
NUMBERS 13:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Twelve men, one out of every tribe, are sent to examine the nature and state of the land of Canaan, Num 13:1-3. Their names, Num 13:4-16. Moses gives them particular directions, Num 13:17-20. They proceed on their journey, Num 13:21, Num 13:22. Come to Eshcol, and cut down a branch with a cluster of grapes, which they bear between two of them upon a staff, Num 13:23, Num 13:24. After forty days they return to Paran, from searching the land, and show to Moses and the people the fruit they had brought with them, Num 13:25, Num 13:26. Their report - they acknowledge that the land is good, but that the inhabitants are such as the Israelites cannot hope to conquer, Num 13:27-29. Caleb endeavors to do away the bad impression made, by the report of his fellows, upon the minds of the people, Num 13:30. But the others persist in their former statement, Num 13:31 : and greatly amplify the difficulties of conquest, Num 13:32, Num 13:33.

NUMBERS 13:2 "Send men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel. Of every tribe of their fathers, you shall send a man, every one a prince among them."

Verse 2

Send thou men, that they may search - It appears from Deu 1:19-24 that this was done in consequence of the request of the people, after the following address of Moses: "And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness - and we came unto Kadesh-Barnea; and I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said: We Will Send Men Before Us, And They Shall Search Us Out The Land and bring us word again, by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. And the saying pleased me well, and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe," etc., etc. Nearly the whole of these verses is added here by the Samaritan.

Every one a ruler - Not any of the princes of the people, (see Numbers 1) for these names are different from those; but these now sent were men of consideration and importance in their respective tribes.

NUMBERS 13:3 Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran according to the commandment of the LORD. All of them were men who were heads of the children of Israel.

NUMBERS 13:4 These were their names: Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur.

NUMBERS 13:5 Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori.

NUMBERS 13:6 Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

NUMBERS 13:7 Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph.

NUMBERS 13:8 Of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun.

NUMBERS 13:9 Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu.

NUMBERS 13:10 Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi.

NUMBERS 13:11 Of the tribe of Joseph, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi.

NUMBERS 13:12 Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli.

NUMBERS 13:13 Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael.

Verse 13

Sethur, the son of Michael - It would have been strange had the numerous searches after the explanation of the mystical number 666, Rev 13:18; Rev 17:5, met with nothing to their purpose in the name of this son of Michael. סֶתוּר Sethur, from סָתַר sathar, to hide or conceal, signifies hidden or mysterious, and includes in it the numerical letters of the No. 666: 200ר, + 6ו, + 400ת, + 60ס, = 666. But of what utility can such expositions be to any subject of history or theology?

NUMBERS 13:14 Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi.

NUMBERS 13:15 Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

NUMBERS 13:16 These are the names of the men who Moses sent to spy out the land. Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua.

Verse 16

And Moses called Oshea Jehoshua - Oshea, Heb. הוֹשֵׁעַ should be written Hoshea: the word signifies saved, or a savior, or salvation; but יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, he shall save, or the salvation of God; a letter, says Calmet, of the incommunicable name of God, being added to his former name. This was not the first time in which he had the name Joshua; see Exo 17:9 (note), and the note there. Some suppose he had this change of name in consequence of his victory over Amalek; see Exo 17:13, Exo 17:14.

NUMBERS 13:17 Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way by the South, and go up into the hill country.

NUMBERS 13:18 See the land, what it is; and the people who dwell therein, whether they are strong or weak, whether they are few or many;

Verse 18

See the land, what it is - What sort of a Country it is; how situated; its natural advantages or disadvantages.

And the people - whether they be strong or weak - Healthy, robust, hardy men; or little, weak, and pusillanimous.

NUMBERS 13:19 and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it is good or bad; and what cities they are that they dwell in, whether in camps, or in strongholds;

NUMBERS 13:20 and what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether there is wood therein, or not. Be courageous, and bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the time of the first-ripe grapes.

Verse 20

The land - whether it be fat or lean - Whether the Soil be rich or poor; which might be known by its being well wooded, and by the fruits it produced; and therefore they were desired to examine it as to the trees, etc., and to bring some of the fruits with them.

NUMBERS 13:21 So they went up, and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, to the entrance of Hamath.

Verse 21

From the wilderness of Zin - The place called; יֶזֶן Tsin, here, is different from that called יָסִין Sin or Seen. Exo 16:1; the latter was nigh to Egypt, but the former was near Kadesh Barnea, not far from the borders of the promised land. "The spies having left Kadesh Barnea, which was in the desert of Paran, see Num 13:26, they proceeded to the desert of Tsin, all along the land of Canaan, nearly following the course of the river Jordan, till they came to Rehob, a city situated near Mount Libanus, at the northern extremity of the Holy Land, towards the road that leads to Hamath. Thence they returned through the midst of the same land by the borders of the Sidonians and Philistines, and passing by Mount Hebron, rendered famous by the residence of Abraham formerly, and by the gigantic descendants of Anak at that time, they passed through the valley of the brook of Eshcol, where they cut down the bunch of grapes mentioned Num 13:23, and returned to the Israelitish camp after an absence of forty days," Num 13:25. See Calmet on this place.

NUMBERS 13:22 They went up by the South, and came to Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the children of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

Verse 22

Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt - The Zoan of the Scriptures is allowed to be the Tanis of the heathen historians, which was the capital of Lower Egypt. Some think it was to humble the pride of the Egyptians, who boasted the highest antiquity, that this note concerning the higher antiquity of Hebron was introduced by Moses. Some have supposed that it is more likely to have been originally a marginal note, which in process of time crept into the text; but all the versions and all the MSS. that have as yet been collated, acknowledge it.

NUMBERS 13:23 They came to the valley of Eshcol, and cut down from there a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bore it on a staff between two. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs.

Verse 23

They bare it between two upon a staff - It would be very easy to produce a great number of witnesses to prove that grapes in the promised land, and indeed in various other hot countries, grow to a prodigious size. By Calmet, Scheuchzer, and Harmer, this subject has been exhausted, and to these I may refer the reader. Pliny mentions bunches of grapes in Africa each of which was larger than an infant. Radzvil saw at Rhodes bunches of grapes three quarters of an ell in length, each grape as large as a plum. Dandini saw grapes of this size at Mount Libanus; and Paul Lucas mentions some bunches which he saw at Damascus that weighed above forty-five pounds. From the most authentic accounts the Egyptian grape is very small, and this being the only one with which the Israelites were acquainted, the great size of the grapes of Hebron would appear still more extraordinary. I myself once cut down a bunch of grapes nearly twenty pounds in weight. Those who live in cold climates can scarcely have any conception to what perfection both grapes and other fruits grow in climates that are warm, and where the soil is suitable to them.

From what is mentioned Num 23:20, Now the time was the time of the first-ripe grapes, it is very probable that the spies received their orders about the beginning of August, and returned about the middle of September, as in those countries grapes, pomegranates, and figs, are ripe about this time; see Harmer, vol. i., p. 108-110. At Sheeraz, in Persia, I find from a MS. journal, that the small white grape, askerie, came into season August 6; and pomegranates September 6; and the large red grape, sahibi, September 10.

The spies' carrying the bunch of grapes on a staff between two men was probably not rendered necessary by the size of the bunch or cluster; but to preserve it from being bruised, that the Israelites might have a fair specimen of the fruit As Joshua and Caleb were the only persons who gave a favorable account of the land, it is most likely that they were the persons who had gathered these fruits, and who brought them to the Israelitish camp. And it is likely they were gathered as short a time as possible before their return, that they might not be injured by the length of the time they had been separated from their respective trees.

NUMBERS 13:24 That place was called the valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from there.

NUMBERS 13:25 They returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days.

NUMBERS 13:26 They went and came to Moses, to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, to the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word to them and to all the congregation. They showed them the fruit of the land.

NUMBERS 13:27 They told him, and said, "We came to the land where you sent us. Surely it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.

Verse 27

We came unto the land, etc. - It is astonishing that men so dastardly as these should have had courage enough to risk their persons in searching the land. But probably though destitute of valor they had a sufficiency of cunning, and this carried them through. The report they brought was exceedingly discouraging, and naturally tended to produce the effect mentioned in the next chapter. The conduct of Joshua and Caleb was alone magnanimous, and worthy of the cause in which they were embarked.

NUMBERS 13:28 However the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. Moreover, we saw the children of Anak there.

NUMBERS 13:29 Amalek dwells in the land of the South. The Hittite, the Jebusite, and the Amorite dwell in the hill country. The Canaanite dwells by the sea, and along the side of the Jordan."

NUMBERS 13:30 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!"

NUMBERS 13:31 But the men who went up with him said, "We aren't able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

NUMBERS 13:32 They brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out to the children of Israel, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and all the people who we saw in it are men of great stature.

Verse 32

Men of a great stature - אנשי מדות anshey middoth, men of measures - two men's height; i. e., exceedingly tall men.

NUMBERS 13:33 There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim. We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

Verse 33

There we saw the giants - נפלים nephilim. It is evident that they had seen a robust, sturdy, warlike race of men, and of great stature; for the asserted fact is not denied by Joshua or Caleb.

Tales of gigantic men are frequent in all countries, but they are generally of such as have lived in times very remote from those in which such tales are told. That there have been giants at different times, in various parts of the earth, there can be no doubt; but that there ever was a nation of men twelve and fourteen feet high, we cannot, should not believe. Goliath appears to have been at least nine feet high: this was very extraordinary. I knew three young men in my own neighborhood, two of them brothers, each of whom was upwards of seven feet, the third was eight feet six inches, and these men were very well proportioned. Others I have seen of extraordinary stature, but they were generally disproportioned, especially in their limbs. These instances serve to prove the possibility of cases of this nature. The Anakim might appear to the Israelites as a very tall, robust nation; and in comparison of the latter it is very probable that they were so, as it is very likely that the growth of

the Israelites had been greatly cramped with their long and severe servitude in Egypt. And this may in some measure account for their alarm. On this subject the reader is desired to turn back to the note on Gen 6:4 (note).

Canaan was a type of the kingdom of God; the wilderness through which the Israelites passed, of the difficulties and trials to be met with in the present world. The promise of the kingdom of God is given to every believer; but how many are discouraged by the difficulties in the way! A slothful heart sees dangers, lions, and giants, every where; and therefore refuses to proceed in the heavenly path. Many of the spies contribute to this by the bad reports they bring of the heavenly country. Certain preachers allow "that the land is good, that it flows with milk and honey," and go so far as to show some of its fruits; but they discourage the people by stating the impossibility of overcoming their enemies. "Sin," say they, "cannot be destroyed in this life - it will always dwell in you - the Anakim cannot be conquered - we are but as grasshoppers against the Anakim," etc., etc. Here and there a Joshua and a Caleb, trusting alone in the power of God, armed with faith in the infinite efficacy of that blood which cleanses from all unrighteousness, boldly stand forth and say: "Their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; let us go up at once and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome." We can do all things through Christ strengthening us: he will purify us unto himself, and give us that rest from sin here which his death has procured and his word has promised. Reader, canst thou not take God at his word? He has never yet failed thee. Surely then thou hast no reason to doubt. Thou hast never yet tried him to the uttermost. Thou knowest not how far and how fully he can save. Do not be dispirited: the sons of Anak shall fall before thee, if thou meet them in the name of the Lord of Hosts.