

ISRAEL'S REBELLION AGAINST GOD

BIBLE TEXT : Numbers 14:1-45

LESSON 102 **Senior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; In whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well" (Psalm 84:5, 6).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Numbers 14:1-45 (KJV)

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 into Egypt.
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 defence 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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Cowardice of the Israelites

1. The whole congregation wept all night because of the evil report of the ten spies, Numbers 14: 1;
Numbers 13:33 (KJV)
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.
2. They murmured against Moses and Aaron, fearing the fate of their children more than God, Numbers 14:2, 3;
Revelation 21:8 (KJV)
⁸ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.
3. They proposed to select a captain of their own choice and return into Egypt, Numbers 14:4;
1 Corinthians 10:11 (KJV)
¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

II The Intercession of their Leaders

1. 'Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before all the congregation of Israel, Numbers 14:5
2. Joshua and Caleb, rending their garments, exhorted the people not to rebel against God, Numbers 14:6-9
3. But the congregation threatened to stone Joshua and Caleb, while the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle, Numbers 14:10

III The LORD'S Judgments Threatening Israel

1. He threatened to smite them with pestilence and make of Moses a mightier nation, Numbers 14:11, 12;
Exodus 32:10 (KJV)
¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.
2. As Israel's intercessor Moses prayed that God, for His own glory, spare them, Numbers 14:13-19;
Exodus 32:12 (KJV)
¹² Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.
3. And the LORD pardoned Israel according to the words of Moses, Numbers 14:20

IV The Older Generation Condemned to Die in the Wilderness

1. Having tempted God ten times, they should not see the Promised Land, Numbers 14:21-25;
Matthew 4:7 (KJV)
⁷ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
2. They were allotted forty years of wandering, and their children only were to enter, Numbers 14:26-35;
Hebrews 4:1-2 (KJV)
¹ Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.
² For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.
3. The ten spies were smitten with a plague, and Joshua and Caleb only were spared to enter, Numbers 14:36-38, 24, 30

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 shewed 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 day time 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* 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*.

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.

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

V The Futile Attempt of Israel to Enter the Land

1. They rose up early in the morning purposing of themselves to enter the Promised Land, Numbers 14:39, 40
2. Moses warned them not to transgress the commandment of the LORD, Numbers 14:41-43
3. Moses remained in the Tabernacle, but they went up and were discomfited by the Amalekites, Numbers 14:44, 45

NOTES:

Israel's Sin of Unbelief

Israel's woeful failure, when they were led up to the very borders of the Promised Land and were commanded of the LORD to take possession of it, is an outstanding example in history of what unbelief can lead a people into. When in the beginning Satan said to the woman, "Hath God said?" he succeeded in planting in the human heart the seed of unbelief. Even the devils believe and tremble, but unbelief in the hearts of the Israelites is pronounced in the Bible as the sin of sins which eventually caused the downfall of this nation. And unbelief is today the sin which is sending countless thousands of the human race to a lost eternity.

We learned in our previous lesson that when Israel reached the borders of Canaan, they proposed to Moses that spies be sent to search this land. The plan seemed to, them, no doubt, the most reasonable step to take. But God who knows the hearts of men saw what was at the bottom of this plan. The Children of Israel were not ignorant of the nature of this Promised Land, for God had told them of its blessings and assured them that He would fight their battles. And had the people possessed the confidence toward God which His goodness toward them and the miracles He had wrought ought to have inspired, they would have taken God at His word and have gone up immediately and possessed the land, as He commanded. But since they had other plans, God let them follow the bent of their own minds with the woeful results which their unbelief brought upon them.

When these twelve spies returned they reported that the land was everything which the LORD had said - a land flowing with milk and honey - and they had with them the fruits of the land as a token of its blessings. But - there were also in the land "strong, walled cities" and "great giants!" And when the evil report of these ten spies was finished, fear was instilled in the hearts of the Israelites, which was the second step in unbelief. All that night they wept, saying, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt" or "Would God we had died in this wilderness." They too feared the fate that might befall their children, crying, "Our children shall be a prey." Their next step was to murmur against Moses and Aaron, and to choose a captain to lead them back to Egypt. Thus rebellion against God had set in.

Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, had also seen the walled cities, the strong nations, and giants of the land. But these things inspired no fear in them, for they had faith in God. They remembered the miracles He had wrought and the promises He had made. "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. 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. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear

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 swore 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 whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

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.

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 them, *As truly as I live*, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

²⁹ Your carcases 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 swore 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 carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness.

³³ And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases 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 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" (Numbers 14:7-9). But all the congregation was ready to stone them, even *though* the glory of the LORD appeared in the Tabernacle of the congregation before all the Children of Israel.

God's Punishment of Israel

At this stage of their rebellion the LORD stepped in, saying 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? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (Numbers 14:11, 12). But Moses, as a type of the great Intercessor, again came to the rescue of this people and pled their case before the LORD. He reminded the LORD how He had led them out of the land of Egypt by a mighty hand, and had safely brought them to the very borders of the Promised Land. What then would the nations say, were they to be destroyed? "Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations *which have* heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, 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. And now, I beseech thee, let *the power* of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, 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. 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" (Numbers 14:15-19). And as great as the sin of Israel was, yet the LORD heard the plea of Moses, and forgave them. Great is the mercy of God. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103: 10).

Nevertheless, Israel was not exempt from punishment. No one can sin with impunity. The man who delves into deep sin, after having had the light, need not expect to escape the punishment of a just God. Even David knew what it was to suffer for his great sin, after the LORD had pardoned him. And so a just punishment was meted out to rebellious Israel. This people pronounced their own sentence when they said, "Would God we had died in this wilderness." For God determined that Israel should spend forty years wandering in that same wilderness, a year for each day that the spies spent in Canaan land, until the last man and woman who had rebelled against the LORD had bleached his bones in the desert sands. And their children, who they said should be a prey, were taken in to the Promised Land. Out of the six hundred thousand men, who were twenty years of age or over when they came out of Egypt, there were just two, Joshua and Caleb, who reached the Promised Land - because they were of "another spirit." And as to the ten spies who caused Israel to murmur, "even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD" (Numbers 14:37).

Attempt of Israel to Enter Canaan

When Moses delivered to the Children of Israel God's stern but just decree concerning them, they mourned greatly but there was no repentance in their mourning. For they rose up early in the morning, and ascended into the top of the mountain, saying,

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*.

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* 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.

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.

⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

"Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD *hath promised*: for we have sinned" (Numbers 14:40). But Moses said, "Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies" (Numbers 14:41, 42). But disregarding the words of Moses, "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 14:44). And what were the results of their exploit? "The Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah" (Numbers 14:45). And after forty years this rebellious generation had perished in the wilderness, as the LORD decreed.

QUESTIONS

1 What was the state of heart which caused the Israelites to propose sending spies to search the land?

How many days did the spies spend in searching the Land of Canaan?

What was the substance of their report and what did they bring with them?

4 What effect did this report have upon the Children of Israel? and what did it eventually lead to?

5 What steps did Moses and Aaron take in behalf of the people when they heard them weeping?

6 What did Joshua and Caleb do in trying to encourage them to possess the land? And what was the response of the people?

7 What did the LORD decide to visit upon the people when they rebelled against Him?

8 What position did Moses take to stay the hand of judgment against the Israelites?

9 What was the final judgment passed upon the men and women who rebelled against God?

Of those who were twenty years old or over in Egypt, who reached the Promised Land? and why?