

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

NUMBERS 11-14

Ordinarily, it would take about two weeks to journey from Mount Sinai to Canaan on foot - but as we'll see tonight it took the nation Israel 40 years.

Someone asked me the other day if I knew how to get to the field in Norcross. Hey, I'm lousy with directions. I can get lost from the church to my house. I said to the guy, "I can tell you how to get to heaven, but anywhere else you had better ask my wife." Kathy is the one member of my family who is good with directions.

But even I would've had a difficult time turning a 2 week walk into 40 years of wandering. *There must've been more to it than a bad sense of direction...*

We start to see a problem in chapter 11, "Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused."

They say the odds of being struck by lightning are 1 in 1.9 million – *unless you're grumbling and complaining about the provision of the Lord* – that's when the odds increase dramatically. When the people grumbled the Lord got angry.

And look what happens, "So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp." Perhaps the malcontents had huddled together to roast Moses, instead they're the ones who get roasted.

When the Lord bowls a lightning bolt it's always a strike. "Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses

prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. So he called the name of the place Taberah, (which means “*you may get burned.*”) because the fire of the LORD had burned among them.”

God had mercy on the surviving complainers and whiners, but here’s the warning to us... *if you keep up a disgruntled attitude... you may get burned!*

After the fiery judgment, you’d think the complaints would end, but not so...

“Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?”

Notice from where the murmuring rises... “the mixed multitude”.

This was the group traveling with Moses who were not pure Hebrew. They may have included a few Egyptians, foreign slaves, and descendents of Hebrews who intermarried with Egyptians. But they were people influenced by Egyptian culture.

The mixed multitude enjoyed the principle of *freedom*, but not at the price of *faith*. They wanted freedom, but were use to the comforts of Egypt.

Think of the prisoner who longs to be free, but isn’t ready for its responsibilities. He’s comfortable with the three square meals and the warm bed he gets in prison.

This was the mixed multitudes attitude toward Egypt. They hated their bondage, but they liked the free food and beverage. Hey, *it requires no faith to be a slave.*

And the same is true for a slave to sin... There are some folks who hate the bondage there're in to drugs, sex, a dead in job, or an abusive relationship... and though God promises them a land of joy and blessing, they prefer the familiarity, conveniences, and safety... They fear the unknowns that faith would bring...

The mixed multitude wanted both the safety and security of Egypt and the blessings of God - but that's not how it works. If you want the life God promises you've got to believe enough to leave the old behind and enter a new land.

This mixed multitude murmured, **We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!** "Manna" was actually a derogatory term. It's translated, *"What is it?"*

But God always referred to the manna as **"bread from heaven"**. In fact, Psalm 78:25 calls it **"angel's food"**. It was the first angels' food cake. Manna was God's *"wonder bread"* - the first health food. It was the perfect food for desert life.

But the fallen and corrupt nature of man gets tired of even perfect gifts. Eventually even *miracles* get *monotonous*, and we begin to complain.

Verse 7 gives us a physical description of the manna. **"Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium."** It was grainy and white.

"The people went about and gathered it, ground it on

millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.” The word “pastry” doesn’t refer to a crème filled donut. Manna didn’t taste like a Krispy Kreme. “Pastry” means “*cake baked on a hearth*”.

Evidently, the manna tasted a little bland so they tried to prepare it in a variety of ways to jazz it up... *ground manna, mashed manna, fried manna, baked manna.*

Deuteronomy 8:3 spoke to Israel, “(God) humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Evidently, God didn’t want manna to taste like a Krispy Kreme. He designed it with a bland taste.

God wanted Israel to know that real joy is found not in physical food, but in spiritual realities. He feeds our bellies with the basics, but He delights our spirit with the delicacies. God meets physical needs, but caters to spiritual taste buds.

Verse 9, “**And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.**” So every morning the Hebrews walked outside and gathered that day’s portion.

Rather than go to the grocery store, the grocery store came to you! What a set-up! The Divine Dominos delivered every day the perfect food for desert life.

Verse 10, “**Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and**

the anger of the LORD was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased. So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers?"

Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' The Hebrews were grumbling, "*We're tired of manna... how 'bout some meat and potatoes.*" We want some variety.

But first God deals with Moses. He too starts to grumble and murmur, but Moses complains about the people... The people complain about the menu. Moses complained about the ministry... Everybody was sucking sour grapes.

Moses tells God, "I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now - if I have found favor in Your sight - and do not let me see my wretchedness!"

Moses realized the only thing worse than a group of *disgruntled people* is a *disgruntled pastor*. He would rather die than to fail God in his ministry.

The answer though is not *death* – its *delegation*. Its death to the attitude "I've got to do it all! I'm the only person who can do this right." In management they say if someone else can do a task 80% as well as you can, then let him. Often we get overwhelmed with a job because we refuse to delegate tasks to capable people.

“So the LORD said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you." Moses needs seventy men to whom he can delegate leadership over the people of Israel.

God continues, “Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.”

The easy answer for Moses was delegate, but this answer causes another problem... You can't just share your leadership and ministry with just anyone.

Hey, it's fairly easy to find warm bodies to whom you can delegate tasks and assign duties. But it's much harder to find people who'll assume responsibility.

Moses needs more than *glorified gophers* – he needs men who'll *think the way he thinks* – *care the way he cares* – *sacrifice the way he sacrifices*. Moses needs men who'll catch his vision. And God knows that requires a work of the Holy Spirit.

It's one thing for a person to fill a spot on a schedule, but for a man or woman to step into the circle of responsibility it requires a work of the Spirit in their heart.

Moses will gather 70 elders to the Tabernacle. God will fill them with the Spirit.

But first God tells Moses had to solve the present crisis,

verse 18, “Then you shall say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt." Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the LORD who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?" God has such a sense of humor. If Israel wants to eat meat... then God will send them so much meat it'll eventually come *out* their *snout*.

By the end of 30 days they'll have so much meat they'll end up sick of it.

It reminds me of Morgan Spurlock, the guy who ate nothing but MacDonald's fast food for 30 days. Spurlock says he gained 25 pounds, and at the end of the month his liver looked like that of an alcoholic. His film is titled, “[Super Size Me](#)”.

Spurlock commented, “[I rarely go to MacDonalds anymore. Not only because of the health precautions but because I actually don't enjoy the taste anymore.](#)” Hey, after 30 days of eating only Big Macs Spurlock is no longer “[lovin' it!](#)”

And neither were the Hebrews. They ended up loathing the quail God sent.

Guys, real fulfillment comes not from *getting more*, but from *wanting less*.

Satan loves to breed discontent. All is fine with God's manna until the enemy plants a suggestion, "If only you were driving a new car - or if you had just married her – or if you could find another job..." Understand, the Hebrews got what they wanted - then realized what they wanted was not what they really wanted.

The key to happiness is learning to be content with what God provides.

Verse 21, "And Moses said, "The people whom I am among are 600,000 men on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month.' "Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?" A month of Big Macs would require a miracle from God.

"And the LORD said to Moses, "Has the LORD's arm been shortened?" Has the Lord torn a rotator cuff? Has the Lord injured Himself and become incapable of a miracle? Hey, never underestimate the power of *the long arm of the Lord*.

"Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not."

Verse 24, "So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered the seventh men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never

did so again.” They spoke out in ecstatic bursts – the words of God.

“Two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad.” That’s what my kids call their father... “*Me dad*”

“And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!” An interesting reaction...

Joshua was appalled that Eldad and Medad were filled with the Holy Spirit while still in the camp - among the common people. His concern was, “*What if everyone thinks he or she can receive supernatural power and spiritual gifts?*”

I love Moses response, “*Are you zealous for my sake?*” In other words, “*Do you think I want to monopolize God’s gifts?*” To the contrary, “*Oh, that all the LORD'S people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!*”

Rather than view the power of the Holy Spirit as the exclusive property of an elite few – Moses longed for the day when all God’s people not just a few would be empowered by the Holy Spirit and exercising supernatural gifts.

Moses was way ahead of his time. In the Old Testament select people at select times were empowered by the Spirit. Today all of us can be filled with the Spirit.

Verse 30, “And Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel.” But this time Moses had the Spirit-filled help he needed to oversee the nation.

“Now a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits (close to a yard) above the surface of the ground.” Quail was actually an Egyptian delicacy – the Hebrews will be eating better in the desert than most of the Egyptians.

Evidently, the quail flew in low so people could swat them out of the air with a baseball bat. It was like taking batting practice. People were clubbing the quail.

Verse 32, “And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.” And we know they used baseball bats because look at what they gathered...”ten homers.”

Actually, a homer was a dry measurement of a little bit more than a bushel.

The idea of spreading out the quail all around the camp indicates they were drying out the meat in the sunshine. They were apparently making quail jerky.

Verse 33, “But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a

very great plague.” Israel had become greedy. *They were making jerky and acting like jerks...* Rather than enjoy the meat, they spent 36 hours straight gathering quail. Evidently they didn't trust God to provide again.

And because of their unbelief God sent **“a very great plague.”**

“So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.” Kibroth Hattaavah means *“graves of craving.”* And sadly, this is not the last time someone dies because they fail to say “No” to a craving. Always remember, *crave* and *grave* rhyme for a reason.

Pursue a craving without restraint and what you crave will end up a plague.

Verse 35, **“From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and camped at Hazeroth.”** They continue to move northward toward Canaan.

Chapter 12, **“Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.”**

Exodus 2 tells us Moses married a Midianite woman named *“Zipporah”*. By now, it could be that Zipporah had passed away and here he remarries an Ethiopian.

What constituted their complaint against Moses we're not sure... but it had something to do with the fact his wife was an Ethiopian. And since Ethiopians are black skinned it's

possible that Aaron and Miriam were guilty of racial prejudice. They objected to interracial marriage. *Why is a Jew marrying a black woman?*

Imagine racial prejudice all the way back to the days of Moses!

Guys, racial bigotry didn't start in the South with slavery, it can be traced back to the beginning of the races. As soon as someone noticed humans come in different hues it was suggested that one color was better than the other.

Always remember, racial prejudice is not a *skin problem* it's a *sin problem*.

Verse 2, "So they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the LORD heard it." Israel *grumbled about the menu*. In the next chapter they grumble *about the mission*. Here they grumble *about the messenger*. What right does Moses have to lead us?

Moses' own family questioned their brother's God-given authority.

It's sad, but church members today complain about the same three issues – *the manna, Moses, and their marching orders - the menu, the mission, and the messenger*. Seldom to you come right out and complain... But it goes on in little huddles - private conversations – telephone calls. You go to lunch with a friend and have roast pastor. You question decisions and the leader's motive – even *when you lack the facts*. It's so easy to be a Sunday-after-church quarterback.

But listen carefully to the last phrase of verse 2... It should

scare the stuffing out of you... “And the LORD heard it.” I might not hear it, but the Lord hears.

Verse 3, “(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) *What a statement!* This verse was probably added later by Joshua. It would be odd for Moses to write this and boast in his humility.

But here’s the reason Moses was trusted by God with such vast authority.

He was humble. No one had more clout with God or authority with man, than Moses. Yet, he never forgot where he came from – without God he was a failed deliverer - a simple shepherd. Moses never forgot what he was without God.

Since Moses’ sole desire was to glorify God... God comes to his defense.

Verse 4, “Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting! So the three came out.” Hey, murmur in secret about a man of God, and you may get called out to give an account.

“Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.

Then He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.” This was the typical way God spoke through the prophets – in visions and dreams.

But Moses was different, “Not so with My servant Moses; He

is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" God speaks to prophets in visions, but to Moses visually.

Moses communed with God face to face. He saw God's glory with his very eyes. God gave Moses access to His presence no one else was allowed.

Verse 9, "So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow." She was struck with the highly contagious disease of leprosy. *And I hope we realize that murmuring and negativism and a critical spirit are also highly contagious illnesses.*

Complaining in the church spreads like pink eye in the nursery.

Miriam must've been the leading rebel. She's the one who gets punished. Yet it shakes up Aaron, "Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper."

"So Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned. Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!" So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!"

God hears Moses' request and heals his sister, but not without making His point. Racial prejudice is a leprous spot

on the body of Christ - as is all forms of prejudice and pettiness... If a leader is *unbiblical* in his teaching - *immoral* in his living - or *unethical* in how he treats people and money... that leader needs to be criticized. But when the *issues* are personal preferences they shouldn't be *issues*.

Support the pastor, don't criticize him. If you've got a personal bias – get over it. We need to pull together behind our leaders, and be the church God desires.

Verse 14, “Then the LORD said to Moses, “If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days?” In Moses' day a parent could discipline a child by spitting in his face. This brought shame on the child for seven days.

God is saying to Moses, “Yes, I'll heal Miriam, but let me discipline my child.”

He says, “Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that she may be received again.” So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey on till Miriam was brought in again. And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.”

In chapter 13 Israel arrives on the outskirts of the Promise Land. They camp at the border town of Kadesh - and Moses sends 12 spies into the land of Canaan.

Verse 1, “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.”

The 12 spies are listed in verses 3-15, but only two names are ever mentioned again – Hoshea from the tribe of Judah, and Caleb from the tribe of Ephraim.

The men who refused to trust God ended up drifting off into obscurity.

Verse 16, “These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.” The name “Hoshea” means “salvation”, but the name “Joshua” means “Jehovah is salvation.”

Apparently, Moses changed *Hoshea’s* name to *Joshua*.

“Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, “Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land.”

Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

“So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath.” Rehob was west of the Sea of Galilee near the Mediterranean. “And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there.

(Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)” Obviously, they went throughout all the land of Canaan – from the northwest to the southeast.

“Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol (near what would later be the land of the Philistines), and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs.” It testified to the land’s prosperity and fertility.

“The place was called the Valley of Eshcol (the word “Eshcol” means “*cluster*”), because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there. And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.” The reconnaissance took forty days.

Verse 26, “Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.” And they reported... *We’ve got good news and bad news...*

First the good news, “Then they told him, and said: “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.” The grapes were just a token of the land’s prosperity. Canaan was the land of plenty.

But here comes the bad news, “Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.”

In other words, there's *no vacancy*. The land is teeming with *ites*... Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, and Canaanites – and the residents won't take to well with the idea that the Israelites are moving in and taking over their neighborhoods.

Verse 28 is the show stopper for the Hebrews, “Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there.” In verse 33 the descendants of Anak are called “giants”. And the Hebrew word for “giant” is “*nephilim*” - the same word used in Genesis 6:4 to describe the offspring of the sons of God – a phrase that speaks of angels, even fallen angels - and the daughters of men.

I personally believe the *nephilim* were humans sired by demons, or fallen angels. They were a race of superhuman freaks, or mutant humanoids.

Remember, this was the reason God flooded the earth in the days of Noah. He wanted to save humanity from this sort of genetic and cultural contamination.

Evidently, this behavior was not as rampant after the flood as before, but the evil did occur locally among people steeped in the occult – which included the pagan and idolatrous Canaanites. This is why God tells Joshua later to kill all the inhabitants of the land. He wanted to stop the spread of this perversion.

Later, after the conquest of the land, Joshua 11:22 tells us the giants who survived the purge settled in three Philistine cities - Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. And guess who came from

Gath? The most infamous giant of all... *Goliath*.

Obviously, the presence of giants in the land caused concern among the people. Fear spread through the ranks. The murmuring was ratcheted up...

That's when Caleb speaks, verse 30, "Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." Caleb had his eyes fixed on the *grapes* not the *giants*. He was speaking from *faith* – not *fear*. Caleb believed God would assure a victory.

And who was right in their assessment – the *ten* or the *two*?

Obviously, God agreed with the *minority* not the *majority* – the two not the ten. *Be careful when you follow the pack... the pack may not be following God.*

Verse 31, "But the men who had gone up with him (the other ten guys) said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.

And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Chapter 14, "So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole

congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!" Israel is headed for spiritual failure – their problem is a lack of faith - *but who do they blame?*

They blame the pastor... They complain against Moses and Aaron. Guys, don't blame the leader when you don't have faith to follow in his footsteps.

They cry and whine in verse 3, "Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?" God's plan was to turn them into victors not victims – but they lacked the faith to step out and be obedient to His will. They say, "Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?"

It's always easier to *look back* than it is to *look forward*.

Remember what Jesus said to a prospective disciple in Luke 9:62, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

"So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt." They're planning a coup. They want to fire Moses and install a new leader.

"Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel." This is the sad plight of many a Christian.

They get to the edge of the Promise Land. God assures them of victory over sin... But they've got to believe God enough to obey. They've got to enter in and take possession of the blessings. They can't be afraid of the giants that stand in their way... giants like peer pressure, sacrifice,

persecution, rejection...

The joy, peace, and satisfaction of God is in the Promise Land, *but it's a land full of unknowns*. Egypt is a land of frustration and emptiness and bondage, *but at least it's familiar*. And many believers – even after being saved from this world and its hopelessness - chose to return rather than go forward into a new life with God.

Don't succumb to fear – have faith and enter the new life Jesus has for you.

This is Joshua and Caleb's message, verse 6, **“But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' "Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.”** What men of faith!

But note the people's reaction, verse 10, **“And all the congregation said to stone them with stones.”** Rather than join them they want to silence them.

“Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.” Here comes the cavalry. God's glory comes to the rescue.

“Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the

signs which I have performed among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." God will start over with Moses.

"And Moses said to the LORD: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and that Your cloud stands above them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 'Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' Moses is concerned about God's reputation among the nations.

"And now, I pray, let the power of my LORD be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.' "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." This was God's revelation to Moses on Mt. Sinai – now in a time of crisis he returns to the character of God.

This is a good model for us in troublesome times – focus on God's character.

“Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD - because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.” It’s interesting, it took God ten plagues to deliver Israel from Egypt – and it took Israel ten acts of unbelief to forfeit their blessing.

Call it the ten *wonders of God* – and the *ten blunders of the Israelites*.

Hey, Israel is a lesson to us. It’s possible to be saved from sin, but never experience the life of victory that comes with God’s forgiveness. Many believers live and die in the wilderness – somewhere between blessing and bondage.

They’re not in the world, but neither are they walking in God’s fullness.

Verse 24, “**But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully,**” And I want a different spirit in me. While the world settles for *bondage* - and many Christians end up *barren* - I want all God’s *blessing*.

I want to fully follow God and fully enjoy every last favor He shows me.

God continues, “**I will bring (Caleb) into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.**” Caleb and Joshua – the two faithful spies – were the only two members of the generation who left Egypt to enter the Promised Land.

“Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.” Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who murmur against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel murmur against Me. Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the LORD, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.’”

Verse 31, “But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.” In verse 3 they accuse God of leading their little ones to slaughter. But God is a master of irony. The children won’t die - the adults will die in the wilderness. The children will see and walk in the land.

“And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection.” Forty is the number of judgment. “I the LORD have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are

gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.”

“And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land...”

Notice the power of a bad report. Negativity spreads. Unbelief is like a bad cold it's highly contagious. You can pass it on to your kids, and spouse, and friends.

And because of the bad report brought by the ten spies a plague comes against them, “those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.”

Verse 39, “Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, “Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised, for we have sinned!” Then Moses said, “Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed.” Now that God has already cast judgment on them, the people decide they want to be obedient.

The day before God was with them... but not now. It's too little too late.

And Moses warns them, “Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD is not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you

shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you." But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop; nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp." They head into battle without the Lord.

"Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah."

Here's the difference between faith and flesh... Faith takes God at His Word and responds to His promptings. Flesh presumes my will is God's will, and tries to accomplish my desires in God's name. Such a venture is destined for failure.

When you go in the power of the Spirit then you experience God's victory!

In the end the Hebrews *feared the obstacles* more than they *feared the Lord!* It's been said: "Our problem is not the greatness of our troubles, but the littleness of our spirits." Only Joshua and Caleb focused on the *opportunities* rather than the *obstacles*. Only two men saw the *grapes* rather than the *giants*.

When we're facing giants in our lives we need to fix our eyes on God!

This is how a two week walk becomes a 40 year death march!

The longest detour you'll ever take is the fork of unbelief. *Doubt and disobedience always create a detour.* It's faith that receives the reward!