

Qorach

Numbers 16:1 - 18:32

Chapter 16

1 Now Korah, son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi, betook himself, along with Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth - descendants of Reuben - 2 to rise up against Moses, together with two hundred and fifty Israelites, chieftains of the community, chosen in the assembly, men of repute. 3 They combined against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! For all the community are holy, all of them, and the Lord is in their midst. Why then do you raise yourselves above the Lord's congregation?"

4 When Moses heard this, he fell on his face. 5 Then he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Come morning, the Lord will make known who is His and who is holy, and will grant him access to Himself; He will grant access to the one He has chosen. 6 Do this: You, Korah and all your band, take fire pans, 7 and tomorrow put fire in them and lay incense on them before the Lord. Then the man whom the Lord chooses, he shall be the holy one. You have gone too far, sons of Levi!"

8 Moses said further to Korah, "Hear me, sons of Levi. 9 Is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has set you apart from the community of Israel and given you access to Him, to perform the duties of the Lord's Tabernacle and to minister to the community and serve them? 10 Now that He has advanced you and all your fellow Levites with you, do you seek the priesthood too? 11 Truly, it is against the Lord that you and all your company have banded together. For who is Aaron that you should rail against him?"

12 Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come! 13 Is it not enough that you brought us from a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, that you would also lord it over us? 14 Even if you had brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, and given us possession of fields and vineyards, should you gouge out those men's eyes? We will not come!" 15 Moses was much aggrieved and he said to the Lord, "Pay no regard to their oblation. I have not taken the ass of any one of them, nor have I wronged any one of them."

16 And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company appear before the Lord, you and they and Aaron. 17 Each of you take his fire pan and lay incense on it, and each of you bring his fire pan before the Lord, two hundred and fifty fire pans; you and Aaron also [bring] your fire pans." 18 Each of them took his fire pan, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and took his place at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, as did Moses and Aaron. 19 Korah gathered the whole community against them at the entrance of the

Tent of Meeting.

Then the Presence of the Lord appeared to the whole community, 20 and the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 21 "Stand back from this community that I may annihilate them in an instant!" 22 But they fell on their faces and said, "O God, Source of the breath of all flesh! When one man sins, will You be wrathful with the whole community?"

23 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 24 "Speak to the community and say: Withdraw from about the abodes of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."

25 Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, the elders of Israel following him. 26 He addressed the community, saying, "Move away from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing that belongs to them, lest you be wiped out for all their sins." 27 So they withdrew from about the abodes of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Now Dathan and Abiram had come out and they stood at the entrance of their tents, with their wives, their children, and their little ones.

28 And Moses said, "By this you shall know that it was the Lord who sent me to do all these things; that they are not of my own devising: 29 if these men die as all men do, if their lot be the common fate of all mankind, it was not the Lord who sent me. 30 But if the Lord brings about something unheard-of, so that the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, you shall know that these men have spurned the Lord." 31 Scarcely had he finished speaking all these words when the ground under them burst asunder, 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households, all Korah's people and all their possessions. 33 They went down alive into Sheol, with all that belonged to them; the earth closed over them and they vanished from the midst of the congregation. 34 All Israel around them fled at their shrieks, for they said, "The earth might swallow us!"

35 And a fire went forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men offering the incense.

Chapter 17

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Order Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to remove the fire pans - for they have become sacred - from among the charred remains; and scatter the coals abroad. 3 [Remove] the fire pans of those who have sinned at the cost of their lives, and let them be made into hammered sheets as plating for the altar - for once they have been used for offering to the Lord, they have become sacred - and let them serve as a warning to the people of Israel. 4 Eleazar the priest took the copper fire pans which had been used for offering by those who died in the fire; and they were hammered into plating for the altar, 5 as the Lord had ordered him through Moses. It was to be a reminder to the Israelites, so that no outsider - one not of Aaron's offspring - should presume to offer incense before the Lord and suffer the fate

of Korah and his band.

6 Next day the whole Israelite community railed against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You two have brought death upon the Lord's people!" 7 But as the community gathered against them, Moses and Aaron turned toward the Tent of Meeting; the cloud had covered it and the Presence of the Lord appeared.

8 When Moses and Aaron reached the Tent of Meeting, 9 the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Remove yourselves from this community, that I may annihilate them in an instant." They fell on their faces. 11 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Take the fire pan, and put on it fire from the altar. Add incense and take it quickly to the community and make expiation for them. For wrath has gone forth from the Lord: the plague has begun!" 12 Aaron took it, as Moses had ordered, and ran to the midst of the congregation, where the plague had begun among the people. He put on the incense and made expiation for the people; 13 he stood between the dead and the living until the plague was checked. 14 Those who died of the plague came to fourteen thousand and seven hundred, aside from those who died on account of Korah. 15 Aaron then returned to Moses at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, since the plague was checked.

16 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 17 Speak to the Israelite people and take from them - from the chieftains of their ancestral houses - one staff for each chieftain of an ancestral house: twelve staffs in all. Inscribe each man's name on his staff, 18 there being one staff for each head of an ancestral house; also inscribe Aaron's name on the staff of Levi. 19 Deposit them in the Tent of Meeting before the Pact, where I meet with you. 20 The staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout, and I will rid Myself of the incessant mutterings of the Israelites against you.

21 Moses spoke thus to the Israelites. Their chieftains gave him a staff for each chieftain of an ancestral house, twelve staffs in all; among these staffs was that of Aaron. 22 Moses deposited the staffs before the Lord, in the Tent of the Pact. 23 The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Pact, and there the staff of Aaron of the house of Levi had sprouted: it had brought forth sprouts, produced blossoms, and borne almonds. 24 Moses then brought out all the staffs from before the Lord to all the Israelites; each identified and recovered his staff.

25 The Lord said to Moses, "Put Aaron's staff back before the Pact, to be kept as a lesson to rebels, so that their mutterings against Me may cease, lest they die." 26 This Moses did; just as the Lord had commanded him, so he did.

27 But the Israelites said to Moses, "Lo, we perish! We are lost, all of us lost! 28 Everyone who so much as ventures near the Lord's Tabernacle must die. Alas, we are doomed to perish!"

Chapter 18

1 The Lord said to Aaron: You and your sons and the ancestral house under your charge

shall bear any guilt connected with the sanctuary; you and your sons alone shall bear any guilt connected with your priesthood. 2 You shall also associate with yourself your kinsmen the tribe of Levi, your ancestral tribe, to be attached to you and to minister to you, while you and your sons under your charge are before the Tent of the Pact. 3 They shall discharge their duties to you and to the Tent as a whole, but they must not have any contact with the furnishings of the Shrine or with the altar, lest both they and you die. 4 They shall be attached to you and discharge the duties of the Tent of Meeting, all the service of the Tent; but no outsider shall intrude upon you 5 as you discharge the duties connected with the Shrine and the altar, that wrath may not again strike the Israelites.

6 I hereby take your fellow Levites from among the Israelites; they are assigned to you in dedication to the Lord, to do the work of the Tent of Meeting; 7 while you and your sons shall be careful to perform your priestly duties in everything pertaining to the altar and to what is behind the curtain. I make your priesthood a service of dedication; any outsider who encroaches shall be put to death.

8 The Lord spoke further to Aaron: I hereby give you charge of My gifts, all the sacred donations of the Israelites; I grant them to you and to your sons as a perquisite, a due for all time. 9 This shall be yours from the most holy sacrifices, the offerings by fire: every such offering that they render to Me as most holy sacrifices, namely, every meal offering, sin offering, and guilt offering of theirs, shall belong to you and your sons. 10 You shall partake of them as most sacred donations: only males may eat them; you shall treat them as consecrated.

11 This, too, shall be yours: the gift offerings of their contributions, all the elevation offerings of the Israelites, I give to you, to your sons, and to the daughters that are with you, as a due for all time; everyone of your household who is clean may eat it.

12 All the best of the new oil, wine, and grain - the choice parts that they present to the Lord - I give to you. 13 The first fruits of everything in their land, that they bring to the Lord, shall be yours; everyone of your household who is clean may eat them. 14 Everything that has been proscribed in Israel shall be yours. 15 The first issue of the womb of every being, man or beast, that is offered to the Lord, shall be yours; but you shall have the first-born of man redeemed, and you shall also have the firstling of unclean animals redeemed. 16 Take as their redemption price, from the age of one month up, the money equivalent of five shekels by the sanctuary weight, which is twenty gerahs. 17 But the firstlings of cattle, sheep, or goats may not be redeemed; they are consecrated. You shall dash their blood against the altar, and turn their fat into smoke as an offering by fire for a pleasing odor to the Lord. 18 But their meat shall be yours: it shall be yours like the breast of elevation offering and like the right thigh.

19 All the sacred gifts that the Israelites set aside for the Lord I give to you, to your sons, and to the daughters that are with you, as a due for all time. It shall be an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord for you and for your offspring as well. 20

And the Lord said to Aaron: You shall, however, have no territorial share among them or own any portion in their midst; I am your portion and your share among the Israelites.

21 And to the Levites I hereby give all the tithes in Israel as their share in return for the services that they perform, the services of the Tent of Meeting. 22 Henceforth, Israelites shall not trespass on the Tent of Meeting, and thus incur guilt and die: 23 only Levites shall perform the services of the Tent of Meeting; others would incur guilt. It is the law for all time throughout the ages. But they shall have no territorial share among the Israelites; 24 for it is the tithes set aside by the Israelites as a gift to the Lord that I give to the Levites as their share. Therefore I have said concerning them: They shall have no territorial share among the Israelites.

25 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 26 Speak to the Levites and say to them: When you receive from the Israelites their tithes, which I have assigned to you as your share, you shall set aside from them one-tenth of the tithe as a gift to the Lord. 27 This shall be accounted to you as your gift. As with the new grain from the threshing floor or the flow from the vat, 28 so shall you on your part set aside a gift for the Lord from all the tithes that you receive from the Israelites; and from them you shall bring the gift for the Lord to Aaron the priest. 29 You shall set aside all gifts due to the Lord from everything that is donated to you, from each thing its best portion, the part thereof that is to be consecrated.

30 Say to them further: When you have removed the best part from it, you Levites may consider it the same as the yield of threshing floor or vat. 31 You and your households may eat it anywhere, for it is your recompense for your services in the Tent of Meeting. 32 You will incur no guilt through it, once you have removed the best part from it; but you must not profane the sacred donations of the Israelites, lest you die.

Haftarah for Qorach

I Samuel 11:14 - 12:22

14 Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there inaugurate the monarchy." 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there at Gilgal they declared Saul king before the Lord. They offered sacrifices of well-being there before the Lord; and Saul and all the men of Israel held a great celebration there.

Chapter 12

1 Then Samuel said to all Israel, "I have yielded to you in all you have asked of me and have set a king over you. 2 Henceforth the king will be your leader.

"As for me, I have grown old and gray - but my sons are still with you - and I have been

your leader from my youth to this day. 3 Here I am! Testify against me, in the presence of the Lord and in the presence of His anointed one: Whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken? Whom have I defrauded or whom have I robbed? From whom have I taken a bribe to look the other way? I will return it to you." 4 They responded, "You have not defrauded us, and you have not robbed us, and you have taken nothing from anyone." 5 He said to them, "The Lord then is witness, and His anointed is witness, to your admission this day that you have found nothing in my possession." They responded, "He is!"

6 Samuel said to the people, "The Lord [is witness], He who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers out of the land of Egypt. 7 Come, stand before the Lord while I cite against you all the kindnesses that the Lord has done to you and your fathers.

8 "When Jacob came to Egypt, ... your fathers cried out to the Lord, and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place. 9 But they forgot the Lord their God; so He delivered them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the king of Moab; and these made war upon them. 10 They cried to the Lord, 'We are guilty, for we have forsaken the Lord and worshiped the Baalim and the Ashtaroth. Oh, deliver us from our enemies and we will serve You.' 11 And the Lord sent Jerubbaal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the enemies around you; and you dwelt in security. 12 But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was advancing against you, you said to me, 'No, we must have a king reigning over us' - though the Lord your God is your King.

13 "Well, the Lord has set a king over you! Here is the king that you have chosen, that you have asked for.

14 "If you will revere the Lord, worship Him, and obey Him, and will not flout the Lord's command, if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, [well and good]. 15 But if you do not obey the Lord and you flout the Lord's command, the hand of the Lord will strike you as it did your fathers.

16 "Now stand by and see the marvelous thing that the Lord will do before your eyes. 17 It is the season of the wheat harvest. I will pray to the Lord and He will send thunder and rain; then you will take thought and realize what a wicked thing you did in the sight of the Lord when you asked for a king."

18 Samuel prayed to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and the people stood in awe of the Lord and of Samuel. 19 The people all said to Samuel, "Intercede for your servants with the Lord your God that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins the wickedness of asking for a king." 20 But Samuel said to the people, "Have no fear. You have, indeed, done all those wicked things. Do not, however, turn away from the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. 21 Do not turn away to follow worthless things, which can neither profit nor save but are

worthless. 22 For the sake of His great name, the Lord will never abandon His people, seeing that the Lord undertook to make you His people.

Taken from *Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures*,
(Philadelphia, Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society) 1985.