

224. Review the provisions which applied to an individual who was thought to have leprosy, and show how it was appropriate that Aaron should have made the discovery.
225. Why does Aaron ask Moses to intercede for himself and for Miriam, rather than directing his own prayer to the Lord.
226. Might a lesser man than Moses have refused this request?
227. For what probable reasons did God insist that Miriam's leprosy should remain upon her for a week?
228. What is the significance of the Lord's words about the time of isolation if one were spit upon by his father?
229. How important was the factor of repentance in God's dealings with the offenders?

## II. THE PROMISED LAND REVIEWED AND REJECTED (13:1-14:45)

### A. SELECTION OF THE SPIES, vv. 1-16

#### TEXT

Chapter 13:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. 3. And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel. 4. And these were their names: Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur. 5. Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori. 6. Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 7. Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph. 8. Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun. 9. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu. 10. Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi. 11. Of the tribe of Joseph, namely, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi. 12. Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli. 13. Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael. 14. Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi. 15. Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son

of Machi. 16. These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun, Jehoshua.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Send out men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel: from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, each one a ruler among them." 3. So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran by the commandment of the Lord, all those men who were heads of the children of Israel. 4. And these were their names; from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur; 5. from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori; 6. from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; 7. from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph; 8. from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun; 9. from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Rafu; 10. from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi; 11. from the tribe of Joseph, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi son of Susi; 12. from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli; 13. from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael; 14. from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi; 15. from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi. 16. These are the names of the men Moses sent to spy out the land; and Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

### COMMENTARY

When the second account of this mission is told by Moses (Deut. 1:20-25), it is the people themselves who are made to suggest the mission of the spies. The original idea may well have come from them; it is clear, on the other hand, that Moses would have carried the plan to the Lord before acting upon it. With divine approval, the spies are appointed to their work.

The men who are chosen are prominent men, but they were not the tribal princes. The journey they are about to undertake would require both youthfulness and vigor; the princes may have been a poor selection for these reasons.

Only two names in the list are noteworthy: Joshua (here called Oshea), and Caleb. The change in Joshua's name is slight, but the change in meaning is significant: from "Salvation" to "Jehovah is salvation." Since it is a change appointed by Moses, we should not find it strange that he has used the name already several times. Such apparent anachronisms trouble the negative critic much more than they would have bothered Moses, as author of the events. It would be quite natural for him to use the name he himself had bestowed upon his successor, even in alluding to that time before the actual change was made.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

230. Explain the variation between the two accounts of the sending of the spies in the accounts given in Numbers and Deuteronomy.
231. Why were none of the men sent chosen from the previously chosen tribal princes?
232. No spy is sent for the tribe of Levi. Can you think of a good reason for this omission?
233. If the change in Joshua's name was not made until Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea, how can we explain its use in the earlier records?
234. What is the significance of the change in names?

### B. THEIR INSTRUCTIONS vv. 17-20

#### TEXT

Chapter 13:17. And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: 18. And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; 19. And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strongholds. 20. And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the

fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:17. As Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said unto them, "Go up this way by the South; then go up into the high land. 18. Look over the country as it is, and the people who dwell in it, whether they are strong or weak, few or many. 19. And examine the land in which they dwell, whether in tents or in fortified cities; 20. and learn how the land is, whether it is fertile or poor, whether there are trees there or not. Be courageous and bring back some of the fruit of the land." Now it was the time of the first ripe grapes.

### COMMENTARY

The spies did not leave Kadesh to travel in a southerly direction, although the King James and other translations seem to say this. More accurately, the text sends them into the Negev, which is the southern portion of the land later to be given Judah. The territory is poor and barren. By contrast the remainder of Canaan would seem ideal for occupation. The Negev, excepting in the few areas where springs water narrow rivulets and fields, is virtually uninhabitable. Beyond the Negev, traveling northward, the spies would come into the southern hill country, the hills of Judea, which are suitable for both cultivation and grazing. This hill country extends from the Negev to the northernmost parts of Canaan, and continues far beyond as the Lebanon Mountains. It is the very backbone of the country.

Not only are the men to examine the land itself; they are instructed to appraise the residents. Are they strong or weak? Have they fortified cities? Is the land settled heavily or sparsely? Do the people appear to be timid or bold? Do they till the land well? Is the soil productive? Is it well provided with useful trees? All these and many more important observations might be made without any overt actions, in a walk-through

kind of trip. Grapes first ripen in Palestine in late July or early August; they are usually harvested a month later.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

235. Look up a reliable article on the Negev. Learn about the terrain, when and by whom it has been inhabited, and how it figured in later Israelite history.
236. What major types of information were the spies to seek? Which of the items are most important, among those things they are to observe?
237. Why did the Israelites not simply march into the land, trusting in the Lord to deliver it into their hands?
238. Besides the first ripened grapes, what other fruits might the spies have expected to find at this season?

### C. SURVEY AND REPORT vv. 21-33

#### TEXT

Chapter 13:21. So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. 22. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23. And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. 24. The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. 25. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

26. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. 28. Nevertheless the

people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. 29. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. 30. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. 31. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. 32. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof: and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. 33. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:21. So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, on the way to Hamath. 22. After they went up into the South, they came to Hebron where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, children of Anak, were. (Now Hebrón was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23. They came to the Wadi of Eshcol, and there they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, which they carried on a pole between two men; and they brought back pomegranates and figs. 24. That place was called the Wadi of Eschol because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down there. 25. After forty days of searching the land they returned. 26. and came to Moses and Aaron and all the assembly of the children of Israel in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh; and they brought word back to them and to all the assembly, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27. And they spoke to him, and said, "We entered the land to which you sent us, and indeed it flows with milk and honey; and this is its fruit. 28. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are

very large and fortified. 29. Moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. Amalek lives in the land of the Negev, and the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live by the sea and in the valley of the Jordan." 30. Then Caleb stilled the people in front of Moses and said, "Let us go up immediately and take possession of it, for we are quite able to overcome it." 31. But the men who went up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." 32. So they spread a bad report of the land they had spied out to the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we went, to spy it out, is a land which eats up its inhabitants; and all the people we saw in it were men of great height." 33. We also saw the Nephilim there (the sons of Anak were among the Nephilim); and we seemed like grasshoppers in our own sight, just as we were in their sight."

#### COMMENTARY

Zin is the name given the northern portion of the larger desert, Paran. Crossing the Wady Murreh, which divides the sparsely settled wilderness of the South from the higher hill country later given as the southern part of the territory of Judea, the ten spies traversed the length of Canaan. Their northernmost penetration took them beyond Dan (earlier, Laish), to a well-travelled trade route which led to Hamath. This route passed near Beth-rehob, not far from Laish. In early days the city was of great importance under Syrian rule; it is in the territory of Naphtali when the land is divided among the tribes of Israel.

Having summarized the journey of the spies, Moses now reviews their actions in some expanded details. The first important city they encountered was Hebron, nearly twenty miles south of Jerusalem. Remembered for being Abraham's residence and burial place, Hebron was now held by three clans descended from Anak. These Anakim were of gigantic stature, thought to have been exterminated later by Israel excepting for some who found refuge among the Philistines. At this point Moses interjects a note of information which would have been

very meaningful to him. It is the kind of point we can scarcely imagine anyone else's having inserted—one which nobody would have invented, and one which receives its value from the very casual nature in which it is used: the note that Hebron was founded seven years earlier than Zoan (Tanis) in Egypt. Such incidental references give a ring of authenticity to the account, being completely appropriate to the writer, and irrelevant to those who might have written under other circumstances.

We have no reason whatever to draw any historical relationship between Zoan and Hebron. However, if Zoan was built or enlarged into the pharaoh's residence at the time of the exodus, Moses could well have been personally involved in the affairs of state. The association is purely chronological, which is Moses' point.

The second specific area mentioned is properly "the valley of Eshcol"; here an oversize bunch of grapes, carried on a pole between two of the men, becomes tangible evidence that the land is productive. Indeed, the finest grapes in all Canaan are said to come from north of Hebron on the way to Jerusalem. Here are also found pomegranates, figs and various other fruits. The size of the single bunch of grapes would be such that it would require a second man to carry it, not because of the total weight, but in order to avoid crushing them. Bunches weighing up to twelve pounds have been found in the valley of Eshcol (see *KD*, p. 90). No doubt those brought back to the camp of Israel were picked immediately before the spies' return.

The second factor which would figure prominently in the spies' report involved the inhabitants. We are not given a complete resumé of all the tribes inhabiting Canaan, but we are immediately introduced to those who lived in the vicinity of Hebron, as well as general references to the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites and Canaanites. Three of the progeny of Anak are named: Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai. The Anakim, along with the Emim and the Rephaim were notable for their great size, and perhaps for their longevity as well. Their origin is obscure. Fifty years later they would be driven from the city by

Caleb (Joshua 15:14). The Amalekites lived in an area generally including a portion of the northern Negev, and a portion of the area later assigned to Simeon and southern Judah. They were descendants of Esau who lived as nomads, constantly causing difficulty to their neighbors. Saul would later be ordered to exterminate them, I Sam. 15:1-3. The Hittites, a non-Semitic people, had come into the land about a half-century earlier. It is generally suggested that they had come from Cappadocia. Until the early twentieth century, critics of the Scriptures considered them fictitious. They were not mentioned in any extra-biblical writings which had been discovered until that time. But the extensive work of Hugo Winckler at Khattusa (Boghaz-koy) in present-day Turkey in 1906-07 amplified earlier discoveries at Carchemish, and removed any lingering doubts about the Hittites. We now know they were people of a well advanced culture who lived in various portions of Canaan, particularly the south.

The Jebusites were descended from Canaan (see Genesis 10) and are best known in the area of Jerusalem. The Amorites, also descended from Canaan, are thought to have held a rather large kingdom including much of Mesopotamia and Syria, with a capital at Haran before migrating to Canaan. In this latter location, they took land from the Moabites, and usually were found east of the Jordan. The term 'Canaanites' has two uses in the Old Testament. In its broader sense, it includes any of the pagan tribes who lived within the bounds of the Promised Land. More specifically, as used here, it refers to a single tribe living in the coastal plains and the valleys of the land; such is also to be inferred from the meaning of their name: "the lowlanders".

We must admire the integrity and faith of Caleb. He and Joshua had seen exactly what the remaining ten spies had observed, both the good and the formidable, of the land. But his confidence in the guidance of the Lord is unquestioning as he simply says, "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it." It is noted later (14:6) that Joshua urged the same action. Had their enthusiastic advice been followed, the history of the nation would have been changed,

and they would have been spared the extreme difficulties of wandering for approximately 38½ years in the wilderness before ultimately crossing the Jordan into the Land of Promise.

We should not be unduly surprised that the multitude listened to the counsel of the ten rather than the words of the two. It is always a simpler matter to be negative than positive; to rationalize into disobedience rather than to obey an apparently difficult command. The ten spies, and the people as well, are awed by the stature of the people who make the Israelites look like "grasshoppers"; Joshua and Caleb remember that God has promised this land unto His people, and that He has promised to drive out the inhabitants, if they will but trust Him. Their faith seems too visionary for the cowardly listeners.

Many explanations have been proposed for the statement that "the land eats up its inhabitants." It cannot mean death came upon the people from starvation or similar natural causes—the fruits brought back would not give any credibility to such a thought. Even more nauseating is the suggestion that cannibalism was being practiced. One of the most interesting and logical suggestions comes from *RCP*: the people everywhere were "burying their dead . . .", an action of God to "keep the people busy in their mourning so that they would not notice the spies," (p. 142).

The final argument proposed to the people is that "all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature." We must view this as unmitigated hyperbole, a further impassioned appeal to discourage the masses from listening to Caleb. It is successful.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

239. Consult a reliable map, and estimate the distance the spies may have travelled in their journey through Canaan. For what things would they especially look?
240. Establish the probable locations of Rehob and Hamath. Why were they important at that time?
241. Why is Hebron mentioned, rather than Jerusalem, as the key city in the South?

242. What can you say of the "children of Anak"?
243. What association is there between Hebron and Zoan? Why are we given information about the date of founding for the cities? How important is this incidental point in establishing Mosaic authorship of the event and book?
244. What is a Wadi? What does "Eshcol" mean?
245. How would the Israelites be impressed by the fruits brought back from the land before them?
246. Explain the idiom used to describe the land: "it flows with milk and honey."
247. Name the different tribes which are reported as inhabitants in the land. Tell where each lived, and whatever we know about the origin of each.
248. In what two senses is the name "Canaanites" used? How is it probably to be understood here?
249. Upon what items do all of the twelve spies agree, and where do they disagree?
250. Explain why these men could come to such widely different reactions to the people and the land they had just visited.
251. What most important factor had the ten spies overlooked in their negative recommendation?
252. How has the phrase "A land that devours its inhabitants" been understood?
253. Why do the ten spies emphasize the negative factors in their report? How could they justify their gross exaggeration?
254. Who were the Nephilim of whom the spies speak?

#### D. COMPLAINT AND REBELLION (14:1-4)

##### TEXT

Chapter 14:1. And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron:

and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! 3. And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? 4. And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:1. Then all the assembly lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept that night. 2. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron; and the whole assembly said to them, "Would that we had died in this wilderness! 3. And why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword so that our wives and children should be victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" 4. And they said to one another, "Let us select a chief and return to Egypt."

#### COMMENTARY

What should have been a day of rejoicing in anticipation of a great victory through the power of the Lord has been turned into a period of weeping and complaints. Instructions to the people, so confidently expressed by Caleb, are overruled by the discouraging words of the fearful ten, and the spirits of the people are completely extinguished. Now that they are a year and one-half removed from Egypt, the slavery from which they have been delivered does not seem so oppressive. Step by step throughout the interval, the masses have echoed the same tedious refrain: "We never should have left Egypt!"

Moses and Aaron are the immediate targets for criticism. Nothing they might say would be of any weight to them in the present circumstances. Their argument continues, and lays an even greater blame upon the Lord. He has led them here, and certainly must be blamed because they cannot simply march into the new land unopposed. The people have come to expect everything of Him, and nothing of themselves. Murmurings

similar to their protests have been heard before; this is the first time it is actually suggested that another leader be chosen, one who will lead them back to the land of their bondage. We might speculate that, had they actually followed this course, their voices would have risen even more strongly against the renewal of slavery before the first day's servitude had ended.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

255. How do you account for the fact that the words of the ten spies had a much greater effect upon the Israelites than the words of the two?
256. Why should the Israelites have forgotten the fact that they were slaves in Egypt, while they refused to march into the land before them as a free people?
257. Do you think the Israelites would have found true happiness if they had actually returned to Egypt? Defend your answer.

### E. MOSES' PLEA AND GREAT INTERCESSORY PRAYER

vv. 5-19

#### TEXT

Chapter 14:5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: 7. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. 8. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. 9. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not. 10. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

11. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? 12. I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

13. And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) 14. And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

15. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, 16. Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. 17. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, 18. The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. 19. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the entire assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunnah, of those who spied out the land, tore their clothes: 7. and they spoke to all the assembly of the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we passed to spy it out is an exceptionally good land. 8. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us: a land which flows

with milk and honey. 9. Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey: their defense is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them." 10. But all the assembly suggested stoning them with stones. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tent of Meeting before all the children of Israel.

11. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be before they believe me, in spite of all the miracles I have performed among them? 12. I will strike them with a pestilence and disinherit them, and make of you a greater and stronger nation than they."

13. But Moses said to the Lord, "Then Egypt will hear of it, since by your power you brought up this people from among them, 14. and they will tell it to the residents of this land. They have heard that you, Lord, are among this people; that you, Lord, are seen face to face, and that your cloud stands over them, and that you go before them by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire.

15. Now, if you do kill all this people as one man, the nations which have heard of your fame will say, 16. 'Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land He pledged to them, therefore he has slaughtered them in the wilderness.' 17. But now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as you have spoken, saying, 18. 'The Lord is slow to anger, great in love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He will by no means clear the guilty, bringing the iniquity of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generations.' 19. Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people, according to the vastness of your love, even as you have forgiven them from Egypt until now."

#### COMMENTARY

It is sometimes assumed that the congregation desired to stone only Joshua and Caleb ( *RCP* ); however, the manner in which the Lord responded may indicate that the reaction was against all four. Divine glory flashed forth from the Tabernacle

to halt the actions of the crowd, and refocused their attention upon their rightful position. No doubt the manifestation was both visible and awesome, since drastic measures would have been required to prevent mob actions against the potential victims.

The two faithful spies make one final effort to influence the people. But they cannot do more than specify the conditions upon which the Lord will fulfill the promise of the land: they must be worthy of the delight of the Lord, and cease rebelling against Him. Neither must they any longer fear the pagan inhabitants any longer. The choice is placed squarely upon the rebels. They may march victoriously into Canaan, led by God's powerful hand; or, they may resume their grumbling and anarchy. They choose the latter course.

Unreasoning mobs are seldom stilled by cool heads and calm pleas. Stoning was not only a most horrible means of death, it was a disgraceful punishment reserved for the most grave circumstances. That such a thing was suggested for God's men reveals the hostility and irrationality of the mob.

God's glory, manifested under so many different conditions during all dispensations, has never failed to strike the viewers with awe. These same insurrectionists had viewed His glory at Sinai (Ex. 24:16-17), when He confirmed His covenant with them. That had been a time for rejoicing; this was a time for fear.

For the second time, God proposes to destroy an ungrateful, rebellious troupe and make of Moses a greater people than they. *PC* offers the suggestion that God was not actually serious about eliminating Israel—He was putting Moses to the test of unselfishness, loyalty and courage with respect to his people, fully expecting Moses to refuse the offer. From another vantage point, *RCP* reminds the reader that, even had the Lord put all the rebels down, leaving only Moses, the promise to the patriarchs would not have been broken since Moses was a descendant of the patriarchs. An oversimplified response is simply to point out that *every* Israelite was a

descendant of the patriarchs.

Although verses 13 and 14 are corrupt in the original, their meaning is simple: the Egyptians, from whom Israel has been delivered, would delight in pointing out to the inhabitants of Canaan that the God who had presumably led Israel across the Red Sea and to the edge of Canaan, was now suddenly impotent and could not finish His proposed work. The response the Egyptians might logically expect would be a united attack against the former slaves, resulting in their utter defeat. Then, Moses reasons, the name of the Lord would be subjected to derision and contempt. Any tragedy coming upon them, especially the pestilence such as God threatened, would be further confirming evidence to the pagan mind. The logic of Moses rests upon human principles, failing to recognize that God's actions are not measured by men's reasoning; if, in His judgment the actions of Israel warrant death, the reaction of others is irrelevant.

The second basis of Moses' appeal has much more to commend it as he appeals to God's forgiveness and mercy. Justice may well require the death sentence, but God is free always to temper justice with mercy as it may accomplish His purposes. Before He can extend mercy, however, He must effect pardon; and they have sinned grossly. Thus two supreme divine prerogatives are involved: the power to forgive and the ability to temper justice with mercy.

Moses' intercession is a sublime prayer. It is totally unselfish, since Moses might have been briefly tempted to accept the place of progenitor of a new and faithful people. It is solicitous of the name and reputation of God, which Moses would like preserved without even undeserved tarnish. It appeals to the highest attributes of God, prerogatives He alone may possess, in the resolution of this dilemma. If it is not eloquent in its original form, it is a splendid presentation of the thought that the wicked, much more than the righteous, must depend upon the pardoning mercy of the Lord.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

258. What is the significance of the actions of Moses and Aaron as they fell upon their faces before the people? Are the actions of Joshua and Caleb for the same reasons?
259. What reason might the two faithful spies have for thinking the people might listen to them now, when their earlier words had drawn an unfavorable response?
260. Under what conditions would the "Lord delight in us"? What consequences would follow?
261. Explain the thought, "the people are bread for us" in v. 9.
262. Upon what legal basis could the Israelites have appealed for stoning their antagonists?
263. What is the implied reaction of the people when the glory of the Lord appeared from the Tent of Meeting?
264. Discuss the various motives attributed to God when He proposed the destruction of the rebels in Israel.
265. List the points presented in Moses' petition to the Lord. Discuss the relative weight of each.
266. Why should there be any need for the Egyptians to tell the people of Canaan of the impotence of God, if Israel were not brought into the land?
267. What fate would be demanded of the Israelites if God acted upon sheer justice alone? What point or points would be demonstrated if He were to accede to the petition of Moses?

F. GENERAL PARDON;  
SENTENCE UPON THE PROVOKERS, vv. 20-38

TEXT

Chapter 14:20. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: 21. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. 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; 23. Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it; 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land where-into he went; and his seed shall possess it. 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.

26. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 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. 28. Say unto me, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you; 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, 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. 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. 32. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. 33. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. 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. 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. 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, 37. Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord. 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.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:20. And the Lord said, "I have pardoned them according to your word; 21. but certainly, as I live, and as all the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord, 22. all those men who have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me now these ten times, and have not heeded my voice, 23. certainly they shall not see the land I pledged to their fathers, nor shall any of those who provoked me see it. 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had a different attitude and followed me completely, I will bring into the land into which he went; and his descendants shall possess it. 25. Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites lived in the valleys. Turn tomorrow and set out into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea."

26. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, saying, 27. "How long shall I put up with this evil congregation who murmur against me? I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. 28. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you: 29. your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, according to the total number, from twenty years of age and older, who have complained against me. You shall certainly not come into the land, in which I swore I would bring you to live, excepting Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun. 31. However, your children, whom you said would become prey, these I shall bring in, and they shall know the land you have rejected. 32. But as for you, your corpses shall fall in this wilderness. 33. And your children shall be shepherds in this wilderness forty years, and suffer because of your unfaithfulness, until your corpses are consumed in the wilderness. 34. According to the number of days in which you spied out the land, that is, forty days, for every day you shall bear your sins one year: namely, forty years; and you shall know my displeasure.' 35. I have spoken, I the Lord; surely I will do it to all this wicked generation which have gathered together against me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there shall they die." 36. As for the men Moses sent to spy

out the land, those who returned and caused all the congregation to complain against him by giving a bad report concerning the land, 37. those men who brought a bad report of the land died by a plague before the Lord. 38. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, among the men who went to spy out the land, lived.

### COMMENTARY

Whatever the intercessory prayer of Moses might have lacked in eloquence was more than supplied by his sincerity and selflessness. God immediately responds, adopting the course of the petitioner. So the course of an entire nation is determined by the "fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous" man, (James 5:16).

We do not have a record of ten instances when the nation of Israel tested God's patience; nor is it necessary to produce such a list. The language of God simply expresses the thought that their provocations have reached the ultimate. The same technique is used again and again in Amos (1:3; 1:6, et passim), when the end of God's patience comes after three, and then four, transgressions.

God's sentence comes upon the people in two pronouncements: those men directly responsible for misdirecting Israel are to be struck down by the plague; and the people, who have been gullible, will not be permitted to enter the Promised Land at all. The punishments fit the crimes. Those who have attained the age of twenty are presumed to be responsible for their decisions. They have chosen to believe ten men rather than the Lord and His two faithful spies; hence, they are consigned to wandering about in the wilderness for the remainder of their lives. The ten unfaithful spies are especially culpable, since it is their word which has incited the disobedience. If they are allowed to remain alive and influential among the people, there is no way of guessing what seeds of discord and disruption they might have sown. Knowing their hearts, and that they will contribute nothing constructive to the morale of their audience, God deems them worthy of death. They are struck dead on the

spot. The term "plague" is general rather than specific, making it a matter of speculation as to exactly how the Lord imposed His penalty upon them.

Sharply contrasting with the sentence of God upon the unfaithful spies and the doubting people, the commendation of the Lord with respect to Caleb particularly, and to Joshua as well, is refreshing. They alone, of all the Israelites above the age of twenty, would be permitted to enter and possess their portions in Canaan. It is safe to assume, at this point, that Moses and Aaron would have been included with the two faithful men. Moses may have omitted himself and his brother at this point when he wrote the record years later, and both of them had also been excluded from the Promised Land.

An ironic note is inserted into the pronouncement of God when He informs the murmuring people that their children, for whom they have expressed special concern about marching directly into the Promised Land, are to be spared through the wilderness ordeal. They, not their fearful parents, will know the full promise of life in a free land of their own. We must conclude that the expressed fears were only alibis; the people were afraid on their own account, not because of their children. Their carcasses, rotting in the desert, would provide stark evidence of this fact.

The words to the children, and their time in the wilderness, are properly, "Your children shall pasture in the wilderness forty years," suggesting something quite different from aimless wandering, which is the common thought from earlier translations. The area of this pasturing was irregularly used for the same purposes by the Amalekites, the Midianites, and a few other nomadic tribes. At its best, however, the land is bleak and unsuited to permanent residence. It is hot, arid, mountainous, and inhospitable. For forty years the children of the rebels would endure its privations because of the sins of their fathers. "Whoredoms", as used in this context, unquestionably refers to the idolatrous acts of the Jews, as in Ex. 34:16. Blame for these iniquitous deeds rests squarely upon the souls of the defectors: but the consequences of their idolatry come upon the children

as well. Obvious spiritual overtones are to be found in these facts.

Little wonder that the people wept when Moses informed them of the decision of the Lord! They could find neither consolation nor hope in it. Before them lay a difficult life, and death would come upon them all without their having realized the one really wonderful promise which would have made all their trials bearable. Again, the punishment well fits the crime. At this point, Moses inserts the editorial comment which confirms the Lord's prophecies: death came upon these apostates in such a manner as to make it clear that they did not die natural deaths, and all within the time foretold.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

268. The Lord pronounced two judgments and punishments upon various portions of the Israelites because of their faithlessness. What were these two pronouncements, and whom did each affect?
269. Name the previous occasions on which the murmuring people tested God's patience.
270. Why did God set the period of wilderness wandering at forty years?
271. Of the total number of people in the tribes of Israel, how many adults eventually entered into the Promised Land?
272. What alibi did the people give for not moving immediately into the Promised Land? How did God turn this very argument against them?
273. How is the word "whoredoms" used with reference to the conduct of the people?
274. Why did Moses not include himself and Aaron among those whom God promised entrance into the Promised Land?

## G. DEFEATS BY AMALEKITES AND KENITES vv. 39-45

## TEXT

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

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. 41. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper. 42. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. 43. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are 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. 44. But they presumed to go up unto the hilltop: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. 45. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:39. And Moses told these words to all the children of Israel; and the people grieved very much. 40. And they rose up early in the morning and went to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are. We have sinned; nevertheless, we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised." 41. And Moses said, "Then why are you transgressing the word of the Lord, when it will not succeed? 42. Do not go up, lest you be struck down before your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. 43. The Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you will fall by the sword because you have turned away from the Lord. Therefore the Lord will not be with you." 44. But they presumed to go up to the hill top, although neither the ark of the covenant nor Moses left the camp. 45. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that mountainous region came down and attacked them, and utterly drove them away as far as Hormah.

## COMMENTARY

When the verdict of the Lord is brought unto the people, their response is typically human. Having been told they cannot enter the Land before them, that is exactly what they now say they want to do! But it is much too late. God's patience has been tried beyond reason, and they must face the consequences of their rebellions. Even their belated expression, "We have sinned," is of no avail.

Ironically, the course now announced by the people, which would have been exactly what God wanted them to do shortly earlier, is now strongly forbidden; what would have been faithful obedience is now another instance of disbelieving rebellion. Moses stands before them to point out the radically changed circumstances, and the certain consequences of their new resolution: God is not with them, and they will be badly beaten by their enemies. When Israel moves to battle, it is without Moses or the ark of the covenant: and, we may be certain, neither Caleb nor Joshua was among them.

Complete defeat was the inevitable consequence. The Amalekites and the Canaanites descended upon them from the hills, and routed them to Hormah, and unidentified city of the region.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

275. How is it that when the Israelites now want to enter the Land of Promise, they are forbidden?
276. When would it have been more appropriate for the people to confess that they had sinned?
277. Would the presence of Moses, or of the ark of the covenant, have assured victory for Israel at this time?
278. The Amalekites are regularly assigned to live in and around the territory of Kadesh-Barnea; the Canaanites are not. Consult a good Bible dictionary or atlas, and determine the areas of their inhabitation.