

Numbers 16:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

All Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them—the Hebrew nuwc (נוּכ) means to flee in terror. The ground opening beneath Korah's household produced a za'aqah (זָעַקָּה), a cry of distress so horrific that witnesses feared immediate divine judgment upon themselves. Their words "**lest the earth swallow us up also**" reveal both the terror of God's holiness and recognition that sin brings corporate consequences in covenant community.

This fear was godly and necessary—the fear that leads to wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Israel learned that God's mishpat (מִשְׁפָט, judgment) is not arbitrary but surgical, separating rebels from the faithful. The earth literally discriminated between Korah's tents and the rest of Israel (v. 32-33).

Historical Context

This occurred at Kadesh during Israel's second year in the wilderness (c. 1444 BC). Korah, a Kohathite, led 250 prominent leaders in challenging Moses and Aaron's authority. The dual judgment—earth swallowing Korah's household, fire consuming the 250 censers—demonstrated God's comprehensive vindication of His appointed leadership.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Does the fear of God's holiness inform your approach to corporate worship and church discipline?
2. How should modern believers balance confidence in Christ's mediation with holy reverence for God's righteous judgment?
3. When you witness God's judgment on others, does it produce godly fear or self-righteous presumption?

Interlinear Text

כִּי לְלִלְמֹד שִׁבְעַת מְלֹא אָשָׁר יִשְׁבָּא לְכָל	H3605	And all Israel	H3478	H834	that were round about	H5439	אָשָׁר מְלֹא סְבִיבַתִּים מְלֹא אָשָׁר יִשְׁבָּא לְכָל	H5127	them fled	H5127	נְסִעָה מְלֹא אָשָׁר מְלֹא סְבִיבַתִּים מְלֹא אָשָׁר יִשְׁבָּא לְכָל	H3588	at the cry	H6963
אָמַר אֲלֵיכֶם תְּבַלֵּע נָא כִּי	H559	of them for they said	H6435	H1104	swallow us up	H776	פָּאָרֶץ	H1104	Lest the earth	H776	תְּבַלֵּע נָא כִּי	H776		

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