

Korach Numbers – Bamidbar (16-18.32)

God has forgiven the Children of Israel for their lack of faith but now they will no longer go directly to God's promised land. Now they must wander for 40 years in the wilderness. God said to Moses, "Speak to the Children of Israel and say, 'Make tassels, *tzitzis*, as fringes on the corners of your garments and have the corner tassels include a twist of sky-blue thread. This is for you to see it and remember all of God's commandments and perform them, and not explore after your heart or go where your eyes stray. Remain holy to God Who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be God to you.'"

Now Korach, a Levite, and a few other men, gathered 250 community leaders and turned against Moses and Aaron. He said, "If the entire assembly is holy and God is also with them then why do you exalt yourself over God's Congregation?"

Moses said, "In the morning God will show who is holy and Who God wishes to bring close. Do this: Take for yourselves fire pans and put fire in them and then incense and, tomorrow, take it before God. God will choose." Then Moses turned to Korach and said, "Isn't it enough that you Levites are close to God and serving in God's Tabernacle and minister to the community leaders? Must you demand to be a Kohen priest, too?"

In the morning Moses and Aaron gathered everyone in front of the Tent of Meeting with God. And the Glory of God appeared to all. God said to Moses and Aaron, "Stand back so I can kill these rebels!" They prayed and said, "O' God, if one man sins, will you be angry with the whole community?" God said to Moses, "Tell everyone, 'Move away from these wicked men, lest you perish with their sins.'" And they did.

Moses now spoke in front of everyone, "Soon you shall know it is God who sent me. If these wicked men die and share the common fate of all men, then God did not send me. But if God makes the ground open and swallows them whole, going to the grave alive, then you will know that these people have been punished by God."

Moses had hardly finished speaking when the ground opened and swallowed Korach and the other leaders and their belongings, and then closed over them. Then God sent a fire and killed the 250 Korach's followers who were offering their incense.

The next day many Israelites were mad and said, "Moses and Aaron brought death upon God's people." And God sent a plague upon them. Moses told High Kohen Priest Aaron to make a fire and incense offering to ask forgiveness for the sins of the Israelite community. When he did, the plagues stopped even though over 14,000 died because of Korach's rebellion.

Afterwards God tells Moses to have the leader from each of the twelve tribes carve a rod. God said, "The staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout. Leave that staff in front of the Ark with God's Ten Commandments." And they did.

The next day Aaron's rod sprouted with blossoms and almonds. God said to Moses, "Put back Aaron's rod in front of the Ark of God's Testimony as a keepsake and a warning for those who want to rebel." And Moses did exactly as God instructed him.

Then God said to Aaron, "You and your sons shall be the priests. I give you this responsibility and gift of service in the Tent of Meeting. You shall take the offerings of the Israelites for Me and take 1/10th of it. Instead of land, this portion of the offerings, this tithe shall be your portion before God. This is your wage for service as well as sacred donations. Do not profane them.

Questions: 1) Is there a difference between rebelling against God and rebelling against rules? How do you test God? 3) How is working in God's Tent of Meeting a gift and a responsibility?

Illustration Ideas: Korach and followers rebelling against Moses...Korach's followers making an incense offering...the earth eating the rebels...Aaron's rod sprouting...Aaron's rod in front of the 10 Commandments.