

Part 5 – Trouble from Envy

In part 4 we learned that, even though Israel had literally witnessed *many mighty* works (i.e. the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian army) the children of Israel promptly (*very quickly*) forgot (acted as though they were oblivious to) them! For, it only took *three days*, of walking in the wilderness, for Israel to totally forget what was surely the *most amazing* miracles they had *ever* seen in their life! And their lack of memory caused them to complain *obstinately* (stubbornly and tenaciously) to Moses. And we also learned that this (being double minded) is what happens when we *don't control* our carnal mind (our heart, the part of us that wants to sin, i.e. our desires, emotions, intentions and motivations) and *keep* God's Word (and) will as our *top priority* in life. And we also learned that the children of Israel didn't 'wait for' God's 'counsel' because they didn't *adhere to* (#2442) God's command to gather the manna in the mornings and only get what they needed, for it wouldn't last more than that day. And not all of them were obedient to gather twice what they needed before the Sabbath day either, which was another one of God's instructions. Truly, our Heavenly Father gives us His Word (Laws, instructions) *for our good*. But, if we lack faith in Him (and don't remember His mighty works and His Commandments, i.e. Word) then we too will forget to diligently obey Him, from the heart. And that again is why the Israelites were a good example for us (1 Cor 10:11) of what we should not be like!

And then we also learned how the children of Israel *lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert*. This referred to when Israel later lusted to have meat to eat (such as the quail He'd provided for them shortly after they came out of Egypt). And what's amazing (in a bad way) about that was: even though they forgot God's mighty works (freeing them from Egyptian bondage via the plagues and saving them from the Egyptian's by parting the Red Sea), they *could* remember all the 'good foods' they had while in *bondage* to the Egyptians! And they 'tempted' (tested) God (in their heart) when they asked for meat (flesh) to eat (because they lusted) because, instead of asking humbly (and with respect) they were disrespectful, and unbelieving, that the Lord (YHWH) *could* provide for them again. And, even though the Lord (YHWH) did give them their request, He also punished them in doing so. For, as they were eating the quail, the Lord (YHWH) smote those who ate it with a great plague. Thus, God caused those who lusted (and tempted Him) to loathe the very thing they lusted for! And, these lessons from history are ones we should keep tightly in our heart (desires, emotions, intentions, motivations), and mind (thoughts), so we *don't* follow after the examples of the rebellious, ungrateful and unfaithful Israelites who – despite literally seeing many miraculous events in the wilderness – *didn't remember them* and thus, *didn't believe in* (nor obey) the Lord (YHWH). However, the Psalmist is not done giving us a history lesson...

Psalm 106

16 They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.

*17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.
18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.*

These three verses are speaking of the same event which is covered in Numbers 16...

*1 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, **took men**:*

*2 And **they rose up before Moses**, with certain of the children of Israel, **two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly**, famous in the congregation, **men of renown**:*

*3 And **they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron**, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: **wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?***

Num 16:1-3

So, Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On – along with 250 ‘princes’ (rulers) of all the tribes of Israel - ‘rose up’ *against* Moses, and Aaron, and accused *them* of ‘lifting themselves up’ above all the others. In other words, they were accusing Moses and Aaron of *making themselves* rulers over the nation of Israel. And really, that’s nearly calling them ‘dictators’! What this boils down to is that they were making a ‘power grab’ or, as we’d say today, a ‘coup’ to overthrow the legitimate government that the Lord (YHVH) had established. For, the truth is, Moses and Aaron were *both chosen by the Lord*, YHVH (Ex 3:10, 4:16, 7:1, etc.). Further, these fools claimed that all of Israel was ‘holy’ (*every one of them*) ... despite their long history of disobedience to the Lord (YHVH). They apparently forgot *how many times* Israel murmured (and tempted) the Lord (YHVH) *and* (worse yet) the time when they made a golden calf (idol) *and* worshiped it (Ex 32)! So, the children of Israel had an easy time forgetting *all* of their sins but a hard time remembering *God’s mighty works and His righteousness* – especially the many times He forgave them! And that’s why verse 16 (in Ps 106) says they ‘envied’ Moses and Aaron. The word ‘**envied**’ here can mean *to be* (or *make*) *zealous* but also can mean (in a bad sense) *to be jealous* or *envious* (#7065). So, the men who ‘rose up’ against Moses and Aaron did so out of envy, which means painful *or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage*.

So, not only did these foolish men think Moses and Aaron had some ‘advantage’ over them (who used to govern Israel, when they were in Egypt, albeit still ‘under’ the Egyptians) they also desired to *posses* that advantage (of leadership, i.e. power), which is very lustful and greedy! However, the only ‘advantage’ that Moses, and Aaron, had was the honor of being the leaders of the nation – Moses in the civil aspect (God used him to give, and enforce, the Laws) and Aaron in the religious aspect, for he was the first High Priest. But, to reiterate, this ‘honor’ was *not* one they took upon themselves! Clearly, God *had* chosen Moses and Aaron *Himself*. But these men

didn't care about that little 'technicality'. Their ego was too big to consider it, apparently. Likely, these men had enjoyed great prestige (and probably favors from the Egyptians) when they were in Egypt (and allowed to do some governing amongst their fellow Israelites), and were *not* happy to *not* have that same amount of honor, and privileges, after being free. So, after these foolish men challenged Moses and Aaron's authority (given to them by God), Moses said...

*5 And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow **the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.***

6 This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;

*7 And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the LORD to morrow: and **it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.***

Num 16:5-7

So, Moses responded by putting forth a way for the Lord (YHVH) – who freed Israel from bondage and saved them from the Egyptian army - to reveal who He had *really* chosen to rule the nation. Sounds fair, right? Well, that's not apparently what the rebels thought...

12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

*13 **Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?***

*14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? **we will not come up.***

*15 And Moses was **very** wroth, and said unto the LORD, **Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.***

16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow:

17 And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer.

18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

*19 And Korah gathered all the congregation **against them** unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: **and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation.***

Num 16:12-19

This account gives us a deeper understanding of these rebels; for they not only called Egypt (where they were slaves) 'a land that floweth with milk and honey', but accused Moses of killing

them *and* making himself a prince over them! In other words, in the past times (as Israel had been migrating through the wilderness) when God punished Israel (and killed off the rebellious ones), these men claimed it was *Moses* who had done it! And they then accused Moses of wanting to ‘put out the eyes’ of those standing up (rebellious) against him, when the truth was *they were rebelling* against the Lord God Almighty (YHVH)! Moses was simply trying to show them that He was not lifting himself up above them. And he got so angry at Dathan and Abiram’s response that he prayed to the Lord (YHVH) not to respect (accept) their offerings, and *swore* (to the Lord, YHVH) that he had not stolen from them, nor hurt them in any way (as they accused Moses of). Now, there’s something we should understand here: in those days, when people worshipped false gods, they thought that the ruler of the nation could manipulate their ‘gods’ into doing what *they* wanted them to. So, very often, the ruler was credited for the good times but also could be credited for the bad things coming upon the people; again, this was because the people thought that the ruler of their nation (such as the Pharaoh) could *control* the ‘gods’. So, this explains why these men kept acting as though Moses was the one to blame for the Israelites dying off from plagues, fire, and even serpents (all things that had happened prior to this event, which the book of Numbers documents).

So, after Dathan and Abiram refused to do as Moses had said, he then repeated the instructions to Korah, who was (believe it or not) his cousin (Ex 6:16-21); and he made sure the other rebels did as Moses said. And, after they were all gathered at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, *the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation*. Do you know what happened after that? The Lord (YHVH) told Moses and Aaron to get away from the congregation (all the people, not just the rebels) because He wanted to consume them **all** (vs 20-21)! The reason why is because Korah gathered **all** the congregation *against* Moses and Aaron (vs 19), which means they **all** supported Korah and the other rebel leaders! But, good old Moses prayed for the Lord not to be wroth with **all** the congregation. And apparently his prayer was heard, because the Lord (YHVH) then told him to get away from the tabernacles (tents) of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (the three top leaders of the rebellion, vs 24). And it is written...

*25 And Moses rose up **and went unto Dathan and Abiram**; and the elders of Israel followed him.*

*26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, **Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins**.*

*27 **So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children**.*

*28 And Moses said, **Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind**.*

*29 **If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me**.*

30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.

31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them:

32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

33 They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

34 And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

35 And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

Num 16:20-35

So, instead of killing off all of the congregation (the nation) the Lord (YHVH) only killed off the rebel leaders *and* anyone else who refused to stop supporting them. That's why even the wives, and children, of Dathan and Abiram were killed too. And, the way God chose to put an end to their lives was quite amazing – something that's never been done before. And, it was clear proof that the Lord (YHVH) was **not** happy with their rebellion! For when the earth opened up - and then swallowed up (#1104 made away with them *by sucking them down into the ground*) and then covered them up (#3680, by filling up the hole that was rent) - that scared the rest of the people *so much* they fled. And that's not a 'common thing', as Moses pointed out, it was a 'new thing', i.e. something that had never happened before! But, since our Heavenly Father has full control over His creation, He was able to make it happen (in a moment's notice). And this incident made it clear that this was 'of the Lord', i.e. the way the rebels were killed proved it was God's choice that Moses and Aaron lead the nation; so Moses and Aaron were not 'lifting themselves up' by making themselves 'princes' (leaders) over the people.

But don't overlook verse 35, for we're told that after the earth opened, swallowed up and covered the three leaders of the rebellion (and their family who didn't remove themselves) *there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense*. So, the rest of the rebel leaders were also divinely killed! Notably, while Dathan and Abiram's family were killed (because they refused to remove themselves) we know that Korah's sons were **not** killed, as Num 26:9-11 tells us. And, their descendants must not have been rebellious either because many years later they were allowed, by God, to be part of the musicians who praised the Lord at His Temple (2 Chron 20:19). In fact, some of the Korhites even helped David when he was being chased by Saul (1 Chron 12:1-2,6). And that's why we have some Psalms of the 'sons of Korah' still in our Bible today! So, this is what verses 16-18 (in this great Psalm 106) are referring to. But there's more to the story. For Num 16:41-50 goes on to say that,

the next day *the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.* And, the Lord (YHVH) was **so** angry about this that He again threatened to kill them **all** off (for they had gathered together at the Tabernacle, against Moses and Aaron). And that's when another great plague began to attack the people. Were it not for Moses and Aaron's intercession, the plague would have consumed them **all**! Verse 49 tells us that (not including the rebel leaders and their families) there were 14,700 people who died in the plague! And this proves how our Heavenly Father feels about those who *continue* to rebel, even after they have seen the consequences of doing so! That's why, at the end of the Millennium (a thousand years of Jesus Christ ruling, and teaching people truth via His righteous government) those who *still* want to rebel against Him will be *totally* consumed by fire (Rev 20:7-15). And, after reading this history of the rebels in the wilderness, we can surely better understand why Moses told the children of Israel (who were about to inherit the Promise Land) that *God is a consuming fire* (Deut 4:24, 9:3). And, this is why Paul warned us...

25 See that ye **refuse not him that speaketh**. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake **on earth**, much more shall not we escape, **if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven**:
26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.
27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, **that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.**
28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, **let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:**
29 For **our God is a consuming fire.**
Heb 12:25-29

But, let us never remember that, while God's 'consuming fire' *will* consume those who *consistently* rebel against Him (without repentance) He is *ever so* merciful, and gracious, to those who do fear, love and strive to obey Him (Ex 34:6, etc.). Therefore, history teaches us why we should not rebel. Not only does it lead to death (of our very soul and spirit too, eventually) but a rebellious heart prevents us from ever finding 'rest' for our soul too, which is peace of mind and joy in heart. As it is written, *There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked* (Isa 48:22, 57:21). Therefore, let us remember...

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue [Jesus Christ]:
4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
6 And to knowledge temperance [self control]; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [love].

8 For **if** these things be in you, and abound, they make you that **ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, **give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:**

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-11

We'll pick this up in part 6...

AMEN.