

# Numbers 15-16

Bible Study

## Chapters 15-19 (Introduction)

Thirty-eight years of wandering are covered in these few chapters

(Companion) “Only three events recorded during the punishment wanderings: 1) The Sabbath breaker [15: 32-36; 2) Rebellion of Korah [16: 1-17; 3) Red Heifer [19:1-10]

Ch. 15:2 “when you come into the land” (Sacrifices reviewed)

(Oswald T. Allis) “The words just quoted, ‘when you come into the land’ seem to imply that the priestly ritual of the tabernacle was in abeyance during the period”

## Amos 5:25

<sup>25</sup> “Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?”

## Psalms 95:10

<sup>10</sup> For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation, And said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.’

## Review

### Chapter 13

- 12 spies/scouts sent in to spy on the land of Canaan—forty days journey
  - Ten of the spies brought a bad report— “not able to take the land”
  - Caleb tried to hush the people and said they could take the land

### Chapter 14

- The people complain and in spirit of rebellion want to return to Egypt
- God threatens to completely destroy the people and disinherit them....Moses intervenes
  - God reduces the punishment—not all will die
  - Only those under 20 years of age would enter the promised land
- God warns them not to try to enter the land
- They make a foolish attempt to enter in the south

### **Numbers 14:44-45**

<sup>44</sup>But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp.

<sup>45</sup>Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

Numbers 15

(The Pentateuch, Thomas) “The thirty-eight years in the wilderness begins here”

Instructions for life in Canaan—Anticipates **the end** of the years of wandering

<sup>1</sup>And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,  
<sup>2</sup>“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘**When you have come into the land** you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you,

“when you come into the land”  
(NICOT) “Chapter 15 begins with a word of hope to the new generation....what follows is for the new generation in the new land”

**Numbers 14:31**

<sup>31</sup>But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, **I will bring in**, and they shall know the land which you have despised.

v. 3-31 Instructions on offerings and sacrifices.....Why?

(Parallel Com. ) “After the sin at Kadesh, the people needed a reminder of the former commands given at Sinai concerning offerings, lest they conclude that they were no longer in effect. God was still planning on bringing the next generation into Canaan.”

1<sup>st</sup> set of instructions—Sacrificial accompaniments of grain and drink offerings

<sup>3</sup>and you make an offering by fire to the Lord, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet aroma to the Lord, from the herd or the flock,

<sup>4</sup>then he who presents his offering to the Lord shall bring a grain offering of one-tenth of *an ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil;

<sup>5</sup>and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb.

(NIV App. Com.) “The very fact that the Lord is willing to continue as Israel’s lawgiver and accept sacrificial gifts is a good sign.

Whenever God actually commanded this legislation, its placement in chapter 15 affirms his promise to bring the younger generation into Canaan.” [14:31]

v. 5 “wine as a drink offering”

(Expositors) “These passages are the first to indicate that wine offerings, or libations, must accompany all burnt or fellowship offerings.”

<sup>6</sup>Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil;

<sup>7</sup>and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the Lord.

<sup>8</sup>And when you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering, or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow, or as a peace offering to the Lord,

<sup>9</sup>then shall be offered with the young bull a grain offering of three-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil;

<sup>10</sup>and you shall bring as the drink offering half a hin of wine as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

<sup>11</sup>Thus it shall be done for each young bull, for each ram, or for each lamb or young goat.

<sup>12</sup>According to the number that you prepare, so you shall do with everyone according to their number.

(New Bible Com.) “The three elements, flour, oil, and wine, were the chief agricultural products of Canaan...”

There is a principle of thankfulness in this law. Israel must return to the Lord an offering from the land which he had given to them in the first place. Such is the spirit of the law, the very opposite of grumbling and complaining”

<sup>13</sup>All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

<sup>14</sup>And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever *is* among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord, just as you do, so shall he do.

<sup>15</sup>One ordinance *shall be* for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells *with you*, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord.

<sup>16</sup>One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.”<sup>£</sup>

v. 13-16

All the people of Israel were instructed to make these offerings whether they were native-born or alien

v. 13 “native-born” (Heb. Ha’ezrah)

(Expositors, notes) “is a reference that points directly to the time of being settled in the land. At the time of the writing of the book of Numbers, there were no ‘native-born’ Hebrews; all had been born in a foreign place.”

2<sup>nd</sup> set of instructions concerning the offerings of first fruits of the harvest

<sup>17</sup>Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

<sup>18</sup>“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘**When you come into the land** to which I bring you,

<sup>19</sup>then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the Lord.

<sup>20</sup>You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal *as* a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up.

<sup>21</sup>Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the Lord a heave offering throughout your generations.

v. 18-21 “you”

(Expositors) “The ‘you’ in these verses may have been spoken to the community as a whole, but they are addressed to the children; for only they will actually enter the land....v. 18 ‘which I bring you’...God will have brought them”

v. 20 “ground meal” (Heb. Risah)= coarse grain...instead of the fine flour [v.4]

(Expositors)“The idea seems to be one of immediacy. Right at the time of the threshing of the grain, before the processes of refining for princely flour, a cake is to be made in worship of God and held high from the threshing floor.”



3<sup>rd</sup> section covering unintentional sins [v. 22-26 whole community]

<sup>22</sup>If you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the Lord has spoken to Moses—

<sup>23</sup>all that the Lord has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the Lord gave commandment and onward throughout your generations—

<sup>24</sup>then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation, that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the Lord, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats as a sin offering.

<sup>25</sup>So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional; they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their unintended sin.

<sup>26</sup>It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people *did it* unintentionally.

(BKC) “The difference between the regulations here and those pertaining to the sin offering in Lev. 4: 13-21 is that here the sins were of omission (unintentional neglect) while those in Leviticus were of commission.

Moreover, this passage in Numbers requires the offering of both a bull as a burnt offering and a male goat as a sin offering while Leviticus mentions only the bull as a sin offering.”

<sup>27</sup>And if a **person** sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering.

<sup>28</sup>So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the Lord, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.

<sup>29</sup>You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, *for* him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them.

v. 27-28 An individual guilty of the unintentional sin is to bring a female goat as an offering

v. 30

(Expositors) “As in the case of other sacrifices, the alien and the citizen have the same demands of compliance”

4<sup>th</sup> set of instructions—**defiant** sin

<sup>30</sup>But the person who does *anything* presumptuously, *whether he is* native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from among his people.

<sup>31</sup>Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *shall be* upon him.’”

v. 30 “presumptuously” (Heb. ‘with a high hand’)

(Expositors) “The Hebrew idiom is ‘sins with a high hand’, a posture of arrogance, blasphemy and revolt....this verse deals with outrageous behavior of blasphemy”

Next Section [v.32-36]—event that occurred in the wilderness  
Deals with the ‘**sins of a high hand**’ and probably meant to serve as an example of such  
sin



<sup>32</sup>Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.

<sup>33</sup>And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation.

<sup>34</sup>They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him.

<sup>35</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” [Ex. 31:15]

<sup>36</sup>So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

v. 32 (Expositors) “The point of the story is that Sabbath breaking is the act is the act of a raised fist in defiance of the Lord; by his action this man was thumbing his nose at God”

(NIV App. Com.) “This happened sometime during the period when the Israelites were in the desert [v.32], where the climate was warm and the people had manna to eat.

So a fire for warmth or cooking would not have been urgent even if it were not the Sabbath. It looks as though this man was going out of his way to violate the Sabbath command...”

<sup>37</sup>Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

<sup>38</sup>“Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.

v. 38 “tassels” (OKJ)— ‘fringes’ (Heb. *zizith*)

(Companion) “Occurs only four times here v. 38 [twice], v. 39 and Eze. 8:3 (lock of hair)= a fringe where the threads hang down, like a lock of hair.”

v. 38 “a blue thread” (Heb. *tekelet*) “the color (violet)” (strong's)

“A violet (*tekelet*) cord (*petil*) attached to the tassels is to symbolize consecration of the Israelites to the Lord [v.40] as a ‘kingdom of priests’

Violet was a color of royalty...was also connected with the priesthood because it was used in priestly garments”

<sup>39</sup>And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you *may* not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,  
<sup>40</sup>and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.  
<sup>41</sup>*I am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: *I am* the Lord your God.”

(Tanakh, JSB) “The purpose of the fringes, to remind the wearer of God’s laws, clearly ties into the previous case of the Sabbath breaker”

v. 39 “that you may not follow the harlotry”

(v. 2, 18)— “**when you come into the land**”—the Canaanites were extremely corrupt, pagan people, and the tassels would help them remember God’s laws

We don’t use tassels—the **Holy Spirit** helps us remember to keep God’s laws and leads us to true conversion [Heb. 8:10] [John 14:26]

▪ We have God’s written word to remind us of his law

## Chapter 16

### Korah's rebellion

One of the only 3 events recorded in the 38 yrs of wandering

<sup>1</sup>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 *men*;

<sup>2</sup>and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.

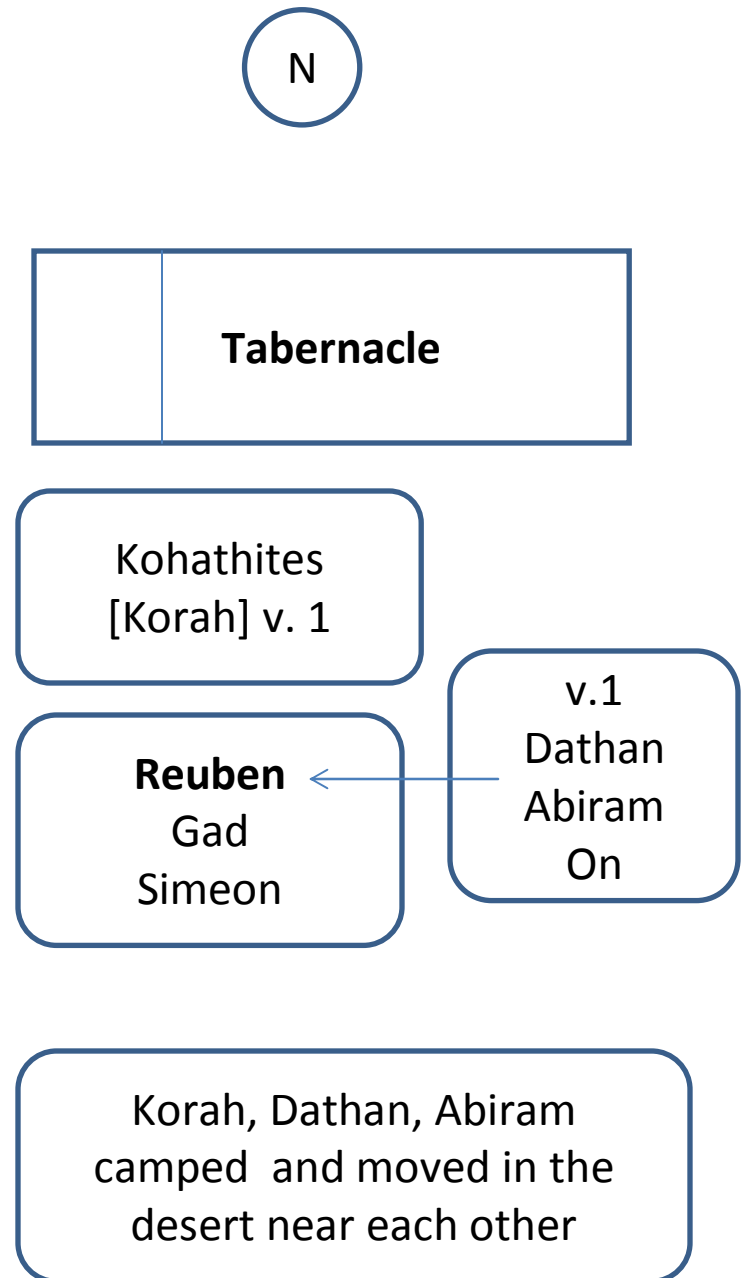
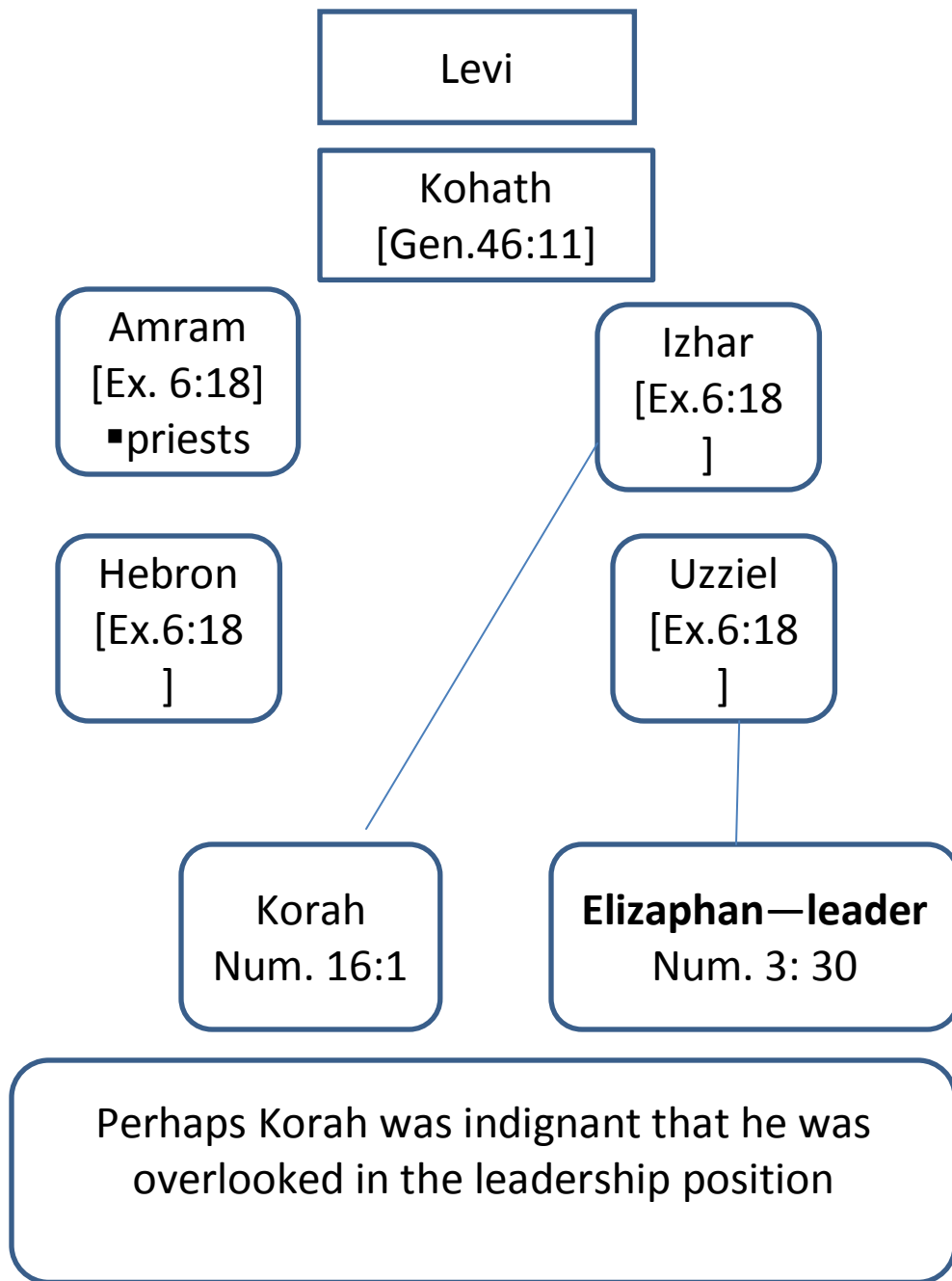
<sup>3</sup>They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "*You take* too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation *is* holy, every one of them, and the Lord *is* among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"

v. 1 **Korah** --(Moses and Aaron's first cousin)

Along with three men from Reuben, and 250 other leaders of the congregation accused Moses and Aaron of superseding their authority

v. 1 Kohath, Dathan, Abiram and On all associated together as they all camped on the south side of the tabernacle







<sup>4</sup>So when Moses heard *it*, he fell on his face;

<sup>5</sup>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 cause *him* to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him.

<sup>6</sup>Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company;

<sup>7</sup>put fire in them and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow, and it shall be *that* the man whom the Lord chooses *is* the holy one. *You take* too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!”

v. 4 Moses “fell on his face”—to seek God’s instructions on how to deal with this situation

▪After receiving God’s will, Moses has two replies...the first one in verses 5-7:

Moses puts Korah and all his company to a test—offering incense was a job of the priests (and could be dangerous)...God would show who are the ones to do it

v. 7 The procedure to put fire in the censer followed by putting incense, is the same as in Lev. 10:1

<sup>8</sup>Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi:

<sup>9</sup>*Is it* a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to serve them;

<sup>10</sup>and that He has brought you near *to Himself*, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also?

<sup>11</sup>Therefore you and all your company *are* gathered together against the Lord. And what *is* Aaron that you complain against him?”

Moses’ second response: verses 8-10

v.9 Rhetorical response: is it not important to do the ‘work of the tabernacle’ [moving it]?

And service to all the people

v. 10 (NIV) “He has brought you and your fellow Levities near Himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too.”

v. 11 Complaining against Aaron is really complaining against God

<sup>12</sup>And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, “We will not come up!

<sup>13</sup>*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 should keep acting like a prince over us?

<sup>14</sup>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!”

<sup>15</sup>Then Moses was very angry, and said to the Lord, “Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them.”

v. 13 “should keep acting like a prince over us?”

The main complaint of Dathan, Abiram and the Reubenites is that Moses is an illegitimate authority over them

v. 13 “Out of a land flowing with milk and honey” —referring to Egypt the land of slavery

v. 14 “Will you put out the eyes of these men?” —commentators believe it a metaphor for misleading, deceiving

<sup>16</sup>And Moses said to Korah, “Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the Lord—  
you and they, as well as Aaron.

<sup>17</sup>Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the  
Lord, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each *with* his censer.”

<sup>18</sup>So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the  
tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron.

<sup>19</sup>And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of  
meeting. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation.

v. 16-17 A gathering was called for by Moses that would contest the issue of the  
legitimate priesthood...at the tabernacle courtyard

They were to bring censers and put incense in them

<sup>20</sup>And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,  
<sup>21</sup>“Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”  
<sup>22</sup>Then they fell on their faces, and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?”  
<sup>23</sup>So the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,  
<sup>24</sup>“Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’”

v. 21 God advised Moses and Aaron to step aside so he could destroy Korah and their entire assembly

v.22 Moses asked God not to destroy the congregation because of the sins of a few men  
“congregation” here—most likely a representative group of the people

v. 22 “The God of the spirits of all flesh” (BKC) “occurs only here and in 27:16. It refers to God’s omniscient understanding of all people”

<sup>25</sup>Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.  
<sup>26</sup>And he spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.”  
<sup>27</sup>So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.

<sup>28</sup>And Moses said: “By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, for I *have not done them* of my own will.

<sup>29</sup>If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, *then* the Lord has not sent me.

<sup>30</sup>But if the Lord creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord.”

v. 28-29 Moses lays down ground rules of the test...if the rebellious ones live on to an old age, then they know God is not using Moses

v. 30 But if God does something unique, like opening up the earth to swallow Korah and his cohorts...then the people would know God had rejected them for their sins

<sup>31</sup>Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them,

<sup>32</sup>and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods.

<sup>33</sup>So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.

<sup>34</sup>Then all Israel who *were* around them fled at their cry, for they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up *also!*”

v. 32 “with their households”

(BKC) “The fact that the wives and children of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were included in the awful judgment of God...one must conclude that the families...must have collaborated some way in their rebellion”

<sup>35</sup>And a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

<sup>36</sup>Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

<sup>37</sup>“Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away.

<sup>38</sup>The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel.”

<sup>39</sup>So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar,  
<sup>40</sup>*to be* a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who *is* not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the Lord, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the Lord had said to him through Moses.

v. 37 “the censers...they are holy”—because they had been presented ‘before the Lord’  
they were holy

v. 39 the censers were hammered into sheets of bronze to overlay the altar

v. 40 the covering of bronze would be a constant reminder to Israel of what happened that day...and that only a descendent of Aaron could be a priest before God



<sup>41</sup>On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, “**You** have killed the people of the Lord.”

<sup>42</sup>Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared.

<sup>43</sup>Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.

Instead of humbling the people to a right attitude from seeing God’s wrath, it led to complaining by the people and gathering against Moses and Aaron

- They blamed them for the deaths...You is emphatic

v. 42 “They **turned** toward the tabernacle” in wrath and frenzy

(Expositors) “it may mean that the crowd was about to take over the territory, to seize the tent as their own holding”

- God’s glory appearing would result in more judgment

<sup>44</sup>And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,  
<sup>45</sup>“Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” And they  
fell on their faces.

The third time that Moses and Aaron fell on their faces [v.4, 22]

(Expositors) “Again, Moses and Aaron, under unbelievable personal assault, bow to seek  
his mercy, to turn away his wrath”

<sup>46</sup>So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense *on it*, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the Lord. The plague has begun.”

<sup>47</sup>Then Aaron took *it* as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people.

<sup>48</sup>And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.

<sup>49</sup>Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident.

<sup>50</sup>So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.

v. 46-47 Incense was symbolic of prayer and Aaron ran to make intercession for the people

14,700 die in the plague for their rebellion....beyond the 250 who offered incense and Korah and his household and the men with him

## Lessons

Accompaniments of grain and wine required to accompany **sacrifices**

- Today we remember Christ's sacrifice by partaking of bread and wine

Tassels were required as memory devices to remember God's laws

- Today God's spirit writes his laws on our hearts and minds [Heb. 8:10]

Korah, Dathan and Abiram were powerful leaders with forceful personalities

- But they lacked a spiritual connection with God