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NUMBERS 14:1 All the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

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The whole congregation weep at the account brought by the spies, Num 14:1. They murmur, Num 14:2, Num 14:3; and propose to make themselves a captain, and go back to Egypt, Num 14:4. Moses and Aaron are greatly affected, Num 14:5. Joshua and Caleb endeavor to appease and encourage the people, Num 14:6-9. The congregation are about to stone them, Num 14:10. The glory of the Lord appears, and he is about to smite the rebels with the pestilence, Num 14:11, Num 14:12. Moses makes a long and pathetic intercession in their behalf, Num 14:13-19. The Lord hears and forbears to punish, Num 14:20; but purposes that not one of that generation shall enter into the promised land save Joshua and Caleb, Num 14:21-24. Moses is commanded to turn and get into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea, Num 14:25. The Lord repeats his purpose that none of that generation shall enter into the promised land - that their carcasses shall fall in the wilderness, and that their children alone, with Joshua and Caleb, shall possess the land of the Canaanites, etc., Num 14:26-32. As many days as they have searched the land shall they wander years in the desert, until they shall be utterly consumed, Num 14:33-35. All the spies save Joshua and Caleb die by a plague, Num 14:36-38. Moses declares God's purpose to the people, at which they are greatly affected, Num 14:39. They acknowledge their sin, and purpose to go up at once and possess the land, Num 14:40. Moses cautions them against resisting the purpose of God, Num 14:41-43. They, notwithstanding, presume to go, but Moses and the ark abide in the camp, Num 14:44. The Amalekites and Canaanites come down from the mountains, and defeat them, Num 14:45.

#### Verse 1

Cried; and - wept that night - In almost every case this people gave deplorable evidence of the degraded state of their minds. With scarcely any mental firmness, and with almost no religion, they could bear no reverses, and were ever at their wit's end. They were headstrong, presumptuous, pusillanimous, indecisive, and fickle. And because they were such, therefore the power and wisdom of God appeared the more conspicuously in the whole of their history.

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NUMBERS 14:2 All the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "We wish that we had died in the land of Egypt, or that we had died in this wilderness!

NUMBERS 14:3 Why does the LORD bring us to this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will be captured or killed! Wouldn't it be better for us to return into Egypt?"

NUMBERS 14:4 They said one to another, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

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#### Verse 4

Let us make a captain - Here was a formal renunciation of the authority of Moses, and flat rebellion against God. And it seems from Neh 9:17 that they had actually appointed another leader, under whose direction they were about to return to Egypt. How astonishing is this! Their lives were made bitter, because of the rigor with which they were made to serve in the land of Egypt; and yet they are willing, yea eager, to get back into the same circumstances again! Great evils, when once some

time past, affect the mind less than present ills, though much inferior. They had partly forgot their Egyptian bondage, and now smart under a little discouragement, having totally lost sight of their high calling, and of the power and goodness of God.

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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 Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were of those who spied out the land, tore their clothes.

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Verse 6

And Joshua, etc. - See on Num 13:33 (note).

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NUMBERS 14:7 They spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceeding good land.

NUMBERS 14:8 If the LORD delights in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey.

NUMBERS 14:9 Only don't rebel against the LORD, neither fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us. Their defence is removed from over them, and the LORD is with us. Don't fear them."

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Verse 9

Their defense - צלם tsillam, their shadow, a metaphor highly expressive of protection and support in the sultry eastern countries. The protection of God is so called; see Psa 91:1; Psa 121:5; see also Isa 51:16; Isa 49:2; Isa 30:2.

The Arabs and Persians have the same word to express the same thing. nemyeed zulli doulet mamdood bad. "May the shadow of thy prosperity be extended!" nemyeed zulli doulet ber mufareki khayr khwahan mamdood bad. "May the shadow of thy prosperity be spread over the heads of thy well-wishers!"

They have also the following elegant distich: -

Sayahat kem mubad az seri ma

Bast Allah zullikem abeda. "May thy protection never be removed from my head!

May God extend thy shadow eternally!"

Here the Arabic zull answers exactly to the Hebrew צל tsel, both signifying that which overspreads or overshadows. See the note on Num 14:14.

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NUMBERS 14:10 But all the congregation threatened to stone them with stones. the LORD's glory appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the children of Israel.

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 Verse 10

The glory of the Lord appeared - This timely appearance of the Divine glory prevented these faithful servants of God from being stoned to death by this base and treacherous multitude. "Every man is immortal till his work is done," while in simplicity of heart he is following his God.

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NUMBERS 14:11 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? and how long will they not believe in me, for all the signs which I have worked among them?"

NUMBERS 14:12 I will strike them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

NUMBERS 14:13 Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear it; for you brought up this people in your might from among them.

NUMBERS 14:14 They will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you LORD are in the midst of this people; for you LORD are seen face to face, and 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.

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## Verse 14

That thy cloud standeth over them - This cloud, the symbol of the Divine glory, and proof of the Divine presence, appears to have assumed three different forms for three important purposes.

1. It appeared by day in the form of a pillar of a sufficient height to be seen by all the camp, and thus went before them to point out their way in the desert. Exo 40:38.
  2. It appeared by night as a pillar of fire to give them light while travelling by night, which they probably sometimes did; (see Num 9:21); or to illuminate their tents in their encampment; Exo 13:21, Exo 13:22.
  3. It stood at certain times above the whole congregation, overshadowing them from the scorching rays of the sun; and probably at other times condensed the vapours, and precipitated rain or dew for the refreshment of the people. He spread a cloud for their covering; and fire to give light in the night; Psa 105:39. It was probably from this circumstance that the shadow of the Lord was used to signify the Divine protection, not only by the Jews, but also by other Asiatic nations. See the note on Num 14:9, and see particularly the note on Exo 13:21 (note).
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NUMBERS 14:15 Now if you killed this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of you will speak, saying,

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

NUMBERS 14:17 Now please let the power of the Lord be great, according as you have spoken, saying,

NUMBERS 14:18 'The LORD is slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, forgiving iniquity and disobedience; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation.'

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Verse 18

The Lord is longsuffering - See the note on Exo 34:6.

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NUMBERS 14:19 Please pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your loving kindness, and according as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

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Verse 19

Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people - From Num 14:13 to Num 14:19 inclusive we have the words of Moses's intercession; they need no explanation, they are full of simplicity and energy; his arguments with God (for he did reason and argue with his Maker) are pointed, cogent, and respectful; and while they show a heart full of humanity, they evidence the deepest concern for the glory of God. The argumentum ad hominem is here used in the most unexceptionable manner, and with the fullest effect.

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NUMBERS 14:20 The LORD said, "I have pardoned according to your word:

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Verse 20

I have pardoned - That is, They shall not be cut off as they deserve, because thou hast interceded for their lives.

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NUMBERS 14:21 but in very deed, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the LORD's glory;

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Verse 21

All the earth shall be filled, etc. - כל הארץ כל haarets, all This land, i. e., the land of Canaan which was only fulfilled to the letter when the preaching of Christ and his apostles was heard through all the cities and villages of Judea. It does not appear that the whole of the terraqueous globe is meant by this expression in any of the places where it occurs connected with this promise of the diffusion of the Divine light. See Psa 72:19; Isa 40:5; Hab 2:14.

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NUMBERS 14:22 because all those men who have seen my glory, and my signs, which I worked in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have tempted me these ten times, and have not listened to my voice;

NUMBERS 14:23 surely they shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any of those who despised me see it.

NUMBERS 14:24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and has followed me fully, him I will bring into the land into which he went. His seed shall possess it.

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Verse 24

But my servant Caleb, etc. - Caleb had another spirit - not only a bold, generous, courageous, noble, and heroic spirit; but the Spirit and influence of the God of heaven thus raised him above human inquietudes and earthly fears, therefore he followed God fully; וימלא אחריי vaimalle acharai, literally, he filled after me: God showed him the way he was to take, and the line of conduct he was to pursue, and he filled up this line, and in all things followed the will of his Maker. He therefore shall see the promised land, and his seed shall possess it. A dastardly spirit in the things of God is a heavy curse. How many are retarded in their course, and fall short of the blessings of the Gospel, through magnifying the number and strength of their adversaries, their own weakness and the difficulties of the way, with which we may connect their distrust of the power, faithfulness, and goodness of God! And how many are prevented from receiving the higher degrees of salvation by foolishly attributing insurmountable power, either to their inward corruptions or outward enemies! Only such men as Joshua and Caleb, who take God at his word, and who know that against his wisdom no cunning can stand, and against his might no strength can prevail, are likely to follow God fully, and receive the heights, lengths, breadths, and depths of the salvation of God.

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NUMBERS 14:25 Since the Amalekite and the Canaanite dwell in the valley, tomorrow turn, and go into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea."

NUMBERS 14:26 The LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,

NUMBERS 14:27 "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, that murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

NUMBERS 14:28 Tell them, 'As I live, says the LORD, surely as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you.

NUMBERS 14:29 Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all who were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against me,

NUMBERS 14:30 surely you shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore that I would make you dwell therein, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

NUMBERS 14:31 But your little ones, that you said should be captured or killed, them I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have rejected.

NUMBERS 14:32 But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness.

NUMBERS 14:33 Your children shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years, and shall bear your prostitution, until your dead bodies are consumed in the wilderness.

NUMBERS 14:34 After the number of the days in which you spied out the land, even forty days, for every day a year, you will bear your iniquities, even forty years, and you will know my alienation.'

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#### Verse 34

After the number of the days - The spies were forty days in searching the land, and the people who rebelled on their evil report are condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness! Now let them make them a captain and go back to Egypt if they can. God had so hedged them about with his power and providence that they could neither go back to Egypt nor get forward to the promised land! God has provided innumerable spiritual blessings for mankind, but in the pursuit of earthly good they lose them, and often lose the others also! If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the fruit of the land, but not otherwise; unless for your farther punishment God give you your portion in this life, and ye get none in the life to come. From so great a curse may God save thee, thou money-loving, honor-hunting, pleasure-taking, thoughtless, godless man!

And ye shall know my breach of promise - This is certainly a most harsh expression; and most learned men agree that the words *את תנואתי* eth tenuathi should be translated my vengeance, which is the rendering of the Septuagint, Vulgate, Coptic, and Anglo-Saxon, and which is followed by almost all our ancient English translations. The meaning however appears to be this: As God had promised to bring them into the good land, provided they kept his statutes, ordinances, etc., and they had now broken their engagements, he was no longer held by his covenant; and therefore, by excluding them from the promised land, he showed them at once his annulling of the covenant which they had broken, and his vengeance because they had broken it.

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NUMBERS 14:35 I, the LORD, have spoken. I will surely do this to all this evil congregation, who are gathered together against me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

NUMBERS 14:36 The men, whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up an evil report against the land,

NUMBERS 14:37 even those men who brought up an evil report of the land, died by the plague before the LORD.

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#### Verse 37

Those men that did bring up the evil report died - Thus ten of the twelve that searched out the land were struck dead, by the justice of God, on the spot! Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim, alone escaped, because they had followed God fully. Let preachers of God's word take heed how they straiten the way of salvation, or render, by unjust description, that way perplexed and difficult which God has made plain and easy.

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NUMBERS 14:38 But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, remained alive of those men who went to spy out the land.

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NUMBERS 14:39 Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly.

NUMBERS 14:40 They rose up early in the morning, and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Behold, we are here, and will go up to the place which the LORD has promised: for we have sinned."

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Verse 40

We - will go up unto the place, etc. - They found themselves on the very borders of the land, and they heard God say they should not enter it, but should be consumed by a forty years' wandering in the wilderness; notwithstanding, they are determined to render vain this purpose of God, probably supposing that the temporary sorrow they felt for their late rebellion would be accepted as a sufficient atonement for their crimes. They accordingly went up, and were cut down by their enemies; and why? God went not with them. How vain is the counsel of man against the wisdom of God! Nature, poor, fallen human nature, is ever running into extremes. This miserable people, a short time ago, thought that though they had Omnipotence with them they could not conquer and possess the land! Now they imagine that though God himself go not with them, yet they shall be sufficient to drive out the inhabitants, and take possession of their country! Man is ever supposing he can either do all things or do nothing; he is therefore sometimes presumptuous, and at other times in despair. Who but an apostle, or one under the influence of the same Spirit, can say, I can do All Things Through Christ who strengtheneth me?

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NUMBERS 14:41 Moses said, "Why now do you disobey the commandment of the LORD, since it shall not prosper?"

NUMBERS 14:42 Don't go up, for the LORD isn't among you; that you not be struck down before your enemies.

NUMBERS 14:43 For there the Amalekite and the Canaanite are before you, and you shall fall by the sword, because you turned back from following the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you."

NUMBERS 14:44 But they presumed to go up to the top of the mountain. Nevertheless, the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, didn't depart out of the camp.

NUMBERS 14:45 Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites who lived in that mountain, and struck them and beat them down, even to Hormah.

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