

# Numbers 16: The Korah Rebellion

- What's the issue?
  - Jealousy of other Levitical groups?

"You have gone too far! The whole community is holy... why do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (Num. 16:3)
- Class Action Lawsuit
  - Plaintiffs
    - Korah (Levi)
    - Dathan (Reuben)
    - Abiram (Reuben)
    - On (Reuben)
    - 250 community leaders (unknown tribal affiliation, but probably many Levites, see 16:6-8, and note the censers)
  - Defendants: Moses & Aaron
  - Judge: YHWH (also a defendant, see below)
- Pre-trial litigation with to Korah & company
  - A trial: let the LORD judge who is right
    - Isn't it enough?! God had already set apart the Levites for His work, but they wanted the *priesthood*, too.
    - It was the LORD's decision to have the priesthood descend from Aaron, so their complaint is really against the LORD.

"It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together"
- Pre-trial litigation with Reubenites
  - Moses summons the Dathan and Abiram
  - Perhaps to reason with them because they are not as closely related to the priesthood, so they may have less of a "jealousy" problem?
  - Isn't it enough?! (Angry that Moses brought them \*out\* of "a land flowing with milk and honey" to die "in the wilderness")
  - Moses: Don't listen to them, LORD, I haven't done anything wrong.
- The trial
  - Censers with incense for all 250 plaintiffs
  - Moses, Aaron, Korah and 250 others stand at the entrance to the tent of meeting, where the LORD presides as judge
- The verdict
  - Initial verdict: destroy "the entire assembly"
  - We've been here before. Note that this rebellion is coming from community leaders which implicates much of the community, as well.
  - Moses intercedes on Israel's behalf (again)
  - Reduced sentence: only the leadership will suffer the consequences

- Moses pronounces the verdict and sentencing
  - If the leadership die normally, then you were all right, and I was being dictatorial
  - If "something totally now" happens, and the earth swallows them up, then you'll know that Aaron and I were in the right
- The execution
  - Earth swallows up the Reubenites (Dathan and Abiram are the only ones specifically mentioned)
  - "And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense" (16:35)
- Epilogue
  - The censers have been presented to the LORD and are now holy
    - Hammer them out and use them to cover the altar
    - They will be a reminder to the Israelites "that no one except a descendant of Aaron should come to burn incense before the Lord"
  - Continued grumbling from the community (they're not that innocent)
    - They "turn toward the tent of meeting" (they're not just accusing Moses and Aaron, they're accusing God, just as Korah and his followers were)
    - The LORD again threatens to destroy them all
    - Moses tells Aaron to make atonement (in haste!)
    - "So Aaron did as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly. The plague had already started among the people, but Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them. He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped."
- Next week: the LORD re-confirms Aaron's appointment as a priest by the budding staff miracle.