

פרשת

קרח

Parashat Korach

*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-18:32, 1 Samuel 11:14-12:22
Luke 18:35-19:28*

Hearing and understanding the Truth, a How to?

וישלח משה, *16:12 Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab; but they said, "We will not come! המעט כי העליטנו מארץ זבת חלב ודבש להמיתנו במדבר כי-תשתרר עלינו גם-השתרר עלינו? 16:13 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? אף לא אל-ארץ זבת חלב ודבש הביאתנו ותתן-לנו 16:14 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? ויחר למשה מאד ויאמר אלי-יהוה אל-תפן אל-מנחתם "We will not come!" 16:15 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."* Notice how these men respond to Moshe concerning his calling them to come and talk. Their response was that Egypt, the land of their bondage, was a land of milk and honey. The rabbis comment on these verses in the following way. *Chizkuni on Bamidbar*

/ Numbers 16:13 Part 1 state the following, “כי תשתרר עלינו גם השׁ” תרר, “but you have also imposed a dictatorship over us!” According to Rashbam, the Torah uses the word גם, usually translated as “also,” both positively and negatively, i.e. as a continuation of something previous, or as an abrupt opposite of something previously stated. Our verse is an example of Datan and Aviram using it in the latter sense as if asking: “are you now going to also (even) act as dictator? Shemot / Exodus 12:32 is such an example where the Pharaoh who had railed against Moses and Aaron all the time, suddenly makes a 180 degree turn by pleading for Moses to bless him also when offering sacrifices to the Jewish G-d. Bamidbar / Numbers 22:33, is another such example where the angel who had not killed anyone tells Bileam that he would have killed not only his ass but also Bileam if he had been at liberty to do so.” Note how the rabbis draw out the two-faced nature of Pharaoh, when it pleased him he asked Moshe to bless him. These people felt that Moshe and his brother were lording over them authority to rule over them as opposed to offering them God’s way for Teshuvah (repentance) which leads to freedom from sin, and the establishment of justice and truth, the basic needs of every individual on this earth. Babbeinu Bahya on Bamidbar / Numbers 13 Part 2 states that by the word “rule” the people meant that “Moshe was the political autocrat over the people and Aaron was the religious autocrat in his capacity as the High Priest.” Moshe had told the people “is it not enough that G’d has set you apart to become Levites, etc.” as referring to the “elevation” the lifting up of the people to a place of higher elevation. The rabbinic thought process follows as the Land of Canaan was situated higher in elevation than that of Egypt which was situated at sea level. The Lord God in heaven was drawing the people nearer to Himself by bringing them into the Promised Land. This is illustrated at this time the people were at a high plateau in the wilderness and the imagery that is given them is to the Lord lifting them up to heaven, raising them up to set them in a place of blessing even to having heard the voice of God and receiving His holy Words (mitzvot). The people on the other hand felt Eretz Yisrael was punishment and did not want the blessing of God. The people accused Moshe of bringing them to a place where all one could do was to die. Rashi’s explanation to this question is, “Perhaps we can say that Datan and Aviram did not want to justify their refusal

to go and see Moses merely because he had brought them to a place where all one could do was die. They implied that even if all he had done was not to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey this would be sufficient reason for them to decline his invitation as Moses had failed to deliver on his promise.” Remember that the people did not go straight up to the Land of Canaan but went into the wilderness to the Mountain of Sinai. They were working up to their next argument: *“will you put out the eyes of these men?”* Ibn Ezra interprets the verse as *“do you want to gouge out the eyes of those men so that they cannot see”* (what you are doing to them?) The subject of **הָאֲנָשִׁים הָהֵם** are the people who had left Egypt, Datan and Aviram saying that these people had not been blind enough not to see how their lot had deteriorated under Moses’ rule. It is like someone saying about others: *“these people must have their eyes shut, this is why they do not see.”* The people are blaming Moshe for their own sin, *“Is it not sufficient that you did us the evil of causing us to die in the desert, but even the good that you promised us you did not do.”* It is significant to note that the Torah does not quote the people saying *“we will not go,”* or *“we will not come,”* but writes *“we will not ascend, go up.”* What this teaches us is that the people refused to ascend, to go up to the Lord, to draw near, and to pray. This is very important to us today as it is related to God’s Word. How often are we taught the law of God has passed away? The instructions (Torah) of God were given to cause us to ascend, to raise up, to draw near, and to have fellowship with God our Father in heaven. The Midrashic approach to these words of Datan and Aviram was that their mouth betrayed them as having refused to ascend, to go up, not simply to the Promised Land, or entering willingly into the blessing of God. Something more is at stake here. They refused God’s Word, they refused to walk in God’s ways, and by doing so they prepared the way of their destruction by going to die with their own tongues (the words they say). This is why the rabbis have so much to say concerning Lashon Hara (the evil tongue) and its connection to all other sins (idolatry, immorality, adultery, murder, selfishness, pride, covetousness, etc.). If we are not following in the footsteps of the Messiah Yeshua, we may mistake Egypt for a land flowing with milk and honey. The deception here is great, especially when one teaches that the divine commands are of no importance to us today. When we truly seek the walk in the

footsteps of the Messiah, the truth and life that is found by faith in him will become a part of our lives to produce the fruit that God is looking for. Without faith in Yeshua the Messiah, and the empowering of God's Spirit in our lives, it is impossible to produce the fruit God our Father is looking for. Do you have this kind of faith in Yeshua the Messiah?

ב וַיִּקְמוּ לְפָנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְאַנְשֵׁים מִבְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲמִשִּׁים וּמֵאָתַיִם נְשִׂאֵי עֵדָה קְרָאֵי מוֹעֵד אַנְשֵׁי-שֵׁם: ג וַיִּקְהֵלוּ עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם רַב-לָכֶם פִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה כְּלָם קְדוֹשִׁים וְכָל-הָעָם יְהוָה וְיִמְדוּעַ תִּתְנַשְּׂאוּ עַל-קְהַל יְהוָה: *16:2 and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. 16:3 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 in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?'* (NASB) These rebellious men are said to have been leaders within the congregation of Israel. A leader is supposed to be leading the people in the righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth of God. Instead they are causing a rebellion against Moshe, Aaron, and the God of Israel. As we read on in the text, Moshe responds to them in the following way, ד וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה וַיִּפֹּל עַל-פָּנָיו: ה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל-קָרַח וְאֶל-כָּל-עֵדָתוֹ לֵאמֹר בִּקֹּר וַיַּדַּע יְהוָה אֶת-אַשֶׁר-לוֹ וְאֶת-הַקְּדוֹשׁ וְהַקְּרִיב אֵלָיו וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר-בּוֹ יִקְרִיב אֵלָיו: ו זֹאת עָשׂוּ קְחוּ-לָכֶם מַחְתֹּת קָרַח וְכָל-עֵדָתוֹ: ז וַתָּנוּ-בָהֶן | אִשׁ וְשִׁמּוֹ עָלֵיהֶן | קְטֹרֶת לְפָנֵי יְהוָה מִחֹר וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה הוּא הַקְּדוֹשׁ רַב-לָכֶם: *16:4 When Moses heard this, he fell on his face; 16:5 and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, 'Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself. 16:6 'Do this: take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company, 16:7 and put fire in them, and lay 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!'* (NASB) Reading through the text, these men say you have gone far enough and interestingly, Moshe replied with the same, you have gone far enough you sons of Levi. This seems quite relevant to the events taking place today. Recently in the news, James Comey testified

about his role in the Russian investigation, Trump, and the leaks to the media. I heard Jay Sekulow, the Chief Counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLI), state on the radio that Comey committed a federal crime by leaking classified information to the media. What is interesting to watch on the news following his testimony is half the headlines say Comey's testimony was good for President Trump and the other half says it was bad for him. The opinions seem to be based upon a presupposition of who is guilty, and the United States media seems to live in a bipolar reality. This leads us to the need to take matters into our own hands as individuals to thoroughly study the matter and come to conclusions about the truth based upon the evidence. The truth represents only one reality, right? What we can understand based upon the television reporting of the news is that *"each man sees what he wants to see in the story."* A large portion of this week's Torah portion is related to a struggle with leadership. It seems that *"each man was seeing what he wanted to see"* on the role of leadership. Each man makes decisions in his life based upon the narratives that he tells himself in the imagination of his heart. This is exactly what is going on in the leadership within the United States government today. In the Torah portion, there was a struggle with leadership because the people want someone put in place that will also give what they perceived as *"power and authority over the nation."* In addition to this, Moshe continues to say the following, ט הַמַּעַט מִכֶּם כִּי-הִבְדִּיל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְכֶם מֵעַדְתָּ, יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַקְרִיב אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו לַעֲבֹד אֶת-עֲבֹדַת מִשְׁכַּן יְהוָה וְלַעֲמֹד לְפָנַי הָעֵדוּת לְשִׁרְתָּם: י וַיִּקְרַב אֹתָךְ וְאֶת-כָּל-אֶחָיִךְ בְּנֵי-לֵוִי אִתָּךְ וּבִקְשׁוּתָם גַּם-כָּהֲנָה: יא לָכֵן אֹתָהּ וְכָל-עַדְתְּךָ הַנֹּעְדִים עָלַי-יְהוָה וְאַהֲרֹן מִה-הוּא כִּי תִלּוּנוּ [תִּלְיִנוּ] עָלָיו: יב וַיִּשְׁלַח מֹשֶׁה לְקָרָא לְדָתָן וְלָאֲבִירָם בְּנֵי אֶלְיָאֵב וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא נַעֲלֶה: *16:9 is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of 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; 16:10 and that He has brought you near, Korah, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking for the priesthood also? 16:11 'Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord; but as for Aaron, who is he that you grumble against him?' 16:12 Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said, 'We will*

not come up. (NASB) Note how this attitude of rebellion extended so far in their lives that Datan and Aviram said they will not come up. The people and the leaders who were causing these issues were not willing to come to the Tabernacle and stand before God. As a result, this led to an event that had never been seen before in the history of mankind and has never been seen since. The people who joined themselves to rebellion and sin, the end result was they perished, all of them (*i.e. tents, family, children, and all that they owned*). Similar to today, there is a focus on leadership issues when they refuse to meet with Moshe. They asked rhetorically whether Moshe was to rule over them, in view of what they saw as a record of failure (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:13*). Korach and his other followers also had related concerns (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:3*). The point is they saw the story differently based upon their perception of the events that had taken place, they were living in their own reality. Is this what is going on in the nation today (*USA, consider also the worlds view on Islam*)? Is this what was going on in the Torah portion? Was this simply a matter of personal opinion or perspective? This attitude led to the total destruction of not only the people, but also their families and all their possessions. Moshe warned the people to move away from everything they had, because even their possessions were capable of deceiving the people. Let's discuss these things further in this week's Torah portion.

This week the Scriptures we are looking at are *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-22*.

Bamidbar / Numbers 16:1-22

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 action, 16:2 and they rose up before Moses, together with some of the sons of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, chosen in the assembly, men of renown. 16:3 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 in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?' 16:4 When Moses heard this, he fell on his face; 16:5 and he spoke to Korah and all his company,

saying, 'Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself. 16:6 'Do this: take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company, 16:7 and put fire in them, and lay 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!' 16:8 Then Moses said to Korah, 'Hear now, you sons of Levi, 16:9 is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of 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; 16:10 and that He has brought you near, Korah, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking for the priesthood also? 16:11 'Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord; but as for Aaron, who is he that you grumble against him?' 16:12 Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said, 'We will not come up. 16:13 'Is 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 lord it over us? 16:14 'Indeed, 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 put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!' 16:15 Then Moses became very angry and said to the Lord, 'Do not regard their offering! I have not taken a single donkey from them, nor have I done harm to any of them.' 16:16 Moses said to Korah, 'You and all your company be present before the Lord tomorrow, both you and they along with Aaron. 16:17 'Each of you take his firepan and put incense on it, and each of you bring his censer before the Lord, two hundred and fifty firepans; also you and Aaron shall each bring his firepan.' 16:18 So they each took his own censer and put fire on it, and laid incense on it; and they stood at the doorway of the tent of meeting, with Moses and Aaron. 16:19 Thus Korah assembled all the congregation against them at the doorway of the tent of meeting. And the glory of the Lord

appeared to all the congregation. 16:20 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 16:21 'Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly.' 16:22 But they fell on their faces and said, 'O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?' (NASB)

To summarize what had taken place in this week's Torah portion, certain leaders from among the people decided to take action and take hold of the priesthood as their own going against the command of God. These people claimed that Moshe and Aaron had gone far enough. They believed Moshe and Aaron were lording over the people power and authority, something they wanted for themselves. Moshe claims the God of Israel separated the Levites as holy and doing the service of the Tabernacle, and yet they wanted the priesthood as well. Moshe says this is synonymous to gathering against the Lord God of Israel. The basic conclusion is to reject the command of God as a way of life is to take a stand against the God of Israel. What does this say about the modern theologies of today that speak against the commands of God as a way of life for God's people? They not only grumbled against God but also against Aaron. Their claims come on the heels of having rejected entering into the promised land. They were unwilling to admit their own unfaithfulness in the Lord and wanted to pass the blame to Moshe and Aaron. Their refusal, fear, and unfaithfulness led them to where they are today, and they blamed Moshe saying, *16:13 'Is 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 lord it over us? 16:14 'Indeed, 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 put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!'* (NASB) Notice their claim was Moshe brought them from a land flowing with milk and honey. Their opinion was that Egypt was a place of prosperity (milk and honey), and a desirable place to live. Their bondage and sin was not considered something to be rejected. They rest their case on the idea that Moshe did not bring the people into the land, refusing to see it was their own sin and rebellion that led to their present situation, and their sin and rebellion continues up until this day.

Notice what the Lord says the next day when everyone is standing before the Lord, וַיִּדְבֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: כֹּה הַבְּדִלּוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַזֹּאת וְאַכַּלְתֶּם אֹתָם כְּרִגְעָה: כֹּב וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל אֱלֹהֵי 16:20 *Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 16:21 ‘Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them instantly.’ 16:22 But they fell on their faces and said, ‘O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?’ (NASB)* Was the Lord referring to the entire nation of Israel or only to this group of people? Note when the ground opened up to swallow those rebellious people, everyone else run so they too were not consumed. They may have not separated themselves as far as they should have based upon their response. The goal of the Torah command is to humble our lives by submitting and conforming our ways to God’s ways for His glory. It is in the commands that we draw near to the Lord, through seeking His righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth, and believing in His Messiah being demonstrated by our love for the Lord and walking in His ways.

The rabbis have the following to say concerning Parashat Korach.

Rashi on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:7

רב לכם בני לוי. דָּבַר גָּדוֹל אָמַרְתִּי לָכֶם; וְלֹא טַפְּשִׁים הֵינּוּ, שֶׁכֹּה הַתָּרָה בָּהֶם וְקִבְּלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לְקַרְבִּי! הֵם חָטְאוּ עַל נִפְשׁוֹתָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “אֵת מַחֲתוֹת הַחַטָּאִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּנִפְשֹׁתָם” (במד-בר י”ז), וְקִרַּח שֶׁפָּקַח הֵיךָ מָה רָאָה לְשִׁטּוֹת זֶה? עֵינָיו הִטְעִיתָ וְ, רָאָה שֶׁלְשָׁלַת גָּדוֹלָה יוֹצֵאָה מִמֶּנּוּ — שֶׁמוֹאֵל שֶׁשֶׁקוּל כֹּנָגֵד מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן — אָמַר בְּשִׁבְלֵי אֲנִי נִמְלֵט, וְכִּי מִשְׁמֵרוֹת עוֹמֵד וְתִּלְכֵי בְּנֵי בְּנָיו, כִּלְמַם מִתְנַבְּאִים בְּרוּיַח הַקֹּדֶשׁ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “כָּל אֵלֶּה בְּנִים לְהִימָן” (מלכים א כ”ה), אָמַר אֶפְשָׁר כָּל הַגְּדֵלָה הַזֹּאת עֲתִידָה לְעֵמֵד מִמֶּנִּי וְאֲנִי אֲדוּם?! לְכֹה נִשְׁתַּתַּף לְבֵא לְאוֹתָהּ חִזְקָה, שֶׁשָּׁמַע מִפִּי מֹשֶׁה שֶׁכֵּלֵם אוֹבְדִים וְאַחַד נִמְלֵט, “אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה’ הוּא הַקְּדוֹשׁ” — טְעָה וְתָלָה בְּעֵצָמוֹ, וְלֹא רָאָה יָפָה, לְפִי שֶׁבְּנָיו עָשׂוּ תְּשׁוּבָה, וּמֹשֶׁה הֵיךָ רוֹאֶה. — תַּנְחוּמָא: רַב *means, “It is a great (an important) thing that I have told you, ye sons of Levi”). But were they not*

fools in that although he so sternly warned them they nevertheless undertook to offer! They, however, sinned against their own souls (i.e., they were regardless of their lives) as it is said, (17:3) “the censers of these sinners against their souls”. — But Korah who certainly was a clever (lit., open-eyed) man, what reason had he to commit this folly? His mind’s eye misled him. He saw by prophetic vision a line of great men (more lit., a great chain) descending from him, amongst them the prophet Samuel who was equal in importance to Moses and Aaron together (cf. Psalms 99:6: משה ואהרן בכהניו ושמאל בקראי שמו), and he said to himself, “On his account I shall escape the punishment”. And he further saw twenty-four Mishmars (shifts of Levites who formed the Temple Choir) arising among his grand-children, all of them prophesying by the Holy Spirit, — as it is said, (I Chronicles 25:5) “All these (prominent musicians) were sons of Heiman” (Heiman was a descendant of Korah; cf. I Chronicles 6:18—23). — He said, “Is it possible that all this dignity is to arise from me and I shall remain silent (be myself of no importance)?” On this account he joined the others in order to attain to that prerogative, because he had indeed heard from the mouth of Moses that all else of them would perish and one would escape: “He whom the Lord will choose will be holy”. He mistakenly applied this to himself. But he had not seen correctly, for his sons repented of their rebellious attitude and therefore did not die at that time (cf. Numbers 26:11), and it was from them that Samuel and the Levitical singers were descended. Moses, however, foresaw this. (Midrash Tanchuma, Korach 5).

Rashi states these men were warned and yet sinned against their own souls. He says that Korach’s “*minds-eye*” misled him. He decided to take matters into his own hands based upon his version of reality. This is why we are warned over and over again from the Scriptures to be careful so as not to be deceived. The reason being, a man’s “*minds-*

eye,” the stories that he tells himself, have the capability to lead one to seeing what he wants to see and not seeing the truth. A large portion of this week’s Torah portion is related to this topic of “*each man wanting to see what he wants to see.*” This is why it is so important for us to humble our lives according to God’s Torah being led by God’s Spirit. Rashi goes on to speak of Korach seeing prophetic visions in his minds-eye of his descendents and greatness which led him to be deceived. We should be careful to not allow our imaginations go wild. Our thoughts should be governed by God’s word, and this is why the rabbis have placed so much emphasis upon getting God’s word into our hearts each day. (*i.e. The importance of studying Torah.*)

Sforno states the following on *Bamidbar / Numbers 16:7*.

Sforno on Bamidbar / Numbers 16:7 Part 1

הוא הקדוש הוא לבדו שלא יזכה לזה אלא אחד בלבד וזה אמר למען ייראו וישובו בתשובה ולא יאבדו כי לא יחפוץ הוא הקדוש במות המת: הוא הקדוש *only he is the one accorded the title “holy.” In the test Moses proposes there could be only one winner. Moses made this statement in order to frighten his listeners (as they would become aware of the enormity of the gamble they were going to involve themselves in) and knowing this they might repent and not lose their lives. Just as G’d does not want the sinner to die but to repent, so Moses offered these people the chance to retract and thereby save their lives. (compare Ezekiel 18,32).*

Part 2

רב לכם בני לוי אתם האדם אשר לקרה דבר גדול אתם מטילים עליכם כי יותר יקצוף ה’ עליכם בהיותכם כבר *you, inasmuch as you are considered people belonging to Korach (compare verse 32), are being judged more sternly, exactingly, precisely because due to your superior social position you must lead even more exemplary lives than ordinary Israelites. G’d will be much more angry at you if you*

fail to reflect the nobility you already represent.

Sforno says the way in which Moshe requested the people to offer incense before the Lord should have been a warning sign. Note Datan and Aviram's refusal to come before the Lord at the Tabernacle. They may have foresaw what might happen, and presumed their remaining at home would prevent their destruction. This should have led to their repentance, but it only led to their destruction in another form. If you think there is a way to get around the judgement of God and remain in your sin make a note that this week's Torah portion shows us the Lord God sees and knows all! Sforno says these men were leaders, and due to their leadership role they were held to a higher standard. The Apostle James makes the same conclusion in his epistle, saying *James 3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. (NASB)*

Midrash Tanchuma interprets these verses in the following way:

Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Korach 6:1

... Immediately (in Numb. 16:3) THEY GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST MOSES AND AGAINST AARON, AND THEY SAID UNTO THEM: YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR (RB), FOR ALL THE CONGREGATION ARE HOLY, EVERY ONE OF THEM, AND THE LORD IS IN THE MIDST OF THEM. SO WHY DO YOU ELEVATE YOURSELVES OVER THE COMMUNITY OF THE LORD? R. Levi said: At that very time Korah gathered his company and said to them (i.e., to Moses and Aaron): You have increased (rt.: RBH) the burden upon us to be more than the slavery of Egypt. We were better off under the Egyptians than under your authority, for in each and every year fifteen thousand and forty-five of us die.¹⁴ Now they wished to stone him; therefore (according to vs. 4), WHEN MOSES HEARD THIS, HE FELL ON HIS FACE. Moses said to them: I do not desire kingship, nor does Aaron <desire> high priesthood. Thus it is stated (in vs. 11): AND AS FOR AARON, WHAT IS HE THAT YOU SHOULD MURMUR AGAINST HIM? Moses said

to the Holy One: Sovereign of the world, did you not command me thus (in Exod. 28:1): AND YOU SHALL BRING NEAR UNTO YOURSELF <YOUR BROTHER AARON AND HIS SONS ALONG WITH HIM,... TO SERVE ME AS PRIESTS>? Now they have arisen against us to kill us. He said to him (in Numb. 16:5): IN THE MORNING THE LORD WILL MAKE KNOWN <THOSE WHO BELONG TO HIM....> {From where?} [What does this mean?] R. Nathan said: The Holy One said: If all the magicians of the world gathered together and tried to turn the morning into the evening, they would be unable <to do so>; but just as I <formerly> separated the light and the darkness (in Gen. 1:4), so have I separated out Aaron to sanctify him as most holy.

..

The Rabbis draw this same conclusion about the Torah portion, there was a struggle with leadership because the people want someone put in place that will also give what they perceived as “*power and authority over the nation.*” The issues at hand here are in relation to being humble before God and men. The Apostle Paul wrote in *Romans 12:3* “*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*” Pride is “*thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.*” Humility on the other hand is not “*thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.*” The one aspect of the commands that Yeshua taught us and commanded his disciples was to learn the lesson of humility by humbling our lives according to God’s Word. We are told to be humble servants before God. (*James 4:10*) In Parashat Korach, there was a focus on leadership issues when they refuse to meet with Moshe. They asked rhetorically whether Moshe was to rule over them, in view of what they saw as a record of failure (*Bamidbar / Numbers 16:3 and 16:13*). The point is they told themselves a different story in their minds-eye based upon their perception of the events that had taken place, they were living in their own reality. The danger that we have is that in our sin it is possible to develop a perspective and stories in our

hearts that are contrary to God's Word, to His commands, and that may lead to further sin. We have to be careful not to enter into our own reality, but to stay in God's reality by walking in his ways and remaining in His Word (the Scriptures). This is what was going on in the Torah portion, the people did not hold fast to the Word of God. Personal opinion and perspective based upon the stories they told themselves in regard to the commands of God led the people to destruction. This is one of the major issues with modern theologies today that exclude the Torah as a way of life and disregard the commands as valid for each of us in our lives. Modern theologies are the stories we tell ourselves so we do not have to be accountable to God's Word (i.e. Faith alone). These types of stories led to attitudes and seeded their hearts leading to their total destruction, but not only the men responsible for the rebellion, the destruction also included their families and all their possessions. This is a heavy warning for us today, especially in this present age of sin and rebellion. If we need to keep our eyes focused upon Yeshua and remain in God's Word, all of Scripture, including the Torah. If we determine our hearts to do what is right, and to seek the kingdom of God, we will not go far from what the Lord God our Father wants for our lives.