

Torah: B'midbar (Numbers) 16:1 – 18:32
Haftarah: Sh'mu'el Alef (1 Samuel) 11:14 – 12:22
B'rit Hadashah: Luke 23:32-43

	<i>yr. 1 16:1-17:15</i>	<i>yr 2 16:20-17:24</i>	<i>yr 3 17:25-18:32</i>
1	16:1 – 3	16:20 – 27	17:25 – 18:7
2	16:4 – 7	16:28 – 35	18:8 – 10
3	16:8 – 13	17:1 – 5	18:11 – 13
4	16:14 – 19	17:6 – 8	18:14 – 20
5	16:20 – 35	17:9 – 15	18:21 – 24
6	17:1 – 8	17:16 – 20	18:25 – 29
7	17:9 – 15	17:21 – 24	18:30 – 32

and HaShem spoke to Moses and to Aaron saying / separate yourself from the midst of this community / and then I will end them in a moment / [to get] peace	<i>vay'dabér ADONÁI el Moshé v'el-Aharón le'mor hibad'lu mitokh ha'edáh ha'zot va'akaléh otam ke'raga'</i>	וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: הִפְדְּלוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַזֹּאת וְאָכַלְתָּה אֹתָם כְּרָגַע:
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Qorakh, Datan and Aviram and their followers rebel against Moshe, saying that all people are equally holy, complaining about their circumstances, free but in the Wilderness. These rebel leaders and their families are swallowed up by the earth and fire consumes their followers. Even after this, the people continue to rebel and they suffer a plague. The duties of Aharon's descendants, the priests, and the other members of the tribe of Levi and the offerings that they will keep for this duty are established. The tribe of Levi will have no territory in the Promised Land like the other tribes.

The Haftarah portion tells of Samuel's inauguration of King Saul. It connects to the Torah as it speaks of HaShem making Moshe and Aharon leaders of the people, and of people going astray and being punished for it, like Qorakh, Datan, Aviram and their followers.

Year 2 Aliyah Highlights

- Nu. 16:20-27** HaShem orders Moshe and Aharon to separate themselves from all the Israelites and they “fall on their faces” in prayer. The assembly is ordered to “go up” (*alah* – עָלָה) so they might not “go down” (*yarad* – יָרַד – v.30) with them. The use of the singular *mishkhan* (מִשְׁכָּן – v. 24, 27) for their dwelling places ironically suggests that their attack was really against HaShem. Complications in the text suggest that there were up to 4 separate rebellions. That Datan and Aviram “came out” emphasizes the visibility of their open defiance – contrast v. 14.
- Nu. 16:28-35** Moshe’s service is not from his own heart (*mi'libi* – מִלִּבִּי), but in service to HaShem. Moshe denies the accursed burial rites. Because they did not “go up,” they “went down” to Sheol – שְׁאֵל (Ps. 9:18, 31:18, Ps. 55:16, Pr. 15:24, Ecc. 3:20-22). Earthquakes were well known – it was the precision of Moshe’s command that fulfilled the punishment. Their contempt was toward HaShem, not Moshe. Fire took the lives of the 250 who offered the incense.
- Nu. 17:1-5** The firepans are used to cover the altar (second time?). Coals which likely did not come from the altar are therefore not returned to the altar, but scattered.
- Nu. 17:6-8** The community rebels yet again, picking up where Qorakh left off, apparently unfazed by the previous scenes, and the presence of HaShem in cloud and glory.
- Nu. 17:9-15** Will HaShem sweep away the righteous with the wicked (Ge. 18:23)? Yes, unless they vacate the area (Lot left S'dom, Noah gets in the Ark, Israelites put blood on their doorposts...). Legitimate fire from the altar, now offered outside by legitimate priests stops the plague. The same amoral incense that killed unauthorized persons now averts death when used by authorized persons.

The wrath (*qetzel*– קִצְפָּה) of HaShem is personified (Nu. 1:53, 18:5, Ex. 12:23) as his amoral agent of destruction (2Ch. 19:2) who does not distinguish between innocent and wicked.

6. **Nu. 17:16-20** Despite the death of the instigators of rebellion and their followers, all doubt of who is chosen to serve must be removed. The Hebrew word *matteh* (מַטֵּה) means both “staff” (walking stick, Ge. 38:18, 25) and “tribe” (Nu. 1:16). Names of each man, not the name of the tribe, was written on each staff – the individual mattered, not his tribe.
7. **Nu. 17:21-24** The staffs are placed before the Ark in the Holy of Holies. Aharon’s staff alone buds and bears ripe almonds.

Thought Focus

The Collective vs. The Individual: HaShem gives breath to every human being upon birth and withdraws it at death, an idea that is found many times in scripture (Nu. 16:22, Is. 42:5, Zec. 12:1, etc.). The implication is that since HaShem is the creator of life, he alone has the right to determine who will live and who will die. Human leaders might slay the good with the bad because they cannot tell which individual has rebelled and which has not. Only HaShem knows the thoughts of man and can discern the inclinations of the heart. Though he has the right to collective punishment, yet he knows the “spirit” of each and every individual human being. Perhaps we should consider individual responsibility and merit more so than association by blood or proximity in our jurisprudence.

Earthquakes or Almonds: It is surprising that after Qorakh and his followers are swallowed up by the earth, and 250 firepans go clattering to the ground, the very next day (17:6) the whole community continues to rebel. Perhaps the quiet testimony of Aharon’s budding staff speaks louder – and longer – than the fading shock and awe of HaShem’s punishment.

Daily Devotional questions for reflection and application

1. (16:1) Are your plans in line with God’s plan? Are your heart’s desire from Him? (Jer 17:9, Mat 15:19-20, Psa 20:4(5), Rom 12:2, Jer 6:16, Deu 10:12-16, Psa 51:12-19, luk 6:43-45)
2. (16:14) Do you struggle with the promises God has made to you? (Exo 3:16-18, Joh 6:22-69)
3. (16:21) Does your presence affect the wickedness in this world, and hold back the judgement of God? (Exo 32:10, Gen 18:20-30, 1Co 7:14, Mat 5:13, Deu 29:10-13, Rom 11:16)
4. (17:10) How can you reach the lost if you separate yourself from them? Are you “in” the world, but not “of” it? (Gen 18:23, Num 16:27, 2Co 2:14-16, Mat 9:11-13, Jer 5:1, Luk 19:9-10)
5. (17:17) Is Yeshua at work in you, causing you to bud, blossom, and bringing forth fruit? (Psa 110:1-2, Jer 23:5-6, Rom 12:1-2)
6. (17:25) Do you have salvation through Yeshua, the “branch,” chosen by God, and declared by the prophets? (Jer 33:15-16, Zec 6:12, Isa 8:23-9:1, Isa 60:1-5, Mat 4:15-16, Joh 3:14, 8:28, Joh 12:32)
7. (18:21) Did the Levi’im always get paid? Do you get “paid” for your service for The Kingdom? What is your “salary?” (2Ch 31:4-5, Neh 13:10-12, 1Ti 5:17-18, 1Co 9:9-10, 15, Mat 10:9-11, Gal 6:6, Rom 16:1-2)