

Numbers Chapter 14 Continued

Numbers 14:22 "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;"

“Ten times”: The Talmud tract “Arachin” (15a, b), takes this as an arithmetical statement and cites the 10 instances (Exodus 14:11-12), at the Red Sea (15:23-24); at Marah (16:2), in the wilderness of Sin (16:20 and 16:26-28), with the manna (17:2), at Rephidim (32:1-7), at Horeb (Num. 11:1), at Taberah (11:4), the complaint of the mixed multitude; and 14 (at Kadesh-barnea). Others take it as a figure of speech, conveying the idea of “many times” as in, “If I have told you once, I have told you 50 times”.

In the last lesson, the twelve spies had come back from 40 days of investigation of the Promised Land. Ten of them brought a bad report, and two brought a good report. The people murmured to the point of even wanting to appoint a captain to lead them back to Egypt. God was so angry with them, he asked Moses if he would like to begin a new race with him. Moses asked God, even pleaded with God, to forgive them one more time. Joshua and Caleb wanted to go in and take the land, but the people would not. We now resume our lesson here. These very men had seen the miracles of the 10 plagues that had come on Egypt, before Pharaoh would let them go. They saw the Red Sea part. They also had eaten the miracle food which fell from heaven, and yet they had no faith in God. Ten different times on this journey, they have rebelled with their murmuring and their other sins. They are just too worldly.

Numbers 14:23 "Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:"

Not possess and enjoy the land of Canaan, which the Lord by an oath had promised their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give it to their seed. And now he swears that these men, who had so often tempted him, and been disobedient to him, should not inherit it. So the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem take it for an oath (see Heb. 3:11).

"Neither shall any of them that provoked me see it": That provoked him by the ill report they had brought of the land, by their unbelief, by their murmurings, and mutiny.

Everyone who rebelled against God, and would not go in and take the land, so they will not see the Promised Land. Some had not sinned in this manner, and they will see it.

Numbers 14:24 "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it."

“My servant Caleb”: Since Caleb was recognized as one who feared and trusted the Lord, He later rewarded his faith (compare Joshua chapter 14).

The reason for Caleb's success is no secret. Thirty verses hold his entire life story in the Scriptures. Six times in those 30 verses we see a recurring theme: he had "another spirit" (14:24; 32:12; Deut. 1:35-36; Joshua 14:8-9; 14:14). Caleb had a passion for God and followed Him with all of his heart.

We have discussed in many of the lessons, that there seem to be two forces in man. One of the forces is the desire to follow the flesh. The other force (the spirit), desires to do the will of God. Caleb was controlled by his spirit which wanted to please God. Caleb and his descendants will go into the Promised Land, and possess it. Caleb will receive Hebron.

Joshua 14:14 "Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel."

Numbers 14:25 "(Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea."

"Turn ... get you into the wilderness" Because of Israel's refusal to enter the Land, instead of continuing northward, God commanded they move southward toward the Gulf of Aqabah.

Canaanites are the same as the Amorites. The Israelites, for the time being, must leave the border of the Promised Land. God will not help them at this time in battle, because of their unbelief.

Verses 26-35: The Lord granted the Israelites their wish, i.e., their judgment was that they would die in the wilderness (verses 29, 35; compare verse 2). Their children, however, whom they thought would become victims (verse 3), God would bring into the land of Canaan (verses 30-32). The present generation of rebels would die in the wilderness until 40 years were completed. The 40 years were calculated as one year for each day the spies were in Canaan.

Numbers 14:26 "And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,"

Before he had been only speaking to Moses, who had interceded with him to pardon the people, which he had granted. But at the same time assured him they should not enter into and possess the land of Canaan, and the same he repeats to him and Aaron together.

"Saying": As follows.

These are new instructions from the LORD.

Numbers 14:27 "How long [shall I bear with] this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me."

Bear with their murmurings, spare them, and not cut them off? How long must sparing mercy be extended to them? The Lord speaks as one weary of forbearing, so frequent and aggravated were

their murmurings. The Jews understand this not of the whole congregation of Israel, but of the ten spies. From whence they gather, that ten make a congregation. And they interpret the phrase, "which murmur against me", transitively, "which cause to murmur against me". Made the children of Israel murmur against him, so Jarchi. But rather all the people are meant, as appears from (Num. 14:28), and from the following clause.

"I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me". For their murmurings were not only against Moses and Aaron, but against the Lord himself (Num. 14:2).

God heard every time they complained to Moses. He even knew the things they said in secret in their own tents. The congregation, as a whole, were doubters. They were rebellious against God. Every idle word has to be accounted for someday.

Numbers 14:28 "Say unto them, [As truly as] I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:"

The form of an oath, as in (Num. 14:21).

"As ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you": What they had wished for, and expressed in the hearing of the Lord, he threatens them should be their case.

The very things they had said in their doubt and disbelief, now will truly be done unto them.

Numbers 14:29 "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,"

"Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness": They had said, "Would God we had died in this wilderness!" (verses 2). Now four times they are warned, "Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness" (verses 29, 32, 33, 35). Their children, who they said would perish in Canaan, would eventually arrive there and take possession of it (verses 3, 31, 33). God killed all those who brought the evil report (verse 37). The message of this story reverberates throughout scripture (Num. chapter 32; Deut. 1:20-40; 8:2; Psalms 95:10; 106:24-26; Amos 2:10; 5:25; 1 Cor. Chapter 10, Heb. 3:7 – 4:13).

They had said, they wished they had died in the wilderness. That is exactly what God lets happen to everyone who was 20 years old and older, who had murmured. Be careful what you ask for. You might get what you asked.

Numbers 14:30 "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, [concerning] which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

The land of Canaan; or "if ye shall come". That is, I swear ye shall not, so the Targum of Jonathan.

"Concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein": Not them personally, but the people and nation of which they were, and to which they belonged. The seed and posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom the oath was made.

"Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun": Who brought a good report of the land. Caleb is mentioned first, as Aben Ezra thinks, because he first appeased and quieted the people. But in (Num. 14:38), Joshua stands first, so that nothing is to be inferred from those. These were the only two of the spies that went into the land of Canaan (Num. 13:4), and the only two of the Israelites that were numbered, from twenty years old and upwards (Num. 14:29). Those of the tribe of Levi, not being in that account, must be remembered to be excepted also.

Joshua and Caleb were the only two with the good report. God will allow them to live long enough to go into the Promised Land. They will be older, but they will go in. All ten of those who doubted, will die in the wilderness, with all the people that murmured.

Numbers 14:31 "But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."

To the Canaanites (Num. 14:3).

"Them will I bring in": Into the land of Canaan, and so fulfil the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For the unbelief of this congregation did not make the faith, or faithfulness of God, of none effect.

"And they shall know the land which ye have despised": Shall know what a good land it is by experience. And shall possess and enjoy it with approbation, delight, and pleasure. Which they, believing the spies, rejected with, loathing and disdain.

Their little ones, that they had used for an excuse to not go in, will inherit the Promised Land. They will not be a prey, as their parents said. They will possess the land.

Numbers 14:32 "But [as for] you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness."

Which way of speaking seems to be used to distinguish them from their children.

"They shall fall in this wilderness": Which is repeated for the confirmation and certainty it. And an emphasis is laid on the words. This which are pronounced with an accent, to put them in mind of their wish (Num. 14:2).

All of the doubters and murmurers will die in the wilderness, and be buried there.

Numbers 14:33 "And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness."

Or "feed", as shepherds, who go from place to place, and seek fresh pasture for their sheep. It being the custom of a shepherd, as Aben Ezra observes, not to stand or rest in a place. And so

like sheep grazing in a wilderness, where they have short commons, and wander about in search, of better. These forty years are to be reckoned from their coming out of Egypt, from whence they had now been come from for about a year and a half.

"And bear your whoredoms": The punishment of their idolatries, which are frequently signified by this phrase. And particularly of the idolatry of the calf, which God threatened to punish whenever he visited for sin (Exodus 32:34). And of other sins, as their murmurings, etc. For it was on account of them their children wandered so long in the wilderness, and were kept out of the possession of the land of Canaan.

"Until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness": Every one of them be consumed by death, save those before excepted (Num. 14:30).

Remember, they wandered 40 days searching out the land. This 40 years of wandering in the wilderness is to compensate for 40 days of doubt. The generation of the faithless will die off, and the young generation will inherit the land. God counted their parents' lack of faith as being spiritual adultery.

Numbers 14:34 "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, [even] forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, [even] forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise."

For so long they were searching it (Num. 13:25).

"Each day for a year": Reckoning each day for a year, forty days for forty years (as in Ezek. 4:6).

"Shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years": Which number is given, being a round one, otherwise it was but thirty eight years and a half before they were all cut off, and their children entered the land.

"And ye shall know my breach of promise": God never makes any breach of promise. His covenant he will not break, nor alter what is gone out of his lips. Men break their promises, and transgress the covenant they have made with him, but he never breaks his (Psalm 89:34). This should rather be rendered only, "ye shall know my breach". Experience a breach made upon them by him, upon their persons and families by consuming them in the wilderness. The Targum of Jonathan is, "and ye shall know what ye have murmured against me." This same word is used in the plural in (Job 33:10), and is by the Targum rendered "murmurings" or "complaints". And so the sense is, ye shall know by sad experience the evil of complaining and murmuring against me. The Vulgate Latin version is, "ye shall know my vengeance." And so the Septuagint, "ye shall know the fury of my anger". Which give the sense, though not a literal version of the words.

This explanation is to show that God was perfectly justified in His punishment of the 40 years wandering. They had brought this punishment upon themselves, with their lack of faith. God had removed His blessings from them temporarily. It was not altogether removed, because He still

fed them, and their shoes did not wear out. He just did not help them go into the Promised Land, as previously planned.

Numbers 14:35 "I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

Determined, resolved on doing what I have declared, and again repeat it. The decree is absolute and peremptory, and will never be revoked.

"I will surely do it to all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me": Against his ministers, Moses the chief magistrate, and Aaron the high priest. And this is interpreted gathering, conspiring, and rebelling against the Lord himself. On account of which they might be truly called an evil congregation, and therefore it was a determined point with him to destroy them.

"In this wilderness they shall be consumed": By wasting diseases.

"And there they shall die": As they wished they might (Num. 14:22). With respect to which this was so often repeated (Exodus 16:3). And which the Jews interpret not only of a corporeal death, but of an eternal one. For they say "the generation of the wilderness (of those that died there), have no part in the world to come. Nor shall stand in judgment, as it is said, "in this wilderness", etc. (Num. 14:35)."

Whatever God says He will do, He does. They do wander and die in the wilderness.

Numbers 14:36 "And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land,"

Ten of them.

"Who returned": As they all did, who were sent to search it.

"And made all the congregation to murmur against him": Against, Moses that sent them. They murmured themselves, and made others murmur.

"By bringing up a slander upon the land": That it ate up its inhabitants, and that the inhabitants of it were of such a stature, and so gigantic and strong, and dwelt in such walled cities (Num. 13:28). That there was no probability of subduing them (Num. 13:31).

Numbers 14:37 "Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD."

"Died by the plague": As an indication of the certainty of the coming judgment, the 10 spies who undermined the people's faith were struck by the plague and died.

The plague swept through the camp, even before they began the 40 years of wandering. The ten spies that caused the people to doubt, die from the plague immediately. "Plague", in this particular instance, means stroke. They died suddenly, as a stroke from the hand of God.

Numbers 14:38 "But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, [which were] of the men that went to search the land, lived [still]."

Here Joshua is set first, as Caleb is in (Num. 14:30). Which shows that they were equal in dignity, and therefore are indifferently put. Sometimes the one first, and sometimes the other.

"Which were of the men that went to search the land": Were two of the spies, and were for the tribes of Judah and Ephraim (Num. 13:6).

"Lived still": Were not stricken with death, when the other spies were. Though perhaps upon the very spot, and in the same place, and among them, when they were struck dead. But these remained alive, and continued many years after. And entered the good land, and possessed it.

Joshua would live to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land, at the death of Moses.

Verses 39-45: Actions come too late when the Lord is no longer in them. A chastened and shamed people were defeated when they took things into their own hands, attacking a group of "Amalekites" apart from the Lord's instruction.

Numbers 14:39 "And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly."

That all that had murmured, who were of twenty years old and upwards, should die in the wilderness. And never see nor enter into the land of Canaan. On the borders of which they now were.

"And the people mourned greatly": Because of their unhappy case, that they should be cut off by death in the wilderness. And be deprived of the enjoyment of the good land. Their sorrow seems to have been not a godly sorrow, or true repentance for sin committed, but a worldly sorrow that works death. It was not on account of the evil of sin, the pardon of which they did not seem to seek after. But on account of the evil that was likely to come to them by it.

We do not see that they repented, only that they were grieved over their situation.

Numbers 14:40 "And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we [be here], and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned."

The next morning after they had heard the bad news of their consumption in the wilderness. Not being able, perhaps, to sleep that night with the thoughts of it, and being now in a great haste to go up and possess the land of Canaan. As they were before to return to Egypt.

"And gat them up into the top of the mountain": Which was the way the spies went into the land of Canaan (Num. 13:17). This they did not actually ascend, as appears from (Num. 14:44). But they determined upon it, and got themselves ready for it.

"Saying, lo, we be here": This they said either to one another, animating each other to engage in the enterprise. Or to Moses and Joshua, signifying that they were ready to go up and possess the land, if they would put themselves at the head of them, and take the command and direction of them.

"And will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised": The land of Canaan.

"For we have sinned": In not going up to possess it, when they were bid to go. And in listening to the spies that brought an ill report of it. And by murmuring against Moses and Aaron, and the Lord himself, and proposing to make them a captain and return to Egypt (Num. 14:2). But this acknowledgment and repentance were not very sincere, by what follows.

After the punishment is pronounced, they repent and want to go into the land of promise. Perhaps, the sudden death of the ten doubting spies caused them to question their own unfaithfulness.

Numbers 14:41 "And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper."

Which was to turn back into the wilderness, and go the way that leads to the Red sea (Num. 14:25). Instead of which now they were for going forward into the land of Canaan, though averse to it just before.

"But it shall not prosper": Their attempt to enter into it.

Before they left the camp, Moses warned them they are again disobeying God's wishes. He will not be with them now.

Numbers 14:42 "Go not up, for the LORD [is] not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies."

And therefore could not expect success, for victory is of the Lord. The Targum of Jonathan adds, "the ark, and the tabernacle, and the cloud of glory move not." Which were a plain indication that the Lord would not go with them, and therefore could not hope to prevail over their enemies and enter the land. But on the contrary might expect to be defeated by them, as follows.

"That ye be not smitten before your enemies": Of which they would be in great danger should they attempt to go up the hill, and the Lord not with them.

If they try to go up to the Promised Land without God leading the way, they will perish. They are still unaware that it is not their power that defeats the enemy, but God's.

Numbers 14:43 "For the Amalekites and the Canaanites [are] there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you."

Having removed from the valley (Num. 14:25). Or else had detached a party to defend the pass on the top of the mountain. And where perhaps they designed to feign a retreat if they found it proper, and draw them into a combat in the valley.

"And ye shall fall by the sword": By the sword of the Amalekites and Canaanites.

"Because ye are turned away from the Lord": From the word of the Lord, from hearkening to and obeying his command.

"Therefore the Lord will not be with you": The consequence of which must be bad for them.

Fighting in their own strength, without the LORD empowering them, would be disastrous. Their flesh is no match for the flesh of these worldly armies.

Numbers 14:44 "But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp."

"They presumed to go up unto the hill top": With characteristic obstinacy, the people rejected Moses' counsel and the Lord's command and went to attack the Amalekites in the hill country. Since the Lord was not with them, they were defeated.

The ark of the covenant of the LORD represented the power of God that was with them. Moses stayed with the ark. They had not only distrusted the power of God earlier, but now they place trust in their own power. This is a terrible mistake. They are still disobeying God's commands.

Numbers 14:45 "Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, [even] unto Hormah."

The hill, met the Israelites as they ascended. And the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill; the same with the Amorites. One of the seven nations of Canaan (Num. 13:29).

"And smote them": With the sword, having the advantage of them in coming down the hill upon them.

"And discomfited them even unto Hormah": The name of a place, so called from what happened there. As Jarchi says; either from this destruction of the Israelites at this time by these their enemies, or from the destruction of the Canaanites by Israel (Num. 21:4). And so here has its name by anticipation. Or it may be from both these events, and seems to be confirmed by a third of the like kind, having been in former times called Zephath (Judges 1:17; see Joshua 15:30).

Though some take it to be an appellative here, and not the proper name of a place. And render it even unto destruction, as the Targum of Jonathan. Denoting the very great destruction and havoc that were made among them. How many were destroyed is not certain. The judgment threatened them of God soon began to take place, that their carcasses should fall in that wilderness.

The plainest way to say this is, these rebellious of Israel lost the battle.

Deuteronomy 1:44 "And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, [even] unto Hormah."

Numbers Chapter 14 Continued Questions

1. How many times had the men tempted God?
2. How many spies were sent to check out the Promised Land?
3. How many of them brought back a bad report?
4. How badly had they sunk in their murmuring?
5. Why did God allow these murmurers to live for the time being?
6. Why was it so ridiculous for them to not have faith in God?
7. What punishment does God speak upon them?
8. Caleb had another _____ within him.
9. What are the two forces in man?
10. The _____ and the _____ dwelt in the valley.
11. The Canaanites are the same as the _____.
12. What had they spoken, that God will surely do?
13. Who of the twelve will come into the Promised Land later?
14. Who will inherit the land of promise?
15. How long will the children wander in the wilderness?
16. What is significant about this number?
17. What did God count the parents' lack of faith as being?
18. What happened immediately to the ten spies who doubted?

19. What did the people decide to do, after it was too late?
20. What did Moses warn them of?
21. Where was the ark while they were fighting?
22. What did the ark represent?
23. What happened to the Israelites who went to battle?