

Torah Portion Preview for Korach

Sabbath beginning June 23, 2023

This week's portion uses Korach's rebellion to mark the transition of the Israelites from a tribal chiefdom to a religious community. Korach and his friends gathered 250 men with fine reputations to confront Moses and Aaron. Moses replied that they rebelled against God, not him. The rebels brought the whole community against them. The next day, Moses warned the people to stand back from the tents of the wicked. Suddenly, the earth swallowed the rebels into a burning pit. A plague followed killing 14,000 people. Once it was checked, God told Moses to plant each chief's staff before the Tabernacle, marking Aaron's name on the Levite staff. The next day only Aaron's sprouted blossoms and almonds, while the others stood lifeless. The new order of Kohanim and Levites replaced the rule of the chiefs.

Such transitions often trouble communities. People meet with their own agendas and expectations, acting assertive and domineering. They solicit support from others in self-serving enterprises. So how do we discern worthy directions? The fruit of Aaron's staff proved how a whole tribe serving God and the community prevailed over rule by chiefs. We know valuable directions from the fruit of their service to God and community.