

# Power Struggle



## SABBATH—NOVEMBER 7

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Genesis 17:10–17; Numbers 16; Numbers 17; Joshua 4:3–9; Matthew 26:13; Luke 22:19.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “If you are proud, you will be destroyed. If you are proud, you will fall” (Proverbs 16:18, NIV).

**HATE AGAINST MOSES AND AARON STILL BURNED IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.** They could not accept the idea of being doomed to wander in the wilderness until the first generation<sup>1</sup> of people died. Instead of accepting God's judgment, some began to plan how they could get rid of the two brothers (Moses and Aaron). They felt that Moses and Aaron were more to blame than God for their situation.

“Korah, the leader of this rebellion,<sup>2</sup> was a Levite, of the family of Kohath, and a cousin of Moses; he was a man of power and great skill. Korah was chosen for the service of the tabernacle.<sup>3</sup> But he had become unhappy with his work. For some time, he had been secretly working against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. He finally developed an evil plan of rebelling [warring] against them and the religion of Old Israel.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,<sup>4</sup> page 395.

This week's lesson should be a powerful reminder to us of the evil of the human heart. Pride, jealousy, and love of power can show themselves in terrible ways. God alone knows how much pain, suffering, and loss have happened and will happen to those who knew better but let their bitterness overcome them. May we learn from the mistakes of Korah's rebellion and not make the same ones ourselves.

1. generation—all the people born about the same time. Your parents belong to one generation. You and your friends who are your age belong to another generation.

2. rebellion—a fight or struggle against any kind of power.

3. tabernacle—the place of worship or the house of God in the wilderness; tent.

4. *Patriarchs and Prophets*—patriarchs were leaders of God's people in early Bible times, such as Abraham or Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are given messages by God to give to His people.

**SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 8****REBELLION . . . AGAIN  
(Numbers 16:1–3)**

**Read carefully the rebels'<sup>5</sup> words to Moses in Numbers 16:1–3. What four lies are found there?**

Moses' action toward this attack (Numbers 16:4) shows how upset he must have felt at such twisted lies. What is worse, these lies were made by those who should have known better. "They were with the group who went up with Moses into the mount and witnessed God's glory.<sup>6</sup> . . . They acted as though they had a great interest in the goodness of the people. They first whispered their complaints to one another and then to leading men of Israel. Their complaints were so quickly accepted that they dared to go still further. Then at last they really deceived themselves into thinking they were doing God's work."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 396, 397.

Here, again, we find the perfect example of Satan's first sin in heaven. No matter how important and high up these men and princes were in their positions, it was not enough for them. They wanted more.

How careful we must be!

**According to Numbers 16:12–14, what else was behind their rebel-**

**lion? Why, too, were these charges so false?**

The words of these men are hard to believe! They called Egypt the land flowing "with milk and honey." It is shocking to read how sin could twist their minds so much that they claimed that Egypt, the place of their slavery, was now God's Promised Land!

**In what ways do we deceive ourselves into thinking our sins or wrong ways are right? How can we keep from falling into this sad and dangerous trap?**

**MONDAY—NOVEMBER 9****IF THE LORD MAKES  
SOMETHING NEW  
(Numbers 16:15–35)**

Notice how Moses answered these men (Numbers 16:4–11). The men were well respected in Israel. But they wanted more power. Moses clearly knew that.

Read carefully what these men said. They were rebelling against Moses and Aaron. They made it seem as if Moses and Aaron had gone too far in using their authority (power). They accused Moses and Aaron of leading the people into the wilderness<sup>7</sup> to kill them.

5. rebels—those who oppose, or fight against, God's power and rule.

6. glory—great beauty, power, and royal perfection.

7. wilderness—a dry and barren (empty) land in which few people live.



The princes and leaders accused Moses and Aaron of leading the people into the wilderness to kill them.

**According to Numbers 16:11, against whom were these men really rebelling?**

Again, one has to wonder where these men came up with such false charges (lies). Whose power split the Red Sea—God’s or Moses’ and Aaron’s? Who brought manna for them every morning—God or Moses and Aaron? Who was it that gave the cloud by day and the fire by night—God or Moses and Aaron? It is hard to imagine how these men went ahead with their rebellion after they had witnessed (experienced) God’s power.

**Read Numbers 16:15–35. Notice Moses’ words in Numbers 16:28–30. What saying shows us what the real issue is in verses 15–35?**

Think of the situation. If these men had been able to arrange a wider and more successful rebellion, who knows the terrible results that could have happened! The children of Israel were not so spiritual (holy) in the Lord

8. memorials—reminders.

9. archaeologists—people who dig to find things from the past that have been buried.

as they should have been. They easily could have gone completely astray. They should have known that the Lord was in control. They should have realized that the Lord was the One who was leading them. They needed to understand that Moses and Aaron were doing what God called them to do and were not acting to please themselves. All this should have been clear. But, again, sin has a powerful way of clouding our minds. Once it is set in motion, the spirit of rebellion is hard to stop.

**How weak are you to feelings of jealousy about those who are in positions of leadership over you? What can you learn from Christ’s example that could help you overcome this dangerous feeling?**



Sin has a powerful way of clouding our minds.

**TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 10**

**MEMORIALS<sup>8</sup>  
(Numbers 16:36–40)**

Archaeologists<sup>9</sup> in Palestine have

not uncovered many written materials (other than the Dead Sea Scrolls). But the Bible points to many memorials to help people remember the meaning of God's Word. For example, in Genesis 28:11–22, Jacob set up a stone memorial to remember the covenant promises<sup>10</sup> God had made to him and to his future children.

**According to Numbers 16:36–40, how was this terrible rebellion against Moses and Aaron set up as a memorial? What was this memorial to remind them of?**

Most of the memorials in the Old Testament reminded Israel of God's will (plan), His goodness and grace,<sup>11</sup> and covenant blessings. They pointed the person upward and toward the Lord. For example, the blue tassels<sup>12</sup> on the people's clothing (Numbers 15:38–41), or the rainbow after the Flood (Genesis 9:13), or circumcision<sup>13</sup> (Genesis 17:10–17), or the Passover<sup>14</sup> festival (Numbers 9:1–14), or the memorial stones Joshua placed at the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 4:3–9).

But the brass plates that covered the altar<sup>15</sup> were a warning. They warned a stranger or person who did not belong to Aaron's family not to take over the priesthood. The plates also would re-

mind people of what happened when greedy people rebelled (warred) against God. They were a memorial, warning people not to "become like Korah and his followers" (Numbers 16:40, NIV).



The brass plates that covered the altar were a warning to others not to take over the priesthood.

**What are some other memorials you can find in the Bible? And what are their purposes? Read, for example, Exodus 20:8–11; Numbers 31:54; Matthew 26:13; Luke 22:19. In what ways were the animal sacrifices<sup>16</sup> a kind of memorial?**

**What things about the Lord and His promises do you need to**

10. covenant promises—the blessings God will give to us if we obey Him.

11. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

12. tassels—decorative pieces of cord attached to clothes; for example, a tassel hangs from a graduation mortar board (cap).

13. circumcision—cutting off the foreskin of a male's penis (physical); separation of oneself from sin (spiritual).

14. Passover—Jewish holiday celebrating the freedom of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

15. altar—a structure that is raised off the ground or a special place on which sacrifices (gifts to God) are made or incense (sweet-smelling perfume) is burned.

16. sacrifices—the things we give up, such as life or time or money, to save or help someone or something; gifts or offerings given to God.

**always remember? Why is it important to always remember those promises?**

### **WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 11**

#### **BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING (Numbers 16:41–50)**

We would think that the judgments<sup>17</sup> that fell upon Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the 250 princes would have warned the wilderness group to wake up to obeying God. After all, fire came down from heaven and destroyed some, while the earth opened up and destroyed the others. What more could the Lord have done to show His righteous (holy) anger at such stubborn rebellion and backsliding?

**What should Numbers 16:41–50 tell us about how sinful we all are apart from Christ? How was the charge against Moses and Aaron here the same as the charge that Korah and the others had just made?**

What this shocking story should show us is that the spirit of rebellion among some of the people had not ended with Korah. It remained in the camp, even after all that had just happened. It is hard to understand how anyone could have acted rebellious (sinful and not obedient), especially after what he or she had just seen. Again, this shows us how once we

start the slide toward rebellion and apostasy,<sup>18</sup> we might find ourselves doing some very crazy and unreasonable things. How very important it is that we, through God's grace, claim His promises (1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 1:6) and die to these feelings before they destroy us!

**In Numbers 16:48, what does the idea of Aaron standing between the dead and the living mean? How does this idea help us to better understand what Jesus has done and is doing for us?**

There are only two kinds of people in this world, the dead and the living. The dead referred to here are not the dead in body but the dead in spirit. " 'Anyone who believes in him is not judged. But anyone who does not believe is judged already. He has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son' " (John 3:18, NIV). Jesus stands between the dead and the living. He is the border and the midpoint from one to the other. Only through Jesus can we go from death to life.

**Are you among the living or the dead? Explain your answer.**

### **THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 12**

#### **AARON'S ROD THAT BUDDERED (Numbers 17)**

Thousands died in the rebellion stirred up by Korah. But the Lord

17. judgments—the punishments received from doing wrong.

18. apostasy—giving up faith in God and falling back into sin.

knew the issue of priestly leadership had yet to be settled. God poured powerful and painful judgments out on the rebellious. But God must have known that the people still were restless. He rightly could have wiped them all out. But it was never His desire to do that. Even after all that had happened, the Lord still was willing to work with His people to show His saving grace to them.

**Read Numbers 17 and answer the following questions:**

- **What was the reason for the test?**
- **How was this test to help prevent further rebellion and punishment?<sup>19</sup>**
- **How do the people show they finally understand that only certain people could be priests?**

There was no way the people could deny this miracle<sup>20</sup> of Aaron's staff blooming and producing almonds. The people of Israel had to admit that God had done a miracle within the tabernacle. Once and for all, this miracle showed that Aaron and his future sons were to be the priests of the Lord's sanctuary.<sup>21</sup> The sad part is that it caused so much suffering for the people to understand. What is surprising is that the Lord was willing to do even more for them in order to



**Aaron's rod miraculously budded and produced almonds.**

help their understanding.

It is so easy to judge the Hebrews. But what about when we think of ourselves (2 Corinthians 3:15)? Why is it often so hard for us to learn the lessons that God tries to teach us? Even when we have received more than enough proof of God's love and grace, why do we fail to trust Him? Why do we make the same mistakes over and over? Even more important, why must we not make excuses for our mistakes?

### **FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 13**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, "The Rebellion of Korah," pages 395–405, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"I wonder if true rebellion ever can be solved. . . ."

19. punishment—a penalty (price to be paid) for, or the result of, doing something wrong; when someone must suffer loss or pain for doing something bad, wrong, or against the law.

20. miracle—an extraordinary (amazing; great) event believed to be a sign of the power of God. Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead is an example of a miracle.

21. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

“Rebellion and backsliding are very much a part of life. We shall be influenced by<sup>22</sup> them if we do not hang our helpless souls upon Christ. If men are so easily deceived [tricked], how will they stand when Satan pretends to be Christ and works miracles? Who will not be influenced by his lies? Satan will claim to be Christ. But it is only Satan acting as the person of Christ, seeming to do the works of Christ. What will keep God’s people from giving their loyalty to false Christs? ‘Go not ye after them.’

“The doctrines [beliefs] must be clearly understood. Those who teach the truth must be strong in faith. Then their ship of faith will hold against the storm, because the Anchor [Christ] holds them firmly. The deceptions [lies] will increase, and we are to call rebellion [sin] by its right name. [For example, we must call sin, SIN.] We are to stand with the whole armor of God on.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 1, page 1114.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What are ways in which sin deceives (tricks) us? How can we know if we are being deceived by it? (After all, sin makes us think that we are not really being deceived.) What role does the Bible play in answering this question?
- ❷ The rebellion that we studied this week is terrible. But what are other ways the same rebellious (sinful) spirit can be shown among us? How can we recognize it when it comes up among ourselves? When we cover this spirit up, it makes us think we are not really rebelling but are standing up for what is right. How do we know the difference?
- ❸ Why are memorials, either religious or worldly, important? What are some worldly memorials common in your culture?<sup>23</sup> What do they show?

22. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

23. culture—the way people live, dress, think, eat, and get along with one another.