

THE REBELS

Numbers 16:1- 17: 13

August 10, 1997

Thou shalt not covet! It is a commandment that we need to be reminded of often. It is so easy to look at what someone else has and want it. Oh to remember, how that little spark of envy can lead to the sin of covetousness, and that will lead us to rebel against God.

Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, conspired together along with some other men. They came to Moses with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred fifty princes of the assembly, men who were famous and well known in the congregation. These men gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much authority for yourselves, seeing that all the congregation is holy and the Lord is among them all. Why do you put yourselves above the rest of the congregation?"

Korah and his friends were complaining that Moses and Aaron kept the nearness that they had with God for themselves deliberately, they claimed that the relationship that Moses and Aaron had with God was for everyone. These men envied Moses, and coveted his position as leader of the people.

When Moses heard their accusations, he fell on his face. For Moses was a very humble man and he had neither sought nor even desired that place of leadership where the Lord had placed him. He spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy, and will cause them to come near him that he has chosen to come near him. Do this. Take censers, you Korah, and those with you. Put fire in them, and incense before the Lord tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the Lord chooses, he shall be holy. You take too much credit for yourselves you sons of Levi."

Moses also said, "Listen you sons of Levi. Does it seem as nothing to you that God has chosen you out of all the congregation of Israel to come near him and do his service in the tabernacle and to stand before the congregation and to minister to them? He has brought you close to his presence, along with all the sons of Levi, yet that isn't enough for you! You want even the priesthood for yourselves. Because of this all the company is gathered against the Lord, and why do you complain against Aaron?"

Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram to come to him, but they refused, saying, "You have brought us out of a land that flowed with milk and honey (that is, it was rich and prosperous), to kill us in this wilderness unless you can make yourself a prince over us. Besides you have not brought us to the land of milk and honey that you promised or given us fields and vineyards. You have deceived us!" This is what the men accused Moses of, but the truth was that they wanted to be princes and they were the ones who were deceiving the people.

Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram with the elders of Israel following him. He spoke to the congregation, saying, "Go, I ask you, away from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be caught and consumed in their sins."

So the people got up and moved away from the tents of those men that were in rebellion against the Lord. Dathan and Abiram came out and stood in the doors of their tents, along with their wives, and their sons, and their children.

On the surface it looked as though this rebellion was against Moses and Aaron, but in truth it was against God and his established way of governing and leading the people.

Moses said, "This is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do these works, and that I have not done them by my own decisions. If these men die as all men die, rather than the Lord doing a wonder, you will know that the Lord has not sent me, BUT, if the earth opens her mouth, and swallows them up along with all that belongs to them, and they go down quick to the pit, then you will know that they have provoked the Lord."

So it happened, that as soon as Moses finished speaking, the earth opened her mouth and swallowed those wicked men up, along with all that they owned. They went down alive into the pit and the earth closed upon them and they died. When the congregation saw what happened, and heard the cries of those wicked people as they were swallowed up in the earth, all that were near the spot ran away. They were terrified that they also might be swallowed up by the earth.

After this a fire came out from the Lord and burned up the two hundred fifty men that had followed Korah in his rebellion.

The Lord told Moses to have Eleazar the priest take up the censors that they had brought and make them into a covering for the altar. He wanted the people to be always reminded of the rebellion and God's judgment on those who had rebelled.

The next day the congregation of the people came against Moses and Aaron, saying that they had killed the people of the Lord.

Sometimes it takes us such a long time to learn our lessons!

When all the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, they looked toward the tabernacle, and the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Get out from among these people, that I may consume them in a moment. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the Lord. Moses told Aaron, "Take a censor, and put fire in it from the altar and incense. Go quickly into the congregation and seek forgiveness for the people's sin, for there is wrath gone out from the Lord against the people."

Immediately Aaron ran into the congregation with the censor. He stood between the dead and the living and the plague from the Lord against the people was stopped. That day fourteen thousand seven hundred people died because of the rebellion started by Korah and the people's willingness to believe a lie.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the children of Israel to take a rod every one of them according to the house of their fathers. Each house of Israel shall have one rod and write the head prince's name on his rod. I want you to write Aaron's name on the rod for the house of Levi. Lay the rods in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet you. It will happen that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, will blossom. I will put an end to all this murmuring that they murmur against you."

Then Moses gave the people God's instructions and the leader of each tribe brought his rod with his name upon it. Moses laid the rods in the tabernacle before the Lord. The next morning Moses went into the tabernacle of witness and there he saw that the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. All the rods of every other man were still only dead pieces of wood.

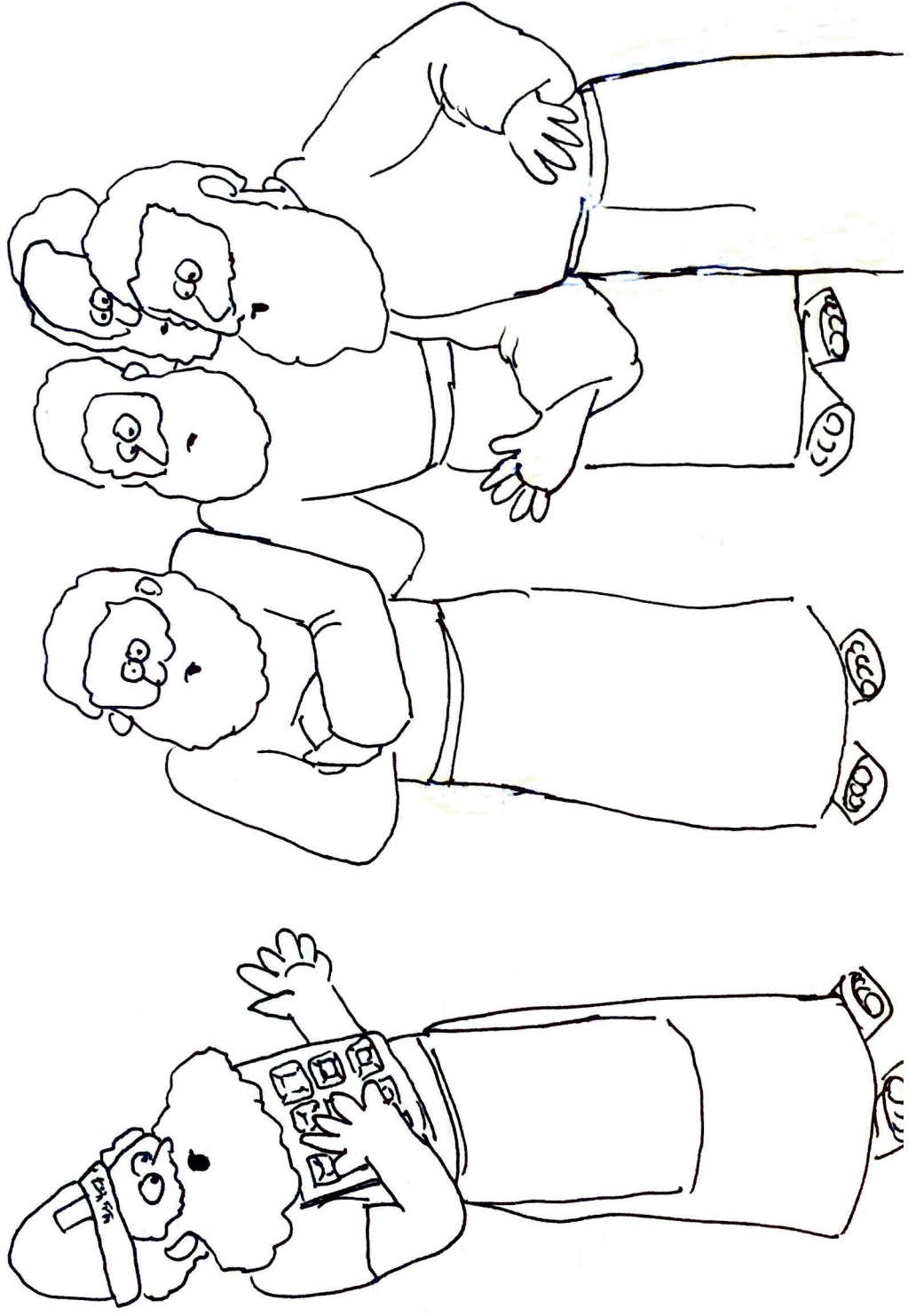
Moses brought out all the rods and showed them to the children of Israel. They looked at them and every man took his own rod. The Lord said to Moses, "Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept as a reminder against the rebels. This will stop their murmuring so that they don't die before me."

Moses did as the Lord had commanded him. The children of Israel were afraid that they would perish for the Lord showed them that day his holiness and power, and they were afraid to come near the tabernacle. For that day at least, the children of Israel saw that they were to trust God's judgment and his choice for leadership. It is not ours or theirs to decide who will lead God's people. Only God has that right. Therefore we ought to be content where ever the Lord places us and to work for his glory no matter what our task. The Lord calls and chooses each one that is his to accomplish what he chooses for them to do, and to do that task wherever he chooses for them to work. We ought to obey and serve him with gladness, not wishing for another place of service nor envying or coveting another's place position or task.

LEARN: Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

John 15:16,17

Paste the on construction paper - Aaron at far left and men at far right.
Between them glue your twelve rods. One should have Aaron's name on it
along with flowers. - small sticks - one with artificial flowers + name written with gold pen



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