

FAITH AND FEAR

Numbers 13:1-3 The Lord said to Moses, ² “Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders.”

³ So at the Lord’s command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites. NIV

Numbers 13:17-33 When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, “Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. ¹⁸ See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹ What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwallled or fortified? ²⁰ How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.” (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.)

²¹ So they went up and explored the land... ²³ When they reached the Valley of Eshkol [cluster], they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. ²⁵ At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

²⁶ They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. ²⁸ But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.”

³⁰ Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.”

³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” ³² And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³ We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” NIV

Exodus 3:8 [The LORD said from the burning bush,] “So I have come down to rescue [the Israelites] from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.” NIV

Numbers 14:1-11 That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. ² All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! ³ Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” ⁴ And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”

⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. ⁶ Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. ⁸ If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us.

⁹ Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”

¹⁰ But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. ¹¹ The Lord said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?” NIV

Numbers 14:20-23 The Lord replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked. ²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, ²² not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— ²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. NIV

Lessons:

A person of fear

Numbers 14:2-4

- Sees the worst-case scenario
- Settles for and seeks comfortable and familiar ways (even if destructive)
- Grumbles and complains against God
- Depends on own strength.
- Stops following God and his leaders.
 - *2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. NIV*

A person of faith

Numbers 14:6-9

- Sees the best-case scenario
 - Joshua 24:13 [The LORD said,] ‘So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’
- Trusts God for something better than status quo
- Clings to the character of God
- Depends on the Lord instead of self
- Listens to and aligns with people of faith (instead of stoning them)