these die -- or the charge of all men is charged upon them -- Jehovah hath not sent me;

LXE Numbers 16:29 If these men shall die according to the death of all men, if also their visitation shall be according to the visitation of all men, then the Lord has not sent me.

ASV 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 Jehovah hath not sent me.

- visited: Ex 20:5 32:34 Job 35:15 Isa 10:3 Jer 5:9 La 4:22
- the Lord: 1Ki 22:28 2Ch 18:27
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**SIGN THAT GOD  
HAD SENT MOSES**

**If these men die the death of all men or if they suffer the fate of all men** - Heb. "If according to the dying of all men, these men die." KJV = "visited after the visitation of all men." He is referring obviously to natural death.

**Then the LORD has not sent me** - If they die anything but a supernatural, miraculous death, then Moses says this is a sign Yahweh has not sent him.

**Bush** - If these men that now oppose and scandalize us shall die the common death of other men, then you are all at liberty to think of us as ill as you please. But if, on the other hand, an immediate and unheard of miracle is wrought for their destruction, by causing the earth to open her mouth and swallow them up, and all that belong to them; then you will have no excuse for refusing to acknowledge that Aaron and myself are acting as we do by a divine commission, and that the conspiracy now formed is less against us than against the Lord himself.

**Kitto** remarks that "'From the beginning of the world unto this day, no man ever made so bold and noble an assertion of divine approval, or subjected his claims, in the presence of a nation, to a test so immediate and so infallible."

**Numbers 16:30 "But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD."**

BGT Numbers 16:30 ἂν φεραῖ δέξει κριός καὶ νοξασα γὰρ τὸμα αὐτὸς καταπεται αὐτοὺς καὶ τοὺς οὐκοὺς αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς σκηνὰς αὐτῶν καὶ πάντα αὐτῶν καὶ καταβούνται ζῆτες εἰς δόου καὶ γινέσθε τι παρὰ ξυνοῦν ὁ νῆρωποι οἱ τοῦ κριόν

NET Numbers 16:30 But if the LORD does something entirely new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up along with all that they have, and they go down alive to the grave, then you will know that these men have despised the LORD!"

NLT Numbers 16:30 But if the LORD does something entirely new and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them and all their belongings, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have shown contempt for the LORD."

ESV Numbers 16:30 But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD."

NIV Numbers 16:30 But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt."

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:30 and if a strange thing Jehovah do, and the ground hath opened her mouth and swallowed them, and all that they have, and they have gone down alive to Sheol -- then ye have known that these men have despised Jehovah.'

LXE Numbers 16:30 But if the Lord shall shew by a wonder, and the earth shall open her mouth and swallow them up, and their houses, and their tents, and all that belongs to them, and they shall go down alive into Hades, then ye shall know that these men have provoked the Lord.

- **new thing:** Job 31:3 Isa 28:21 43:19 45:7,12 Jer 31:22
- **and they:** Nu 16:33 Ps 55:15
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **MOSES PROPHECIES THEIR DEMISE BY A "NEW THING"**

**But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing** - "creates a creation," or "create a creature;" that is, perform a new, unprecedented work, by bringing about such a death by which no one has ever died of before. **NET** adds that **brings about**

(creates) "means to fashion or make or do something new and fresh. Here the verb is joined with its cognate accusative to underscore that this will be so different everyone will know it is of God."

**Brings about** (creates) (01254) (**bara'**) has the basic meaning "to create", to bring into existence (first use Ge 1:1) and God is the subject of the majority of the OT uses of **bara'** (exceptions - Josh 17:15, 18 = "clear away")! Only God can "**create**" out of nothing

**Jensen** - The critical moment had arrived. Moses spoke. If Jehovah had not chosen Moses to this position of leadership, Korah and his company would, in the natural course of events, eventually die the common death of man. But if these men had despised Jehovah (16:30), the sign of Jehovah would be the creation of a sudden catastrophic situation: the ground would "open its mouth, and swallow them up" (16:30).

**And the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that is theirs**- This is a vivid personification of the coming catastrophe of the earth consuming or swallowing these rebels whole!

**Bush** - "That is, on a sudden; at a time when all is calm and still, with no premonitions of an earthquake; and in such a way, moreover, that only the guilty shall be involved, the rest being delivered." (Bush)

The English of the Lxx amplifies the Hebrew - "Swallow them up, and their houses, and their tents, and all that belongs to them."

**Bush** has an interesting thought - The whole history of the divine providence shows that it has ever regarded a man's surroundings and appendages as a part, as it were, of himself.

**And they descend alive into Sheol** (see Nu 16:33) - Do they not die per se? The text would indicate they go consciously from one place on earth to their new abode in Hell! Amazing! **Bush** agrees writing "That is, alive and active, hale and sound, not dead, as men usually are before they descend into the grave."

**Currid** - They will 'descend' to Sheol; they had refused to **go up** (Nu 16:12), so now they will **go down**! Sheol, of course, is the realm of the dead, and how terrifying it would be to descend there while still alive! The act of swallowing is a common ancient Near-Eastern motif for utter and absolute destruction (cf. Exod. 7:12; 15:12). Hort has attempted to demonstrate that such an event would be produced by a natural phenomenon that is known to occur in these desert regions (a boggy area called a kewir). A naturalistic explanation hardly does justice to the account, however.

**NET NOTE** on **alive** - The word is "life" or "lifetime"; it certainly means their lives—they themselves. But the presence of this word suggest more. It is an accusative specifying the state of the subject—they will go down alive to Sheol.

**Henry Morris** on **sheol** - sheol is the equivalent of hades (commonly translated "hell") in the New Testament, so that this event was no ordinary earthquake but was indeed a "new thing." Korah and his followers descended quick ("alive"), deep into the great cavity at the center of the earth where the spirits of the lost--both men and angels--are now confined (Ps 55:15).

**NET NOTE** on **sheol** - The word "Sheol" in the Bible can be used four different ways: the grave, the realm of the departed [wicked] spirits or Hell, death in general, or a place of extreme danger (one that will lead to the grave if God does not intervene). The usage here is certainly the first, and very likely the second as well.

**Then you will understand that these men have spurned the LORD** - NLT = "then you will know that these men have despised the LORD."

**Spurn** (despise, reject, blaspheme) (05006) **naas** means to revile, to scorn, to reject, despise, abhor (hate extremely or with contempt), spurn, treat with contempt, revile. God tells Moses His people "**spurn**" Him (Nu 14:11) and that those who "**spurned**" Him would not enter the promised land (Nu 14:23) The rebellion of Korah and those with him in effect "**spurned** the LORD" (Nu 16:30) by challenging Moses' divinely appointed role as leader (Nu 16:1-3). God prophesied that His people would "**spurn**" Him by turning to other gods and serving them and thus breaking His (Mosaic) covenant (Dt 31:20). Israel made Jehovah jealous with strange gods, provoking Him to anger (even sacrificing to demons!) and thus Jehovah "**spurned** them because of the provocation." (Dt 32:19, context Dt 32:16-18) The sons of Eli were worthless men who did not know Jehovah and as a result "**despised** the offering of the LORD." (1Sa 2:17). Naas is used in the Psalms of a greedy man who "spurns Jehovah" (Ps 10:3), the wicked who "spurned God" (Ps 10:13), "the enemy" who spurned His Name (Ps 74:10), foolish people who "spurned" His Name (Ps 74:18) and His people who "spurned the counsel of the Most High." (Ps 107:11). Israel was disciplined because they "**despised** the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5:24, cp Isa 1:4 "**despised** the Holy One of Israel").

Webster says **spurn** is from a root meaning to kick and means literally to kick; to drive back or away as with one's foot. To reject with disdain; to scorn to receive or accept. To treat with contempt. To manifest

disdain in rejecting any thing; as to spurn at the gracious offers of pardon. To make contemptuous opposition; to manifest disdain in resistance.

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the difference between Sheol, Hades, Hell, the lake of fire, Paradise, and Abraham's bosom? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What do Jews believe about the afterlife? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Do Jews believe in hell? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is Abraham's bosom? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Where is hell? What is the location of hell? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Did God create hell? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Where did Old Testament believers/saints go when they died? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Numbers 16:31 As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open;**

BGT Numbers 16:31 ς δ πασατο λαλν πντας το ς λ γους το του ς ρρ γη γ ποκ τω α τ ν

NET Numbers 16:31 When he had finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open,

NLT Numbers 16:31 He had hardly finished speaking the words when the ground suddenly split open beneath them.

ESV Numbers 16:31 And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart.

NIV Numbers 16:31 As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart

KJV 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:

YLT Numbers 16:31 And it cometh to pass at his finishing speaking all these words, that the ground which is under them cleaveth,

LXE Numbers 16:31 And when he ceased speaking all these words, the ground clave asunder beneath them.

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

- Nu 26:10,11 27:3 De 11:6 Ps 106:17,18
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 11:6 and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel—

**MOSES STOPS.  
GOD ACTS!**

**As he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open**- God now took over and spoke not with words but with one of the most dramatic events in the Bible! These verses have to be some of the most frightening passages in the Bible regarding the hand of divine judgment on rebellious sinners. This is surely but a faint foreshadowing of the horrors which will befall all who reject Messiah's gracious offer of salvation. See eternal punishment.

Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them.

-- Ecclesiastes 9:12

**Bush** - The response to the awful appeal of Moses was speedily made. He had scarce done speaking ere the earth opened, as it



were, its ponderous jaws, and the guilty band with all their households and effects were precipitated into the yawning abyss. As we have already seen, the fate of Korah himself is by the narrative left doubtful.

**Bishop Hall** - "So soon as the innocent are severed, the guilty perish; the earth cleaves and swallows up the rebels. This element was not used to such morsels. It devours the carcasses of men; but bodies informed with living souls, never before. To have seen them struck dead upon the earth had been fearful; but to see the earth at once their executioner and grave, was more horrible."

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### **Norman Geisler (When Critics Ask) - NUMBERS 16:31—Was Korah swallowed by the earth or burned?**

**PROBLEM:** In verses 31–32 it says the earth opened and swallowed Korah and his 250 rebellious associates. Yet verse 35 asserts that fire came from God and consumed Korah and his associates.

**SOLUTION:** Some scholars have suggested that Korah was burned along with the 250 other rebels. However, no verse actually affirms this and other verses seem to deny it (noted below).

It seems better to understand it as follows: Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (v. 27) were swallowed by the earth, while at the same time (cf. Nu 26:10) a fire from God consumed the 250 other rebels who offered incense in the tabernacle (cf. Ps. 106:17–18).

**Numbers 16:32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions.**

BGT Numbers 16:32 καὶ ὁ χθὺν ὥς καὶ κατὰ πῖεν αὐτοὺς καὶ τὰ οἴκου αὐτῶν καὶ πάντα τὰς ὑβήλους τοὺς υἱοὺς μετὰ Κορὲ καὶ τὰ κτήνη αὐτῶν

NET Numbers 16:32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, along with their households, and all Korah's men, and all their goods.

NLT Numbers 16:32 The earth opened its mouth and swallowed the men, along with their households and all their followers who were standing with them, and everything they owned.

ESV Numbers 16:32 And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods.

NIV Numbers 16:32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions.

KJV 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.

YLT Numbers 16:32 and the earth openeth her mouth, and swalloweth them, and their houses, and all the men who are for Korah, and all the goods,

LXE Numbers 16:32 And the ground opened, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that were with Core, and their cattle.

ASV Numbers 16:32 and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

- the earth: Nu 16:30 Ge 4:11 Isa 5:14 Rev 12:16
- all the: Nu 16:17 26:11 27:3 1Ch 6:22,37 Ps 84:1 85:1 88:1
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Related Passages:**

Numbers 26:9-11 The sons of Eliab: Nemuel and Dathan and Abiram. These are the Dathan and Abiram who were called by the congregation, who contended against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the LORD, 10 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up **along with Korah**, when that company died, **when the fire devoured 250 men**, so that they became a warning. 11 **The sons of Korah, however, did not die.**

A man who hardens his neck after much reproof  
Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.  
-- Proverbs 29:1

We can learn from Dathan's sin that the Lord requires more from those to whom more has been given (Luke 12:48). He holds us responsible for the knowledge, callings, and opportunities He gives us.

-- Gotquestions

Ps. 42:1; Ps. 44:1; Ps. 45:1; Ps. 46:1; Ps. 47:1; Ps. 48:1; Ps. 49:1; Ps. 84:1; Ps. 85:1; Ps. 87:1; Ps. 88:1

**Brian Bell** - In Nu 26:11 we learn **not all of Korah's family was destroyed** (were not involved) :) This explains we have Psalms titled "A Psalm of the sons of Korah" (Ps.84,85,87,88) Apparently the descendants of Korah were content to be humble ministers & not priests, for they wrote in Ps.84:10 "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness." [see Nu 16:26 for the tents of wickedness]

**THOUGHT** - Have we been tempted to rebel against God by criticizing or grumbling against those leading in His name, especially your pastor? Maybe you had better watch the ground beneath your feet!

PROBLEM: This verse states that “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah.” However, Numbers 26:11 speaks about Korah’s descendants who did not perish in the judgment.

SOLUTION: Those who perished with Korah were all his followers, but not all his family. Numbers 26:11 states clearly: "Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die." Indeed, the prophet Samuel was a descendant of Korah (1 Chron. 6:22–28).

BGT Numbers 16:33 κα κατ βησαν α το κα σα σ τ ν α τ ν ζ ν τ α ε ς δου κα κ λυ ψεν α το ς γ κα π λοντο κ μ σου τ ς συναγω γ ς

NET Numbers 16:33 They and all that they had went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed over them. So they perished from among the community.

NLT Numbers 16:33 So they went down alive into the grave, along with all their belongings. The earth closed over them, and they all vanished from among the people of Israel.

ESV Numbers 16:33 So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

NIV Numbers 16:33 They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community.

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

YLT Numbers 16:33 and they go down, they, and all that they have, alive to Sheol, and the earth closeth over them, and they perish from the midst of the assembly;

LXE Numbers 16:33 And they went down and all that they had, alive into Hades; and the ground covered them, and they perished from the midst of the congregation.

ASV Numbers 16:33 So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into Sheol: and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the assembly.

- into the: Ps 9:15 55:23 69:15 143:7 Isa 14:9,15 Eze 32:18,30
- they perished: Jude 1:11
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **BURIED ALIVE BY EARTH THE UNDERTAKER!**

**So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol** - NLT = "So they went down alive into the grave, along with their belongings. The earth closed over them, and they all vanished."

**Went down alive** indicates they were literally buried alive! I have a great fear of drowning, but this passage makes drowning pale in comparison.

**Sheol** ([07585](#)) ([she'ol](#)) is the underworld or the place to which people descend at death. The grave, death, the depths, the nether world, the underworld. Sheol was viewed as the place where departed spirits went after death. Sheol was envisioned as a dark region within the earth, the entrance to which was the grave with its steep slopes (cf. Ps 88:4-6). In Job 14:13-22, Job expressed the common view of life beyond death, namely, that in Sheol there is no contact with the living, only separation, but in Sheol there is a conscious awareness of the dreary existence. In Jonah 2:3 Jonah pictures himself in the belly of Sheol, its very center - in other words he is as good as dead. In Ps 22:6 Sheol, the underworld, the place of the dead, is personified as David's enemy. **Abaddon** is used as a name for Sheol in Ps 88:11. In Ps 143:3 "dark places" is a synonym for Sheol, pictured as a dark place located deep in the ground. In the ancient Israelite view he joined his deceased ancestors in Sheol. In Isaiah 7:11, the phrase "Make it as deep as Sheol or make it high upwards" words suggest that Ahaz can feel free to go beyond the bounds of ordinary human experience. The phrase "path of life" stands in contrast to death/Sheol in Pr 2:18-19; Pr 5:5-6; Pr 15:24. **Sheol**, the place of death, is sometimes depicted as a raging sea (see Ps 18:4, 15-16). Sheol is the land of the dead localized in Hebrew thought in the earth's core or the grave. "Sheol" in the Bible can be used four different ways: the grave, the realm of the departed [wicked] spirits or Hell, death in general, or a place of extreme danger (one that will lead to the grave if God does not intervene. (**Note:** Many of these comments on Sheol are summarized from over 100 comments on "Sheol" in the very helpful resource, [NET Notes](#)).

**And the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly** - "It was a marvel that the waters opened (for Israel); it was no wonder that they shut again; for the retiring and flowing was natural. It was no less a marvel that the earth opened; but more marvel that it shut again; because it had no natural disposition to meet when it was divided. Now might Israel see, they had to do with a God that could revenge with ease."

**Bishop Hall** - "It was a marvel that the waters opened (for Israel); it was no wonder that they shut again; for the retiring and flowing was natural. It was no less a marvel that the earth opened; but more marvel that it shut again; because it had no natural disposition to meet when it was divided. Now might Israel see, they had to do with a God that could revenge with ease."

**Bush** -The deprecatory prayer of David, Ps. 69:15, seems to allude to this terrible judgment

**Perished** (lost, destroy, ruin) ([06](#))([abad](#) cp Abaddon [011](#)) is a verb meaning to perish, to be destroyed, to be ruined, to be lost, to in a state of ruin and destruction pertaining to an object, including the death (Ex 10:7). **Abad** can mean literally to die, or, in the case of things, reputation, etc., to pass away. In a causative sense, **abad** means to destroy, to reduce to some degree of disorder. God's destruction of evil, both threatened (Lev. 26:38) and realized (Nu 17:12); Israel's destruction of the Canaanites and their altars (Nu 33:52; Dt. 12:2, 3); the perishing of natural life (Ps. 49:10; 102:26; Eccl. 7:15); the perishing of abstract qualities such as wisdom and hope (Isa. 29:14; Lam. 3:18); and an item or animal being lost (Dt. 22:3; Eccl.

3:6). Uses in Numbers - Num. 16:33; Num. 17:12; Num. 21:29; Num. 21:30; Num. 24:19; Num. 33:52.

The **Septuagint** translates it with **apollumi** (from **apo** = away from or wholly + **olethros** = state of utter ruin <> **ollumi** = to destroy <> root of **apollyon** [Re 9:11] = destroyer) means to destroy utterly but not to cause one to cease to exist. **Apollumi** as it relates to men, is not the loss of being per se, but is more the loss of well-being. It means to ruin so that the person (or thing) ruined can no longer serve the use for which he (it) was designed. To render useless. The gospel promises everlasting life for the one who believes. The failure to possess this life will result in utter ruin and eternal uselessness (but not a cessation of existence).

#### **Numbers 16:34 All Israel who were around them fled at their outcry, for they said, "The earth may swallow us up!"**

BGT Numbers 16:34 κα π ς Ισραηλ ο κ κλ α τ ν φυγον π τ ς φων ς α τ ν τι λ γοντες μ ποτε καταπ μ ς  
Y

NET Numbers 16:34 All the Israelites who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "What if the earth swallows us too?"

NLT Numbers 16:34 All the people around them fled when they heard their screams. "The earth will swallow us, too!" they cried.

ESV Numbers 16:34 And all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up!"

NIV Numbers 16:34 At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us too!"

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

YLT Numbers 16:34 and all Israel who are round about them have fled at their voice, for they said, 'Lest the earth swallow us;'

LXE Numbers 16:34 And all Israel round about them fled from the sound of them, for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

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

- **fled:** Isa 33:3 Zec 14:5 Rev 6:15-17
- **The earth may swallow us up:** Nu 17:12,13
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**All Israel who were around them fled at their outcry, for they said, "The earth may swallow us up!"** - "The Israelites respond by fleeing in panic and terror. The word translated 'lest' is a telic negative which expresses great caution in the face of great fear. This scene is reminiscent of Israel's fleeing from Mount Sinai and from the presence of God. And the reason given for their panic on that occasion is 'lest we die' (Exod. 20:18–19)." (Currid)

**Bush** - At the cry or noise they made in perishing, for we can well believe that the most heartrending shrieks would be heard from the multitude when they found themselves being engulfed in the opening caverns of the earth.

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**Spurgeon** - Thus, by terrible things in righteousness, did the Lord uphold the power of his servants; how much more will he maintain the throne of his Son. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

With humble love address the Son,  
Lest he grow angry, and ye die;  
His wrath will burn to worlds unknown,  
If ye provoke his jealousy.

His storms shall drive you quick to hell;  
He is a God, and ye but dust;

Happy the souls that know him well,  
And make his grace their only trust.

**Numbers 16:35 Fire also came forth from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense.**

BGT Numbers 16:35 καὶ πρὸς ἔλθεν παρὰ κυρίου καὶ κατέφαγεν τοὺς πεντήκοντα καὶ διακοσους ἄνδρας τοὺς προσφροντάς τὴν θυμᾶμα

NET Numbers 16:35 Then a fire went out from the LORD and devoured the 250 men who offered incense.

NLT Numbers 16:35 Then fire blazed forth from the LORD and burned up the 250 men who were offering incense.

ESV Numbers 16:35 And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men offering the incense.

NIV Numbers 16:35 And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense.

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

YLT Numbers 16:35 and fire hath come out from Jehovah, and consumeth the two hundred and fifty men bringing near the perfume.

LXE Numbers 16:35 And fire went forth from the Lord, and devoured the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

ASV Numbers 16:35 And fire came forth from Jehovah, and devoured the two hundred and fifty men that offered the incense.

- And there: Nu 11:1 26:10 Lev 10:2 Ps 106:18
- two hundred: Nu 16:2,17
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Rebellious Leaders Holding Firepans of Incense Consumed by Fire!

## CONSUMED BY FIRE

**Fire also came forth from the LORD-** From the glory of the LORD in the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle! They were consumed in a manner similar to Nadab and Abihu who offered strange fire (Lev 10:1-2+)

**And consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense-** Consumed is "ate up" or devoured. The psalmist records "And a fire blazed up in their company; The flame consumed the wicked. " (Ps 106:18) **Spurgeon** comments on this psalm writing "The Levites who were with Korah perished by fire, which was a most fitting death for those who intruded into the priesthood, and so offered strange fire. God has more than one arrow in his quiver, the fire can consume those whom the earthquake spares. These terrible things in righteousness are mentioned here to show the obstinacy of the people in continuing to rebel against the Lord. Terrors were as much lost upon them as mercies had been; they could neither be drawn nor driven."

**Bishop Hall** has an interesting note - "There were two sorts of traitors; the earth swallowed up one, the fire the other. All the elements agree to serve the vengeance of their Maker. Nadab and Abihu brought fit persons, but unfit fire to God; these Levites bring the right fire, but unwarranted persons before him; fire from God consumes both. It is a dangerous thing to usurp sacred functions. The ministry will not grace the man; the man may disgrace the ministry."

**Currid** applies this section - Submission to the authority of others is a difficult thing to put into practice, and Calvin argues that it goes strongly against human nature. Are you jealous of others who have positions of authority in the church? Do you have contempt for leaders in your church whom God has placed over you? We must pray that God would make us obedient to the task to which he has called us, whether it be small or great. For the truth is that God assigns different duties to different persons in the church; Paul tells us, 'And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ' (Eph. 4:11-12). Not all of us have been called to those positions of service, but we have

all been called to a particular service, and we must be diligent in our duty to it. (Ibid)

## Numbers 16:36 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

**NET NOTE - technical note** - Beginning with Numbers 16:36, the verse numbers through 17:13 in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (BHS), with 16:36 ET = 17:1 HT, 16:37 ET = 17:2 HT, 17:1 ET = 17:16 HT, etc., through 17:13 ET = 17:28 HT. With 18:1 the verse numbers in the ET and HT are again the same. But in the English chap. 17 there are two parts: Aaron's rod budding (1–9), and the rod preserved as a memorial (10–13). Both sections begin with the same formula.

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### John Bennett - Day by Day - Numbers 16:36–50 BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING

Two types of censer feature in this passage—the censers of false priesthood and the censer of the true priest.

The censer was used in tabernacle service to cause the incense to ascend before God. Incense speaks of the glories of Christ that delight the heart of God, Exod. 30:34–38.

Censers in the hands of unbelieving rebels can only bring judgement. In our previous reading we noted that Korah and his company had been told to bring their censers before the Lord, vv. 16–17. It would seem that as they were attempting to offer incense they were consumed by fire from God. The brass censers, however, were preserved and these were beaten into plates to form a covering for the altar of incense, vv. 36–38. They guarded the incense altar from false priesthood.

In our dispensation all believers have the great privilege of drawing near to God as priests. We offer incense as we pray and worship. But worship can only be acceptable to God if it comes from those who are from the priestly family. In a sense the altar of incense is still guarded.

On the following day, the people murmured, blaming Moses and Aaron for the deaths of the rebels, v. 41. When God then judged the people, Moses recognized that the plague could only be stayed by the action of the censer. In the hands of a true priest, the censer is the means of salvation. Aaron stood between the dead and the living, v. 48. His action halted death.

This no doubt symbolizes the priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus, but there is a practical lesson for us too. Often today there can be a plague among the people. There was a plague of worldly wisdom at Corinth, 1 Cor. 1:20; there was a plague of legalism in Galatia, Gal. 5:1; there was a plague of Gnostic philosophy at Colosse, Col. 2:8. In each case Paul acts as a priestly man. He confronts the plague by wielding the censer. A ministry of the glories of Christ will always result in the plague being stayed.

May we wield the censer today, whether in the sanctuary in prayer and worship, or in the congregation as we stand between the dead and the living.

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## Numbers 16:37 "Say to Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, that he shall take up the censers out of the midst of the blaze, for they are holy; and you scatter the burning coals abroad.

BGT Numbers 17:2 καὶ πρὸς Ἐλεάζαρ τὸν υἱὸν Ἀαρὼν τὸν ἐραυνέσθε τὰ πυρεὰ τὰ χαλκὸν σου τὰ κατακεκαυμένων καὶ τὰ πρὸ τῶν ἁλίων τοῦ οὐνοῦ κετιγᾶσαν

NET Numbers 16:37 "Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to pick up the censers out of the flame, for they are holy, and then scatter the coals of fire at a distance.

NLT Numbers 16:37 "Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to pull all the incense burners from the fire, for they are holy. Also tell him to scatter the burning coals.

ESV Numbers 16:37 "Tell Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest to take up the censers out of the blaze. Then scatter the fire far and wide, for they have become holy.

NIV Numbers 16:37 "Tell Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, to take the censers out of the smoldering remains and scatter the coals some distance away, for the censers are holy--



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

YLT Numbers 16:37 'Say unto Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, and he lifteth up the censers from the midst of the burning, and the fire scatter thou yonder, for they have been hallowed,

LXE Numbers 16:37 and to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, Take up the brazen censers out of the midst of the men that have been burnt, and scatter the strange fire yonder, for they have sanctified the censers

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

- **the censers:** Nu 16:7,18
- **holy:** Lev 27:28
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CENSERS ARE MADE HOLY BY BEING IN PRESENCE OF YAHWEH

**Say to Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, that he shall take up the censers out of the midst of the blaze, for they are holy**  
The censers were consecrated to the service of God although they here had been improperly employed.

**and you scatter the burning coals abroad** - "The Hebrew text just has "fire," but it would be hard to conceive of this action apart from the idea of coals of fire." (NET)

**Currid** - Why are the **coals** not returned to the altar from which they had come? Perhaps they had not been taken from there. Remember, the leaders had put coal / fire in their censers not at the command of Moses (16:18). And, therefore, they may have been offering 'strange fire', as Nadab and Abihu had done in Leviticus 10:1–2.

**Ronald Allen** - "Can you imagine the scene? True priests are picking among the bodies, charred flesh, stench, smoke, smoldering embers, and twisted parts. They are to make a count. There were 250 censers; not one is to be lost. Each one is recorded, each one cleansed, each one holy."

**Bush** - Whatever fire, or cinders, still remained in the smoking censers was to be hurled away at once, and to the farthest possible distance, probably to the spot where all the refuse of the camp was cast, in order to indicate that the service performed by them was rejected with the utmost loathing and detestation as profane. Gr. "As for the strange fire, scatter it there;" in which rendering we have no clue to lead us to the precise import of "there."

**THOUGHT** - If Christians today encounter ungodly, divisive leadership they should do what the 250 followers of Korah did not do. The right thing to do is to, if possible, remove yourself from such leaders without becoming rebellious and divisive. If it isn't possible, leave it up to God to deal with it (as David allowed God to deal with Saul) instead of taking matters into his own hands. (Guzik)

**Numbers 16:38** "As for the censers of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives, let them be made into hammered sheets for a plating of the altar, since they did present them before the LORD and they are holy; and they shall be for a sign to the sons of Israel."

BGT Numbers 17:3 τ πῦρε α τ ν μαρτωλ ν το των ν τα ς ψυχας α τ ν κα πο ησον α τ λεπ δας λατ ς περ θεμα τ θυσιαστηρ τι προσην χθησαν ναντι κυρ ου κα γι σθησαν κα γ νοντο ε ς σημει ον το ς υ ο ς Ισραηλ

NET Numbers 16:38 As for the censers of these men who sinned at the cost of their lives, they must be made into hammered sheets for covering the altar, because they presented them before the LORD and sanctified them. They will become a sign to the Israelites."

NLT Numbers 16:38 Take the incense burners of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives, and hammer the metal into a thin sheet to overlay the altar. Since these burners were used in the LORD's presence, they have become holy. Let them serve as a warning to the people of Israel."

ESV Numbers 16:38 As for the censers of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives, let them be

made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, for they offered them before the LORD, and they became holy. Thus they shall be a sign to the people of Israel."

NIV Numbers 16:38 the censers of the men who sinned at the cost of their lives. Hammer the censers into sheets to overlay the altar, for they were presented before the LORD and have become holy. Let them be a sign to the Israelites."

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

YLT Numbers 16:38 even the censers of these sinners against their own souls; and they have made them spread-out plates, a covering for the altar, for they have brought them near before Jehovah, and they are hallowed; and they are become a sign to the sons of Israel.'

LXE Numbers 16:38 of these sinners against their own souls, and do thou make them beaten plates a covering to the altar, because they were brought before the Lord and hallowed; and they became a sign to the children of Israel.

- **men who have sinned** : 1Ki 2:23 Pr 1:18 8:36 20:2 Hab 2:10
- **a sign**: Nu 16:40 17:10 26:10 Eze 14:8 1Co 10:11 2Pe 2:6
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Altar of Burnt Offering - Brazen Altar

## CENSER SIGN FOR THE SONS OF ISRAEL

**As for the censers of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives-** A vivid example of Ro 6:23 that "the wages of sin is death."

**Let them be made into hammered sheets for a plating of the altar-** They were to be beaten out and cover the brazen altar, the main altar when one entered the courtyard of the tabernacle complex where the animals were sacrificed and offered up to Yahweh. This would have been a place that even lay Israelites could enter and thus would be able to see the plated altar.

**Currid** - Bronze sheeting had already been placed on this altar (see Exod. 27:2; 38:2), and so this will be a second layer.

**Bush** - "They were to be laid on over the precious covering of brass which enveloped the brazen altar, or the altar of sacrifice, as described, Ex. 27:12+."

**Since they did present them before the LORD and they are holy** - NLT conveys the idea "Since these burners were used in the LORD's presence, they have become holy."

**and they shall be for a sign to the sons of Israel-** A **sign**, a reminder every time an Israelite brought an animal for sacrifice they would see the hammered censers and be reminded of the 250 men who died! The fear of the LORD is a mixture of reverential awe, but it also needs a little holy dread, which is what the sight of these beaten censers would likely stimulate.

**Brian Bell** - The censers made into brass plates for a covering for the brazen altar, would have been a great visual reminder to all worshipers coming to the altar that...the sin of rebellion is severely judged by God.

**Bush - a sign.** That is, a memorial to put Israel in mind of the transgression in which the fact originated, and to serve as a perpetual warning to them against repeating the offence. "Not only the Israelites in general, but also the Levites in particular, save Aaron's sons only, are counted strangers in respect of the priest's office; and this covering of the altar, with those censers of polished splendid brass, was as a looking-glass for all to behold, that none might, afterwards, like Korah, presume to the priesthood."—Ness. Thus Aaron's rod was kept for a **sign**, Nu 17:10, and God threatens, by destroying the wicked man, to make him "**a sign** and a proverb," Ezek. 14:8.

**THOUGHT** - The mention of this OT **sign** reminds us of Paul's exhortation in the NT to believers -- "Now these things happened to them **as an example**, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (1 Cor. 10:11)

**Sign** (Lxx = [semeion](#))(0226)('oth) means a signal, a mark a miracle and is used to describe amazing events such as God bringing Israel out of Egypt (Ex 4:8, 9, Nu 14:22, 16:38) or a sign serving to authenticate the message as from God (1Sa 2:34, 10:7, 9) in contrast to the signs from false prophets (Dt 13:1, 2).

**Numbers 16:39 So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers which the men who were burned had offered, and they hammered them out as a plating for the altar,**

BGT Numbers 17:4 κα λαβεν Ελεαζαρ υ ς Ααρων το ερ ως τ πυρε α τ χαλκ σα προσ νεγκαν ο κατακεκαυμ νοι κα προσ θηκαν α τ περ θεμα τ θυσιαστηρ

NET Numbers 16:39 So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers presented by those who had been burned up, and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar.

NLT Numbers 16:39 So Eleazar the priest collected the 250 bronze incense burners that had been used by the men who died in the fire, and he hammered them into a thin sheet to overlay the altar.

ESV Numbers 16:39 So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned had offered, and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar,

NIV Numbers 16:39 So Eleazar the priest collected the bronze censers brought by those who had been burned up, and he had them hammered out to overlay the altar,

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

YLT Numbers 16:39 And Eleazar the priest taketh the brazen censers which they who are burnt had brought near, and they spread them out, a covering for the altar --

LXE Numbers 16:39 And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest took the brazen censers, which the men who had been burnt brought near, and they put them as a covering on the altar:

ASV Numbers 16:39 And Eleazar the priest took the brazen censers, which they that were burnt had offered; and they beat them out for a covering of the altar,

#### ■ Numbers 16 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers which the men who were burned had offered**-This is an ironic picture. These men were in a sens "burnt offerings" but of course they were not acceptable because they were overtly rebellious.

**And they hammered them out as a plating for the altar** - Just as Yahweh instructed.

**Numbers 16:40 as a reminder to the sons of Israel that no layman who is not of the descendants of Aaron should come near to burn incense before the LORD; so that he will not become like Korah and his company--just as the LORD had spoken to him through Moses.**

BGT Numbers 17:5 μνημ συνον το ς υ ο ς Ισραηλ πως ν μ προσ λθ μηθε ς λογεν ς ς ο κ σιν κ το σπ ρματο ς Ααρων πιθε ναι θυμ αμα ναντι κυρ ου κα ο κ σται σπερ Κορε κα πισ στασι ς α το καθ λ λησεν κ ριος ν χειρ Μωυσ

NET Numbers 16:40 It was a memorial for the Israelites, that no outsider who is not a descendant of Aaron should approach to burn incense before the LORD, that he might not become like Korah and his company-- just as the LORD had spoken by the authority of Moses.

NLT Numbers 16:40 This would warn the Israelites that no unauthorized person-- no one who was not a descendant of Aaron-- should ever enter the LORD's presence to burn incense. If anyone did, the same thing would happen to him as happened to Korah and his followers. So the LORD's instructions to Moses were

carried out.

ESV Numbers 16:40 to be a reminder to the people of Israel, so that no outsider, who is not of the descendants of Aaron, should draw near to burn incense before the LORD, lest he become like Korah and his company-- as the LORD said to him through Moses.

NIV Numbers 16:40 as the LORD directed him through Moses. This was to remind the Israelites that no one except a descendant of Aaron should come to burn incense before the LORD, or he would become like Korah and his followers.

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

YLT Numbers 16:40 a memorial to the sons of Israel, so that a stranger who is not of the seed of Aaron doth not draw near to make a perfume before Jehovah, and is not as Korah, and as his company, -- as Jehovah hath spoken by the hand of Moses to him.

LXE Numbers 16:40 a memorial to the children of Israel that no stranger might draw nigh, who is not of the seed of Aaron, to offer incense before the Lord; so he shall not be as Core and as they that conspired with him, as the Lord spoke to him by the hand of Moses.

- that no: Nu 3:10,38 18:4-7 Lev 22:10 2Ch 26:18-20 Jude 1:11
- come near: 1Ki 13:1-3 2Ch 26:16-21
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PURPOSE OF THE CENSER SIGN

**as a reminder to the sons of Israel that no layman who is not of the descendants of Aaron should come near to burn incense before the LORD** - NLT = "This would warn the Israelites that no unauthorized man--no one who was not a descendant of Aaron--should ever enter the Lord's presence to burn incense." Levites were forbidden. The priesthood came only through the Levite Aaron.

**so that he will not become like Korah and his company** - Layman burning incense would be burned or swallowed by the earth. In fact King Uzziah did break this rule and was made a leper for the rest of his life (read 2Ch 26:16-21). this is the duty of the Levitical priesthood alone.

**just as the LORD had spoken to him through Moses** - NLT = "Thus, the Lord's instructions to Moses were carried out."

**Currid** - God graciously provides his people with signs and symbols of spiritual truths and realities. Humans live by sight, and such things are important for the way in which God teaches his people. For example, the rainbow serves as a physical 'sign' of the reality of the covenant relationship between God and his people (Gen. 9:12–13). Circumcision is a sign of a spiritual reality: that reality is the covenant relationship between God and his people (Gen. 17:9–11). The Sabbath also serves as a 'sign' of the covenant between God and his people; it symbolizes that God has set apart a people unto himself (Exod. 20:8–11). Baptism and the Lord's Supper are particularly important signs for the Christian. The Westminster Confession puts it this way: Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his word.

**Numbers 16:41 But on the next day all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You are the ones who have caused the death of the LORD'S people."**

BGT Numbers 17:6 καὶ ἡ γῆ συσφύσθη ὑπὸ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ τὸ πᾶν τὸν πῦρ Μωϋσέως καὶ Ααρὼν λήγοντες μετὰ πικτῆ γκατὲ τὴν λαὸν κυρίου

NET Numbers 16:41 But on the next day the whole community of Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the LORD's people!"

NLT Numbers 16:41 But the very next morning the whole community of Israel began muttering again against

Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the LORD's people!"

ESV Numbers 16:41 But on the next day all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD."

NIV Numbers 16:41 The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. "You have killed the LORD's people," they said.

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

YLT Numbers 16:41 And all the company of the sons of Israel murmur, on the morrow, against Moses and against Aaron, saying, 'Ye -- ye have put to death the people of Jehovah.'

LXE Numbers 16:41 And the children of Israel murmured the next day against Moses and Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.

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

- all the: Nu 16:1-7 14:2 Ps 106:13,23,25-48 Isa 26:11
- Ye have: Nu 16:3 2Sa 16:7,8 1Ki 18:17 Jer 37:13,14 38:4 43:3 Am 7:10 Mt 5:11 Ac 5:28 21:28 2Co 6:8
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PEOPLE SEE GOD'S POWER BUT STILL GRUMBLE!

Beloved, this has to be one of the most amazing passages in the Bible! Almost 15,000 fellow Jews have just died in what were clearly divinely ordained, supernatural circumstances, and in spite of this overwhelming proof, they come again against Moses and Aaron. Amazing arrogance!

I am reminded of the words of Stephen shortly before he was stoned to death...

"You men who are **stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears** are **always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.**" (Acts 7:51+)

**But on the next day all the congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You are the ones who have caused the death of the LORD'S people."** - If this were not in the Bible, it would be difficult to believe they would dare make such an accusation after what they had just witnessed! How hard must their hearts have been. How deceived they were by their own sin.

Accusation is yet another sign of unbelief.

-- Larry Richards

Did you catch their complaint? **"You are the ones who have caused the death of the LORD'S people."** They were not the **LORD'S people**. They had spurned Him and rejected His chosen leader (what a picture of the Jews in the NT - John 19:15-16).

The path to open rebellion against God begins with dissatisfaction and skepticism, then moves to grumbling about both God and present circumstances.

-- Life Application Study Bible

**THOUGHT** - Are you dissatisfied or discontent with the lot God has given you? Are you skeptical of His existence or of the fact that He means what He says? Is so you are about to step into the "spiritual quicksands" called "grumbling" and it will potentially take you down, down, down! Confess and repent and walk in the light of the Gospel of Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit.

**Spurgeon** - Wonderful audacity! Yesterday they fled in terror while they saw the earth open and swallow up the rebels, and now they, themselves, break out into revolt, and charge Moses with murdering those whom the Lord, himself, so justly executed. Is there any bound to human sin? Lions and tigers may be tamed, but man breaks off from all restraint, and follows his own devices, despite every warning and instruction.

**NET NOTE** - The whole congregation here is trying to project its guilt on Moses and Aaron. It was they and their rebellion that brought about the deaths, not Moses and Aaron. The LORD had punished the sinners. The fact that the leaders had organized a rebellion against the LORD was forgotten by these people. **The point here is that the Israelites had learned nothing of spiritual**

## value from the event.

**Cole** - You would think that after seeing God's power in the plagues in Egypt, parting the Red Sea, and the fire and thunder on Mount Sinai, the Israelites would have respected God's power, but they didn't. This shows that even seeing powerful miracles is not enough evidence to convert sinners. The hearts of skeptics are so hardened that they can see miracles and rather than fall on their faces in the fear of God, they accuse God and His servants of cruelty....This story shows that the God we serve is not to be trifled with! If you say, "Well, this is the Old Testament; we're under grace in the New Testament," my reply is, "Remember Ananias and Sapphira!" They died instantly because of their hypocrisy with their financial gift. While thankfully that was a unique occurrence, the result of it was (Acts 5:11), "And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things." These stories are in the Bible so that great fear would come over us as we serve the Lord!

**Brian Bell** - To rebel against Moses meant rejecting the Word of God, for he was God's prophet; To rebel against Aaron meant rejecting the Work of God on the altar, salvation by blood. Only the grace of God can change the human heart; no amount of law or judgment will ever make the

**Bush** - So fearful a judgment as they had just been called to witness would have been sufficient, one would suppose, to prevent the outbreak of any further murmurings or discontent. Yet how different the matter of fact! As the vessel, in its course through the deep, leaves a track of foam behind it which is a little while distinct and well defined, but soon mingles with the mass of waters and is seen no more, so was it with the judgment of heaven on this occasion, and the impression it created. It endured for the night, but discontent and rebellion came in the morning. With a unanimity that is amazing, "all the congregation"—not merely the rulers or a few intractable spirits—but the great mass of the people, gave way to groundless complaints. With tumultuous outcries and accusations, they press upon Moses and Aaron, charging them with the destruction of a multitude of their brethren, the peculiar people of the Lord; as if these atrocious transgressors had been good and holy people, and Moses and Aaron had been their persecutors. Alas, how will pride, passion, and self-will prevail to blind the understanding of men, so that they will call evil good, and good evil, and put darkness for light, and light for darkness. Especially does this hold among large bodies of men in times of public tumult. By saying, however, that they had killed them, their meaning doubtless was that they had been the means, the procuring cause, of their losing their lives, and not that they had directly slain them. Accordingly the Chald. renders, "ye have caused the death."

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## Rumblings

Some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. —1 Corinthians 10:10

Today's Scripture: Numbers 16:41-50

How would you feel if today's newspaper reported that the military had executed 15,000 people? Suppose the victims were not criminals, foreign agitators, or political radicals, but ordinary citizens who were protesting the way their country was being run.

Such a possibility seems unthinkable. Yet in Numbers 16 we read that God responded like that to ancient Israel. He took the lives of 15,000 of His chosen people because they were complaining about the way He was caring for them.

Not long after their miracle-filled deliverance from Egypt, they started dragging their feet. They didn't like the trouble they were encountering on the way to the Promised Land. They murmured about their leaders, about what God was feeding them, and about the risk involved in moving into the land of Canaan. The people longed for "the good old days," and their unbelief provoked the righteous indignation of God.

Their kind haven't died out entirely. They weren't the last to complain rather than move ahead in faith. How many of us grumble when God doesn't give us what we want? A wise person wouldn't be caught dead complaining against God. By: Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The ones who of their lot complain  
Displease the Lord and cause Him pain;  
But thankful hearts are His delight,  
And they find favor in His sight.  
—Bosch

**Faith flourishes in the garden of gratitude.**

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**Numbers 16:42** It came about, however, when the congregation had assembled against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tent of meeting, and **behold**, the cloud covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared.

BGT Numbers 17:7 καὶ γένοιτο τῷ πισυστῇ φεσθαι τὴν συναγωγὴν πρὸς Μωυσὲν καὶ Ἀαρὼν καὶ ῥήσάν πρὸς τὴν σκηνὴν τὸ μαρτυρίου καὶ τότε κλυψέντες ἅπαντες ἐφθέγγοντο τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου

NET Numbers 16:42 When the community assembled against Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting— and the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

NLT Numbers 16:42 As the community gathered to protest against Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the Tabernacle and saw that the cloud had covered it, and the glorious presence of the LORD appeared.

ESV Numbers 16:42 And when the congregation had assembled against Moses and against Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting. And behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

NIV Numbers 16:42 But when the assembly gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron and turned toward the Tent of Meeting, suddenly the cloud covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared.

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

YLT Numbers 16:42 And it cometh to pass, in the company being assembled against Moses and against Aaron, that they turn towards the tent of meeting, and lo, the cloud hath covered it, and the honour of Jehovah is seen;

LXE Numbers 16:42 And it came to pass when the congregation combined against Moses and Aaron, that they ran impetuously to the tabernacle of witness; and the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared.

ASV Numbers 16:42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was assembled against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tent of meeting: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of Jehovah appeared.

- when the: Nu 16:19
- the glory: Nu 16:19 14:10 20:6 Ex 16:7,10 24:16 40:34,35 Lev 9:23
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## YAHWEH AGAIN STEPS INTO THE SCENE

**It came about, however, when the congregation had assembled against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tent of meeting - They** is probably Moses and Aaron for they had seen the LORD be their Protector before!

**and behold, the cloud covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared-** Once again YAHWEH appears to rescue His persecuted saints whose lives were likely in danger in light of the accusations from the congregation.

**Behold** (02009)(**hinneh**) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) **Hinneh** generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so **hinneh** is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**Bush** - The intimation is that they, i. e., Moses and Aaron more especially, looked imploringly in that direction, that they invoked help from the Lord in his dwelling-place, and the consequence was an immediate manifestation in their favor. That awful phenomenon termed "the glory of the Lord," shone forth, as on former occasions, with an aspect of threatening which they well understood. It was now, however, unaccompanied by any voice, but a silent judgment proceeded from it, as we learn from the effect that followed, which

was the cutting off of more than 14,000 of the host by a deadly plague or stroke from the divine hand.

**Believer's Study Bible** - Note that the cloud signified the presence of the Lord not only for guidance, but also for judgment (cf. Nu 12:5, 10; 14:10; 16:19).

#### **Numbers 16:43 Then Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting,**

BGT Numbers 17:8 κα ε σ λθεν Μωυς ς κα Ααρων κατ πρ σωπον τ ς σκην ς το μαρτυρ ου

NET Numbers 16:43 Then Moses and Aaron stood before the tent of meeting.

NLT Numbers 16:43 Moses and Aaron came and stood in front of the Tabernacle,

ESV Numbers 16:43 And Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting,

NIV Numbers 16:43 Then Moses and Aaron went to the front of the Tent of Meeting,

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

YLT Numbers 16:43 and Moses cometh -- Aaron also -- unto the front of the tent of meeting.

LXE Numbers 16:43 And Moses and Aaron went in, in front of the tabernacle of witness.

ASV Numbers 16:43 And Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting.

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Then Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting-** They came to where God's presence was manifest.

#### **Numbers 16:44 and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

#### **Numbers 16:45 "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly." Then they fell on their faces.**

BGT Numbers 17:10 κχωρ σατε κ μ σου τ ς συναγωγ ς τα της κα ξαναλ σω α το ς ε ς παξ κα πεσον π πρ σωπον α τ ν

NET Numbers 16:45 "Get away from this community, so that I can consume them in an instant!" But they threw themselves down with their faces to the ground.

NLT Numbers 16:45 "Get away from all these people so that I can instantly destroy them!" But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground.

ESV Numbers 16:45 "Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces.

NIV Numbers 16:45 "Get away from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once." And they fell facedown.

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

YLT Numbers 16:45 'Get you up from the midst of this company, and I consume them in a moment;' and they fall on their faces,

LXE Numbers 16:45 Depart out of the midst of this congregation, and I will consume them at once: and they fell upon their faces.

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

- **Get:** Nu 16:21,24,26
- **they fell:** Nu 16:22 20:6 1Ch 21:16 Mt 26:39
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES AND AARON ON THEIR FACES AGAIN

**Fell on face** is a key phrase in Numbers 16 - Nu 16:2, Nu 16:22<sup>+</sup>, Nu 16:45<sup>+</sup>. Only 2 more times in entire book of Numbers (Nu 14:5+, Nu 20:6+).

**Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly."** - This is the fourth time Yahweh is about to destroy His Chosen People!

**Then they fell on their faces** - Surely they fell in plaintive pleading for the people not to perish.

**Bush** - Doubtless to intercede afresh for these high-handed offenders. No provocations avail to abate their charity and compassion in behalf of the people, however undeserving. A true benevolence seems unable to discover that point in the divine displeasure beyond which it is in vain to sue for mercy. It will still lift up its prayer in the very article of inflicted vengeance. Comp. 1 Chron. 21:16.

**Spurgeon** - This was the second time in which the Lord had spoken thus to his servants, and a second time they fall upon their faces in reverent but earnest intercession. They pleaded for those very people who were up in arms against them; such is the true love of God's ministers. Never will they give sinners up while they have breath in their bodies.

**Numbers 16:46 Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put in it fire from the altar, and lay incense on it; then bring it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone forth from the LORD, the plague has begun!"**

BGT Numbers 17:11 κα ε πεν Μωυς ς πρ ς Ααρων λαβ τ πυρε ον κα π θες π ατ π ρ π το θυσιαστηρ ου κα π βαλε π ατ θυμ αμα κα π νεγκε τ τχος ες τν παρεμβολ ν κα ξ λασσαι περ ατ ν ξ λθεν γ ρ ργ π προσ που κυρ ου ρκται θρα ει ν τ ν λα ν

NET Numbers 16:46 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Take the censer, put burning coals from the altar in it, place incense on it, and go quickly into the assembly and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD-- the plague has begun!"

NLT Numbers 16:46 And Moses said to Aaron, "Quick, take an incense burner and place burning coals on it from the altar. Lay incense on it, and carry it out among the people to purify them and make them right with the LORD. The LORD's anger is blazing against them-- the plague has already begun."

ESV Numbers 16:46 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun."

NIV Numbers 16:46 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put incense in it, along with fire from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to make atonement for them. Wrath has come out from the LORD; the plague has started."

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

YLT Numbers 16:46 and Moses saith unto Aaron, 'Take the censer, and put on it fire from off the altar, and place perfume, and go, hasten unto the company, and make atonement for them, for the wrath hath gone out from the presence of Jehovah -- the plague hath begun.'

LXE Numbers 16:46 And Moses said to Aaron, Take a censer, and put on it fire from the altar, and put incense on it, and carry it away quickly into the camp, and make atonement for them; for wrath is gone forth from the

presence of the Lord, it has begun to destroy the people.

- from off: Lev 9:24 10:1 16:12,13 Isa 6:6,7 Ro 5:9,10 Heb 7:25-27 9:25,26 Rev 8:3-5
- and put: Ps 141:2 Mal 1:11
- an atonement: Ex 30:7-10 Lev 16:11-16 1Jn 2:1,2
- there is wrath: Nu 1:53 8:19 11:33 18:5 Lev 10:6 1Ch 27:24 Ps 106:29
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Aaron Takes Censer with Incense

**Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put in it fire from the altar, and lay incense on it; then bring it quickly to the congregation** - NLT = "Quick, take an incense burner and place burning coals on it from the altar. Lay incense on it and carry it quickly among the people to make atonement for them."

**Spurgeon** - His spiritual soul could see what others could not, for he perceived that danger was near. Those who have had communion with God possess a sensitiveness unknown to others. Moses bade Aaron hasten, and, indeed when men are dying, we must make no delay in our efforts to save them. Lord, help us to fly on the wings of love.

**Guzik** - God had promised judgment in Numbers 16:45 (that I may consume them in a moment). Therefore, Moses told Aaron, as the high priest over God's people, to immediately offer incense to make atonement for the congregation. (Aaron's) sense of urgency is characteristic of true intercession. A censer filled with burning incense was used to stop the plague. Incense is a picture of prayer in the Bible (as in Revelation 8:3-4), because the sweet-smelling smoke of incense ascends to heaven as our prayers would. This was a dramatic picture of Aaron, as high priest, interceding for God's people.

**Bell** - If Moses had a bitter spirit, he would have allowed the plague to destroy the people. Instead he commands his brother Aaron to go into the midst of the plague w/his censer to stop it. How little the people realized Moses's love & sacrifice for them. (Sounds a lot like what people fail to realize about Jesus!)

**Bush** - Incense was regularly to be offered nowhere but at the golden altar within the sanctuary; but on the present extraordinary emergency, Aaron is sent with it into the camp in order to stay the plague, by making an atonement for the people; the natural effect of which would be to afford them a convincing proof of the sanctity and authority which should henceforth pertain to his ministry. "God might have stayed the plague without the intervention of Aaron; but in this time of discontent, it pleased him to afford another convincing testimony that the high-priest was acting in his sacred office by his appointment and under his direction. They must have been hardened indeed who could doubt the authority under which the high-priest acted, after such a striking evidence of the Lord's respect to his official intervention."—Kitto.

**and make atonement for them** That is, by acting as a mediator or interceder on behalf of the people. There is nothing of an expiatory kind implied in the use of the term in this connection. (Bush)

**for wrath has gone forth from the LORD, the plague has begun!"**

**Bush** - The Heb. negeph from nâgaph to strike, to smite, is a term of general import denoting any severe stroke or infliction from the divine hand. Our English word plague is derived from the Latin plaga, and that from the Gr. πληγή, plēgē, in both which languages it is used to signify a stroke, a blow, a stripe, a wound. By an extension of the import of the word it is made to denote a pestilence or some other fatal disease, which would naturally be regarded as an extraordinary scourge proceeding directly from the Lord.

**Numbers 16:47 Then Aaron took it as Moses had spoken, and ran into the midst of the assembly, for behold, the plague had begun among the people. So he put on the incense and made atonement for the people.**

BGT Numbers 17:12 καὶ λαβὼν Ἀαρὼν καθ' ἑρῆμην αὐτὸν Μωϋσῆς καὶ δρᾶμεν ἐς τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ δὴν ῥηκτο θρασὺς ντὶ λαὸν καὶ πῶλεν τὸ θυμὸν καὶ ξίλοιστο περὶ τὸ λαόν

NET Numbers 16:47 So Aaron did as Moses commanded and ran into the middle of the assembly, where the plague was just beginning among the people. So he placed incense on the coals and made atonement for the people.

NLT Numbers 16:47 Aaron did as Moses told him and ran out among the people. The plague had already begun to strike down the people, but Aaron burned the incense and purified the people.

ESV Numbers 16:47 So Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. And behold, the

plague had already begun among the people. And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people.

NIV Numbers 16:47 So Aaron did as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly. The plague had already started among the people, but Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them.

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

YLT Numbers 16:47 And Aaron taketh as Moses hath spoken, and runneth unto the midst of the assembly, and lo, the plague hath begun among the people; and he giveth the perfume, and maketh atonement for the people,

LXE Numbers 16:47 And Aaron took as Moses spoke to him, and ran among the congregation, for already the plague had begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

ASV Numbers 16:47 And Aaron took as Moses spake, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on the incense, and made atonement for the people.

- **and ran:** Mt 5:44 Ro 12:21
- **and behold:** Ps 106:29
- **and he put:** Nu 16:46 De 33:10,11 Isa 53:10-12
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AARON SENSES THE URGENCY

**Then Aaron took it as Moses had spoken, and ran into the midst of the assembly-** Aaron runs in order to save lives.

**for behold,** - An interjection inserted to call one's attention to what follows, in this case as if one need to get their attention.

**Behold** (02009)(**hinneh**) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) **Hinne** generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so **hinneh** is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy. **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**the plague had begun among the people-** Time was of the essence. One can picture Aaron running into the throng standing between the dead and the living. This was a dramatic scene. In fact the entire chapter 16 is filled with some of the most dramatic scenes in the Scripture.

**So he put on the incense and made atonement for the people-** The incense ascended to Heaven and God ceased the plague.

**Made atonement** (03722)(**kapar**) means to make atonement, to make reconciliation (to reconcile), to purge, to make propitiation (to propitiate), to pacify, to cancel. The Septuagint uses the verb **exilaskomai** (from **hilaskomai**) which BDAG says means "When one endeavors to attain the goodwill of another, the word can be rendered appease." **Exilaskomai** is the Greek verb used to describe the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement who was "presented alive before the LORD, to **make atonement** upon it." (Lev 16:10+). Note that the verb is from the root **hilaskomai** "means to cause to be favorably inclined toward or favorably disposed toward another (as in Lk 18:13+). **BDAG** says it means "to eliminate impediments that alienate the deity, expiate, wipe out, of Christ as high priest" (He 2:17+) **Hilaskomai** means to be merciful, make reconciliation for, be propitious, gracious, to be favorably inclined."

**Bush** - Aaron was as full of anxiety for the people as his brother. He instantly did as he was commanded. He ran into the midst of the congregation, fearless of their wrath, fearless of the contagion of the plague; he put the incense upon the sacred fire in the censer, and made an atonement with it for the people; and he stood between the living and the dead; and the plague was stayed. The spirit evinced both by Aaron and Moses, on this occasion, was pre-eminently worthy of such distinguished servants of heaven. Insulted

and opposed as they had been, taunted and falsely accused, they have no ill will or resentment, they seek no revenge for themselves, nor feel gratification at the punishment of their factious and rebellious people. On the contrary, they suffer long and are kind. They count not their own lives dear unto themselves if so be that they may save the lives of these offenders. This is the conduct of men who are taught and governed by the laws of heaven.

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### Spurgeon - The High Priest standing between the dead and the living Numbers 16:47, 48

Jesus, the propitiator, is to be looked upon as the ordained one—called of God as was Aaron. Settled in eternity as being the predestined propitiation for sin, he came into the world as an ordained priest of God; receiving his ordination not from man, neither by man; but like Melchisedec, the priest of the most high God, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, he is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Stand back, sons of Korah, all of you who call yourselves priests. I can scarce imagine that any man in this world who takes to himself the title of a priest, unless he takes it in the sense in which all God's people are priests,—I cannot imagine that a priest can enter heaven. I would not say a thing too stern or too severe; but I do most thoroughly believe that an assumption of the office of priest is so base an assumption of the priestly office of Christ, that I could as well conceive of a man being saved who called himself God, as conceive of a man being saved who called himself a priest; if he really means what he says, he has so trampled upon the priestly prerogative of Christ, that it seems to me he has touched the very crown jewels, and is guilty of a blasphemy, which, unless it be repented of, shall surely bring damnation on his head. Shake your garments, you ministers of Christ, from all priestly assumption; come out from among them; touch not the unclean thing. There are no priests now specially to minister among men. Jesus Christ and he only is the priest of his Church. He has made all of us priests and kings unto our God.

### Numbers 16:48 He took his stand between the dead and the living, so that the plague was checked.

BGT Numbers 17:13 καὶ ἵστη ἐν μέσσοις τῶν τεθνηκυῶτων καὶ τῶν ζώντων καὶ παύσεν θρᾶσις

NET Numbers 16:48 He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped.

NLT Numbers 16:48 He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague stopped.

ESV Numbers 16:48 And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped.

NIV Numbers 16:48 He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped.

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

YLT Numbers 16:48 and standeth between the dead and the living, and the plague is restrained;

LXE Numbers 16:48 And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague ceased.

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

CSB Numbers 16:48 He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was halted.

NKJ Numbers 16:48 And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.

NRS Numbers 16:48 He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stopped.

- Nu 16:18,35 25:8-11 2Sa 24:16,17,25 1Ch 21:26,27 1Th 1:10 1Ti 2:5,6 Heb 7:24,25 Jas 5:16 Joh 5:14
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

High Priest Standing Between the Living and the Dead

## AARON STANDS IN THE GAP

**He took his stand between the dead and the living, so that the plague was checked-** Aaron's quick actions averted a disaster with his burning incense standing in effect as a buffer or a mediator between those who had already died and those who were still alive. What a foreshadowing of Jesus Who took His stand on Calvary bearing our sin and paying the penalty of death that the "plague" of death would be checked in our lives forever and ever. Amen.

Nu 1:53+ describes a somewhat parallel effect of the entire tribe of Levi - "But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, **so that there will be no wrath on the congregation of the sons of Israel.** So the Levites shall keep charge of the



tabernacle of the testimony." In other words the tribe of Levi with Aaron as its head functioned as a "protective barrier" around the Tabernacle!

**Bell** - What does the service of the priesthood involve by reading vs.48? Aaron literally becomes their savior standing between the living & the dead. To stop the plague. [type of Christ] His 1 censer accomplished more than the 250 censers of the rebels!

**THOUGHT** - The plague stopped where Aaron prayed. Intercessors do the same thing today; they stand between the dead and the living, beseeching God's mercy, preserving and promoting life with their prayer.. To stand between the dead and the living speaks of how serious the matter of prayer is; it is no casual pursuit, no fatalistic exercise in self-improvement. Prayer moves the hand of God, and moves it to stop death and to give life!. When was the last time we prayed as if life and death depended upon it? (Guzik)

**Bush** - he stood between the dead and the living. Thus interposing between the infected and the uninfected portions of the camp, and exposing himself to the ravages of the plague in behalf of the people. "As one that would part a fray, he thrusts himself under the strokes of God, and puts it to the choice of the revenger whether he will smite him or forbear the rest; he stands boldly between the living and the dead, as one that will either die with them or have them live with him; the sight of fourteen thousand carcasses dismayed him not; he that before feared the threats of the people now fears not the strokes of God."—Bp. Hall. **How striking a type of the intervention of our Lord do we recognize in the conduct of Aaron on this occasion. Our great and compassionate High-Priest, moved by the contemplation of our danger, not only at the hazard of life, but in the sure prospect of death, hastened into our midst to make atonement for us.**

**Spurgeon** - "Aaron wisely puts himself in the pathway of the plague. It came on, cutting down all before it, and there stood Aaron the interposer with arms outstretched and censer swinging towards the heaven, interposing himself between the darts of death and the people. 'If there be darts that must fly,' he seemed to say, "let them pierce me; or let the incense shield both me and the people.' "...He stood as a champion, blocking the pathway of the destroyer. He came to the front of the danger, as though he would either die with the people, or else if he lived, they should live. Was it not bravely and kindly done of Aaron thus to stand in the gap for his enemies? What a noble type he was of the Lord Jesus, who interposed on our behalf!

There is nothing that can save the soul of man except Jesus Christ standing between that soul and the judgment of God.

-- David Guzik

**Cole** - Aaron was the high priest, standing between the Judge and death for the guilty sinners (Nu 16:48). Ironically, even though the people resented Aaron and his priestly role, his fulfilling his duty as the high priest saved their lives! As such, Aaron is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who made atonement for our sins even when we were His enemies (Ro 5:6-10+)! His example of loving us when we opposed Him should help us to love those who may treat us wrongly when we are serving Him (Eph. 5:2+).

"With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace  
Beheld our helpless grief;  
He saw, and oh, amazing love,  
He ran to our relief."

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**Spurgeon** - Nu 16:48 **"He stood between the dead and the living."**

The authority of Moses and Aaron had been disputed by an ambitious man belonging to an elder branch of the family of Levi, who had craftily joined with certain factious spirits of the tribe of Reuben the firstborn. By an amazing judgment from heaven, God had proven that rebellion against Moses was a mortal sin. He had bid the earth open its mouth and swallow all the traitors, and both Levites and Reubenites had disappeared, covered in a living grave. **One would have imagined that from this time the murmurings of the children of Israel would have ceased.** Yet the day after that solemn transaction the whole of the people of Israel with unholy clamors surrounded Moses and Aaron, charging them with having put to death the people of the Lord. There is the infuriated mass of people in tumult against two men; the two might have sufficient cause for trembling. But just as they are rushing up like the waves of the sea, the cloudy pillar which hung above the tabernacle descends and envelopes in its fold, as with a protecting baptism, the whole of the sacred place. The people stand back a little; Moses and Aaron fall on their faces in prayer. But the destroying angel begins to mow down the outer ranks of the vast tumultuous host. Moses calls for Aaron to snatch fire from the holy altar and run among the people, which he does. When the incense is accepted in heaven, death stops his work. **On this side are heaps on heaps of corpses, and there stand the crowd of people, living only because of Aaron's intercession. This picture is a great spiritual type of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for that erring multitude of people who "went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way" (Is 53:6).**

**Numbers 16:49 But those who died by the plague were 14,700, besides those who died on account of Korah.**

BGT Numbers 17:14 καὶ γινόντο οὗτοι τεθνηκότες ἐν τῇ θρασείᾳ τῶν σαφρῶν καὶ ὀκτακισίων χωρὶς τῶν τεθνηκόντων νεκρῶν Κορε

NET Numbers 16:49 Now 14,700 people died in the plague, in addition to those who died in the event with Korah.

NLT Numbers 16:49 But 14,700 people died in that plague, in addition to those who had died in the affair involving Korah.

ESV Numbers 16:49 Now those who died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the affair of Korah.

NIV Numbers 16:49 But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah.

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

YLT Numbers 16:49 and those who die by the plague are fourteen thousand and seven hundred, apart from those who die for the matter of Korah;

LXE Numbers 16:49 And they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides those that died on account of Core.

ASV Numbers 16:49 Now they that died by the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides them that died about the matter of Korah.

CSB Numbers 16:49 But those who died from the plague numbered 14,700, in addition to those who died because of the Korah incident.

- **fourteen thousand:** Nu 16:32-35 25:9 1Ch 21:14 Heb 2:1-3 10:28,29 12:25
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **GRUMBLING CAN BE A DEADLY SIN!**

**But those who died by the plague were 14,700, besides those who died on account of Korah-** Nearly 15,000 people died because of four men who wanted to promote themselves. Of course the 14,700 were not innocent of guilt, but went along with the rebellion. Be careful following the crowd!

**Spurgeon** - Who slew all these? Or rather, what slew them? Was it not **sin** which is a murderer from the beginning? Sin will slay us also unless we are sheltered behind our great High Priest.

**Adam Clarke** - "If Aaron the high priest, with his censer and incense, could disarm the wrath of an insulted, angry Deity, so that a guilty people, who deserved nothing but destruction, should be spared; how much more effectual may we expect the great atonement to be which was made by the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Aaron was only the type! The sacrifices of living animals pointed out the death of Christ on the cross; the incense, his intercession. Through his death salvation is purchased for the world; by his intercession the offending children of men are spared."

**Numbers 16:50 Then Aaron returned to Moses at the doorway of the tent of meeting, for the plague had been checked.**

BGT Numbers 17:15 καὶ πείσθηεν Ἀαρὼν πρὸς Μωυσὶν πείσθησαν τὸ σκηνώσας μαρτυροῦν καὶ κήρυσεν θρασὺς

NET Numbers 16:50 Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and the plague was stopped.

NLT Numbers 16:50 Then because the plague had stopped, Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

ESV Numbers 16:50 And Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting, when the plague was stopped.

NIV Numbers 16:50 Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, for the plague had stopped.

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

YLT Numbers 16:50 and Aaron turneth back unto Moses, unto the opening of the tent of meeting, and the plague hath been restrained.

LXE Numbers 16:50 And Aaron returned to Moses to the door of the tabernacle of witness, and the plague ceased.

ASV Numbers 16:50 And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tent of meeting: and the plague was stayed.

CSB Numbers 16:50 Aaron then returned to Moses at the entrance to the tent of meeting, since the plague had been halted.

- Nu 16:43 1Ch 21:26-30
- **Numbers 16 Resources** - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AARON'S ATONING WORK COMPLETED

**Then Aaron returned to Moses at the doorway of the tent of meeting, for the plague had been checked-** One cannot help but think of the resurrected Jesus returning (ascending - Acts 1:9-11+) to the Tabernacle in Heaven, His work of redemption having been fully accomplished (Jn 19:30+ - [tetelestai](#) = "It is finished!" "Paid in full!").

**Irving Jensen** - One wonders what was in the hearts of the people who were spared this last dreadful plague. They knew they were not spared because of faithful hearts or repentant ones. They should have been convinced, by the timing of the cessation of the sudden death plague with the atonement offering, that what saved them was the quick action of Moses and the faithful intercession by the high priest of God through an offering of the sanctuary. The very ones whom they called murderers had proved to be their "saviors." No better approbation by God of His leaders could have been manifested to the people. (EvBC-Nu)

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**Spurgeon** - By such a terrible event of judgment, and such a wonderful miracle of mercy connected with Aaron's priesthood, one would think that the question of his right to the sacred office would be settled for ever beyond all dispute, and yet it was not so. How set on mischief sinners are! Sin is ingrained in our very nature. Alas! alas! Let us, by faith, see our Lord Jesus standing between his living people and dead souls, waving his censer, and keeping off death from all his believing ones. He is our shield from the destroying plague of sin and all the powers of evil. His sacred person bars the way. Vengeance cannot smite those to whom the Lord's Anointed is a shield. Happy they who have Jesus to stand before them. On one side all is ruin, on the other all is safety. On which side of Jesus are we at this hour? Are we with the living in him, or are we numbered with those who are without him, and consequently are condemned already? Lord save us, or we perish

Jesus the merciful and true,  
Between the dead and living stand;  
The numerous dead, the living few,  
Who now divide this sinful land.

Now in our midst, great Priest, appear,  
For sin thou hast atonement made,  
Present the incense of thy prayer,  
And let the plague of sin be stayed.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - The story is told of a judge who had been frequently ridiculed by a conceited lawyer. When asked by a friend why he didn't rebuke his assailant, he replied, "In our town lives a widow who has a dog. And whenever the moon shines, it goes outside

and barks all night.” Having said that, the magistrate shifted the conversation to another subject. Finally someone asked, “But Judge, what about the dog and the moon?” “Oh,” he replied, “the moon went on shining—that’s all.”

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**ILLUSTRATION** - I’ve shared this unforgettable story before, but I share it again because it illustrates how wrongly and rightly to serve God. At a pastors’ conference, Bill Mills told about when he was speaking to a group of Wycliffe missionaries in South America. On the last evening as he ate dinner with the director and his wife, she told him how years before they had been assigned to translate the Bible into one of the native tribal languages. This is a lengthy and tedious process which, before computers, often took up to twenty years.

During that time, the translators were teaching the Scriptures and seeing a new church emerging among the tribe. But as the translation was almost done, the tribal people were becoming more and more involved in selling their crops for the drug trade and less and less interested in the Scriptures. When they finally finished the translation and scheduled a dedication of the New Testament, not even one tribal person came! This missionary wife was angry and bitter. She had given twenty years of her life so that these people could have the Scriptures, but they didn’t even want it!

Then with regard to Bill’s ministry of the Word that week, she said (in, *Finishing Well in Life and Ministry* [Leadership Resources International], p. 190):

God has ... opened my eyes to see this all from His perspective. I am just beginning to realize now that we did it for Him! That is the only thing that makes any sense in all of this. We did it for God!

Mills concludes, “That is the only thing that makes any sense in ministry. We do it for Him.” Amen! We serve God wrongly when we serve for ourselves, but rightly when we serve for Him. ([Steven Cole](#))

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#### **Life Application Study Bible - Korah's story gives us numerous warnings:**

1. Don't let desire for what someone else has make you discontented with what you already have.
2. Don't try to raise your own self-esteem by attacking someone else's.
3. Don't use part of God's Word to support what you want, rather than allowing its entirety to shape your wants.
4. Don't expect to find satisfaction in power and position; God may want to work through you in the position you are now in.

### **The High Priest Intercedes Numbers 16:41-50 Henry Mahan**

The authority of Moses and Aaron had been questioned by Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and 250 men of renown in the congregation of Israel (vv. 1-4). Moses tried to show them the unreasonableness of their rebellion (vv. 5-11). Moses commanded them all to appear before the Lord the next day, with Aaron, to have the matter settled (vv. 16-18). When God would destroy the whole congregation, Moses and Aaron interceded for them (vv. 19-22). God opened the earth and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, Abiram, their families, and all that pertained to them (vv. 26-33). He then sent fire from heaven and consumed the 250 men who followed them and offered incense (vv. 34-35). The rebellion was not only against Moses (the prophet and leader) but against God's appointed High Priest, Aaron (vv. 9-11), which reveals rebellion against God's way of redemption through Christ; for Aaron represents Christ, our High Priest (Lev. 16:17-18; Lev. 16:33-34; Heb. 9:7-8).

One would think that this incident would have a lasting effect on the people of Israel, but it did not; for the very next day all of the congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron saying, ‘You have killed the people of the Lord’ (v. 41). This reveals the total blindness and hardness of the human heart. No amount of signs, miracles, nor witnesses will bring men to God apart from divine regeneration and revelation. In John 5:32-40, our Lord declared to the religionists, ‘John bore witness to me... the works I do reveal who I am...the Father himself has verified my claims the scriptures testify of me.. but you will not come to me!’

The wrath of God arose against the rebellious people and he said to Moses, ‘Get you up from among this congregation that I may destroy them’ (v. 45). Moses instructed Aaron to take a censer, put fire in it from off the alter with incense, and go quickly unto the congregation and make an atonement for them before the Lord. The plague from God had begun (v. 46). Aaron, the High Priest, ran with the censer of incense and stood between the fallen dead and the living, for the plague had already killed 14,700 people. As Aaron stood between the Holy God and the people with the atonement, the plague stopped (vv. 47-49). This is one of the strong Old Testament pictures of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ. We will consider the type as we look at Aaron.

### **1. Aaron loved the sinful people**

These people certainly did not love Aaron. The whole plot was against him—to strip him of his office and take it unto themselves. Is not this the attitude of Adam's race against Christ? In the garden of Eden, at the tower of Babel, and at the cross the cry has been and is, 'We will not have him reign over us.' 'They hated me without a cause.' We would rob him of all his preeminence.

Yet Aaron loved the people, and with no regard for his own life or safety, he rushed down among the people who were under the wrath of God and was identified with them. Christ, our Lord, loved us, came to earth, identified with us in the flesh under the law of God, and took upon himself the form of a servant (Phil. 2:6-8). 'Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4:10).

### **2. Aaron acted as God's High Priest**

Aaron did not rush before God empty-handed with only a plea for mercy and a prayer for compassion. The people had sinned, and the wrath of God cannot be lifted without a sin-offering and an atonement (Heb. 9:22). Aaron brought the censer of incense. Even so, Christ, our Lord, as our High Priest, must have somewhat to offer (Heb. 8:1-3). His tabernacle is his body; his sacrifice is himself; his atonement is his own blood (Heb. 9:11-12).

Aaron did not plead their works and deeds, nor promise that they would do better in the future. He held up the atonement. Christ does not plead our righteousness, but his! He does not plead our works, but his!

### **3. Aaron served as the mediator**

The people were dropping like dust as Aaron stepped between them and God to plead God's mercy for them. He was saying, 'Death and judgment, you must march over me and my atonement; you must smite God's High Priest and ignore God's atonement if you destroy the people.' Wrath and judgment have a claim on us. Justice is ready to smite the sheep. But Christ, the Mediator, stands between us and the justice of God and says, 'You must walk over me and ignore my blood to destroy my sheep' (1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 8:33-34).

Aaron and his atonement was the only hope the people had, as Christ in you is the hope of glory. Aaron was the unaided mediator: he stood alone waving the censer, as Christ, by himself, purged our sins! Aaron was the sufficient saviour. Death came to his feet and stopped. Even so, our Lord Jesus Christ is the effectual, sufficient Redeemer of all who believe.

Judgment must stop at his feet (Rom. 8:1); for 'he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them' (Heb. 7:25; Heb. 10:12-17).