

## Called to Encourage Seek God's Word for Truth

Read the following passage:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go back to Pharaoh, and tell him to let the people of Israel leave Egypt."

"But Lord!" Moses objected. "My own people won't listen to me anymore. How can I expect Pharaoh to listen? I'm no orator!"

But the Lord ordered Moses and Aaron to return to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and to demand that he let the people of Israel leave Egypt.

These are the ancestors of clans from some of Israel's tribes:

The descendants of Reuben, Israel's oldest son, included Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. Their descendants became the clans of Reuben.

The descendants of Simeon included Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul (whose mother was a Canaanite). Their descendants became the clans of Simeon.

These are the descendants of Levi, listed according to their family groups. In the first generation were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (Levi, their father, lived to be 137 years old.)

The descendants of Gershon included Libni and Shimei, each of whom is the ancestor of a clan.

The descendants of Kohath included Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. (Kohath lived to be 133 years old.)

The descendants of Merari included Mahli and Mushi.

These are the clans of the Levites, listed according to their genealogies.

Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses. (Amram lived to be 137 years old.)

The descendants of Izhar included Korah, Nepheg, and Zicri.

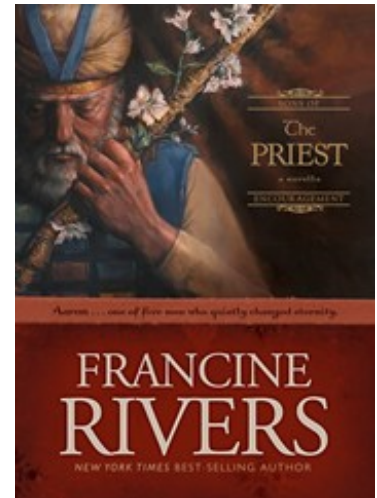
The descendants of Uzziel included Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

The descendants of Korah included Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. Their descendants became the clans of Korah.

Eleazar son of Aaron married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. (Exodus 6:10-25)

List everything you learn about Aaron from this Levitical lineage.



# The Priest

Francine Rivers

Read the following passages:

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he went deep into the wilderness near Sinai, the mountain of God. Suddenly, the angel of the Lord appeared to him as a blazing fire in a bush. Moses was amazed because the bush was engulfed in flames, but it didn't burn up. "Amazing!" Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go over to see this."

When the Lord saw that he had caught Moses' attention, God called to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied. (Exodus 3:1-4)

"Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You will lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

"But who am I to appear before Pharaoh?" Moses asked God. "How can you expect me to lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:10-11)

But Moses protested, "If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they won't believe me. They will ask, 'Which god are you talking about? What is his name?' Then what should I tell them?"

(Exodus 3:13)

But Moses protested again, "Look, they won't believe me! They won't do what I tell them. They'll just say, 'The Lord never appeared to you.'" (Exodus 4:1)

But Moses pleaded with the Lord, "O Lord, I'm just not a good speaker. I never have been, and I'm not now, even after you have spoken to me. I'm clumsy with words." (Exodus 4:10)

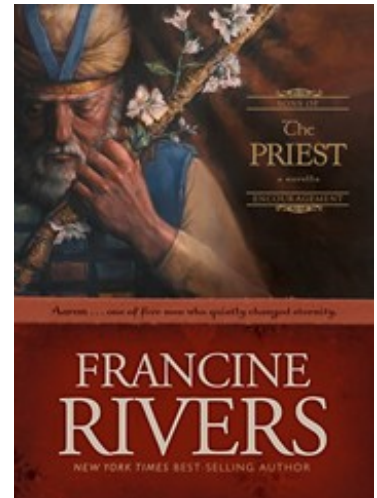
But Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send someone else."

Then the Lord became angry with Moses. "All right," he said. "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? He is a good speaker. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. And when he sees you, he will be very glad. You will talk to him, giving him the words to say. I will help both of you to speak clearly, and I will tell you what to do. Aaron will be your spokesman to the people, and you will be as God to him, telling him what to say. And be sure to take your shepherd's staff along so you can perform the miraculous signs I have shown you." (Exodus 4:13-17)

Now the Lord had said to Aaron, "Go out into the wilderness to meet Moses." So Aaron traveled to the mountain of God, where he found Moses and greeted him warmly. Moses then told Aaron everything the Lord had commanded them to do and say. And he told him about the miraculous signs they were to perform.

So Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt and called the leaders of Israel to a meeting. Aaron told them everything the Lord had told Moses, and Moses performed the miraculous signs as they watched. The leaders were soon convinced that the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron. And when they realized that the Lord had seen their misery and was deeply concerned for them, they all bowed their heads and worshiped. (Exodus 4:27-31)

Contrast Moses and Aaron from these verses.



Discuss God's role and response from the same passages.

What roles did Moses and Aaron take/accept?

How did the Israelite people respond? What did they conclude about the two men?

What impact, if any, do you think Aaron had on Moses at this juncture? Why?

### Find God's Ways for You

How do you respond when God impresses you to do something?

Which of the two leaders (Moses or Aaron) do you identify with and why?

The Lord is for me, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? Yes, the Lord is for me; he will help me. I will look in triumph at those who hate me. It is better to trust the Lord than to put confidence in people. (Psalm 118:6-8)

What do you learn about God from these verses?

### Stop and Ponder

Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. (Ephesians 3:20)

### Called to Egypt

#### Seek God's Word for Truth

Moses and Aaron both chose to obey God and return to Egypt to help deliver their relatives out of bondage. Read the following passage:

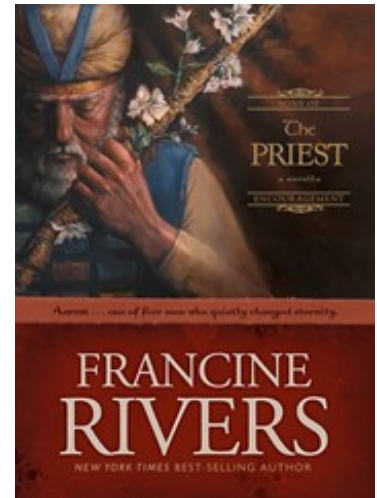
So Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt and called the leaders of Israel to a meeting. Aaron told them everything the Lord had told Moses, and Moses performed the miraculous signs as they watched. The leaders were soon convinced that the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron. And when they realized that the Lord had seen their misery and was deeply concerned for them, they all bowed their heads and worshiped.

After this presentation to Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh. They told him, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, for they must go out into the wilderness to hold a religious festival in my honor.' " "Is that so?" retorted Pharaoh. "And who is the Lord that I should listen to him and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go."

But Aaron and Moses persisted. "The God of the Hebrews has met with us," they declared. "Let us take a three-day trip into the wilderness so we can offer sacrifices to the Lord our God. If we don't, we will surely die by disease or the sword." (Exodus 4:29-5:3)

What steps did Aaron and Moses take upon returning to Egypt?

What supporting evidence do you find that Aaron was an encouragement to Moses?



Read the following passage:

After this presentation to Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh. They told him, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, for they must go out into the wilderness to hold a religious festival in my honor.'" "Is that so?" retorted Pharaoh. "And who is the Lord that I should listen to him and let Israel go? I don't know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go."

But Aaron and Moses persisted. "The God of the Hebrews has met with us," they declared. "Let us take a three-day trip into the wilderness so we can offer sacrifices to the Lord our God. If we don't, we will surely die by disease or the sword."

"Who do you think you are," Pharaoh shouted, "distracting the people from their tasks? Get back to work! Look, there are many people here in Egypt, and you are stopping them from doing their work."

Since Pharaoh would not let up on his demands, the Israelite foremen could see that they were in serious trouble. As they left Pharaoh's court, they met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting outside for them. The foremen said to them, "May the Lord judge you for getting us into this terrible situation with Pharaoh and his officials. You have given them an excuse to kill us!"

So Moses went back to the Lord and protested, "Why have you mistreated your own people like this, Lord? Why did you send me? Since I gave Pharaoh your message, he has been even more brutal to your people. You have not even begun to rescue them!"

"Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh," the Lord told Moses. "When he feels my powerful hand upon him, he will let the people go. In fact, he will be so anxious to get rid of them that he will force them to leave his land!"

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pay close attention to this. I will make you seem like God to Pharaoh. Your brother, Aaron, will be your prophet; he will speak for you. Tell Aaron everything I say to you and have him announce it to Pharaoh. He will demand that the people of Israel be allowed to leave Egypt."

So Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord had commanded them. Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty-three at the time they made their demands to Pharaoh.

Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Pharaoh will demand that you show him a miracle to prove that God has sent you. When he makes this demand, say to Aaron, 'Throw down your shepherd's staff,' and it will become a snake."

So Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh, and they performed the miracle just as the Lord had told them. (Exodus 5:1-5, 19-23-6:1-2; 7:1-2, 6-10a)

How did Pharaoh react to the demands of Aaron and Moses? How did the Israelites react to Pharaoh's demands?

What does Moses do when he is confronted by the Israelite foreman?

Just as God laid out His plan to Moses, what role did He give Aaron? Why?

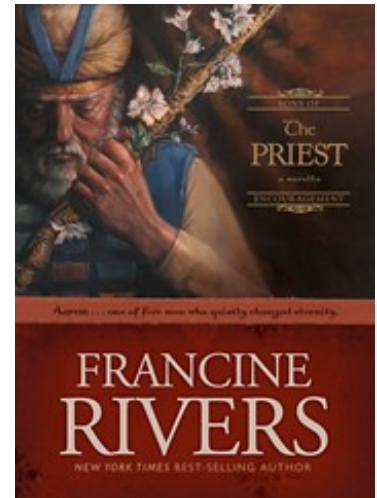
Notice Moses' and Aaron's response to God's plan (7:8). Discuss the possible reasons for the change in their attitudes.

## Find God's Ways for You

Have you ever needed to "go back" in order to go forward? Explain.

Share a time when someone was willing to support you, stay by your side, through a difficult time.

A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12)



Discuss this verse in light of Moses and Aaron. Who is always there to form the triple braid?

### Stop and Ponder

God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you." That is why we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5b-6)

### Called to Higher Ground

#### Seek God's Word for Truth

Read the following passage:

The Lord instructed Moses: "Come up here to me, and bring along Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of Israel's leaders. All of them must worship at a distance. You alone, Moses, are allowed to come near to the Lord. The others must not come too close. And remember, none of the other people are allowed to climb on the mountain at all."

When Moses had announced to the people all the teachings and regulations the Lord had given him, they answered in unison, "We will do everything the Lord has told us to do."

Then Moses carefully wrote down all the Lord's instructions. Early the next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also set up twelve pillars around the altar, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent some of the young men to sacrifice young bulls as burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord. Moses took half the blood from these animals and drew it off into basins. The other half he splashed against the altar.

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They all responded again, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded. We will obey."

Then Moses sprinkled the blood from the basins over the people and said, "This blood confirms the covenant the Lord has made with you in giving you these laws."

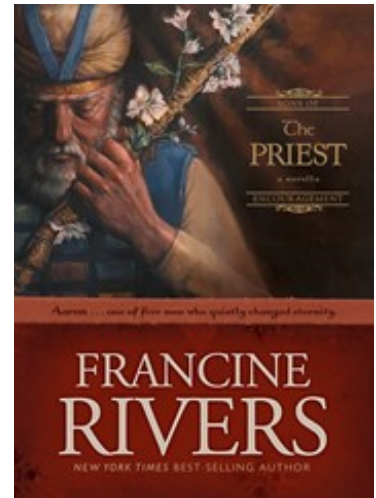
Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the leaders of Israel went up the mountain. There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a pavement of brilliant sapphire, as clear as the heavens. And though Israel's leaders saw God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they shared a meal together in God's presence!

And the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain. Stay there while I give you the tablets of stone that I have inscribed with my instructions and commands. Then you will teach the people from them." So Moses and his assistant Joshua climbed up the mountain of God.

Moses told the other leaders, "Stay here and wait for us until we come back. If there are any problems while I am gone, consult with Aaron and Hur, who are here with you."

Then Moses went up the mountain, and the cloud covered it. (Exodus 24:1-15)  
Who was invited to the mountain? What took place among them while they were there?

When Moses went up the mountain with Joshua, what were his instructions to the other leaders?





# The Priest

Francine Rivers

With all this in mind, read the following passage:

When Moses failed to come back down the mountain right away, the people went to Aaron. "Look," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. This man Moses, who brought us here from Egypt, has disappeared. We don't know what has happened to him."

So Aaron said, "Tell your wives and sons and daughters to take off their gold earrings, and then bring them to me."

All the people obeyed Aaron and brought him their gold earrings. Then Aaron took the gold, melted it down, and molded and tooled it into the shape of a calf. The people exclaimed, "O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt!"

When Aaron saw how excited the people were about it, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord!"

So the people got up early the next morning to sacrifice burnt offerings and peace offerings. After this, they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and indulged themselves in pagan revelry.

Then the Lord told Moses, "Quick! Go down the mountain! The people you brought from Egypt have defiled themselves. They have already turned from the way I commanded them to live. They have made an idol shaped like a calf, and they have worshiped and sacrificed to it. They are saying, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.' "

Then the Lord said, "I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. Now leave me alone so my anger can blaze against them and destroy them all. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation instead of them."

But Moses pleaded with the Lord his God not to do it. "O Lord!" he exclaimed. "Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and mighty acts? The Egyptians will say, 'God tricked them into coming to the mountains so he could kill them and wipe them from the face of the earth.' Turn away from your fierce anger. Change your mind about this terrible disaster you are planning against your people! Remember your covenant with your servants—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You swore by your own self, 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven. Yes, I will give them all of this land that I have promised to your descendants, and they will possess it forever.' "

So the Lord withdrew his threat and didn't bring against his people the disaster he had threatened.

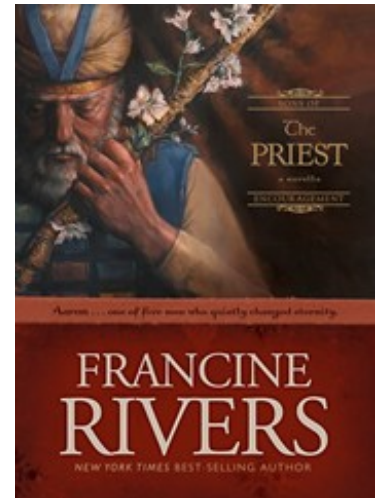
Then Moses turned and went down the mountain. He held in his hands the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back. These stone tablets were God's work; the words on them were written by God himself.

When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting below them, he exclaimed to Moses, "It sounds as if there is a war in the camp!"

But Moses replied, "No, it's neither a cry of victory nor a cry of defeat. It is the sound of a celebration."

When they came near the camp, Moses saw the calf and the dancing. In terrible anger, he threw the stone tablets to the ground, smashing them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf they had made and melted it in the fire. And when the metal had cooled, he ground it into powder and mixed it with water. Then he made the people drink it.

After that, he turned to Aaron. "What did the people do to you?" he demanded. "How did they ever make you bring such terrible sin upon them?"



# The Priest

Francine Rivers

“Don’t get upset, sir,” Aaron replied. “You yourself know these people and what a wicked bunch they are. They said to me, ‘Make us some gods to lead us, for something has happened to this man Moses, who led us out of Egypt.’ So I told them, ‘Bring me your gold earrings.’ When they brought them to me, I threw them into the fire—and out came this calf!”

When Moses saw that Aaron had let the people get completely out of control—and much to the amusement of their enemies—he stood at the entrance to the camp and shouted, “All of you who are on the Lord’s side, come over here and join me.” And all the Levites came.

He told them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Strap on your swords! Go back and forth from one end of the camp to the other, killing even your brothers, friends, and neighbors.” The Levites obeyed Moses, and about three thousand people died that day.

Then Moses told the Levites, “Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, for you obeyed him even though it meant killing your own sons and brothers. Because of this, he will now give you a great blessing.”

The next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a terrible sin, but I will return to the Lord on the mountain. Perhaps I will be able to obtain forgiveness for you.”

So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Alas, these people have committed a terrible sin. They have made gods of gold for themselves. But now, please forgive their sin—and if not, then blot me out of the record you are keeping.”

The Lord replied to Moses, “I will blot out whoever has sinned against me. Now go, lead the people to the place I told you about. Look! My angel will lead the way before you! But when I call the people to account, I will certainly punish them for their sins.”

And the Lord sent a great plague upon the people because they had worshiped the calf Aaron had made. (Exodus 32)

Discuss the circumstances surrounding the creation of the golden calf: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

What did Moses find when he returned? What was his response?

Compare Aaron’s response to the people’s request in verses 2-4 with his reply to Moses’ questions in verses 22-24.

Moses took drastic measures within the camp of Israel when he discovered their sin. He drew a line in the sand. Who crossed that line to join him in obedience? What might this also imply about Aaron?

## Find God’s Ways for You

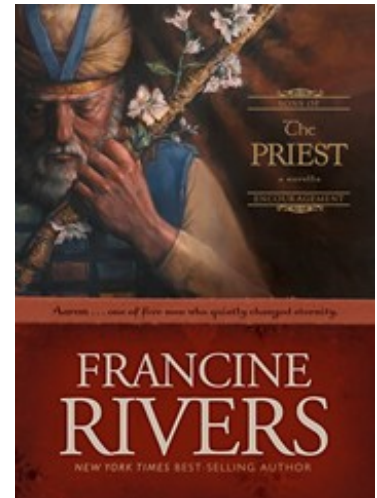
Both Aaron and Moses were put on the spot, each revealing himself in his response. Share a time when you were put on the spot by other people. What did you learn about yourself by the way you handled it?

With whom do you identify now—Moses or Aaron? Why?

Discuss steps Aaron should have taken when the people came to him for leadership.

## Stop and Ponder

We can gather our thoughts, but the Lord gives the right answer. People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives. Commit your work to the Lord, and then your plans will succeed. (Proverbs 16:1-3)



## Called to Holiness

### Seek God's Word for Truth

Read the following passages:

Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the Tabernacle, and wash them with water. (Exodus 40:12)

The Lord said to Moses, "Now bring Aaron and his sons, along with their special clothing, the anointing oil, the bull for the sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread to the entrance of the Tabernacle. Then call the entire community of Israel to meet you there."

So Moses followed the Lord's instructions, and all the people assembled at the Tabernacle entrance. Moses announced to them, "The Lord has commanded what I am now going to do!" Then he presented Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. He clothed Aaron with the embroidered tunic and tied the sash around his waist. He dressed him in the robe of the ephod, along with the ephod itself, and attached the ephod with its decorative sash. Then Moses placed the chestpiece on Aaron and put the Urim and the Thummim inside it. He placed on Aaron's head the turban with the gold medallion at its front, just as the Lord had commanded him.

Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the Tabernacle and everything in it, thus making them holy. He sprinkled the altar seven times, anointing it and all its utensils and the washbasin and its pedestal, making them holy. Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, thus anointing him and making him holy for his work. Next Moses presented Aaron's sons and clothed them in their embroidered tunics, their sashes, and their turbans, just as the Lord had commanded him. (Leviticus 8:1-13)

Discuss the anointing of Aaron. What stands out to you from this account? What do you learn about God from this passage, especially in light of the previous lesson?

After such a high point in Aaron's life, it is hard to conceive that he would ever vacillate again. Read the following passage:

While they were at Hazereth, Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. They said, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he spoken through us, too?" But the Lord heard them.

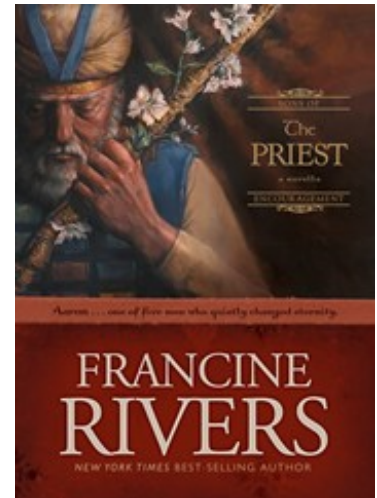
Now Moses was more humble than any other person on earth. So immediately the Lord called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam and said, "Go out to the Tabernacle, all three of you!" And the three of them went out. Then the Lord descended in the pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle. "Aaron and Miriam!" he called, and they stepped forward. And the Lord said to them, "Now listen to me! Even with prophets, I the Lord communicate by visions and dreams. But that is not how I communicate with my servant Moses. He is entrusted with my entire house. I speak to him face to face, directly and not in riddles! He sees the Lord as he is. Should you not be afraid to criticize him?"

The Lord was furious with them, and he departed. As the cloud moved from above the Tabernacle, Miriam suddenly became white as snow with leprosy. When Aaron saw what had happened, he cried out to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please don't punish us for this sin we have so foolishly committed. Don't let her be like a stillborn baby, already decayed at birth."

So Moses cried out to the Lord, "Heal her, O God, I beg you!"

And the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had spit in her face, wouldn't she have been defiled for seven days? Banish her from the camp for seven days, and after that she may return."

So Miriam was excluded from the camp for seven days, and the people waited until she was brought back before they traveled again. (Numbers 12:1-15)





What complaints did Aaron and Miriam have about Moses? What did God have to say about these complaints? Who do you think started the complaints and why? What does this imply about Aaron? about his motives?

### Find God's Ways for You

What significance do you see for yourself that God continued to work with, work through, and use Aaron? Explain.

For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

So take a new grip with your tired hands and stand firm on your shaky legs. Mark out a straight path for your feet. Then those who follow you, though they are weak and lame, will not stumble and fall but will become strong. (Hebrews 12:10-13)

What is the difference between God's discipline and our earthly father's discipline? What benefits are there from God's discipline? For you? For others in your sphere of influence?

### Stop and Ponder

If we confess our sins to him [Jesus], he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from every wrong. (1 John 1:9)

### Called to Lead

#### Seek God's Word for Truth

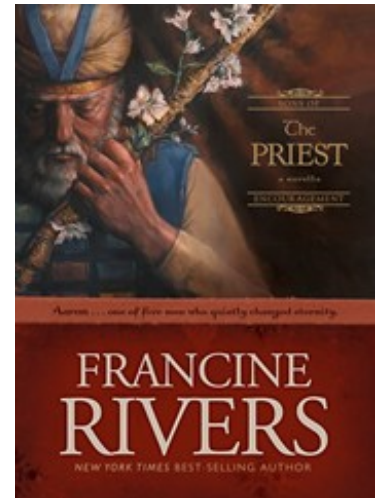
Read the following passage:

One day Korah son of Izhar, a descendant of Kohath son of Levi, conspired with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, from the tribe of Reuben. They incited a rebellion against Moses, involving 250 other prominent leaders, all members of the assembly. They went to Moses and Aaron and said, "You have gone too far! Everyone in Israel has been set apart by the Lord, and he is with all of us. What right do you have to act as though you are greater than anyone else among all these people of the Lord?"

When Moses heard what they were saying, he threw himself down with his face to the ground. Then he said to Korah and his followers, "Tomorrow morning the Lord will show us who belongs to him and who is holy. The Lord will allow those who are chosen to enter his holy presence. You, Korah, and all your followers must do this: Take incense burners, and burn incense in them tomorrow before the Lord. Then we will see whom the Lord chooses as his holy one. You Levites are the ones who have gone too far!"

Then Moses spoke again to Korah: "Now listen, you Levites! Does it seem a small thing to you that the God of Israel has chosen you from among all the people of Israel to be near him as you serve in the Lord's Tabernacle and to stand before the people to minister to them? He has given this special ministry only to you and your fellow Levites, but now you are demanding the priesthood as well! The one you are really revolting against is the Lord! And who is Aaron that you are complaining about him?"

Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they replied, "We refuse to come! Isn't it enough that you brought us out of Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us here in this wilderness, and that you now treat us like your subjects? What's more, you haven't brought us into the land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Are you trying to fool us? We will not come."



# The Priest

Francine Rivers

Then Moses became very angry and said to the Lord, “Do not accept their offerings! I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, and I have never hurt a single one of them.” And Moses said to Korah, “Come here tomorrow and present yourself before the Lord with all your followers. Aaron will also be here. Be sure that each of your 250 followers brings an incense burner with incense on it, so you can present them before the Lord. Aaron will also bring his incense burner.”

So these men came with their incense burners, placed burning coals and incense on them, and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle with Moses and Aaron. Meanwhile, Korah had stirred up the entire community against Moses and Aaron, and they all assembled at the Tabernacle entrance. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to the whole community, and the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Get away from these people so that I may instantly destroy them!”

But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground. “O God, the God and source of all life,” they pleaded. “Must you be angry with all the people when only one man sins?”

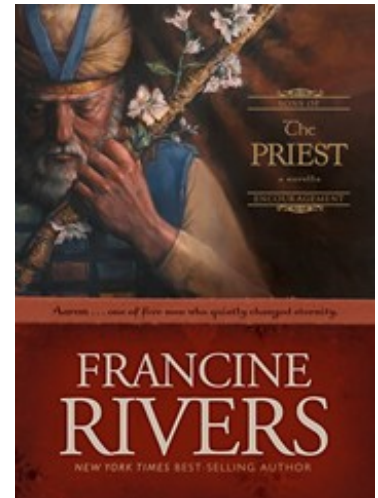
And the Lord said to Moses, “Then tell all the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.”

So Moses got up and rushed over to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, followed closely by the Israelite leaders. “Quick!” he told the people. “Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and don’t touch anything that belongs to them. If you do, you will be destroyed for their sins.” So all the people stood back from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the entrances of their tents with their wives and children and little ones. And Moses said, “By this you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things that I have done—for I have not done them on my own. If these men die a natural death, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord performs a miracle and the ground opens up and swallows them and all their belongings, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have despised the Lord.”

He had hardly finished speaking the words when the ground suddenly split open beneath them. The earth opened up and swallowed the men, along with their households and the followers who were standing with them, and everything they owned. So they went down alive into the grave, along with their belongings. The earth closed over them, and they all vanished. All of the people of Israel fled as they heard their screams, fearing that the earth would swallow them, too. Then fire blazed forth from the Lord and burned up the 250 men who were offering incense.

And the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to pull all the incense burners from the fire, for they are holy. Also tell him to scatter the burning incense from the burners of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives. He must then hammer the metal of the incense burners into a sheet as a covering for the altar, for these burners have become holy because they were used in the Lord’s presence. The altar covering will then serve as a warning to the people of Israel.”

So Eleazar the priest collected the 250 bronze incense burners that had been used by the men who died in the fire, and they were hammered out into a sheet of metal to cover the altar. This would warn the Israelites that no unauthorized man—no one who was not a descendant of Aaron—should ever enter the Lord’s presence to burn incense. If anyone did, the same thing would happen to him as happened to Korah and his followers. Thus, the Lord’s instructions to Moses were carried out.



But the very next morning the whole community began muttering again against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You two have killed the Lord's people!" As the people gathered to protest to Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the Tabernacle and saw that the cloud had covered it, and the glorious presence of the Lord appeared.

Moses and Aaron came and stood at the entrance of the Tabernacle, and the Lord said to Moses, "Get away from these people so that I can instantly destroy them!" But Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground.

And Moses said to Aaron, "Quick, take an incense burner and place burning coals on it from the altar. Lay incense on it and carry it quickly among the people to make atonement for them. The Lord's anger is blazing among them—the plague has already begun."

Aaron did as Moses told him and ran out among the people. The plague indeed had already begun, but Aaron burned the incense and made atonement for them. He stood between the living and the dead until the plague was stopped. But 14,700 people died in that plague, in addition to those who had died in the incident involving Korah. Then because the plague had stopped, Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Take twelve wooden staffs, one from each of Israel's ancestral tribes, and inscribe each tribal leader's name on his staff. Inscribe Aaron's name on the staff of the tribe of Levi, for there must be one staff for the leader of each ancestral tribe. Put these staffs in the Tabernacle in front of the Ark of the Covenant, where I meet with you. Buds will sprout on the staff belonging to the man I choose. Then I will finally put an end to this murmuring and complaining against you."

So Moses gave the instructions to the people of Israel, and each of the twelve tribal leaders, including Aaron, brought Moses a staff. Moses put the staffs in the Lord's presence in the Tabernacle of the Covenant. When he went into the Tabernacle of the Covenant the next day, he found that Aaron's staff, representing the tribe of Levi, had sprouted, blossomed, and produced almonds! When Moses brought all the staffs out from the Lord's presence, he showed them to the people. Each man claimed his own staff. And the Lord said to Moses: "Place Aaron's staff permanently before the Ark of the Covenant as a warning to rebels. This should put an end to their complaints against me and prevent any further deaths." So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. (Numbers 16:1–17:11)

What complaint did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram have? To whom did they complain? About whom were they really complaining?

What did God tell Moses and Aaron to do? What was their response?

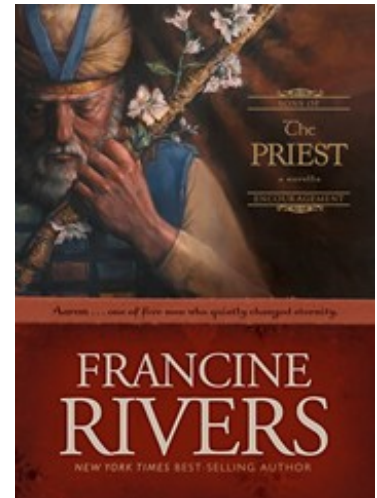
Because of this insurrection, who else began to complain? What was their complaint?

Compare the way the Lord dealt with Korah to the way He dealt with the whole community. What role does Moses have? What role does Aaron accept?

Discuss how God settled the murmuring and complaining against the leadership. What two warnings come from these rebellions? How are they memorialized?

## Find God's Ways for You

Remember a time when you were criticized for your leadership, position, or authority. What effect did it have on you personally? How did it affect those around you?



Now remember a time when you complained about someone else's leadership, position, or authority. How did it affect others? Looking back, have you gained any insights into yourself? your motives?

In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing, so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of crooked and perverse people. Let your lives shine brightly before them. (Philippians 2:14-15)

What are you to do about complaining and arguing? Why?

## Stop and Ponder

I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. As you make your requests, plead for God's mercy upon them, and give thanks. Pray this way for kings and all others who are in authority, so that we can live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, for he wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

## Called Upward

### Seek God's Word for Truth

Read the following passage:

In early spring the people of Israel arrived in the wilderness of Zin and camped at Kadesh. While they were there, Miriam died and was buried.

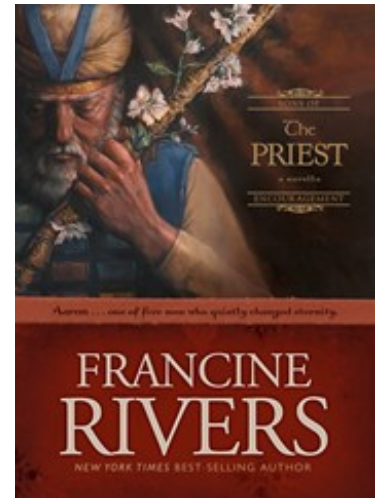
There was no water for the people to drink at that place, so they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. The people blamed Moses and said, "We wish we had died in the Lord's presence with our brothers! Did you bring the Lord's people into this wilderness to die, along with all our livestock? Why did you make us leave Egypt and bring us here to this terrible place? This land has no grain, figs, grapes, or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!"

Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the Tabernacle, where they fell face down on the ground. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to them, and the Lord said to Moses, "You and Aaron must take the staff and assemble the entire community. As the people watch, command the rock over there to pour out its water. You will get enough water from the rock to satisfy all the people and their livestock."

So Moses did as he was told. He took the staff from the place where it was kept before the Lord. Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. "Listen, you rebels!" he shouted. "Must we bring you water from this rock?" Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So all the people and their livestock drank their fill.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!" This place was known as the waters of Meribah, because it was where the people of Israel argued with the Lord, and where he demonstrated his holiness among them.

While Moses was at Kadesh, he sent ambassadors to the king of Edom with this message: "This message is from your relatives, the people of Israel: You know all the hardships we have been through, and that our ancestors went down to Egypt. We lived there a long time and suffered as slaves to the Egyptians. But when we cried out to the Lord, he heard us and sent an angel who brought us out of Egypt. Now we are camped at Kadesh, a town on the border of your land. Please let us pass through your country. We will be careful not to go through your fields and vineyards. We won't even drink water from your wells. We will stay on the king's road and never leave it until we have crossed the opposite border."





But the king of Edom said, "Stay out of my land or I will meet you with an army!" The Israelites answered, "We will stay on the main road. If any of our livestock drinks your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through your country and nothing else."

But the king of Edom replied, "Stay out! You may not pass through our land." With that he mobilized his army and marched out to meet them with an imposing force. Because Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through their country, Israel was forced to turn around.

The whole community of Israel left Kadesh as a group and arrived at Mount Hor. Then the Lord said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor on the border of the land of Edom, "The time has come for Aaron to join his ancestors in death. He will not enter the land I am giving the people of Israel, because the two of you rebelled against my instructions concerning the waters of Meribah. Now take Aaron and his son Eleazar up Mount Hor. There you will remove Aaron's priestly garments and put them on Eleazar, his son. Aaron will die there and join his ancestors." So Moses did as the Lord commanded. The three of them went up Mount Hor together as the whole community watched. At the summit, Moses removed the priestly garments from Aaron and put them on Eleazar, Aaron's son. Then Aaron died there on top of the mountain, and Moses and Eleazar went back down. When the people realized that Aaron had died, all Israel mourned for him thirty days. (Numbers 20)

Describe the mood of the camp. What steps do Moses and Aaron immediately take?

Compare the instructions God gave to Moses and Aaron with what the two men actually do. Any conclusions?

What instructions are given to Moses and Aaron when the whole community arrived at Mount Hor?

Contrast Moses' and Aaron's actions this time with their previous actions.

What reasons are given for Aaron's not getting to enter the Promised Land?

What evidence do you find that God kept His promise to Aaron about the priesthood being kept in his family? How would you characterize Aaron at the end of his journey?

### Find God's Ways for You

What are some reasons we fail to follow instructions?

How do you handle personal disappointments?

God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7)

When we believe in Jesus, what is available to us for navigating through life's dilemmas and disappointments?

### Stop and Ponder

That is why we have a great High Priest who has gone to heaven, Jesus the Son of God. Let us cling to him and never stop trusting him. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

