



קרח *Korach* Korah
[Numbers 16.1—18.32](#) / [1 Samuel 11.14—12.22](#) / [John 9—10](#)

Rebellion This *תורה* *Torah* Law/instruction portion is about Korah's rebellion and God's judgment: besides the Beast and False Prophet of Revelation, Korah and his rebels are the only others to go alive down into the pit. This portion also raises questions about God's election of *ישראל* *Yisra'el* Israel and those who join with *ישראל*.

When *ישראל* leaves Egypt, a “mixed multitude” goes with them, [Exodus 12.38](#). Why? It would be clear to non-*ישראל* observers of the plagues that the God of *ישראל* is more powerful than the gods of the Egyptians. In [Exodus 19.4-6](#), God promises *ישראל* that they will be a covenant people, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. So the mixed multitude makes the right decision in becoming grafted into the root of *ישראל*, the same opportunity individuals have today through *ישוע* *Yeshua* Jesus/salvation. Being such a privileged people means that *ישראל* and those who graft in to them also have a great responsibility to reflect the God of *ישראל*.

It's a Mystery! In [Ephesians 6.19](#), Paul mentions “the mystery of the Gospel.” What is that mystery? Many in the Church today think the mystery is that we are no longer under *תורה*, but under Grace. Others think the mystery is that God has transferred his affection away from the Jews and Synagogue to the Church. But perhaps the mystery of the Gospel is something different still.

The Mystery of the Gentiles Peter has a vision in [Acts 10](#) of a sheet full of all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, coming down from heaven three times. He is told, “Kill and eat,” and, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” Many in the Church have taken from this event that the food laws of [Leviticus 11](#) no longer apply—that it’s OK to eat pork and shellfish, for example. But that’s not what Peter gets from his own vision! Instead, he is led for the first time to go into the home of a Gentile and tell those assembled about salvation through **ישוע**. Up to this point, Peter, an observant Jew, could not conceive either of going into a Gentile home or expecting a Gentile to receive a Jewish Messiah. But that’s what ends up happening—more than he ever imagined.

The other (Jewish) believers have trouble with this and they challenge Peter in [Acts 11](#). Peter tells them about his vision and the Gentile response. They end up agreeing with Peter that Gentiles can be saved. None of them takes the lesson that Leviticus 11 has been thrown out. From that point on, Gentiles continue to receive salvation. When Paul and his companions enter Pisidian Antioch in [Acts 13](#), Paul preaches in the Synagogue on Shabbat. *The Jews have no problem with **ישוע** being the promised Messiah, executed at the urging of the Jews in Jerusalem, rising from the dead as the prophets foretold, and forgiving sin—they even ask Paul to come back the next Shabbat!* But when Gentiles arrive in the Synagogue, the Jews become outraged. Paul announces that he will take his message of salvation to the Gentiles, and he and his companions are kicked out of the city. Still, in [Acts 14.1](#), his first stop is the Synagogue in Iconium. The mystery which many Jews couldn’t accept, and which much of the Church now misses, is that *Gentiles are allowed into the salvation of **ישראל** through **ישוע**!*



The Jerusalem Council Jewish believers telling Gentiles that they had to be circumcised *in order to be saved* precipitates the Jerusalem Council in [Acts 15](#). The result in verses 19-20 is a letter from the Council explaining just four laws for the Gentiles to follow. Many in the Church take from this council that the other **תורה** laws no longer apply. But if the council means that no other laws apply, they are tossing blasphemy, murder, and adultery! Obviously something else is meant. Verse 21 explains that the Gentiles will get the rest of **תורה** in time. In other words, the Council says,

Dear Gentiles,

*As you know, we used to think you are disgusting. For all we knew, you had just been to a prostitute at some pagan shrine, as was your custom. Now we find that God accepts you, something we never expected. So if you obey these four laws: no sexual immorality, no eating of meat offered to idols, or of strangled animals, or blood, we can at least fellowship and share our salvation with you. In time, as you continue to attend Synagogue, you will learn all of *יהדות*, since Moses is preached around the world every Shabbat. But until you know better, just these four laws will suffice.*

*In Love, James and all
the other Jewish believers in Jerusalem*



Does the Church Replace Synagogue? Do you think the early believers stopped attending Synagogue? Check out [James 2.2](#) and which Greek word is translated assembly or meeting: συναγωγή *synagōgē* Synagogue. Do you think there was no Church before **עושי**? Check out Stephen's speech in [Acts 7.38](#) and how he refers to **לראי** at the time of Moses, 1,500 years before **עושי**: ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia* Church. συναγωγή and ἐκκλησία are interchangeable terms—both refer to the assembly of God's people. The Hebrew word is קהל *kahel* assembly such as [Exodus 12.6](#), when the whole קהל of **לראי** is instructed to kill the Passover Lamb. In some verses such as [Deuteronomy 4.10](#), versions of ἐκκλησία are used in the Septuagint to translate קהל:

2250	3739	2476	1799	2962				
4:10	ἡμέραν	ἣν	ἕστητε	ἐνώπιον	κυρίου			
	<i>Specially the day</i>	which	you stood	in the presence of	<i>the LORD</i>			
3588	2316-1473	1722 *	3588	2250	3588	1577	3754	
	τοῦ θεοῦ σου	ἐν	Χωρήβ	τῇ	ἡμέρᾳ	τῆς	ἐκκλησίας	ὅτι
	<i>your God in</i>	<i>Horeb,</i>	<i>in the day</i>	<i>of the</i>	<i>assembly;</i>		<i>for</i>	
2036-2962	4314	1473	1577.1	4314	1473	3588	2992	
	εἶπε κύριος	πρὸς	ἐκκλησίασον	πρὸς	με	τὸν	λαόν	
	<i>the LORD said to</i>	<i>me,</i>	<i>Hold an assembly</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>me,</i>	<i>[³the</i>	<i>⁴people</i>	



The קהל of the time of Moses, the ἐκκλησία of the Septuagint, and the συναγωγή and the Church of the time of **עושי** and the apostles are all synonyms for the same company of believers, the Assembly of God. Modern believers are one with the Jewish heroes of [Hebrews 11](#) and the early Church.

Jews and Gentiles Together The mystery is not in changing from Law to Grace. In [Acts 21.17-26](#), Paul agrees to a demonstration to prove that he does not teach saved Jews to abandon תורה, while he himself remains תורה-observant. In fact, verse 20 affirms that *thousands of believing Jews are still zealous for תורה, and that's understood as a good thing!* The belief of the early Church is that following תורה is good. In [Galatians 5.11](#), Paul also says that not teaching circumcision, that is, not insisting that Gentiles *convert to Judaism to be saved*, is the cause of his persecution. He calls what he does “the offense of the cross.” Peter addresses his [first letter](#) to “God’s elect, strangers in the world.” In [1 Peter 2.10](#) he continues, “Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

Gentiles allowed to be saved without first converting to Judaism?

ישוע, a Jewish Messiah, opening salvation to Gentiles?

Gentiles, the unclean, lawless ones who were always trying to destroy ישראל?



The Misunderstanding Continues In [Acts 21.27-29](#), the Jews jump to conclusions. They think that since Paul is bringing Gentiles into salvation, he’s also bringing them into the area of the Temple forbidden to Gentiles—that Paul himself is a breaker of תורה—and they want him arrested. Josephus in his [Antiquities](#) tells about the wall to keep Gentiles away, and the penalty of death if a Gentile crossed it. A stone with this warning inscription was discovered in 1871 by French archaeologist Charles Clermont-Ganneau.



[Ephesians 2.11-22](#) may be referring to this wall as having been destroyed (figuratively) by

ישוע, so that those “who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ...(Who) destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people...” 40 years after the death of ישוע, this wall is literally destroyed along with the rest of the Temple.

Gentiles Saved? Yes! Paul's arrest averts a riot. Then the soldiers give him the opportunity to address the crowd. In [Acts 22](#), his Jewish listeners again are fine with Paul being blinded and thrown off his horse, accepting **ישוע** as Messiah, getting baptized, and his sins forgiven in the Name of **ישוע**. But when he tells them in verse 21 that he is sent to the Gentiles, the uproar starts again! **ישוע** is the promised Messiah of God, "OK!" God is giving salvation to the Gentiles too, "NO!" This uproar and arrest leads to Paul's imprisonment in Rome and, ultimately, his execution.

The mystery of the Gospel is that Gentiles are allowed into salvation through **ישוע** along with the Jews. It's ironic, isn't it? Before Acts 10, the whole Church is Jewish and they're sure Gentiles aren't allowed. Today, most Jews don't think they're allowed to have anything at all to do with the Church or **ישוע**—it's all strictly for Gentiles!

In Paul's time, the Jews are outraged that he is breaking **תורה**, though he wasn't. Jews think the same thing today about Christians. Their worry is grounded in [Deuteronomy 13.1-6](#), which specifically warns **ישראל** against those who would turn them from God and "from the way **יהוה YHVH** the LORD your God commanded you to follow." When a Christian tells a Jew, "Jesus abolished the Law," the Jew hears "false prophet." But **ישוע** specifically says in [Matthew 5.17](#) that He did not come to abolish the Law.

Roots The Hebrew Roots movement is about Christians rediscovering the Hebrew way of thinking that underlies Scripture, and the relevance of **תורה** for today. It's a recognition that the Church is grafted into the tree of **ישראל**. *One mistake* is to think the Church is a replacement of **ישראל**. As adopted children, it's not appropriate to say, "OK, now we'll show you what you've been doing wrong all along." There is much to learn from **ישראל**, who has been struggling for centuries with how to apply **תורה** to life. **תורה** is written for **ישראל**. Gentiles have no connection to **תורה** except through the Messiah of **ישראל ישוע**, and His sacrifice. *The other mistake* the Church can make is to try to be so Jewish in following **תורה** that we neglect **ישוע**, the reason we have a connection in the first place. *But if we Gentiles want to be like the early Church, then we should follow the four laws outlined by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and attend Synagogue every Shabbat so that we gradually follow the rest of Moses and תורה!*



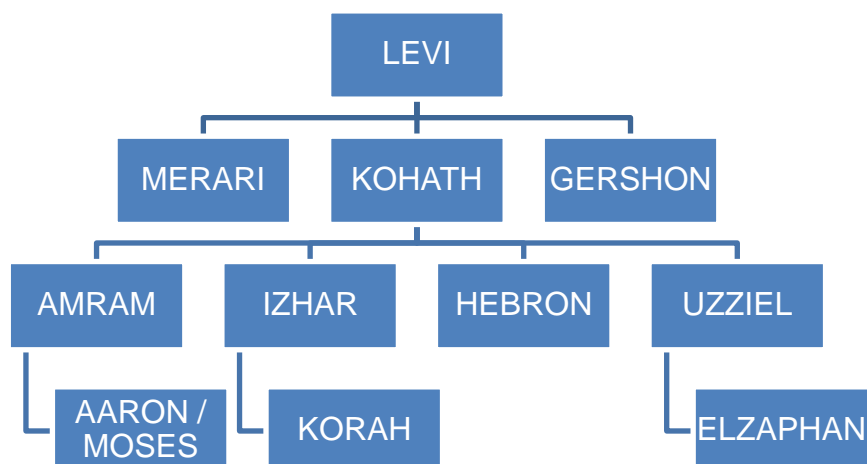
Korah's Rebellion [Numbers 16](#) tells how Korah and 250 leaders of the people rise up against Moses. They say, "The whole community is holy!" and challenge Moses' leadership. Moses falls facedown. In verses 20-22, God proposes to destroy the assembly and to make Moses and Aaron the sole survivors, but Moses and Aaron fall facedown. After Korah and his followers are all destroyed by God and the people rebel again, God in verse 45 (Hebrew [Numbers 17.10](#)) proposes again to destroy the entire assembly, and again Moses and Aaron fall on their faces. 14,700 are killed by God.

The history of the Church has kept this history of rebellion. The Roman Catholic Church, for various reasons of its own, changed Shabbat from the 7th day of the week to the 1st, what we call Sunday, changed from the Biblical to the Roman calendar, and abandoned the Biblical feast days. Protestants, as their name implies, protested against the Roman Church and created their own traditions, while keeping much of Rome's changes. And both Catholics and Protestants tend to agree that תורה does not apply.

In his speech before dying, Stephen in [Acts 7.23-27](#) reminds ישראל how a slave in Egypt rejected Moses, "Who made you ruler and judge over us?" In verses 35-37, Stephen extends this rejection to include all of ישראל, possibly referring to Korah's rebellion as well. Stephen then connects these rejections of God's leader by the people of ישראל to the rejecting of ישוע, the Prophet that Moses promised God would raise up.

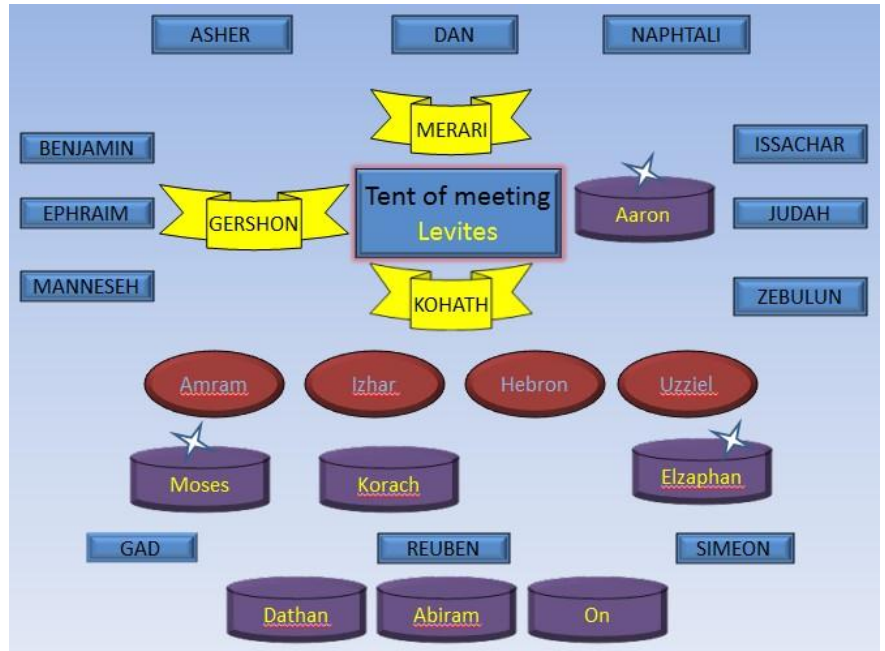
If there are factors that assist Korah in rebelling against Moses, it is useful for us to know what they are, so that we can learn to avoid them.

Korah is Grumpy In [Exodus 19.6](#), God promises that if ישראל keeps His covenant, they will be a kingdom of priests וגוי קדוש v'goi kadosh and a holy nation. But in [Leviticus 9](#), it is only Aaron and his sons who minister in the Tabernacle. Kohath's descendants are given the task of carrying the furniture of the Tabernacle in [Numbers 3.29-31](#), which also names Elizaphan the prince of the Kohathites. Unlike his cousins, Korah is not a prophet like Moses, not a priest like Aaron, and not a prince like Elizaphan. And now, because of the rebellion, instead of carrying the furniture to the Land for a few days, he has to schlep it around the wilderness for the remainder of 40 years. Not a happy camper, Korah may feel left out, disrespected.



Korah Gets Agreement Miriam speaks against Moses and gets leprosy. Two of the tribes to search out the Land, **רֵאוּבֵן** [Re'uvan](#) Reuben/Behold a son!, from the root **רָאָה** [ra'ah](#) to see, and **שִׁמְעוֹן** [Shimown](#) Simeon/heard, from the root **שָׁמַע** [shamah](#) to hear/listen/obey, help spread the evil report about the Land that results in a plague, the worst day in the history of **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, **תְּשֻׁעָה בְּאָב** *Tisha b'Av* the 9th of Av.

Korah camps near Reuben and Simeon on the south of the Tabernacle. They are the ones with eyes that don't see what God is doing and ears that don't hear what God is saying. Ephraim under Joshua and Judah under Caleb are separated from Korah. So although Korah is a Levite, he is insulated from those who trust God and is influenced by those who doubt God. In other words, Korah gets agreement from his neighbors in his discontent. In [Numbers 16.1](#), three men from the tribe of Reuben, Dathan, Abiram, and On, plus about 250 others, join Korah in his rebellion.



Lessons We can learn from Korah's mistake by avoiding grumpiness and not getting agreement in our dissatisfaction. Positively, we can keep a good attitude by trusting God and fellowshipping with those who also seek to trust God.



God is Dangerous With a bad attitude and agreement among neighbors, Korah challenges Moses in [Numbers 16.3](#), saying that the whole congregation is holy and **יְהוָה** is with them all. He sounds religious, but he is rebelling against God's authority. Moses falls on his face and then assures Korah that God will make it plain the next day who is holy and chosen, asking in verses 8-10 why being a Levi isn't enough, and why Korah seeks the priesthood also. Moses calls for Dathan and Abiram, but they refuse to come. Jewish tradition says that On is not mentioned here, even though he was part of the rebellion earlier, because his wife told him to back down. On listens to his wife, doesn't continue with the rebellion, and doesn't get destroyed along with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their families. But the children of Korah were spared, [Numbers 26.11](#), [1 Chronicles 6.16-22](#), and [9.19](#), and 11 psalms are written by sons of Korah.

Failure to Listen Numbers 16.41 ([17.6](#) in Hebrew) shows the people murmuring against Moses and Aaron, blaming them for the deaths, even though Moses promised in [16.30](#) that this would be a special judgment from God. So 14,700 more die. [Psalm 106](#) warns against rebellion and lists what **ישראל** did.

In the Church, we tend to dismiss any such concerns in this “Age of Grace.” Should we?

- [Matthew 7.15-20](#) A good tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (It’s that simple. Yet I know a Christian pastor who argues around this passage by saying that the Sermon on the Mount only applied during the life of **ישוע** on earth!)
- [Luke 9.62](#) One who looks back is unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven
- [Luke 13.6-9](#) The tree that doesn’t bear fruit is cut down
- [1 Corinthians 10.1-13](#) All that happened to **ישראל** should be examples for us
- [Hebrews 6.4-8](#) Believers are fruitful or punished
- [Hebrews 10.26-31](#) Sin still brings terrible consequences

Cheap Grace vs. Costly Grace Consider some quotes by German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who, because of his work against the Nazi party’s attempt to take over the Church and because of his attempt on Hitler’s life, was hung by Hitler:






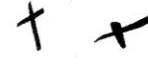
- When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.
- Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church. We are fighting today for **costly grace**.
- Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession.... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.
- **Costly grace** is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such **grace** is **costly** because it calls us to follow, and it is **grace** because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is **costly** because it costs a man his life, and it is **grace** because it gives a man the only true life. It is **costly** because it condemns sin, and **grace** because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is **costly** because it cost God the life of His Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is **grace** because God did not reckon His Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us. **Costly grace** is the Incarnation of God.
- Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God's will.
- Jesus Christ lived in the midst of His enemies. At the end all His disciples deserted him. On the Cross He was utterly alone, surrounded by evildoers and mockers. For this cause He had come, to bring peace to the enemies of God. So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes. There is his commission, his work.

BELIEVE = OBEY



Sign of Authority Numbers 17 tells of Aaron's staff budding and producing almonds overnight to prove God's approval of his leadership. Synagogues today still recognize this authority given to Aaron by asking before the תורה reading, "Is there a son of Aaron in the house?" If not, someone else stands in for a son of Aaron.

Sign of ישוע Numbers 17.10 says that Aaron's rod is to be kept as an אֹת *owt* sign/signal/token against the rebels, so that they stop murmuring and dying. In Moses' time, these letters looked different from the way they do today:

1		ALEF א		OX, BULL (vowel)
			strength, leader, first	
6		VAV ו		NAIL, PEG v
			'and', to add, to secure	
22		TAV ת		SIGN t
			to seal, to covenant	



א, since it is first, silent, and indicates strength, is often used to symbolize God. Together, the symbolic meaning of the letters in אֹת is *The Leader/God Nailed to the Cross*. Hebrews 10.28-31 warns that if people didn't escape when they rejected the Law of Moses, anyone who rejects the Son of God and the blood of the covenant should be punished more severely. The cross is a symbol of grace, but it is also a warning of God's attitude toward rebellion.



Also, ישוע is the promised Branch/Shoot/Sapling of Isaiah 11.1-2, Isaiah 53.2-3, and Zechariah 6.12-13. He was cut off, left for dead, but has come back to life, bearing fruit!

From Rebellion to Grace [1 Samuel 1.19-20](#) says that the prophet Samuel's father is Elkanah and [1 Chronicles 6.22-27](#) that Elkanah is a descendant of Korah. Because of [1 Samuel 1](#), some think that Samuel is a descendant of Ephraim. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* edited by Frank E. Gaebel, Ronald F. Youngblood says of 1 Samuel 1,

The Chronicles' genealogies identify Samuel as a member of the Kohathite branch of the tribe of Levi and an ancestor of tabernacle and temple musicians (1 Chron 6:16, 22, 31-33). The reference to Samuel's father as an Ephraimite, then, relates to the territory where he lived rather than to his tribal origin. Allotted no patrimony of their own, the Levites lived among the other tribes...

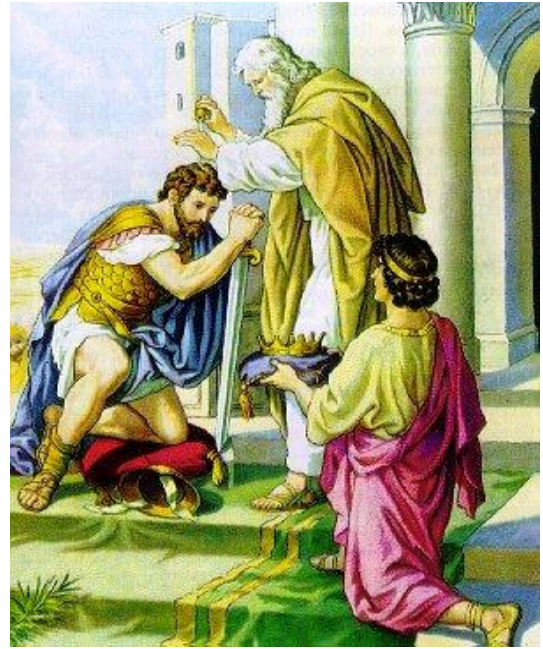
Jewish tradition also holds that Samuel is a descendant of Korah. In fact, as the [Chabad](#) website points out, that's the reason the Haphtarah portion for today is [1 Samuel 11.14 to 12.22](#). As Moses in [Numbers 16.15](#) announces that he hasn't taken so much as an ass from the people, Samuel makes the same claim in [1 Samuel 12.3](#). Korah rebels against Moses. About 500 years later, **ישראל** rejects Samuel, Korah's descendant, by demanding a king. In [Numbers 23.9](#), Balaam prophesies that **ישראל** will not be reckoned among the nations. Samuel later agrees with this sentiment, warning the people not to be like the other nations in demanding a king. But the people reject Samuel in [1 Samuel 8.4-5, 18-20](#). As Moses stands alone against the desire, contrary to God's plan, to spread the authority of the priesthood to all, Samuel stands alone against the desire, contrary to God's plan, to consolidate kingship authority in one man.

In [1 Samuel 12.19](#), the people realize it was a sin to **שאל** *sha'al* ask for a king. This repentance is made after **שאוּל** *Sha'ul* Saul/desired/passive participle of **שאל**, of the tribe of Benjamin, is anointed by Samuel to be their king. Samuel responds in verse 23 that although the people have done evil, he will not sin by ceasing to pray for them.



About 1,000 years later, another **שאוּל** of the tribe of Benjamin, the Apostle Paul, says in [Romans 9.1-5](#) that he has great sorrow and prays with unceasing anguish in his heart for the salvation of **ישראל**, who have received sonship, glory, covenants, **תורה**, temple worship, promises, and the genealogy of the patriarchs and **ישוע**.

Korah's Spirit Continues In [Leviticus 8.12](#), Moses **משח** *mashach* anoints Aaron as the high priest. And so Aaron becomes a **משיח** *mashiach* anointed one, where we get our word for **ישוע המשיח** *Yeshua ha'Mashiach*, Jesus the Messiah. **משח** involves pouring oil on the person's head. This is what Samuel did for **שאול** and later David, [1 Samuel 16](#); [Psalm 132.17](#). Anointing is for a purpose—the **משיח** has a job to do. **ישוע** brings salvation through His life, death, and resurrection, David and **שאול** rule as kings, and Aaron is God's high priest. Korah rebels against God's **משיח**, Aaron. Korah is "Anti-Messiah," or in Greek, Anti-Christ.



In [2 Thessalonians 2.3](#), Paul describes the Anti-Christ as the man of **ἀνομία** *anomia* lawlessness (in Paul's mind, probably synonymous with **תורה-lessness**). This man of lawlessness will actively fight against the God's rule and reign.

"Torah is done away with" is a popular refrain in many churches today, but this is contrary to the definition of the New Covenant in [Jeremiah 31.33](#), **תורה** written in our hearts. And this passage is repeated in [Hebrews 8.8-12](#). If we preach **תורה-lessness**, it's like **ἀνομία**, the spirit of Korah, the spirit of Anti-Christ.

Korah, if he hadn't gone alive down into the pit, would probably be proud of much of the Church's teaching today.



Glossary, in order of appearance:

קרח	<i>Korach</i>	Korah
תורה	<i>Torah</i>	Law/instruction
ישראל	<i>Yisra'el</i>	Israel
ישוע	<i>Yeshua</i>	Jesus/salvation
συναγωγή	<i>Synagogue</i>	Synagogue
ἐκκλησία	<i>ekklēsia</i>	Church
קהל	<i>kahel</i>	assembly
יהוה	<i>YHVH</i>	the LORD
וגוי קדוש	<i>v'goi kadosh</i>	and a holy nation
ראובן	<i>Re'uvan</i>	Reuben/Behold a son!
ראה	<i>ra'ah</i>	to see
שמעון	<i>Shimown</i>	Simeon/heard
שמע	<i>shamah</i>	to hear/listen/obey
תשעה באב	<i>Tisha b'Av</i>	9 th of Av, worst day on the Jewish calendar
אות	<i>owt</i>	sign/signal/token <i>The Leader/God Nailed to the Cross</i>
א	<i>aleph</i>	first letter, silent, indicates strength, often used to symbolize God
שאל	<i>sha'al</i>	ask
שואל	<i>Sha'ul</i>	Saul/desired/passive participle of שאל
משח	<i>mashach</i>	anoint
משיח	<i>mashiach</i>	anointed one
ישוע המשיח	<i>Yeshua ha'Mashiach</i>	Jesus the Messiah
ἀνομία	<i>anomia</i>	lawlessness