

Korach **Bald** **Getting Rebellion Out of Their System**
Torah: Numbers 16:1-18:32
Haftarah: I Samuel 11:14-12:22
Brit Chadashah: Acts 5:1-11

This story deals with two attempts to overthrow the leadership of Moses and seize control of the Tabernacle and the Tent of Meeting. It also deals with how the Levites and the Aaronite priests were to be paid. It was from this camp that the people were to wander for forty years, because they refused to use it as a staging point for the conquest of the Holy Land.

It begins with an attempt by a Levite who did not belong to the family of Aaron, to overthrow Moses and Aaron and then probably to negotiate a new and better deal with YHVH. His name was Korach and he is helped in this attempted coup by three leaders from the tribe of Reuben. They were also joined by 250 of the leaders whose job it to gather all the people when an assembly was called. We are not told how many of the 250 were Levites but it is likely that the group contained a sprinkling of people from all the tribes.

The mixed multitude of Egyptian converts had already been integrated into various tribal groups, but some of the 250 may also have been Egyptian converts.

Korach first argues that Moses is wrong to elevate himself (and the Aaronites) above the rest of the people, because everyone in the camp was holy and by association should also have direct access to YHVH whenever they wanted it. They likely feel that Moses has some kind of hold over YHVH and is speaking for himself and not on behalf of YHVH.

Moses and Aaron immediately fell on their faces before the people, so they would not also fall on their faces and fail to do what YHVH was calling them to do. There appeared to never be a dull moment in the camp.

Moses challenges the 250 leaders to come back the next day with their incense burners and put fire in them and place these burning incense holders before YHVH at the entrance to the Holy Place. Before they could take possession of the tent of meeting (and by association, of YHVH himself), they had to somehow defeat Moses and Aaron. If their incense burners were accepted by YHVH, it would be game over for Moses and the Aaronites.

Moses chastises the other Levites who want to not just be teachers of the people and helpers in the sanctuary, but who also want to climb higher and become priests. Moses made the incense burner challenge before the whole people. For some reason Korach and the three Reubenites do not come before the tent of meeting and are perhaps waiting to see if the 250 leaders win the incense burner challenge.

When Moses sends a message telling them to come for the incense challenge, their reply is a further accusation against Moses' leadership. They claim that he did not give them possession of the land which flowed with milk and honey and which had abundant fields and vineyards. They also say that Moses is trying to blind the people to his failure, and neglect to mention that their wandering punishment was a direct result of their refusal to enter the land when they were told to do so.

These four stand at the entrance of their tents, surrounded by their families and their possessions, while the 250 get ready to light their incense burners. This is a stunt before the whole people aimed at discrediting Moses' leadership. Moses places a "devoted to destruction" curse on them and says that if these rebels do not go down alive into the dwelling place of the dead, then he did not speak for YHVH. The people are ordered to back away from the tents of the rebels and the ground opens up and they are swallowed up, along with all of their possessions.

Next it is the turn of the 250 gathering leaders. When they kindle their incense burners, fire comes out from the holy place and they are incinerated. Their incense burners are collected and shaped into a metal covering for the big altar as a permanent reminder of their failed rebellion.

Before all of this, YHVH is again prepared to annihilate the entire nation and the people are saved when Moses intercedes on their behalf.

The people accuse Moses of having murdered people who just wanted to give everyone equal access to the Presence of G-d. This is their last attempt to overthrow Moses and avoid going into the wilderness for forty years. When we piece the sequence of events together we see that a crowd of people try to rush the Tabernacle to take possession of it away from Moses and the Aaronites.

The lethal presence of G-d comes out of the tabernacle and causes a plague to break out among the people. As they are dying, Aaron takes his incense burner and makes a wall of smoke between the living and the dying. 14,700 of people die and YHVH give one more sign of the legitimacy of Moses' and Aaron's leadership. Not all the leaders of the people have perished and leaders from all 12 tribes are to bring their staffs to Moses and the names of each tribe is written on each respective staff. Aaron's name is written on his staff and they are all taken into the Holy Place and placed before YHVH.

Overnight, Aaron's rod buds, flowers and produces almonds. It is to be kept in the Holy of Holies as a reminder that Aaron's family alone is allowed generational access to tent of meeting. When the people are shown Aaron's staff they are terrified because of the attempted overthrow of Moses and Aaron. There is no more talk of rebellion and the people submit to the leadership structure which YHVH established.

The people are to bring their tithes and offerings along with first born children and animals. The children and the unclean animals are to be redeemed (bought back) and this money and the tithes and offerings are what the Levites and the Aaronites are to live off of. Their tithes were to be of the best of their produce. The Levites were not assigned a territory in the Holy Land because YHVH was their portion and they were to live on the tithes and offerings of the people. The Levites were take one tenth of the tithes they received and this was given to the family of Aaron.

Eatable offerings could be eaten anywhere by both the sons and the daughters of the Levites. Paul uses this principle of the Levites living off the tithes of the people to teach that those who proclaim the Gospel should also live off the tithes which believers bring into the assembly. Tithing remains a practical demonstration of your faith and obedience as you serve YHVH and walk with Him according to His Word. How is your practical demonstration doing?

Sermon: **Overcoming Evil With Good – Never Fight Fire With Fire**

passage: “For as much as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Do not allow yourself to be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:18, 21)

I want to use these two verses as the staging point for my message. Here we go. As my health improves, I am able to explore again the life themes which all preachers base their ministries on. I want to introduce you to a few of mine and see if you recognize them.

As an adolescent, I was bullied into oblivion and suffered from what is now known as PTSD. At the time, I constantly battled depression and the thought of suicide was never far from my mind. Now, I am going to say something which may seem a little strange (as if you are surprised). When I dropped out of High School, I began a three year period of drug abuse. I now know that using drugs kept me alive long enough until I came to faith in the Messiah.

Along with the drugs, I tried to hide my pain behind my humour and still find this a good strategy to maintain. If you want to live a long time and be fulfilled, you have to cry and laugh a lot. I do both, frequently. Now after more than 50 years in the faith, because of my background, one of my main spiritual priorities is to promote spiritual and emotional stability. I want to resolve everything which wanders through my life, so that instead of feeling trapped on an endless emotional roller coaster, in the Messiah, I am enjoying lying down in green pastures as my cup overflows.

I was quite confused, growing up in an abusive secular home. And as the Proverbs say, I was a hungry soul who found every bitter thing sweet. I became a Theravada Buddhist in High School, but also had a keen interest in many other religions as well. When I came to faith in the Messiah, I started to purge anything out of my life which stood in opposition to the Bible. So being biblical is another major ministry theme for me (see especially 2 Timothy 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 4:6).

Related to this, Bible Study and memorizing Scripture have always been high priorities in my life and ministry. Unless you are feeding your soul with the Word of YHVH, you will both eventually run out of gas and have your faith shipwrecked. Also, coming from a home full of all kinds of dissension and in-fighting, peacefully resolving conflict and disagreements is also something which I value highly. As well, I value accepting people for who they are and not trying to reshape them into clones of my image. I want to embrace differences.

Biblical responses to life situations is essential for solid, constant, consistent spiritual health. I also have no patience with all and any weird, strange doctrines which are not supported by the Bible.

I also have several life theme verses (Phil. 2:13; Eph. 2:10 and Proverbs 4:23 and 15:15, to name a few which you are invited to look up). They have become an essential part of how I think and how I live. I am also troubled by those who are ignorant of the lessons of history (I do good on Jeopardy) and some of the more positive perspectives of psychology. I consider it a major problem when people do not know how we got to where we are, and who truly do not really know who they really are. These are major spiritual hangups which need to be dealt with firmly and repeatedly, as history unfolds around us and as we age and make life decisions. Where is your life headed and what are you building in it?

Related to this, there are also major social and moral issues which I uphold and will, respectfully, fight tooth and nail for. I used to be an evolutionist, but now I am a convinced biblical creationist with no patience for one of the biggest and most heinous lies to ever infect the hearts and minds of humankind. And while I also consider myself a biblical feminist who supports equal rights for both ladies and men, I remain firmly convinced that abortion is murder and not a form of birth control. A pre-born child only lives and grows inside of a woman's body and is not a part of her body that she do whatever she wants with. She does not have the right to make a choice which terminators a human life.

Victims of poverty, rape and abuse deserve our help and our modern society is not doing a stellar job in helping those who are less fortunate – even though I believe we have the resources to do so. Alleviating poverty is everybody's business. Rape should be a capital offence so that you kill the rapist and not the new life growing in the victim's womb. My old dad used to say: "two wrongs do not make a right".

Related to this, I am also a convinced, firm supporter of using capital punishment to punish those who commit capital crimes. The punishment should always fit the crime and anyone who takes a life, has forfeited their right to live. Rape may create a new life, but all rapists have forfeited their rights to life because of their violation of the fairer sex. They deserve facing execution, even if the violence does not result in pregnancy.

The use of deadly force by law enforcement and soldiers is a different issue, but the recognized rules of war need to be followed. No one's rights should be violated. My only regret that Hitler took his own life is that he was not made to stand trial for his crimes and face execution, like Eichmann did for all the murders he was responsible for.

The illegal abuse of military power is what president Putin's regime is guilty of. He needs to be stopped and we need to continue giving our full support to our brave Ukrainian brothers and sisters. This is something which I fully support because I believe that the Ukraine deserves to defeat the invaders and drive them back across the border as Russia's ability to continue to wage war is destroyed.

Finally, our politically correct society has hijacked the concept of inclusion and requires that it be extended to homosexuals, so that they can fully integrate their gay agenda into every area of our lives. Sexual brokenness is a tragedy and being gay only becomes a crime when they try and recruit vulnerable people into their twisted lifestyle. They talk out of both sides of their mouth and on the one hand they say that sexual orientation is a personal choice and on the other, they say they were born this way and had no choice in the matter.

The Bible firmly condemns fornication of any kind and the only acceptable expression of human sexuality is within the bounds of a monogamous heterosexual marriage. The practise of sex outside of marriage is as much criminal fornication as the practice of homosexuality. Most people are not aware that many homosexuals choose not to come out and practice homosexual behaviour. They are not denying their true sexuality, by refusing to adopt a gay lifestyle, they are just refusing to live a life of sexual brokenness as if it were noble and acceptable. Homosexuality is neither noble or acceptable.

I do not feel that they should be jailed for their sexuality or executed, like they were by the Nazis. They should seek help and not try and pretend that being gay is normal and acceptable. They do not need to become part of inclusion, they need help.

Any kind of racism and prejudice is despicable and totally unacceptable. The abuse of women, children and seniors should be considered capital crimes in my books. I have always been a supporter of truth and reconciliation, both for our own indigenous people and for those in troubled places like South Africa. Reconciliation should also be worked out with the descendants of those African people who were kidnapped into slavery and treated with savage cruelty because they were not considered fully human. The Bible says that both Moses and Aaron had black skinned wives and no one should be mistreated because of the colour of their skin. Inside we are all the same colour – red.

Slavery still exists, especially in Africa and the Middle East. Just because you make something illegal, does not always make it go away. Genocides have frequently occurred when one people was more numerous or had better weapons than those they were attacking and murdering in order to steal their land. There is a series on Netflix called the Last Kingdom, which deals with the horrible treatment of the Saxons by the savage Danes. But if we examine history carefully, we find that the Saxons were just as savage to the Britons, when they were slaughtered and driven to the fringes of their island.

I support upholding the rule of international law as long as it does not violate G-d's Word. I am not really concerned with global warming, because I see it as a natural millennial weather pattern that has frequently happened in the past. Having said this, I believe that all forms of pollution need to be brought under control, along with global deforestation and the overuse of fossil fuel. These fuels can be made to pollute much less and even not at all, even if the safeguards are expensive. The Revelation says that the wrath of G-d will come upon those who destroy the earth and they will be exterminated (Rev. 11:18).

The list of issues in our world which trouble me could go on, but all that I hold dear and have taken a position on, is based upon my faith in the inerrant supremacy of the Bible. And fighting for issues that need to be addressed is part of our obligation to participate in **Tikkun Olam** (the healing of the world). On the one hand, I know that things are getting worse across the globe, as darkness grows and things line up for the end of the world and the return of our blessed Messiah. But we have an obligation to take a stand when there is violence and when people are being abused or slaughtered. I am glad that we are participating with the Inner City Pastoral Ministry (ICPM) outreach to feed homeless people of the inner city.

And while I do not promote giving change to people who are begging for it, we should be reminding them about shelters that will shelter them, feed them and clothe them, without expecting payment. From the beginning, the Torah commands us to help the poor, the orphaned, the widow and the strangers in our midst. Our singular focus needs to remain walking through this darkening world as strangers and pilgrims, on our way home to our Father's House in Glory. What we do along the way, needs to reflect this focus.

I am also not a supporter of the social Gospel where social issues replace the Bible and our Messiah as the central focus of our lives. We have to strike a balance between reaching out to help those less fortunate than us and just ignoring them as we say: "be warmed and be filled". We should do all that we are capable of doing to reach out and help them and then we need to commit the rest to the Messiah. After all, when He walked among us, He reached out to heal the sick and to feed the poor. When Judas left to betray the Messiah, the other apostles assumed that he was being sent on a mission to help the poor. It is always our mission to help the poor and failing to do so would be a betrayal of our faith. This kind of outreach is also a big part of what it means to be salt and light.

We always need to be focused on cultivating the fruit of the Spirit as we weed out the works of the flesh from the garden of our hearts and lives. Now, not everybody feels the same way about what kind of outreach we should become a part of to help the poor, so I want to be careful to be clear about an important point, then we will draw this service to a close.

Our faith is built upon five fundamental beliefs which should be the firm foundation of all we do and think. (1) the Bible is the Word of G-d. (2) Yeshua (Jesus) is the Son of G-d (or G-d the Son). (3) He was born of a virgin. (4) He died on the cross for the sins of the world. (5) He rose from the dead, ascended back into Heaven and one day He will return to set up G-d's everlasting Kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind.

These are the only non-negotiables of our faith and as we learn not to be overcome by evil and live at peace with all men, we need to allow one another to have differences of opinion on secondary issues. Everyone does not have to always agree with me on everything in order to attend our wonderful shul. I had an elder in Montreal who believed that angels had wings. I believe he is wrong, but he is entitled to his opinion and we had lots of good talks about this.

The Flood in the days of Noah and the disaster at the Tower of Babel are key elements of what the Bible teaches and are not up for negotiation. Whatever you believe and whatever you do, it has to be based or derived from the changeless Word of G-d, the Bible. We are to forbid what the Bible forbids and to promote what the Bible promotes.

However, what you believe about vaccination and alcohol consumption and even the consumption of tobacco is up to you. They fall into the category of things about which we are entitled to have our own opinion about, as long as any position we take does not violate the Word of G-d. The Bible only forbids the abuse of alcohol.

Conspiracy theories and embracing either radical right wing or left wing politics, violates what the Bible says about how we should live. I do not support any one particular political party in our fair country and I have voted federally and provincially for every major political party in our fair country, except for the Federal Liberals. I support your right to vote for the candidate of your choice. I knew a man once who would not vote for any candidate unless he was certain that they were a born again Christian. I want to go to a good doctor, whether he is a believer or not, but if you would not go to a Muslim doctor, that is your privilege, as long as you do not tell people that going to a Muslim doctor is a sin. My doctor is a Muslim from Libya.

I find it sad that Green Peace promotes the use of violence as a form of protest and that Amnesty International has become radicalized and has become antisemitic. I could not support them with a clear conscience because they are going down so many rabbit holes. Antisemitism is a grave sin, especially among those who call themselves Christian and the UN is really not doing anything to deal with this unacceptable, violent, radical form of racism.

I do not think that Muslims are bad people, unless they do bad things. You may be surprised to learn that I was once being groomed to become a community counsellor for the Reform Party. I declined and said that I would also never consider running as a candidate, but this is not because my politics are confused and I am unclear on major issues our modern world is facing. I received a call to ministry and we must always stay where we are called. We must also go where we are called. Part of our calling is not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good. Is this what is happening in your life? Shabbat Shalom campers.