

## Numbers 14

Verses 1 - 4

**Then all the congregation raised their voices and cried out, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> And all the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the entire congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or even if we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> So why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder! Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let's appoint a leader and return to Egypt!"**

**Then the entire congregation raised their voices and cried out, and the people wept that night.**

The author of Hebrews pinpoints the real problem of these people.

See Hebrews 3:16-19

They could not enter because of unbelief

**So why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword?**

Despite all that God had done for them they were unwilling to trust Him.

They had already forgotten the 10 plagues that allowed them to leave Egypt and what God had done for them at the Red Sea.

They walked on dry ground thru a 10 mile long path on the bottom of the Red Sea that was 2400 feet deep at the center.

**So they said to one another, "Let's appoint a leader and return to Egypt!"**

Do you think they were actually serious about this plan?

See Nehemiah 9:17

They actually appointed a leader.

Verses 5 – 10

**Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. <sup>6</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; <sup>7</sup> and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, “The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection is gone from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.” <sup>10</sup> But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel.**

**Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all Israel. And Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes**

These 4 leaders showed their heart felt disapproval of this misguided plan in a way that all the people could see and understand.

**He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. Do not fear the people of the land, their protection is gone from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them**

The unfaithful spies told two lies

1. The land ate up its inhabitants

The fact that the land was large should have been a plus for the Israelites. A group of 2.5 million people needed a lot of room to settle in plus room to grow.

2. And that all the people were giants

Joshua and Caleb told the truth based on their faith in God

1. The land is an exceedingly good land

2. Do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey

3. Their protection is gone from them, and the Lord is with us

Verses 11 - 19

**<sup>11</sup> And the Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people be disrespectful to Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst? <sup>12</sup> I will strike them with plague and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.”**

**<sup>13</sup> But Moses said to the Lord, “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought this people up from their midst, <sup>14</sup> and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Lord, are in the midst of this people, because You, Lord, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. <sup>15</sup> Now if You put this people to death all at once, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, <sup>16</sup> ‘Since the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, He slaughtered them in the wilderness.’ <sup>17</sup> So now, please, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, saying, <sup>18</sup> ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in mercy, forgiving wrongdoing and violation of *His Law*; but He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, inflicting the punishment of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth *generations*.’ <sup>19</sup> Please forgive the guilt of this people in accordance with the greatness of Your mercy, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”**

**How long will they not believe in me, despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst?**

The following is a brief list of the miracles:

1. The 10 plagues
2. The crossing of the Red Sea
3. The daily manna
4. The water supplied
5. God’s presence in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire

These people had seen signs that no other generation had ever seen.

The people’s unbelief is hard to comprehend and it appears that miracles do not create faith or change the mind of unbelievers.

**I will strike them with plague and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.**

Could God start all over again? Sure He could.

He hit the reset button for all of humanity at the global flood.

He chose one man, Abraham, to make many nations from him.

Starting over for one nation would be simple in comparison.

However, over time more of Abraham's descendants turned out to be unbelievers than believers. That is a problem that is more difficult to manage because all of mankind has free will and starting over would not necessarily solve the problem.

**Now if you put this people to death all at once, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, <sup>16</sup> 'Since the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, He slaughtered them in the wilderness.'**

What do you think of Moses argument?

Hey God, if you do that (put this people to death) it will make You look weak.

**So now, please, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, saying, <sup>18</sup> 'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in mercy, forgiving wrongdoing and violation of His Law; but He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished,**

Moses wants God to show His greatness by being:

1. Slow to anger,
2. Abundant in mercy
3. Forgiving wrongdoing

God had been doing this and will continue to do this **but** He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished.

So forgiving does not preclude punishment. Very interesting.

## **Inflicting the punishment of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations**

Do children suffer for the sins of their father?

See verses 32 and 33 below.....

**<sup>32</sup> But as for you, your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness. <sup>33</sup> Also, your sons will be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness, until your bodies perish in the wilderness.**

If that generation had trusted God and entered Canaan their sons could have been spared 38 more years in the wilderness.

The choices made by parents affect their children, for good and for bad.

But just because they suffer for their fathers sins does not mean they are responsible for the sins of their father.

See Ezekiel 18:1 – 3

**Please forgive the guilt of this people in accordance with the greatness of your mercy, just as you also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now**

Moses seems to be saying, why change your approach now. You forgave them all those other times; forgive them now as you have done in the past.

Verses 20 – 25

**<sup>20</sup> So the Lord said, “I have forgiven *them* in accordance with your word;**

**<sup>21</sup> however, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.**

**<sup>22</sup> Certainly all the people who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, <sup>23</sup> shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who were disrespectful to Me see it.**

**<sup>24</sup> But as for My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring him into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it. <sup>25</sup> Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valleys; turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.”**

**So the Lord said, “I have forgiven *them* in accordance with your word;**

Moses' prayer was answered and God forgave the people for their sin and yet this is by no means the end to the story.

**Certainly all the people who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, <sup>23</sup> shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who were disrespectful to Me see it.**

The people were forgiven, so they did not die immediately, but they still suffered a severe punishment.

That generation would spend 38 more years in the wilderness and would not enter the Promised Land.

To those who have been given much, much is required.

About 400 years from now King David will suffer a similar fate when he takes the wife of Uriah and has him killed.

See 2 Samuel 12:9-14

**Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “**The Lord also has allowed your sin to pass; you shall not die.** <sup>14</sup> **However, since by this deed you have shown utter disrespect for the Lord, the child himself who is born to you shall certainly die.**”**

David had been given much. He had seen numerous miracles done for his benefit and yet he turned his back on God because he desired a woman that belonged to another man. He paid a high price for his sin.

### **Those who have put Me to the test these ten times**

Some people think the 10 times is not literal, but rather a number signifying completeness. That may be true but it can just as easily be seen as a literal number.

In this case, whether it is literal or figurative it still has the same meaning, so it seems superfluous to debate the issue.

**<sup>24</sup> But as for my servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring him into the land which he entered**

Some people wonder why Joshua is not mentioned here.

Joshua was a long time servant of Moses and his loyalty was already well established.

Besides, God will mention both of them in 6 more verses.

Verses 26 – 35

**<sup>26</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron again, saying, <sup>27</sup> “How long *shall I put up* with this evil congregation who are grumbling against me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel which they are voicing against Me. <sup>28</sup> Say to them, ‘As I live,’ declares the Lord, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you; <sup>29</sup> your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness, all your numbered men according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. <sup>30</sup> By no means will you come into the land where I swore to settle you, except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. <sup>31</sup> Your children, however, whom you said would become plunder—I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected. <sup>32</sup> But as for you, your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness. <sup>33</sup> Also, your sons will be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and they will suffer *for* your unfaithfulness, until your bodies perish in the wilderness. <sup>34</sup> In accordance with the number of days that you spied out the land, forty days, for every day you shall suffer the punishment for your guilt a year, *that is*, forty years, and you will know My opposition. <sup>35</sup> I, the Lord, have spoken, I certainly will do this to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. They shall be worn out in this wilderness, and there they shall die.’”**

**How long *shall I put up* with this evil congregation who are grumbling against me?**

This generation had seen enough to believe in God but they choose to reject his leadership despite the many miracles.

But God does not put up with rebellion forever.

This was Peters appear to the Jewish people on the day of Pentecost.

See Acts 2:22-38

**Your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness, all your numbered men according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against me**

Any who did not murmur against God would be exempt from this punishment

We know this included Joshua and Caleb

How many others were spared?

**Your children, however, whom you said would become plunder—I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected**

Their sons would enter Canaan and enjoy its riches

**Your sons will be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness**

We covered this in verse 18 above.

Verses 36 - 38

<sup>36</sup> **As for the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, and who returned and led all the congregation to grumble against him by bringing a bad report about the land, <sup>37</sup> those men who brought the bad report of the land also died by a plague in the presence of the Lord.** <sup>38</sup> **But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive out of those men who went to spy out the land.**

**Those men who brought the bad report of the land also died by a plague in the presence of the Lord**

God's judgment was swift so the message would be clear to the people.

The 10 spies that had misled the people and caused untold harm died quickly.

However, Joshua & Caleb will spend 38 more years in the wilderness with those who did not trust in God.

The faithful are not completely exempt from the consequences of a fallen world.

See Ecclesiastes 7:15



Verses 39 - 45

**<sup>39</sup> Now when Moses spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people mourned greatly. <sup>40</sup> In the morning, however, they got up early and went up to the ridge of the hill country, saying, "Here we are; and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned." <sup>41</sup> But Moses said, "Why then are you violating the command of the Lord, when *doing* so will not succeed? <sup>42</sup> Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, to prevent you from being defeated by your enemies. <sup>43</sup> For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there to confront you, and you will fall by the sword, since you have turned back from following the Lord. And the Lord will not be with you." <sup>44</sup> But they *foolishly* dared to go up to the ridge of the hill country; neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses left the camp. <sup>45</sup> Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down, and struck them and scattered them as far as Hormah.**

**In the morning, however, they got up early and went up to the ridge of the hill country, saying, "Here we are; and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned"**

After hearing the bad news that they would die in the wilderness the people realized that they had sinned and confessed it.

Did they not consider what would happen the day before?

Before we make a decision do we not consider both the good and the bad that may come from the choice we make?

Now they were ready to take the land of Canaan.

**Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, to prevent you from being defeated by your enemies. <sup>43</sup> For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there to confront you, and you will fall by the sword, since you have turned back from following the Lord**

The Israelites thought that their confession of guilt made everything ok, but they were missing the bigger picture.

They had only confessed wrong to this latest rebellion. What about the other 9 cases where they had rejected Gods leadership.

Moses warned them, but to no avail.

**Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down, and struck them and scattered them as far as Hormah.**

Some maps show Hormah to be in the general area of Beersheba but this location is not known for sure.

In 38 years when the new generation goes into Canaan they will battle the people of this area and utterly destroyed them and their cities.

See Numbers 21:1-3