



**“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:45**

Korah: (Kora) Numbers 16:1 – 18:32

2nd June 2022 / 2 Tammuz 5778

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim, and welcome to this week's Parsha Pearl 38 –Korah

Key Events:

Rebellion of Korah

The ground opens up to swallow the rebels.

Aarons staff blossoms

The presentation of gifts to the priests.

The institution of the Levitical priesthood

In this Parsha, we notice that it is named after the man it is about. We will see that there is a lot to be revealed about this man. His name means 'Baldness, Ice, Frosty, Hail. An unusual name with a meaning that would indeed reflect his character. It is not known whether Korah was indeed bald, but in scripture, it refers to the lack or loss of wisdom which indeed Korah reflected. Natural baldness must not be confused with the shaving of the head which was forbidden in Deut 14:1 and was a sign of mourning (Isaiah 22:12). It was a practice undertaken by other cultures and YHVH prohibited it among His people. It also marked the conclusion of a Nazarite's vow (Acts 18:18 ; 21:24 ; Numbers 6:9). Maybe you could do your own study on this.

Here is a passage in Ezekiel: Shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all heads. They shall cast forth their silver into the streets, and their gold shall be for an abomination (Ezek. 7:18, 19)

This speaks of the wickedness of Israel and the judgement upon her. The whole of chapter 7 is well worth reading.

Metallic terms were often references to a man's character. Silver was a reference to intelligence and Gold wisdom. They also referred to spiritual and celestial states. The passage in revelation has counsel from the Lord.

REV 3:18 To the Church in Laodicea 17 You say, 'I am rich; I have grown wealthy and need nothing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, white garments so that you may be clothed and your shameful nakedness not exposed, and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those I love, I rebuke and discipline. Therefore be earnest and repent.

This counsel cannot refer to real gold. It is a metaphor for something far more valuable. You can only purchase gold with something of lesser value. If you are buying gold with silver, then you will need lots of silver. The counsel is to buy wisdom. The charge from the Lord in this passage is shocking. He highlights the wretched state of the church.

So let's start.

Numbers 16 Amplified Bible (AMP)

Korah's Rebellion

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, descendants of Reuben, took action, **2 and they rose up [in rebellion] before Moses, together with some of the Israelites, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation chosen in the assembly, men of distinction.**

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 among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

4 And when Moses heard this, he fell face downward; 5 and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to Him, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; the one whom He will choose He will bring near to Himself. 6 Do this: Take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company, 7 then put fire in them and place incense on 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."

In this opening chapter, we are told that Korah is a Kohathite, the grandson of Levi. In the list, we see also the two agitators Dathan and Abiram whose names are attributed to these passages.

Exodus 2:13 The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

Ex 14:11-13, 10 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. 11 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

Ex 5:19. 5 Then the Hebrew foremen came to Pharaoh and cried, "Why do you deal like this with your servants? 16 No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' And look, your servants are being beaten, but it is the fault of your own people."

Their goal has been to continually undermine Moses and bring discontent among the travelling community. The passage even tells us that they were numbered among leaders from the community and men of renown, 16:2.

The Midrash remarks that the men of distinction were the princes of the tribes, and gives a little more information regarding the background issues between the two men, Moses and Korah. The issue arises between the two men because Moses appointed Elizaphan the son of Uzziel as the prince of the Kohathites (Numbers 3:30) 27 From Kohath came the clans of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites; these were the clans of the Kohathites. 28 The number of all the males a month old or more was 8,600. They were responsible for the duties of the sanctuary. 29 The clans of the Kohathites were to camp on the South side of the tabernacle, 30 and the leader of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan son of Uzziel. 31 Their duties were the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the articles of the sanctuary used with them, and the curtain—all the service for these items.

Now Korah made a claim to the position of prince because he was a descendent of Izhar.

Ex 6:18 The sons of Kohath: Amram (Moses' father), Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel; and Kohath lived a hundred and thirty-three years. 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of Levi according to their generations. 20 Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she gave

birth to Aaron and Moses, and Amram lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. **21 The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.** 22 The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

This issue was the cause of contention between Moses and Korah.

The 1st century historian Josephus writes in the Antiquities of the Jews, that levels of disunity pervade among the Jews unlike any other people, and in addition, chapter 2:014 he reveals a little of Korah's background:

1: 011 As it often happens with large groups and especially after failure, that they are hard to please and to persuade, so it was with the Jews. For being six hundred thousand, and because of their large numbers not readily subject to their betters even in good times, now in their plight and calamities they were even worse, both to each other and to their leader. 012 Such disunity took hold of them as was never among the Greeks or the Barbarians, and they were in danger of being destroyed by it, until they were saved by Moses, who set aside their abuse and the fact that they had almost put him to death. 013 God did not want them to be ruined, and despite their disregard for their Legislator and the commandments he had given them by Moses, he saved them from the troubles of this sedition which, without his providential care, would have overwhelmed them. First I will explain the cause of the sedition and then how Moses dealt with it.

2.

014 Korah, a Hebrew of notable family and wealth, was an eloquent man, gifted in persuading the people by his speeches. Seeing the great dignity enjoyed by Moses, he envied him bitterly, being of the same tribe and kin, and thinking himself more worthy of that honour, due to his wealth and not being his inferior by birth.

Now let us turn our attention to the main thrust of this study. Moses speaks to Korah and asks the question concerning their role as Levites Verse 12:

8 Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi, 9 does it seem but 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 tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them; 10 and that He has brought you near [to Him], Korah and all your brothers, sons of Levi with you? Would you seek the priesthood also? 11 Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD; but as for Aaron, who is he that you murmur against him?" 12 Then Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said [defiantly], "We will not come up. 13 Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, but you would also Lord it over us? 14 Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!"

The following passage speaks of how YHVH will choose the one amongst the group who will be near Him — Numbered also among the group is Aaron. Moses' anger fumes against the men but nonetheless he asks YHVH not to destroy everyone because of the sin of one man? YHVH's response is to separate the people away from Dathan, Aviram, Korah and the 250 leaders. The rest of the story tells us that following Moses' declaration, YHVH opened up the ground and the men and their families went into the earth 'Sheol.' Numbers 26 accounts the event in the census and highlights that Korah's sons survived the judgement of YHVH because they took no part in it.

Ch26: **8** The son of Pallu was Eliab, **9** and the sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram. The same Dathan and Abiram were the community officials who rebelled against Moses and Aaron and were among Korah's followers when they rebelled against the Lord. **10** The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them along with Korah, whose followers died when the fire devoured the 250 men. And they served as a warning sign. **11 The line of Korah, however, did not die out.**

On a side note, we see the songs of the sons of Korah included among the 'tehilim', the book of Psalms.

The judgement of the Lord tells us that those who have contempt for the LORD will suffer the fate common to all men; a natural death shall not come to them.

Now, you would have thought that the people would have learned a lesson, wouldn't you? But oh no! The very next day they complain again to Moses and Aaron. YHVH appeared at the tent of meeting and tells the men to move away from the assembly as He is going to destroy them. Once again Moses and Aaron plead for mercy and are told to make atonement for the people because the anger of the YHVH has gone out. The plague had already been released. Moses takes the censer of atonement and stands between the people. On His return to the tent of meeting with Aaron, the plague is stopped.

Chapter 17 :16 -27 tells us once again that YHVH will prove whom He has elected and reaffirms Aaron's place among the Levites by showing the people the blossomed staff of Aaron and confirming it as a sign to any future rebellion and the grumbling nature of the people.

You can imagine the fear now among a people who could not help but grumble over every least thing. They would have to change their ways and learn to do that which YHVH had instructed them to do – 'Live by Faith'.

The lack of faith or not trusting in YHVH is rebellion. It is rebellion against that which is true and trustworthy - the very word of God.

The story of Korah and his 250 cohorts who were also 'magistrates' according to the Midrash, alludes to the rebellion that took place in heaven when Ha'satan rebelled against YHVH. His punishment was to fall to earth and eventually in the judgement to come be consigned to the abyss beneath the earth.

We also witness the establishment of the earthly priestly role and the staff of Aaron the High Priest representing the authority of YHVH. It was this rod that swallowed up the serpents of Pharaoh and caused the water of the Nile to turn to blood. The blossoming branch is representing the tree of life and the authority and rule of Yeshua Himself. The symbolism within this text is overwhelming.

In these two references from the Midrash and the Haggadah, we are introduced to the legend of the staff.

(From the Sarajevo Haggadah.) **God created it in the twilight of the sixth day of Creation and delivered it to Adam when the latter was driven from paradise. After it had passed through the hands of Shem, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob successively, it came into the possession of Joseph. On Joseph's death the Egyptian nobles stole some of his belongings, and, among them, Jethro appropriated the staff. Jethro planted the staff in his garden when its marvellous virtue was revealed by the fact that nobody could withdraw it from the ground; even to touch it was fraught with danger to life. This was because the Ineffable Name of God was engraved upon it.**

When Moses entered Jethro's household he read the Name, and by means of it was able to draw up the rod, for which service Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, was given to him in marriage. Her father had sworn that she should become the wife of the man who should be able to master the miraculous rod and of no other.

Midrash: "the staff with which Jacob crossed the Jordan is identical with that which Judah gave to his daughter-in-law, Tamar (Gen. xxxii. 10, 18). It is likewise the holy rod with which Moses worked (Ex. iv. 20, 21), with which Aaron performed wonders before Pharaoh (Ex. vii. 10), and with which, finally, David slew the giant Goliath (I Sam. xvii. 40). David left it to his descendants, and the Davidic kings used it as a sceptre until the destruction of the Temple, when it miraculously disappeared. When the Messiah comes it will be given to him for a sceptre in token of his authority over the heathen."

Friends, our lesson from this week's parsha tells us that YHVH will choose those whose hearts are set on Him and His kingdom purposes. Contention will always arise when people seek their own

ambition and see themselves better or more worthy than YHVH's divinely chosen candidate. These that God chooses, may seem the mostly unlikely or unassuming people, but we cannot fulfil the purposes of God in our own strength. We are told to respect those who God puts in place over us, because they pray for us. The call upon Moses and Aaron were prophetic offices. Moses was a Leader of leaders and in that sense a *King Chief* even before the anointing of Saul and David.

Moses had direct communication with YHVH, and Aaron was to hold the position of High Priest among what would be an earthly foreshadow, a serving priesthood unto the Lord.

If we choose to live by faith, then we observe the blessings of having faith. If we don't, then we can conclude that we don't have the benefits. (Deut 28). The Lord desires that we live by faith (Romans 1:17) or by trusting Him because it was this trust that was broken twice — once in heaven as Ha'satan, convinced a third of the angels to follow him, and second, in the Garden of Eden where the humans were also persuaded to mistrust God by the serpent.

We have to realise that we are living in a fallen world, one where evil or adversity conflict with honest intent and practice. Living in Faith is basically God's provision of protection from the fallout from this fallen world. However, we must be acutely aware that we do live in such a world and that we are as equally touched by it.

We don't have to go into any in-depth theological debate here except to understand that by accepting YHVH's precious gift of salvation we can become partakers in this covenant of trust. As an analogy, if you come into my house or grow up in my house, I will look after you so long as you obey the family rules. If you choose to disrespect my family or me regardless of whether you are family or not, then I will not protect you. You will either decide to leave my house, or I will ask you as politely as possible to leave. You cannot come into my house and receive my hospitality and goodness and then decide to rebel against it and do what you want.

The Levites in this week's portion chose to do just that — to rebel against the authority of God upon an anointed and appointed person. However, though it may seem that Moses was their focus, in reality their rebellion was against God.

Moses was elected by God and was accepted by the people to lead and to hold court with YHVH — teach them the law of YHVH and to maintain tribal rule amongst the leaders. His prowess as a leader in battle led the Hebrews through many a conflict.

The lesson we learn from this is that with every true leader YHVH establishes a vision and a purpose. Prophecy also plays an important part in establishing their positions. This empowerment or grace may last for a lifetime or until the task is done. It is an absolute presumption that roles of service to the body remain static, and many today, though obviously called, have not progressed, simply because they just refuse to give up or cannot see the times when YHVH is moving them on.

A leader within an army must always be prepared to receive new orders. Being unable to accept commands from a higher authority will lead to failure. In ministry, in particular, refusal to conform to God's *Will*, will lead to frustration, stagnation or lack of growth.

Moses' rebuff of the rebels is one where he highlights the role that has been given to them. They were to be a select group among the tribes of Israel who would hold the priestly rank and serve YHVH in the temple.

Remember, Korah was the cousin of Moses. It seemed to him that Moses was somehow keeping all this leadership stuff close to his chest, by apportioning the positions among his kin — Moses had some idea of nepotistic rule. Why shouldn't he have a go? After all he was just as capable of ruling too?

The priestly position was not enough for Korah and his troop, and they determined among themselves to designate another. Despite the fact that Moses had proven his divine calling to them time and time again, they wanted to remove him and take control. They accused Moses of

tyranny and nepotism, which was of course unfounded, but ironically Korah would have lived up to his accusation had he lived and succeeded in his coup.

We have confirmed that carnality will overtake a mind lacking in spiritual wisdom. Korah and his group had lost this.

Romans 8:5- Amplified Bible (AMP)

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

We are living in an ever-increasing secular world. Secular thought is invading the culture of YHVH's people, and they look to men more than they do to God. Korah wanted the people to look to him, not to God. He believed he was something that he was not and that the roles given to his clan by God was just not enough.

Friends, when people deny the influence of God in our world, He turns them over to delusions and to a wicked and debauched mind. Idolatry is now the norm because the focus on oneself epitomises the very act. The emphasis on sexual sin, homosexuality, adultery and fornication are the effects of this type of rebellion.

We have faced a danger in the priesthood of the Christian church for far too long. In believing it can become its own authority it has and continues to mislead many today especially in the magnitude of the modern evangelical church mega movements. These mega ministries are powerful and wealthy beyond belief. So was Korah. When their dominion is threatened they seek to throw out or dilute the truth.

Finally, let us approach the subject of leadership. Korah shows us that not all leadership is Godly. Ungodly men from consecrated families can arise to oppose the will of God, but that does not mean that their offspring will be the same. Korah's sons were saved because they refused to take part in the rebellion of their father. Moses brought the leaders of the tribes to himself to counsel and teach the Torah. They had to be led just as Moses was led by the LORD.

Without true divinely appointed leadership, men will fall to their own inclinations. Blindness will come upon them, and they will be unable to hear as they once did. The communication link between them and God becomes blurred. This does not mean that such a position, however, is removed. It can be salvaged through repentance. As with Korah, a person who comes against a divinely chosen leader, opposes YHVH.

In a military context, a person respects the office of rank given by a higher authority and not the man wearing the uniform per se.

As YHVH is preparing His people for the greater exodus to come, He is also preparing those who will carry a Moses anointing to lead and prophesy to this generation. Numbers 11:26.

Korah had the power and position to influence, but just because a person has been called to lead does not mean that he is endued with all knowledge and skill. Leaders need advisors too, and godly counsel at that. We must be careful that we don't find ourselves grumbling when we can help. YHVH will not stand for it. To give Moses the respect he is due, he was called to lead a nation, not a man. That's a different grace. Abusing power and wealth that Korah possessed is the sin of pride.

We often find ourselves in a situation when inadequacy and ineptitude prevail in positions of leadership, but that does not mean that success and prosperity will not come. Those situations are turned around when good counsel is given and received. David did not, after all, become king immediately. He had to be prepared and he made a lot of mistakes during his reign.

Before we leave, let us remember that Dathan and Aviram, survived the judgements that came upon Egypt. They walked and lived amongst a delivered people; they experienced the power of God for nearly two years, as did Korah. We see that in effect they were saved from the first judgement which brought death only to receive the second because they were party to a rebellion, which seems to reflect the rebellion, in pattern, to that which happened in heaven, with Ha'Satan.

As we walk in the wilderness, we see that it too, is a fore-shadow, a picture image of our own walk toward salvation and the promised land. Along the way there will be many who will seek to turn us back to the old ways and entice us to rebel against God. Such persons walk with the spirit of rebellion and witchcraft. In this sense we truly need to be careful — working out our salvation in fear and trepidation. The spirit that possessed Korah is as much alive today as it was then.

Finally, we must remember, a leader who prospers is one who works in partnership with God. Though the Lord may choose us to work with, we must all begin at the bottom of the ladder, perhaps just as Jacob did. Those who understand their position and remain in humble service to God have their feet planted on solid ground. For the one who assumes a position, they stand upon something of lesser foundation. The ground may open up for them at any time.

Shalom
Until next time.
Shabbat Shalom
Grant Marshall: Co-founder Arrows of Ephrayim Ministries.

Haftarah Korah: 1 Samuel 11:14 -12:22
B'rit Hadashah suggested readings: Matthew 26:13-24, 2 Timothy 2:8, Jude 1-25



Numbers 6:

24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.

[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom

[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

Glossary

*Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (Aggadah) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (halakha), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (Tanakh)*

*Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)*

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**), otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

'Antiquities of the Jews' 1st century historian Flavius Josephus wrote around AD 93 or 94. The 20 volumes contain an account of history of the Jewish people.

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi , whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides- 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.