

POWER STRUGGLE!

(Scripture. Numbers 16:1-3)

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3They 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 in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

Introduction: This story is a warning for all of us. Don't try to pull down the leader whom God has appointed. People should not support a rebel leader blindly. If they do, they will be punished along with the rebel leader also. Sometimes, we create unnecessary problems in God's kingdom. Let us learn from this story, and avoid this kind of power struggle.

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Before we dig into this story, let us see their genealogy. It will show that it was a power struggle among the relatives!

Slide 1

Aaron/Moses genealogy

Levi/Kohath/Amran/ (Aaron and Moses)

Slide 2

Korah's genealogy

Levi/Kohath/Izhar/Korah

Moses and Aaron, and Korah were first cousins!

Korah was supported by some of the prominent members from Reuban tribe and two hundred and fifty leaders from the whole congregation. They all came against Moses, and Aaron. What was the reason? They claimed that God is not only amid Moses and

Aaron, but among all the congregation also. So, the priesthood role should not be for Aaron family alone, but for the whole congregation, because every one of them is holy like them?

This is a direct violation of God's law. He said clearly that only Aaron and his descendants can enter the tabernacle. Moses was an exception. No one else was supposed to enter. Korah, his cousin felt that his clan could have been given that privilege also. He felt that Moses and Aaron made up that law to elevate themselves. He gathered support for himself by saying that priesthood is for anyone, thereby contradicting the word of God! Korah felt that Moses was exalting himself above the assembly like a king!

This story is all about power struggle! This kind of fire starts small in a small circle. It may start with criticizing and mocking the leader behind his back. Moses was not eloquent in talking. Paul admits that he was not eloquent in talking either. So, some people may take that as a weakness and feel that their leader is too incompetent to lead.

Such people would try to use their charm and humor to sway few people to follow them and lift themselves up as the informal leader of that group. This is how Absalom; the son of David created his own followers! He charmed his way through show and subtle criticism of the leaders.

This happens in the churches also. A little bitter seed gets sown, and it becomes a tree. If one keeps on criticizing the leader, he will start gathering his own followers who will become negative toward the leader also. But that is not what Jesus told us to do. He gave a clear direction in Mathew chapter 18:15-17

Mathew 18:15-17. 15 Now if your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that ON THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY MATTER MAY BE CONFIRMED. 17 And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, he is to be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Follow the protocol of Jesus before you become overly negative with your brother. If you don't want to follow it, be quiet then. Do not slander.

Korah was manipulative, and he got 250 such people who followed his challenge foolishly! It is so easy to incite people against the leader.

Numbers 16:4-7. 4 When Moses heard this, he fell on his face; 5 and he spoke to Korah and all his group, saying, Tomorrow morning the LORD will make known who is His, and who is holy, and will bring that one near to Himself; indeed, the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself. 6 Do this: take censers for yourselves, Korah and your whole group, 7 and put fire in them, and place incense upon 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!”

Moses fell on his face not to plead for mercy but to plead for patience. Tomorrow morning, Moses says that God will reveal who is holy, and who must be close to Him. Only God can clarify and settle this issue for them. They must all stand before the LORD with their burning incenses. Incense is a symbol of our prayers also. If the LORD approves and answers our prayers, God accepts us. If our prayers are not answered at all, it's time to examine ourselves. Moses insists that God would choose His leader tomorrow also, and Moses warns that these rebels have gone too far.

Numbers 16:8-10. 8Then Moses said to Korah, Hear now, you sons of Levi: 9Is it too small an honor for you that the God of Israel has singled you out from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to perform the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them; 10and that He has brought you near, Korah, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you?

Here we can see the real reasons for their uprising. They were not happy enough to serve the congregation and the Lord in the courtyard of the temple. They wanted to be like Aaron and children serving the Lord inside the tabernacle also.

Vs 16:11 tells us clearly that it was all about power struggle.

Numbers 16:11. 11Therefore you and your whole group are the ones gathered together against the LORD; but as for Aaron, [f]who is he, that you grumble against him?”

Fighting against God's appointed leader is like fighting against God. When you decide to fight against the leader, remember that! There was no need to challenge Aaron or Moses. Sometimes, we get engaged in matters that are highly inappropriate, and totally unnecessary.

Numbers 16:12-14. 12Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said, We will not come up. 13Is it not enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to have us die in the wilderness, but you would also appoint yourself as master over us? 14Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you gouge out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!”

Some of the supporters of Korah refused to come to Moses. Their anger was for a different reason! They were so angry with Moses because he didn't provide them a land of milk and honey as promised. Instead, made them wander around in a hot desert where scorpions and snakes live!

Numbers 16:15-17. 15Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, Pay no attention to their offering! I have not taken a single donkey from them, nor have I done

harm to any of them.” 16Moses said to Korah, You and all your group be present before the LORD tomorrow, you and they along with Aaron. 17And each of you take his censer and put incense on [j]it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, 250 censers; also, you and Aaron shall each bring his censer.”

But Moses commands them to be there the next day with their censers to meet the Lord. The Lord Himself would settle their dispute. Moses was so angry, he prays that the Lord should not accept any of their offerings!

Numbers 16:18,19. 18So they took, each one his own censer, and put fire on it, and placed incense on it; and they stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting, with Moses and Aaron. 19So Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.

Korah brought the whole congregation also to witness this judgement. He thought that the Lord was surely on their side. They took the fire from the altar for their censers and stood before the entrance of the tent of the meeting. Now the Shekinah, the glory of the Lord appeared before them signifying the Lord's arrival.

Numbers 16:20-24. 20Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, so that I may consume them instantly.” 22But they fell on their faces and said, God, the God of the spirits of [m]humanity, when one person sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?” 23Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 24 Speak to the congregation, saying, Get away from the areas around the tents (literally residence!) of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.”

God was angry with the whole congregation also who sympathized with Korah. He was ready to destroy them first! But Moses again pleaded for the congregation and petitioned God not to destroy the whole congregation!

Numbers 16:25-27. 25Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him, 26and he spoke to the congregation, saying, Get away now from the tents of these wicked men, and do not touch anything that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin!” 27So they moved away from the areas around the [o]tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrances of their tents, along with their wives, their sons, and their little ones.

Moses sent a warning to all the congregation to stay away from the dwelling places of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. He warned that God is ready to destroy them.

Dathan and Abiram stood outside their tents with their families.

Numbers 16:28-30. 28Then Moses said, By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these deeds; for it is not my doing. 29If these men die the death of all mankind, or if they suffer the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. 30But if the LORD brings about an entirely new thing and the ground opens its mouth and

swallows them with everything that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, then you will know that these men have been disrespectful to the LORD.”

Moses warns That these people will not die of natural death but a supernatural death and predicts how it would happen exactly!

Numbers 16:31-33. **31**And as he finished speaking all these words, the ground that was under them split open; **32**and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, and all the people who belonged to Korah with all their possessions. **33**So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to [u]Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

The earth split beneath their feet, and all the supporters of Korah were swallowed by the earth, and it closed again. Went down alive to Sheol, an underground world.

Num. 16:34,35. 34Then all Israel who were around them fled at their outcry, for they said, The earth might swallow us!” 35Fire also came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense.

All the people of Israel ran away from that area, thinking that the earth may swallow them also. The 250 men including Korah were consumed by fire from heaven. So, people witnessed God’s divine, supernatural wrath from above as well as below! It is a terrible thing to fall in the hands of the Lord!

What do we learn from this story -

Things may look normal, but suddenly satan may turn people against you. Beware! Like in this story, Korah brought an unusual challenge for no reason.

Power struggle begins with backbiting and criticism of the leader from behind. Rebuke such informal leaders. Like In this story, it starts out small but then it became a huge fire.

People become enablers when they fail to rebuke the informal rebellious leader. Like in the story, people enabled the informal leaders over Moses and Aaron who were God’s appointed leaders.

God will not only punish the rebellious leaders; He will punish his supporters also. Like in the story, the enablers, supporters of Korah were punished by God.

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