

200909-4 Nu 16, 1-40, Korah's Rebellion—CThurman

We now come to the episode of the great rebellion that was evidently led by a man named Korah. This same man is referenced once in the NT epistle of Jude, in verse 11: Cór-ē is the same person. Jude names Core with two other infamous persons from OT Scripture: Cain and Balaam. Cain has a way. Balaam has an error. And Korah has a contradiction. He is noted here in Numbers chapter 16 for contradicting Moses, Aaron, and the LORD.

gainsaying, ἀντιλογία, a dat. sing. of the noun ἀντιλογία, ἀντί against, contradiction + λέγω, to say; ἀντιλογία is tss. a strife, a contradiction, and a gainsaying; the verb ἀντιλέγω, is tss. to speak against, to deny, to contradict, to answer again.

Through our studies through the book of Numbers we have read that the LORD appointed to all the tribes of Israel the places where they may camp around the tabernacle. The twelve tribes of Israel were situated afar off from the tabernacle (Manasseh and Ephraim, the sons of Joseph were counted as the sons of Jacob and as part of the tribes of Israel, cf. Ge.48.5) and the tribe of Levi was situated near to it. The tribe of Levi was divided into four camps: the Kohathites on the south side nearby; Gershonites on the west side nearby, and the Merarites, on the north side nearby, & Moses, Aaron and his sons constituted the Aaronic priesthood located nearby on the east side of the tabernacle. This arrangement for all of the camps was observed until the nation of Israel arrived to Canaanland. It was the tribe of Levi that served the LORD about the tabernacle in behalf of all of Israel. Aside from helping Aaron and his sons minister about the sacrifices, the Kohathites were responsible for the transportation of all the furniture, inside and outside of the tabernacle, with the various accoutrements and the vail, which they bear on their shoulders. (cf. Nu.3.29, 31; 7.9) The Gershonites were responsible for the software: the curtains, coverings and ropes. (cf. Nu.3.23, 25, 26) And the Merarites, the hardware: the bars, boards, pillars, sockets, etc. (cf. Nu.3.35, 36) And Aaron and his sons served directly with the offerings and sacrifices as well as tended to the sanctuary, shewbread, incense, and lampstand and oversaw the other families of Levi in their duties. (cf. Nu.4.16; 19, 27, 28,33) Moses and Aaron served together as overseers in Israel, but Moses was the primary figure over Israel. (cf. Nu.33.1; He.3.5) This was the order which the LORD was pleased to set up for Israel. And it was against this order that Korah

rebelled. Korah was evidently a prominent Kohathite that stood with a couple of prominent figures of the tribe of Reuben, named Dathan and Abiram. (All from the *southside*.)

1 ¶ *Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi,*

By considering these names we discover that Korah is cousin to Moses and Aaron. Jacob begets Levi. (cf. Ge.29.34) Levi begets Kohath. (cf. Ge.46.11) Kohath begets Amram, father to Moses and Aaron. Kohath also bare a son named Izhar. And Izhar's son is Korah. (cf. Ex.6.18, 20, 21)

Incidentally, this lends more proof to the fact that the nation of Israel was in Egypt for only 210 years, not 400 or 430 as some misinterpret certain Scriptures to say. (cf. Ge.15.13; Gal.3.17)

Jacob was 130 years of age when he stood before Pharaoh. He lived in Egypt for 17 years, and died there in 2255 since creation. (cf. Ge.49.9, 28) All of Jacob's sons and daughters (Ge.30.21; 46.15) came with him into Egypt, which sons included Levi. With the information was have available Levi was probably about 56-60 years of age when Jacob came into Egypt. Levi lived 137 years. Meaning 81 of the years of his life was spent in Egypt. Levi died about 2319-2323 since creation. Levi had three sons, Kohath, Gershon and Merari born to him before he came into Egypt. (Ge.46.11) Kohath lived for 133 years. (cf. Ex.6.18) He must have died, along with his brothers Gershon and Merari in Egypt. But Kohath begat Amram, and Amram begat Moses. Now Moses was 80 years of age when the LORD raised him up to lead Israel out from Egyptian bondage. He was 40 when he fled from the wrath of Pharaoh. He spent 40 years in Midian and then came to lead Israel out of Egypt. (Ac. 7.23-29 [since creation 2,408]; Ex.7.7 [Ac.7.30, since creation, 2,448]; Deu.31.2 since creation 2,488) There are only five generations from Jacob to Moses: Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses. If Moses was 80 years of age when He led Israel out from Egypt (2,448 since creation and Jacob was 130 when he stood before Pharaoh (since creation 2,238) then the total number of years that the nation of Israel was in Egypt is 210. This fact cannot be contradicted. Anyone that will track the information provided in the Bible can prove this for themselves.

1 ¶ *Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eli'ab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men:*

Korah is only a representative of any of the Levites that have aligned themselves with him. This does not suggest that the Kohathites as a whole have united with him against Moses any more than it implies that the names Dathan and Abiram represents the whole tribe of Reuben. Rather,

3 And they gathered themselves together against
particularly these four

gathered themselves together, וַיִּקְהָלוּ, Niphal (simple pass.) fut. of קָהַל, *to gather or assemble themselves together*; **Nu.16.3; 20.2.**

against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you,

Too much of what? Of a leadership position? Of a prominent role? These men imply that Moses and Aaron had *appointed* themselves to be princes over Israel.

Nu.16.13 Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

Moses has this complaint lodged against him even before Israel had been delivered from Egyptian bondage.

Ac.7.35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

...

39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt ...

The truth is, in the beginning, when Moses had suffered rejection by his own brethren he attempts to avoid any kind of a leadership role in Israel.

Ex.4.1 ¶ And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

...

10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

...

13 And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

14 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, **seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?**

lift ye up yourselves, תִּתְנַשְׂאוּ, Hithpael (reflexive) fut. of נָשָׂא, tss. to lift, carry, bear, to suffer, to take away, to forgive.

The point is that only those that the LORD chooses for a certain work can possibly be holy for that work. The LORD chose Moses, Aaron and his sons to serve in the priesthood. He did not choose others. That is the LORD's prerogative isn't it?

Mt.20.15 *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*

4 And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face:

he fell upon his face – is an expression that appears to be a show of humility.

Ge 17:3 *And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying*

...

Jos 5:14 *And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?*

1Sa 20:41 *And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.*

2Sa 9:6 *Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!*

I think Moses, who was a man of such a gentle character, was shocked to see men act so brashly against the grace and will of God for His people.

Nu 12:3 *(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)*

5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company,
[Levitical] (vss. 7, 8, sons of Levi)

saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his,
acknowledge

even ... will show, וַיִּדַע, Hiphil (causative act.) fut. of יָדַע, tss. to know, to show, to acquaint, to comprehend, to understand, to discern, to acknowledge, to tell.

and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

will ... cause to come near, Hiphil (causative act.) pret. of קָרַב, tss. to approach, to come near, to be at hand, to bring, to make ready, etc.

to come near – would mean to come nearest in the service of the LORD as Moses, Aaron and His sons came. The Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites (sons of Levi) were certainly near, but they were not content with that. He (they) wanted the priesthood.

8 And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

9 And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

and seek ye the priesthood also?
[of Aaron]

It wasn't enough that the LORD had called Korah and the Levites to come into special service, but he (and they desired) to usurp the function of priesthood. Little did they know that Aaron and His sons were subject to judgment for deviating in the services of the LORD. (cf. Ex.28.35; 30.20, 21; Le.8.35; 16.2, 13) Remember what happened to Nadab and Abihu when they offered the strange fire of incense and directly contradicted the will of God? (cf. Lev.10.1, 2) For anyone to presume upon the office of the priesthood was certain judgment.

Nu 3:10 And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

11 For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

Moses, in so many words asks them, 'Why raise a complaint against Aaron when it is the LORD against whom you have murmured.

12 ¶ And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

It is at this place that the name of On, son of Peleth (of the tribe of Reuben) is no longer mentioned. Moses didn't call for On, but only for the brothers, Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab (also of the tribe of Reuben) to come to him. Outside of this chapter Dathan and Abiram are mentioned three more times and always with reference to this episode. (cf. Nu.26.9; Deu.11.6; Ps.106.17) Did On have a change of heart? Did he withdraw himself from

this error? I don't know, but that is a possibility. Isn't it interesting that in the NT book of Jude the name of Korah is mentioned; he with two others named, Cain and Balaam? Clearly, these were wicked men. Men and women like them today are wicked. They might be eloquent, debonair, or intellectual (2Co.11.13-15), but if their words are not the word of the Lord and their works the works of God they are wicked, imposters, hypocrites. Of such persons the Bible tells us that their words are *great swelling words* (2Pe.2.18; Jude 16) *feigned words* (2Pe.2.3), *words to no profit* (2Ti.2.14), *vain words* (Ep.5.6); *enticing words* (1Co.2.4) and *good words and fair speeches* (Ro.16.18). It is with these words and their carnality that they attempt to draw away disciples (Ac.20.30) after them and lead them into error. (Gal.2.13; Eph.4.14; He.13.7-10)

2Pe 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

Some of us, because of carelessness and neglect might find ourselves falling for their crafty errors and cunning wresting of Scripture. If I could cite the name of On here, I think he came to himself, that is he saw the error of the wicked for what it was, and the danger there was of ruining the rest of His life for Christ, and then was recovered. Some of us have come into these places and been recovered through the love and faithfulness of the brethren. This is what I see Jude addressing near the end of his epistle.

Jude 20 But ye, beloved ...

21 Keep yourselves (v.20, [How? By] building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost) in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (implying 'at His coming)

And here is where I see the OT type of the recovery of On today.

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

[Or, And on the one hand, you show mercy of some, making a difference:]

of some – seems to refer to some that have gotten themselves wrapped up and deceived by those carrying the error of Cain, of Balaam, or of Core. Falling for those who *have gone in the way of Cain, or ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, or have perished* (ἀπώλοντο, 3rd pl. aor. ind. mid. of the verb ἀπόλλυμι, destroyed, marred, lost themselves, their lives) *in the gainsaying of Core.*

making a difference, διακρινόμενοι, nom. pl. masc. part. pres. mid. of διακρίνω, *to discern, to doubt, to content, to waver.*

23 And others

And others – with reference to the same group ...

save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

[Or, And on the other hand, you save others with fear (fear for what these that have been overcome of the error of the wicked haven't any idea what is coming, the dangers they put themselves into and the eternal loss they shall suffer if they never recover. [Mt.19.21; 1Co.3.14; Col.2.18; 2Jn.8]), pulling [snatching] them out of the fire ...]

pulling, ἀρπάζοντες, nom. pl. masc. part. pres. act. of the verb ἀρπάζω, *tss. to take by force, to catch away, to catch, to pluck, to pull.*

fire – a fire which burns all dross; and a life sown after the flesh is a completely wasted life, a life burned up, wasted, destroyed, marred by error. (1Co.3.15; 5.5)

Satan is a crafty enemy and seeks to destroy the life of every child of God. (cf. 1Pe.5.8)

1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

We are not, or should not be ignorant of the methods. (cf. 2Co.2.11) We can only resist him by being steadfast in the faith. (cf. 1Pe.5.9)

1Pe.5.9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith ...

We should not think that we have the power to rebuke him. (cf. Jude 9) Folks that are ignorant of the truth are the ones that think they can live as they please and then when they get into trouble all they have to say is 'I rebuke you Satan,' and everything will just be fine. Well, that is not how it works at all. We must know the word of God and believe it. Believing means that it is my life. It means that my life will be governed by the word of God.

When the word of God says that I should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers that I will watch the company I keep.

When the word of God says that a man should not touch a woman outside of marriage he doesn't engage in premarital sex.

When the word of God says that I should abstain from all appearance of evil, I am concerned about what things look like to others.

When the word of God says that children are to honor their parents they that believing child will honor his parents.

When the word of God directs men to be the head of their house men that believe that will lead their house, yes sometimes in direct contradiction to the will of the wife.

When the word of God directs women to be silent in the congregation they will be quiet.

When the word of God says that we should do our work as to the Lord that is what we will learn to do.

When the word of God says to parents to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord their will is to that end, sink or swim.

When the word of God says that we ought marry in the Lord we seek to marry only those in the Lord.

The word of is my life! The word of God is our life. Right? Isn't that how important it is to us to do the will of God. I am happiest when I know I've obeyed the Lord, and I am of the most miserable creatures on this side of eternity when I fail Him.

I know it is my opinion, but I think On was recovered from his error. He probably regretted ever having identified with the likes of a man like Korah. We can get caught up in, overcome by sin, an error, a trespass, an offense, and we can be recovered too, by the grace of God. And He uses you and me in this congregation to do that.

Dathan and Abiram's complaint:

13 Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

you make thyself a prince, תִּשְׁתַּרְרָה, Hithpael (reflexive) fut. of שָׁרַר; the Hebrew is כִּי־תִשְׁתַּרְרָה עָלֵינוּ גַּמ־הַשְׁתַּרְרָה, as Wigram notes: making thyself a prince, thou make thyself a prince.

And so Dathan and Abiram accuse him of being a self-appointed despot. They probably thought that Moses did what he did because Aaron was his brother. (Nepotism)

Look at what these men said of Egypt. How they loved the world. They called Egypt, not the land of promised that was before them, the land that flows with milk and honey. It is as true today as it was back then.

1Jo 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

These folks didn't love God nor the people of God.

14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.

15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD,

wroth, וַיִּסַּח, Qal fut. of חָרָה, tss. to be wroth, to be hot (with wrath), to be kindled, to be displeased, to be angry, to burn (in anger), to be grieved.

Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

respect, הִתְפַּחַח, Qal fut. of פָּנָה, tss. to respect, to turn to, to look, to regard, to behold.

have I hurt, הִרַעַתִּי, Hiphil (causative act.) pret. of רָעַע, tss. to displease, to deal ill, to do evil, to evil entreat, to afflict, to do hurt, to do wickedly, to do worse, etc.

16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow:

17 And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer.

250 brass censers (v.6, 39) for 250 princes of Israel caught up in the rebellion.

18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:

At this it appears that the entire nation has become infected with Korah's sedition. In the following verse (vss.21, 22) Moses and Aaron would intercede, not for these wicked men, but for Israel, to turn the LORD from destroying the entire nation.

and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation.

20 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume (אָכַל, eat) them in a moment.

22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

23 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

24 Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

The congregation of Israel was to separate themselves from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

25 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.

consumed, the verb אָכַל; verb tss. to consume, to perish, to destroy.

Moses and Aaron did not intercede for these wicked men, but for the children of Israel that had gotten caught up in their error.

27 So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

28 And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind.

Moses affirms before all of Israel that the LORD has appointed them to their service. The accusations that we appointed ourselves over you is false.

29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me.

30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.

Sheol

swallow, verb בָּלַע, tss. to swallow, to devour, to cover, to destroy; vss. 30, 32, 34.

quick, meaning 'alive.'

into the pit, הַשְּׂאֵלָה, sh^e-o-lah, defective for הַשְּׂאוֹלָה, see the noun הַשְּׂאוֹלָה; tss. the grave, hell; בּוֹר, bōr, is the pit, a hole in the ground (comp. to Ps.141.7, bones are at the grave's mouth, not in the grave itself), but הַשְּׂאוֹלָה, is the place where the dead are gathered and is synonymous to the Gr. ᾍδης, Hades.

31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them:

32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses,

houses – This cannot mean that the permanent structures of these men were removed because they lived in tents. *Houses* seem to refer to the *office as fathers*. (cf. Nu.17.2 They had households as fathers and this was removed when the LORD took them alive down into hell. I can't be sure, but it might mean that the *houses* of these men were no more a part of the governance in Israel.

and all the men that [appertained] unto Korah, and all [their] goods.

goods, noun רְכוּשׁ, r^e-koosh, tss. goods, substance, riches.

שָׁאֲלָהּ, sh^e-o-lah

33 They, and all that [appertained] to them, went down alive into the pit,

went down, יָרַד, tss. to descend, to go down, to run down, to light down, to cast down, to carry down; **v.30.**

and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from
over failed, were undone
escaped not

perished, the verb אָבַד, tss. to destroy, to be undone, not escaped, to fail, to be lost, to be broken.

among the congregation.

When the judgment of God falls there is no escape.

34 And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

35 ¶ And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed
devoured, ate, אָכַל

the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

36 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

37 Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed.

38 The censers of these sinners against their own souls,
'sinners against their own souls'

let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar:

or (?), make them into beaten plates for a covering of the brazen altar

broad plates, רָקַע, ra-qa[g], a verb tss. to stamp, to spread abroad, to stretch out, to spread forth, to spread abroad, to spread over, to beat.

Being these are brass censers the altar must be a reference to the brazen altar located in the court of the tabernacle.

for they offered them before the LORD, therefore they are hallowed:

Though sinners had offered, the vessels utilized in the service of the LORD were holy.

and they ***shall be a sign unto the children of Israel.***
the censers made into beaten plates

sign, תִּיָּזָה, ohth, tss, sign, token, mark.

***39 And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar:
40 To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the LORD; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the LORD said to him by the hand of Moses.***

The LORD chose that Aaron and His sons may come near to Him and service Him in behalf of all of the children of Israel. No others should presume upon their office, even to offer incense. Now through the remainder of their sojourn, when they see the brass plates covering the brazen altar they will be reminded of Korah's rebellion and why the LORD judged them so.

I believe the man named On provided a good opportunity to consider how some even today might be overcome by a fault, a sin, an offense and yet be recovered. It might be that the Lord would use one of us in that work of recovery. But for that we must be built upon our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, in the love of God, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Does that speak of me and you? I hope so. Let us be a blessing to one another in the service of Christ.