
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 some men.

The rebellion of Korah and his company against Moses, Num 16:1-3. He directs them how to try, in the course of the next day, whom God had called to the priesthood, Num 16:4-11. Dathan and Abiram use the most seditious speeches, Num 16:12-14. Moses is wroth, Num 16:15; and orders Korah and his company to be ready on the morrow with their censers and incense, Num 16:16-18. Korah gathers his company together, Num 16:19. The glory of the Lord appears, and he threatens to consume them, Num 16:20, Num 16:21. Moses and Aaron intercede for them, Num 16:22. The people are commanded to leave the tents of the rebels, Num 16:23-26. They obey, and Korah and his company come out and stand before the door of their tents, Num 16:27. Moses in a solemn address puts the contention to issue, Num 16:28-30. As soon as he had done speaking, the earth clave and swallowed them, and all that appertained to them, Num 16:31-34; and the 250 men who offered incense are consumed by fire, Num 16:35. The Lord commands Eleazar to preserve the censers, because they were hallowed, Num 16:36-38. Eleazar makes of them a covering for the altar, Num 16:39, Num 16:40. The next day the people murmur anew, the glory of the Lord appears, and Moses and Aaron go to the tabernacle, Num 16:41-43. They are commanded to separate themselves from the congregation, Num 16:44, Num 16:45. Moses, perceiving that God had sent a plague among them, directs Aaron to hasten and make an atonement, Num 16:46. Aaron does so, and the plague is stayed, Num 16:47, Num 16:48. The number of those who died by the plague, 14,700 men, Num 16:49, Num 16:50.

Verse 1

Now Korah - took men - Had not these been the most brutish of men, could they have possibly so soon forgotten the signal displeasure of God manifested against them so lately for their rebellion. The word men is not in the original; and the verb וַיִּקַּח *vaiykkach*, and he took, is not in the plural but the singular, hence it cannot be applied to the act of all these chiefs. In every part of the Scripture where this rebellion is referred to it is attributed to Korah, (see Num 26:3, and Jde 1:11), therefore the verb here belongs to him, and the whole verse should be translated thus: - Now Korah, son of Yitsar son of Kohath, son of Levi, He Took even Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth, Son Of Reuben; and they rose up, etc. This makes a very regular and consistent sense, and spares all the learned labor of Father Houbigant, who translates וַיִּקַּח *yikkach*, by rebellionem fecerunt, they rebelled, which scarcely any rule of criticism can ever justify. Instead of בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן *beney Reuben*, Sons of Reuben, some MSS. have בֶּן *ben*, Son, in the singular; this reading, supported by the Septuagint and the Samaritan text, I have followed in the above translation. But as Eliab and Peleth were both Reubenites, the common reading, Sons, may be safely followed.

NUMBERS 16:2 They rose up before Moses, with some of the children of Israel, two hundred fifty princes of the congregation, called to the assembly, men of renown.

NUMBERS 16:3 They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much on yourself, since all the congregation are holy, everyone of them, and the LORD is among them! Why do you lift yourselves up above the LORD's assembly?"

Verse 3

Ye take too much upon you - The original is simply רב לכם rab lachem, too much for you. The spirit of this saying appears to me to be the following: - "Holy offices are not equally distributed: you arrogate to yourselves the most important ones, as if your superior holiness entitled you alone to them; whereas all the congregation are holy, and have an equal right with you to be employed in the most holy services." Moses retorts this saying Num 16:7 : Ye take too much upon you, רב לכם rab lachem; Ye have too much already, ye sons of Levi; i.e., by your present spirit and disposition you prove yourselves to be wholly unworthy of any spiritual employment.

NUMBERS 16:4 When Moses heard it, he fell on his face.

NUMBERS 16:5 He said to Korah and to all his company, "In the morning, the LORD will show who are his, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to him. Even him whom he shall choose, he will cause to come near to him.

Verse 5

The Lord will show who are his - It is supposed that St. Paul refers to this place, 2Tim 2:19 : The foundation of God - the whole sacrificial system, referring to Christ Jesus, the foundation of the salvation of men; standeth sure, notwithstanding the rebellions, intrusions, and false doctrines of men; having this seal - this stamp of its Divine authenticity, The Lord knoweth them that are his; εγνω Κυριος τους οντας αυτου, a literal translation of וידע יהוה את אשר לו veyoda Yehovah eth asher lo; and both signifying, The Lord approveth of his own; or, will own that which is of his own appointment. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity, alluding to the exhortation of Moses, Num 16:26 : Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men.

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

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

NUMBERS 16:8 Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi!

NUMBERS 16:9 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 service of the LORD's tabernacle, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them;

NUMBERS 16:10 and that he has brought you near, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? Do you seek the priesthood also?

NUMBERS 16:11 Therefore you and all your company have gathered together against the LORD! What is Aaron that you murmur against him?"

NUMBERS 16:12 Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; and they said, "We won't come up!

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, but you must also make yourself a prince over us?

NUMBERS 16:14 Moreover you haven't 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 won't come up."

NUMBERS 16:15 Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, "Don't respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, neither have I hurt one of them."

Verse 15

Respect not thou their offering - There was no danger of this: they wished to set up a priesthood and a sacrificial system of their own; and God never has blessed, and never can bless, any scheme of salvation which is not of his own appointment. Man is ever supposing that he can mend his Maker's work, or that he can make one of his own that will do in its place.

NUMBERS 16:16 Moses said to Korah, "You and all your company go before the LORD, you, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow.

NUMBERS 16:17 Each man take his censer, and put incense on them, and each man bring before the LORD his censer, two hundred fifty censers; you also, and Aaron, each his censer."

NUMBERS 16:18 They each took his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the Tent of Meeting with Moses and Aaron.

NUMBERS 16:19 Korah assembled all the congregation opposite them to the door of the Tent of Meeting. the LORD's glory appeared to all the congregation.

NUMBERS 16:20 The LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,

NUMBERS 16:21 "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment!"

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

Verse 22

O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh - אל אלהי הרוחת לכל בשר El Elohey haruchoth lechol basar. This address sufficiently proves that these holy men believed that man is a being compounded of flesh and spirit, and that these principles are perfectly distinct. Either the materiality of the human soul is a human fable, or, if it be a true doctrine, these men did not pray under the influence of the Divine Spirit. In Num 27:16 there is a similar form of expression: Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh. And in Job 12:10 : In whose hand is the soul (נפש nephesh) of all living; and the spirit (רוח ruach) of all flesh of man. Are not these decisive proofs that the Old Testament teaches that there is an immortal spirit in man? "But does not רוח ruach signify wind or breath?" Sometimes it does, but certainly not here; for how absurd would it be to say, O God, the God of the breaths of all flesh!

NUMBERS 16:23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

NUMBERS 16:24 “Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from around the tent of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram!’”

NUMBERS 16:25 Moses rose up and went to Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

NUMBERS 16:26 He spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart, please, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins!”

NUMBERS 16:27 So they went away from the tent of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side. Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little ones.

NUMBERS 16:28 Moses said, “Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works; for they are not from my own mind.

NUMBERS 16:29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they experience what all men experience, then the LORD hasn’t sent me.

NUMBERS 16:30 But if the LORD makes a new thing, and the ground opens its mouth, and swallows them up, with all that belong to them, and they go down alive into Sheol ; then you shall understand that these men have despised the LORD.”

Verse 30

If the Lord make a new thing - וְאִם בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא יְהוָה veim beriah yibra Yehovah, and if Jehovah should create a creation, i. e., do such a thing as was never done before.

And they go down quick into the pit - שְׂאֵלָה sheolah, a proof, among many others, that שְׂאֵל sheol, signifies here a chasm or pit of the earth, and not the place called hell; for it would be absurd to suppose that their houses had gone to hell; and it would be wicked to imagine that their little innocent children had gone thither, though God was pleased to destroy their lives with those of their iniquitous fathers.

NUMBERS 16:31 As he made an end of speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split apart.

NUMBERS 16:32 The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households, all of Korah’s men, and all their goods.

NUMBERS 16:33 So they, and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol. The earth closed on them, and they perished from among the assembly.

Verse 33

They, and all that appertained to them - Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all that appertained to their respective families, went down into the pit caused by this supernatural earthquake; while the fire from the Lord consumed the 250 men that bare censers. Thus there were two distinct punishments, the pit and the fire, for the two divisions of these rebels.

NUMBERS 16:34 All Israel that were around them fled at their cry; for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up!"

NUMBERS 16:35 Fire came out from the LORD, and devoured the two hundred fifty men who offered the incense.

NUMBERS 16:36 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

NUMBERS 16:37 "Speak to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter the fire away from the camp; for they are holy,

Verse 37

The censers - are hallowed - **קֹדֶשׁ** kadeshu, are consecrated, i. e., to the service of God though in this instance improperly employed.

NUMBERS 16:38 even the censers of these sinners against their own lives. Let them be made beaten plates for a covering of the altar, for they offered them before the LORD. Therefore they are holy. They shall be a sign to the children of Israel."

NUMBERS 16:39 Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burnt had offered; and they beat them out for a covering of the altar,

NUMBERS 16:40 to be a memorial to the children of Israel, to the end that no stranger, who isn't of the seed of Aaron, would come near to burn incense before the LORD, that he not be as Korah, and as his company; as the LORD spoke to him by Moses.

NUMBERS 16:41 But on the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "You have killed the LORD's people!"

Verse 41

On the morrow all the congregation - murmured - It is very likely that the people persuaded themselves that Moses and Aaron had used some cunning in this business, and that the earthquake and fire were artificial; else, had they discerned the hand of God in this punishment, could they have dared the anger of the Lord in the very face of justice?

NUMBERS 16:42 When the congregation was assembled against Moses and against Aaron, They looked toward the Tent of Meeting. Behold, the cloud covered it, and the LORD's glory appeared.

NUMBERS 16:43 Moses and Aaron came to the front of the Tent of Meeting.

NUMBERS 16:44 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

NUMBERS 16:45 "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment!" They fell on their faces.

NUMBERS 16:46 Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer, and put fire from off the altar in it, 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."

Verse 46

The plague is begun - God now punished them by a secret blast, so as to put the matter beyond all dispute; his hand, and his alone, was seen, not only in the plague, but in the manner in which the mortality was arrested. It was necessary that this should be done in this way, that the whole congregation might see that those men who had perished were not the people of the Lord; and that God, not Moses and Aaron, had destroyed them.

NUMBERS 16:47 Aaron did as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly. Behold, the plague has begun among the people. He put on the incense, and made atonement for the people.

NUMBERS 16:48 He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

Verse 48

He stood between the dead and the living; and the plague, etc. - What the plague was we know not, but it seems to have begun at one part of the camp, and to have proceeded regularly onward; and Aaron went to the quarter where it was then prevailing, and stood with his atonement where it was now making its ravages, and the plague was stayed; but not before 14,700 had fallen victims to it, Num 16:49.

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. Hence St. Paul, Rom 5:10, says: If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved Through His Life, i. e., by the prevalence of his continual intercession. 2Cor 5:18, 2Cor 5:19 : "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." By the awful transactions recorded in this chapter, we may see how jealous God is of the sole right of appointing the way and means of salvation. Had any priesthood, and any kind of service, no matter how solemn and sincere, been equally available in the sight of Divine justice and mercy, God would not have resented in so awful a manner the attempts of Korah and his company in their new service. The way of God's own appointment, the agony and death of Christ, is the only way in which souls can be saved. His is the priesthood, and his is the only available sacrifice. All other modes and schemes of salvation are the inventions of men or devils, and will in the end prove ruinous to all those who trust in them. Reader, forget not the Lord who bought thee.

NUMBERS 16:49 Now those who died by the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides those who died about the matter of Korah.

NUMBERS 16:50 Aaron returned to Moses to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and the plague was stopped.
