

Numbers 14:1 ¶ And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

Numbers 14:2 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!

Numbers 14:3 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?

Numbers 14:4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

We continue in context from the previous chapter in which all the spies except Caleb and Joshua argued that the people were too big and strong for the Israelites to be able to conquer the land. Instead of listening to the men of faith, they listened to the men who chose not to believe God. All the people cried over their disappointment that night.

The people soon began to murmur against Moses and Aaron. They declared that it would have been better to have died in the land of Egypt or even in the wilderness instead of having them and their families fall victim to the men of Canaan. In essence, they were accusing God of bringing them into the wilderness to kill them. They then decided to choose a captain to lead them back to Egypt.

I liked David Guzik's comment regarding the response of the people: They were "... mourning because God would not make it all "easy." We often somehow expect that of God, and resent adversity in our lives, forgetting the example of Jesus, who had it "harder" than any of us - and Whom we are not above."

Another great observation by Guzik: "While it is true that one may be angry with God, and should take every such feeling to God, it is wrong to ever assume or imply that such feelings are justified. If we are angry at God, we are in sin, because God has never done anything that deserves us being angry. We should honestly bring such sin before God, but never for a moment feeling it to be justified."

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

Numbers 14:6 And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

Numbers 14:7 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.

Numbers 14:8 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.

Numbers 14:9 Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not.

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the congregation, and Joshua and Caleb ripped their clothes as a sign of their dismay at the response of the people. Joshua and Caleb then spoke out. They once again affirmed that the land was a good land. They reminded the people that if the LORD delighted in them, He would bring them into the land as conquerors. They emphasized again that it was a land flowing with milk and honey—an abundance of all that they needed. They begged the people not to rebel against the LORD or fear the people in the land. Calling them “bread for us” was an idiom that implied they would be conquered as easily as eating bread. The two men reminded them that as long as they were walking in faith and obedience before the LORD, they had nothing to fear.

Reminds me of the old saying: “God and me are a majority.”

“their defence is departed from them” – This phrase is a reminder that the LORD had determined that His people would not be allowed to take the land until the sin of the people living there had become so great that they were beyond redemption.

Genesis 15:13–16 “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

Numbers 14:10 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.

The congregation totally rejected Caleb and Joshua and sought to stone them. God intervened by appearing in the cloud before the people at the tabernacle.

Numbers 14:11 ¶ 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 shewed among them?

Numbers 14:12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

The LORD was basically fed up with the people. His questions weren't posed for the purpose of being informed; they were posed to express His feelings before Moses. He had done so much to prove Himself before the people that He was ready to kill them off, disinherit them and start over again with Moses. He proposed to make an even greater and stronger nation than currently existed.

Numbers 14:13 And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

Numbers 14:14 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 day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

Numbers 14:15 Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

Numbers 14:16 Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

Moses immediately began to reason with the LORD in light of His testimony before the Egyptians and surrounding nations. If He destroyed the people, the nations would interpret this as proving He wasn't who He declared Himself to be—the LORD of all creation. The pillar of cloud / fire testified to His presence among the people, and the nations would conclude that He killed the Israelites because He wasn't powerful enough to keep His promise.

Numbers 14:17 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

Numbers 14:18 The LORD *is* longsuffering, 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.

Numbers 14:19 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.

Moses begged the LORD to reconsider. He basically repeated the LORD's own words back to Him.

Exodus 34:5–7 “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”

He appealed to the LORD's longsuffering, great mercy and willingness to forgive sin. He reasoned that the children shouldn't be made to suffer for the sins of their fathers. He begged for God to show mercy to His people once again, as He had already done several times since bringing them out of Egypt.

We know that Moses had already shown his disgust at having to deal with the people. He wasn't pleading for the people so much because of his love for them; he was pleading because of his love for the LORD. He was jealous for the reputation of God's name.

Numbers 14:20 ¶ And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:
Numbers 14:21 But *as* truly *as* I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

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;

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:

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.

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

The LORD agreed to pardon the people; however, He was determined to punish them in light of their unbelief. His judgment of the people would serve to show the nations that He demanded the respect and obedience of those that claimed His name. His honor before the nations would be upheld. All those that had continued to disregard the miracles He had done in testimony to His power and chosen to tempt Him (at least ten times) and disobey Him would not be allowed to enter the land of promise. Only Caleb (and Joshua) would be allowed to enter the land because "he had another spirit with him" (implying God's Holy Spirit) and had followed the LORD completely, without hesitation.

The NIV Commentary compiled a list possibly identifying the ten times referenced as tempting the LORD:

- At the Red Sea, where it seemed that Pharaoh's army would destroy them
- At Marah, where they found bitter water
- In the Desert of Sin as they hungered
- In the Desert of Sin when they paid no attention to Moses concerning the storage of the manna
- In the Desert of Sin when they disregarded the instruction regarding gathering manna on the seventh day
- At Rephidim when they complained about lack of water
- At Mt. Sinai when Aaron made the golden calf
- At Taberah when the people raged against the LORD after a mere three-day journey
- At Kibroth Hattaavah when they complained about having no meat
- The current situation in which they rejected the good report of Caleb and Joshua in unbelief

A note is made that the Amalekites and Canaanites lived in the valley not far from where they were camped. In light of that fact, they were to retreat into the wilderness by way of the Red sea.

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

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.

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:

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,

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 LORD went on to tell Moses and Aaron that He was finished listening to the murmurings and complaints of “this evil congregation.” They must have been voicing some pretty terrible things against the LORD since He determined to “do to you” according to what He had heard from them. Everyone twenty years old and upward that had murmured against the LORD would die in the wilderness and not be allowed to enter the land of promise. Caleb and Joshua were singled out as the only ones that would be allowed to enter the land.

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.

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

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.

The children whom they had claimed would fall victim to the warriors of Canaan would be the ones that would inherit the land. The “carcasses” of all the rest of the congregation (twenty years and older) would never make it out of the desert. The children would suffer the consequences of the spiritual adultery of their parents by having to wander in the wilderness for forty years, but they would eventually get to realize God’s promise of inheriting the land.

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.

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.

It had taken the spies 40 days to complete their investigation, so the LORD determined that they would wander in the desert 40 years (a year for each day) in consequence of their unbelief. All those 20 years and older of this “evil congregation” would surely die in the wilderness during that time.

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,

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

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*.

The ten men who had served as spies and brought back such a negative report

about the land and caused the congregation to turn against the LORD died by plague before the LORD. The wording seems to imply that this occurred immediately. Joshua and Caleb, however, lived.

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

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.

When Moses informed the people of the LORD's judgment, they mourned greatly. They got up early the next morning and gathered at the top of the mountain determined to go up and take the land that the LORD had promised to give them. They admitted that they had sinned.

How confusing! First they refuse to go because they don't trust the LORD, then they ignore the warning that the LORD would not be with them if they chose to try and take the land in blatant disobedience of His command.

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

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

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.

Moses basically told them not to add to their sin. They would not be successful because the LORD would not be with them to protect them. They would be killed at the hand of the Amalekites and Canaanites because they had rebelled against the LORD. He emphasized strongly that the LORD would not be with them.

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.

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.

Once again, the people determined that they knew what was best and set out to war. Neither the ark of the covenant nor Moses left the confines of the camp. The Amalekites and Canaanites came down the hill and attacked them and drove them all the way back to Hormah.

The flesh always leads us to want to do things our way instead of God's way. We can only expect to receive God's blessing when following Him in faith and obedience according to His word—not according to our will done our way in rejection of the truth of His word.