

# CHAPTER 14

## INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 14

This chapter treats of the murmurings of the children of Israel upon the evil report of the spies, which greatly distressed Moses and Aaron, (<sup><0440></sup>Numbers 14:1-5); and of the endeavours of Joshua and Caleb to quiet the minds of the people with a good account of the land, and of the easy conquest of it, but to no purpose, (<sup><0446></sup>Numbers 14:6-10); and of the Lord's threatening to destroy the people with the pestilence, (<sup><0441></sup>Numbers 14:11,12); and of the intercession of Moses for them, which so far succeeded as to prevent their immediate destruction, (<sup><0443></sup>Numbers 14:13-20); nevertheless they are assured again and again, in the strongest terms, that none of them but Joshua and Caleb should enter into the land, but their carcasses should fall in the wilderness, even all the murmurers of twenty years old and upwards, (<sup><0421></sup>Numbers 14:21-35); and the ten men that brought the evil report of the good land died of a plague immediately, but the other two lived, (<sup><0445></sup>Numbers 14:36-38); and the body of the people that attempted to go up the mountain and enter the land were smitten and discomfited by their enemies, after they had with concern heard what the Lord threatened them with, (<sup><0449></sup>Numbers 14:39-45).

**Ver. 1.** *And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried*, etc.] This is not to be understood of every individual in the congregation of Israel, but of the princes, heads, and elders of the people that were with Moses and Aaron when the report of the spies was made; though indeed the report might quickly spread throughout the body of the people, and occasion a general outcry, which was very loud and clamorous, and attended with all the signs of distress imaginable, in shrieks and tears and lamentations:

*and the people wept that night*: perhaps throughout the night; could get no sleep nor rest all the night, but spent it in weeping and crying, at the thought of their condition and circumstances, and the disappointments they had met with, as they conceived, of entering into and possessing the land.

**Ver. 2.** *And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron*, etc.] They being the instruments of bringing them out of Egypt, and conducting them hither:

*and the whole congregation said unto them*; some of them, the rest assenting to it by their cries and tears and gestures;

*would God we had died in the land of Egypt*; and then what they left behind they thought might have come into the hands of their children or relations; but now they concluded it would become a prey to the Canaanites:

*or would God we had died in this wilderness*; the wilderness of Paran, at Taberah, where many of them had been destroyed by fire, (<sup>CHOD</sup>Numbers 11:1-3), and now they wish they had perished with them.

**Ver. 3.** *Wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land*, etc.] Unto the borders of it: their murmuring did not cease at Moses and Aaron, the instruments, but proceeded against God himself, who had done such wonderful things for them, not only in bringing them out of Egypt, but since they had been in the wilderness; and yet so ungrateful to complain of him and argue with him about favours bestowed on them, as if they were injuries done to them; and particularly as if God had no other intention in bringing them out of Egypt to the place where they were, but

*to fall by the sword*: the sword of the Canaanites, as the Targum of Jonathan adds:

*that our wives and our children shall be a prey?* to the same people; they supposed they should be killed, their wives abused, and their children made slaves of:

*were it not better for us to return into Egypt?* and so escape the hands of the inhabitants of Canaan, of whom they had terrible apprehensions from the report made of them.

**Ver. 4.** *And they said one to another, let us make a captain*, etc.] An head over them instead of Moses, who they knew would never take the government and care of them, should they resolve to return to Egypt as they proposed, and besides were now so disaffected to him, that they might not care he should. Captains they had over their several tribes, but they chose to have one chief commander and general over them all; Nehemiah

says they did appoint one; which they either actually did, or this proposal was interpreted as if really put in execution, they being so desirous of it, and bent upon it; wherefore their will is taken for the deed, and so understood; (see <sup><1697></sup>Nehemiah 9:17);

*and let us return into Egypt:* which was downright madness, as some interpreters have justly observed; they must not only expect to be deserted by Moses, through whose means so many miracles had been wrought for them, and who was so wise and faithful a governor of them; and by Aaron their priest, who offered their sacrifices, and prayed for them, and blessed them; and by such a valiant general as Joshua, who had fought for them against their enemies; but by the Lord himself, so that they could not expect the manna to be continued as food for them, nor the pillar of cloud and fire as a guide unto them, nor to be protected from their enemies, on the borders of whose countries they must pass; so that their destruction in the wilderness seemed inevitable; and if they could have surmounted these and other difficulties, what manner of reception could they expect to find in Egypt, on whose account all the firstborn of man and beast among them were slain, whom they had spoiled of their riches, and whose king and his army, and in it perhaps the, flower of the nation, were drowned in the Red sea, for their sakes? What therefore could they think of, if they had any sober thought at all, but utter ruin, should they return there again?

**Ver. 5.** *Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces,* etc.] Through shame and confusion of face for them, at hearing so shocking a proposal made, and such wretched ingratitude expressed; they blushed at it, and were in the utmost distress on account of it, and therefore threw themselves into this posture; or it may be this was done either to beg of them that they would lay aside all thoughts of this kind, or to supplicate the divine Majesty that he would convince them of their sin and folly, and give them repentance for it and forgiveness of it; and this they did

*before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel;* to affect them the more with a sense of their sin and danger.

**Ver. 6.** *And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh,* etc.] Rose up and interposed in this affair, looking upon themselves under a special obligation so to do, as they were capable of confronting the other spies, and contradicting what they had said:

*[which were] of them that searched the land;* they were two of that number, and were the more concerned to hear such a false account given, and distressed to observe the mutiny of the people, and therefore judged themselves in duty bound to do all they could to stop it:

*rent their clothes;* in token of sorrow for the sins of the people; and at their blasphemy and ingratitude against God, and in dread of his wrath and fury breaking forth upon them.

**Ver. 7.** *And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel,* etc.] To as many as could hear them, to the heads of them:

*saying, the land which we passed through to search it, [is] an exceeding good land;* they observe that they were of the number of the spies that were appointed and sent to search the land of Canaan, and they had searched it, and therefore could give an account of it from their own knowledge; and they had not only entered into it, or just looked at a part of it, but they had gone through it, and taken a general survey of it; and they could not but in truth and justice say of it, that it was a good land, delightful, healthful, and fruitful; yea, “very, very good”<sup>f179</sup>, exceeding, exceeding good, superlatively good, good beyond expression; they were not able with words to set forth the goodness of it; this they reported, in opposition to the ill report the other spies had given of it.

**Ver. 8.** *If the Lord delight in us,* etc.] Continue to delight in them as he had, and as appears by what he had done for, them in Egypt, at the Red sea, and in the wilderness; (see <sup><6105></sup>Deuteronomy 10:15);

*then he will bring us into this land, and give it us,* as he has promised, *a land which floweth with milk and honey;* as the Lord himself hath described it, and as the unbelieving spies themselves had owned it; (<sup><4137></sup>Numbers 13:27).

**Ver. 9.** *Only rebel not ye against the Lord,* etc.] Nothing, it is suggested, could hinder them from the, possession of it but their rebellion against the Lord; which might provoke him to cut them off by his immediate hand, or to deliver them into the hands of their enemies; for rebellion is a dreadful sin, and highly provoking, (<sup><4153></sup>1 Samuel 15:23);

*neither fear ye the people the land*; on account of their number, strength, the walled cities they dwell in; they had nothing to fear from them, so be it they feared the Lord, and were not disobedient to him:

*for they [are] bread for us*; as easy to be cut to pieces, and to be devoured, consumed, and destroyed as thoroughly, as bread is when eaten; and their fields, vineyards, all they have without and within, even all their substance, will be a prey to us, and furnish out sufficient provision for us, on which we may pleasantly and plentifully live, as on bread: (see ~~194~~ Psalm 14:4);

*their defence is departed from them*; they had no heart nor spirit left in them; no courage to defend themselves, and therefore the strength of their bodies and their walled towns would be of no avail unto them; (see ~~194~~ Joshua 2:9-11); or “their shadow” <sup>f180</sup>, which covered and protected them, the providence of God which was over them, and continued them in the land, and quiet possession of it, until the measure of their iniquity was filled up, and the time come for his people Israel to inhabit it; but now it was departed:

*and the Lord [is] with us*; as was evident by the cloud upon the tabernacle, and by the manna being spread around their camp every morning: the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan are,

“the Word of the Lord is for our help:”

*fear them not*; the Canaanites, notwithstanding the strength of their bodies, or of their cities, the Lord is mightier than they.

**Ver. 10.** *But all the congregation bade stone them with stones*, etc.]

Namely, Joshua and Caleb, who had made such a faithful report of the good land, and had delivered such an animating and encouraging speech to the people. This is not to be understood of the body of the people, and of all the individuals thereof, for who then should they bid to stone Joshua and Caleb? unless the sense is, that they stirred up and animated one another to it; but rather it means the princes and heads of the congregation, who commanded the common people to rise up and stone them; for notwithstanding the affecting behaviour of Moses and Aaron, and the arguments of Joshua and Caleb, they still persisted in their mutiny and rebellion, until the Lord himself appeared as he did:

*and the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation, before all the children of Israel*; the Shechinah, or divine Majesty, which

dwelt between the cherubim in the most holy place, came into the court of the tabernacle; for neither in the holy nor in the most holy place could the people see it, or the token of it: in (~~0615~~ Deuteronomy 31:15) it is said, “the pillar of cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle”; and Noldius <sup>f181</sup> renders it here, “and the glory of the Lord appeared above the tabernacle of the congregation”; with which agree the Targum of Jonathan and the Vulgate Latin and Septuagint versions; and so Jarchi says, the cloud descended there, and from thence very probably some coruscations, or flashes of lightning came forth, which plainly showed the Lord was there; and this was done to terrify the people, and restrain them from their evil purposes; and to encourage the servants of the Lord, who hereby might expect the divine protection.

**Ver. 11.** *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] Out of the cloud upon the tabernacle:

*how long will this people provoke me?* which suggests that they had often provoked him, and had done it long ago, and still continued to do so; and he had long bore their provocations; but it was not reasonable, nor could it be expected by Moses or any other, that he would bear them much longer,

*and how long will it be ere they believe me;* unbelief was a sin they had often and long been guilty of, and which greatly prevailed among them, and was the root of all their murmurings, mutiny, and rebellion; and what was highly provoking to the Lord, since they ought to have believed him, and that he was able to make good, and would make good his promises to them:

*for all the signs which I have showed among them;* the wonders and miracles he had wrought in Egypt, at the Red sea, and in the wilderness, and in their sight; on account of which they should have given credit to his word, and which were strong aggravations of their unbelief; and is the true reason why they entered not into the good land, (~~0818~~ Hebrews 3:18,19).

**Ver. 12.** *I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them*, etc.] Deprive them of inhabiting the land; so as many as died of the pestilence were even all the spies who brought an evil report of the good land, (~~0447~~ Numbers 14:37); with respect to the body of the people, this is to be considered not as a preemprory decree or a determined point; but is delivered partly by way of proposal to Moses, to draw out from him what

he would say to it; and partly by way of threatening to the people, to bring them to a sense of their sin and repentance for it:

*and will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they*: this anticipates an objection that might be made, should the people of Israel be cut off by the plague, and so disinherited of the land of Canaan, what will become of the oath of God made to their fathers? to which the answer is, it would be fulfilled in making the posterity of Moses as great or a greater and more powerful nation than Israel now was, and by introducing them into the land of Canaan, who would be of the seed of the fathers of Israel, as Jarchi observes, as those people were; and this was said to prove Moses, and try his affection to the people of Israel; and give him an opportunity of showing his public and disinterested spirit.

**Ver. 13.** *And Moses said unto the Lord*, etc.] In an abrupt manner, as the following words show, his mind being greatly disturbed and distressed by the above threatening,

*then the Egyptians shall hear [it]*; that the Lord had smitten the Israelites with the pestilence; the Targum of Jonathan interprets it of the children of the Egyptians who were suffocated in the sea:

*for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them*; they were once sojourners among them, and slaves unto them, and they were delivered from them by the mighty hand of the Lord upon the Egyptians, destroying their firstborn; and therefore when they shall hear that the Israelites were all destroyed at once by a pestilence in the wilderness, it will be a pleasure to them, as follows.

**Ver. 14.** *And they will tell [it] to the inhabitants of this land*, etc.] The land of Canaan, between which and Egypt there was an intercourse, though not by the way of the wilderness, being neighbours, and their original ancestors brethren, as Mizraim and Canaan were; or “they will say”<sup>f182</sup>, and that with joy, as the Targum of Jonathan adds; but what they would say does not appear so plain; either it was that the Israelites were killed in the wilderness, a tale they would tell with pleasure; but that the Canaanites would hear of doubtless before them, and not need their information, since the Israelites were upon their borders; or that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt indeed, but could carry them no further, could not introduce them into the land he had promised them; or rather they would say to them

what follows, for the preposition “for” is not in the text, and may be omitted; and so the sense is, they will tell them,

*they have heard that thou Lord [art] among this people*; in the tabernacle that was in the midst of them, in the most holy place of it:

*that thou Lord art seen face to face*: as he was by Moses, who was at the head of them:

*and [that] thy cloud standeth over them*; and sheltered and protected them from the heat of the sun in the daytime, when it rested upon them in their encampment:

*and [that] thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night*; in their journeys; they will tell of those favours thou hast shown Israel; and yet, after all, will observe that thou hast destroyed them, which will not redound to thine honour and glory.

**Ver. 15.** *Now [if] thou shall kill [all] this people, as one man*, etc.] Suddenly, and at once, as might be done by a pestilence; and as 185,000 were smitten at once, and as thought by the same disease, by the Angel of the Lord in the camp of the Assyrians, in later times, (<sup>12085</sup>2 Kings 19:35);

*then the nations which have heard the fame of thee*; the Egyptians, Canaanites, and others, as Aben Ezra observes; who had heard the report of the wonderful things done by him for Israel, and of the great favours he had bestowed upon them, and so of his power, and goodness, and other perfections displayed therein, which made him appear to be preferable to all the gods of the Gentiles:

*will speak, saying*; as follows.

**Ver. 16.** *Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them*, etc.] That though he brought them out of Egypt, he was not able to bring them through the wilderness into Canaan; and that though he had wrought many signs and wonders for them, he could work no more, his power failed him, he had exhausted all his might, and could not perform the promise and oath he had made:

*therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness*; because he could not fulfil his word, and so made short work of it, destroying them all together, which Moses suggests would greatly reflect dishonour on him; and in this



he shows, that he was more concerned for the glory of God than for his own.

**Ver. 17.** *And now, I beseech thee, let the power of Lord be great,* etc.]

That is, appear to be great; the power of God is great, not only mighty, but almighty; it knows no bounds, nothing is impossible with him, he can do whatever he pleases, (<sup>497B</sup>Psalm 147:5); his power, and the greatness of it, had been seen in bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, and through the Red sea, and in providing for them, protecting and defending them in the wilderness; and the request of Moses is, that it might appear greater and greater in bringing them into the land of promise; or else he means an exceeding great display of the grace and mercy of God in the forgiveness of the sins of the people; for as the power of God is seen in his forbearance and longsuffering with the wicked, (<sup>492</sup>Romans 9:22); much more in the forgiveness of the sins of men, there being more power and virtue in grace to pardon, than there is in sin to damn; and as it is an indication of strength in men, and of their power over themselves, when they can rule their own spirits, keep under their passions, and restrain their wrath, and show a forgiving temper, (<sup>4162</sup>Proverbs 16:32); so it is an instance of the power of God to overcome his wrath and anger stirred up by the sins of men; and, notwithstanding their provocations, freely to forgive: pardon of sin is an act of power, as well as of grace and mercy, (see <sup>496</sup>Matthew 9:6); and this sense agrees with what follows. The first letter in the word for “great” is larger than usual, that it might be taken notice of; and to signify the exceeding greatness of the power of God, Moses desired might be displayed in this case: and the letter numerically signifies ten, and has been thought to respect the ten times that Israel tempted the Lord, (<sup>4442</sup>Numbers 14:22); and to suggest, that though they had so done, yet the grace and mercy of God should ten times exceed the ingratitude of the people <sup>f183</sup>:

*according as thou hast spoken, saying;* as in (<sup>4236</sup>Exodus 34:6,7); and is as follows.

**Ver. 18.** *The Lord [is] longsuffering,* etc.] Towards all men, and especially towards his own people:

*and of great mercy,* being abundant in goodness, and keeping mercy for thousands:

*forgiving iniquity and transgression,* all sorts of sin:

*and by no means clearing [the guilty], visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation];* which may seem to make against the plea of Moses for mercy and forgiveness; but the reason of these words being expressed seems to be, because they go along with the others in the passage referred to, and are no contradiction to the forgiving mercy of God in a way of justice; nor did Moses request to have the guilty cleared from punishment altogether, but that God would show mercy, at least to such a degree as not to cut off the whole nation, and leave no posterity to inherit the land; which is supposed in visiting the sin of the fathers to the third or fourth generation.

**Ver. 19.** *Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy,* etc.] Intimating, that though the sin of this people was great, the mercy of God to pardon was greater; and therefore he entreats that God would deal with them, not according to the greatness of their sins, and the strictness of justice, but according to the greatness of his mercy, who would, and does, abundantly pardon;

*and as thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now;* which shows both that these people had been continually sinning against the Lord, ever since they came out of Egypt, notwithstanding the great goodness of God unto them, and that he had as constantly pardoned; and therefore it was hoped and entreated that he would still continue to pardon them, he being the same he ever was, and whose mercy and goodness endure for ever: he had pardoned already sins of the like kind since their coming out of Egypt, as their murmurings for bread in the wilderness of Sin, (<sup><1266></sup>Exodus 16:1-7), and for water at Rephidim, (<sup><1270></sup>Exodus 17:1-7), and even a greater sin than these, idolatry, or the worship of the calf, (<sup><1281></sup>Exodus 32:1-10).

**Ver. 20.** *And the Lord said, I have pardoned, according to thy word.*] So as not to kill them utterly as one man: which is an instance of his being plenteous in mercy, and ready to forgive; and of the virtue and efficacy of the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, and of the great regard the Lord has to the prayers of a good man for others. The Jerusalem Targum is,

“and the Word of the Lord said, lo, I have remitted and forgiven according to thy word;”

which must be understood of Christ, the essential Word, and shows, according to the sense of the Targumist, that he has a power to forgive sin, and must be a divine Person, for none can forgive sin but God; (see <sup><4117></sup>Mark 2:7,10).

**Ver. 21.** *But [as truly as] I live*, etc.] Which is the form of an oath, as the Targum; the Lord swears by his life, or by himself, because he could swear by no greater:

*all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*; this is not the thing sworn unto or confirmed, but that by which the oath is made and confirmed; and the sense is, that as sure as the earth “had been” filled with the glory of the Lord, as it may be rendered, as it had been with the fame of what he had done in Egypt, and at the Red sea; or as it “should be” filled with it in later times, especially in the kingdom of the Messiah in the latter day; (see <sup><2068></sup>Isaiah 6:3 <sup><3514></sup>Habakkuk 1:14); so sure the men that had provoked him should not see the land of Canaan.

**Ver. 22.** *Because all those men which have seen my glory*, etc.] His glorious Majesty, or the emblem of it in the cloud, on the tabernacle, which had often appeared to them, and the glorious things done by him; the glory of his power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, and truth, displayed in bringing them out of Egypt, through the Red sea, and thus far in the wilderness, even to the borders of the land of Canaan; it should be rendered, not “because”, but “that”, for this is the thing sworn to, or the matter of the oath:

*and my miracles which I did in Egypt*; by the hand of Moses, both before them, when he was sent to them, as a proof of his divine mission, and before Pharaoh and all his court, (<sup><0170></sup>Exodus 7:10), inflicting plagues upon him and his people, (<sup><0170></sup>Exodus 7:20 8:6,20,24 9:6,10,23 10:13,22 12:29):

*and in the wilderness*; in raining manna from heaven about their tents, (<sup><0164></sup>Exodus 16:14); sending them quails, (<sup><0163></sup>Exodus 16:13 <sup><0413></sup>Numbers 11:31); and giving them water out of the rock, (<sup><0176></sup>Exodus 17:6):

*and have tempted me now these ten times*; which the Jews understand precisely and exactly of such a number, and which they reckon thus <sup>f184</sup>; twice at the sea, (<sup><0141></sup>Exodus 14:11,12); twice concerning water, (<sup><0153></sup>Exodus 15:23,24 17:2); twice about manna, (<sup><0142></sup>Exodus 16:2,20,27 <sup><0410></sup>Numbers 11:4); twice about quails, (<sup><0162></sup>Exodus 16:12 <sup><0410></sup>Numbers 11:4); once by the calf, (<sup><0231></sup>Exodus 32:1-7); and once in the wilderness of

Paran, (<sup><0440></sup>Numbers 14:1-4), which last and tenth was the present temptation: these are reckoned a little otherwise elsewhere<sup>f185</sup>; but perhaps it may be better, with Aben Ezra, to interpret it of many times, a certain number being put for an uncertain, they having frequently tempted the Lord:

*and have not hearkened to my voice*; neither to his word of promise, nor to his word of command, and particularly his late order to go up and possess the land, (<sup><0402></sup>Deuteronomy 1:21,26).

**Ver. 23.** *Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers*, etc.] Not possess and enjoy the land of Canaan, which the Lord by an oath had promised their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give it to their seed; and now he swears that these men, who had so often tempted him, and been disobedient to him, should not inherit it; so the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem take it for an oath; (see <sup><0301></sup>Hebrews 3:11,18);

*neither shall any of them that provoked me see it*; that provoked him by the ill report they had brought of the land, by their unbelief, by their murmurings, and mutiny.

**Ver. 24.** *But my servant Caleb*, etc.] Who was one of the spies, and brought a good and true report of the land; and so in that, as well as in other things, approved himself to be a faithful servant of the Lord, and who had stilled the people at the beginning of their murmur, and with Joshua had attempted to quiet them afterwards; and though Joshua is not here mentioned, because, as some say, he had no children, and therefore it could not be said of him that his seed should possess the land, as is said of Caleb; or rather, because he was to be the general and commander of the people, who was to introduce them into the land of Canaan, and therefore there was no necessity of expressing him by name, yet he is afterwards mentioned, (<sup><0443></sup>Numbers 14:30,38);

*because he had another spirit with him*; different from that of the rest of the spies, excepting Joshua; a spirit of faith, and of the fear of the Lord, of might and courage, of truth and faithfulness; believing in the promise of God, which the spies distrusted, being persuaded the land might easily be conquered, which they feared; and bringing a true report of the land, the reverse of the ill and false one they brought. For this is to be understood not of the Holy Spirit of God, nor of his work upon the hearts of good

men, which is different from the spirit of the world, though Caleb was possessed of that also:

*and hath followed me fully*; with full purpose of heart whithersoever he led him, or directed him, in every path of duty, and in the exercise of every grace; or “hath fulfilled after me”<sup>f186</sup>; obeyed his word of command, fulfilled his mind and will, by going after him, and acting according to the rules and directions he gave him:

*him will I bring into the land whereinto he went*; the land of Canaan he went into to spy and search:

*and his seed shall possess it*; not the whole land, but Hebron, and the parts about it, where he particularly went, and which he and his posterity afterwards enjoyed, (see <sup><0432></sup>Numbers 13:22 <sup><0443></sup>Joshua 14:13-15). The Targum of Onkelos is, “shall expel it”; the inhabitants of it; for the word signifies both to inherit and disinherit; and so Jarchi interprets it, shall disinherit the Anakim, and the people that are in it, that is, drive them out of it, as Caleb did, (<sup><0453></sup>Joshua 15:13,14).

**Ver. 25.** *And now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley*, etc.] By the Canaanites are meant the Amorites, as Aben Ezra, which were a principal people of the land of Canaan, and which may be confirmed by (<sup><0419></sup>Deuteronomy 1:19,20); this may seem contrary to what is said (<sup><0439></sup>Numbers 13:29); where they are said to dwell in the mountain; but it may be reconciled by observing, that indeed their proper settled habitation was in the mountain; but now they went down from thence, and “sat”<sup>f187</sup> in the valley, as it may be rendered, in ambush, there lying in wait for the children of Israel, as in (<sup><0408></sup>Psalm 10:8); and so Aben Ezra interprets it of their sitting there, to lie in wait for them: and now, though these people had so sadly provoked the Lord, yet such was his goodness to them, as to warn them of the design of their enemies, and of the danger by them, to provide for their safety, by giving them the following instruction:

*tomorrow turn you*; do not go forward, lest ye fall into their ambushment, but turn about, and go the contrary way; return in the way, or towards the parts from whence ye came: this they are bid to do tomorrow, but did not till some time after; for, contrary to the command of God, they went up the mount, where they were defeated by the Amalekites and Canaanites, after which they stayed in Kadesh some days, (<sup><0444></sup>Deuteronomy 1:44-46);

*and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea;* or in the way towards it; and so they would be in the way to Egypt, where the people were desirous of returning again; but as they were always a rebellious and disobedient people, and acted contrary to God, so in this case; for when he bid them go back towards the Red sea again, then they were for going forward, and entering into the land of Canaan, (<sup>0440</sup>Numbers 14:40); though when he bid them go up, and possess it, then they were for returning to Egypt, (<sup>0440</sup>Numbers 14:4).

**Ver. 26.** *And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron,* etc.] Before he had been only speaking to Moses, who had interceded with him to pardon the people, which he had granted; but at the same time assured him they should not enter into and possess the land of Canaan, and the same he repeats to him and Aaron together:

*saying:* as follows.

**Ver. 27.** *How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me?* etc.] Bear with their murmurings, spare them, and not cut them off? how long must sparing mercy be extended to them? the Lord speaks as one weary of forbearing, so frequent and aggravated were their murmurings. The Jews understand this not of the whole congregation of Israel, but of the ten spies, from whence they gather, that ten make a congregation; and they interpret the phrase, “which murmur against me”, transitively, “which cause to murmur against me”; made the children of Israel murmur against him, so Jarchi; but rather all the people are meant, as appears from (<sup>0448</sup>Numbers 14:28), and from the following clause:

*I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me;* for their murmurings were not only against Moses and Aaron, but against the Lord himself, (<sup>0442</sup>Numbers 14:2,3).

**Ver. 28.** *Say unto them, [as truly as] I live, saith the Lord,* etc.] The form of an oath, as in (<sup>0442</sup>Numbers 14:21);

*as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you;* what they had wished for, and expressed in the hearing of the Lord, he threatens them should be their case.

**Ver. 29.** *Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness,* etc.] They had wished they had died in it, (<sup>0442</sup>Numbers 14:2), and the Lord here declares they should, which is signified by the falling of their carcasses in it, or their

bodies, which when dead fall to the ground, having no strength to support themselves:

*and all that were numbered of you:* but a few months before this time, when their number was 603,550, (<sup><0046></sup>Numbers 1:46);

*according to your number from twenty years old and upward;* which is observed, as Jarchi thinks, to except the Levites, for they were not numbered with the other tribes; and when they were numbered by themselves, their number was taken from a month old and upwards; wherefore it need not be wondered at, if we find that there were of them who did not fall in the wilderness, but entered into the land of Canaan, as it is certain Eleazar the priest, the son of Aaron, did, (<sup><0047></sup>Numbers 34:17 <sup><0048></sup>Joshua 14:1);

*which have murmured against me;* which shows, that not the spies only, who caused the people to murmur, but the people themselves who murmured, and had been numbered, from twenty years old and upward, are the evil congregation the Lord thus threatened with death.

**Ver. 30.** *Doubtless ye shall not come into the land,* etc.] The land of Canaan; or “if ye shall come” <sup>f188</sup>; that is, I swear ye shall not, so the Targum of Jonathan:

*[concerning] which I swear to make you dwell therein;* not them personally, but the people and nation of which they were, and to which they belonged, the seed and posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom the oath was made:

*save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun;* who brought a good report of the land. Caleb is mentioned first, as Aben Ezra thinks, because he first appeased and quieted the people; but in (<sup><0049></sup>Numbers 14:38) Joshua stands first, so that nothing is to be inferred from hence; these were the only two of the spies that went into the land of Canaan, (<sup><0050></sup>Numbers 13:4-15); and the only two of the Israelites that were numbered, from twenty years old and upwards, (<sup><0051></sup>Numbers 14:29); those of the tribe of Levi, not being in that account, must be remembered to be excepted also.

**Ver. 31.** *But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey,* etc.] To the Canaanites, (<sup><0052></sup>Numbers 14:3);

*them will I bring in*; into the land of Canaan, and so fulfil the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for the unbelief of this congregation did not make the faith, or faithfulness of God, of none effect:

*and they shall know the land which ye have despised*; shall know what a good land it is by experience, and shall possess and enjoy it with approbation, delight, and pleasure, which they, believing the spies, rejected with, loathing and disdain.

**Ver. 32.** *But [as for] you, your carcasses*, etc.] Which way of speaking seems to be used to distinguish them from their children;

*they shall fall in this wilderness*: which is repeated for the confirmation and certainty it, and an emphasis is laid on the words, this which are pronounced with an accent, to put them in mind of their wish, (<sup>4042</sup>Numbers 14:2).

**Ver. 33.** *And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years*, etc.] Or “feed”<sup>f189</sup>, as shepherds, who go from place to place, and seek fresh pasture for their sheep; it being the custom of a shepherd, as Aben Ezra observes, not to stand or rest in a place; and so like sheep grazing in a wilderness, where they have short commons, and wander about in search, of better. These forty years are to be reckoned from their coming out of Egypt, from whence they had now been come about a year and a half:

*and bear your whoredoms*; the punishment of their idolatries, which are frequently signified by this phrase, and particularly of the idolatry of the calf, which God threatened to punish whenever he visited for sin, (<sup>4034</sup>Exodus 32:34); and of other sins, as their murmurings, etc. for it was on account of them their children wandered so long in the wilderness, and were kept out of the possession of the land of Canaan:

*until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness*; everyone of them be consumed by death, save those before excepted, (<sup>4040</sup>Numbers 14:30).

**Ver. 34.** *After the number of days in which ye searched the land, [even] forty days*, etc.] For so long they were searching it, (<sup>4035</sup>Numbers 13:25);

*each day for a year*; reckoning each day for a year, forty days for forty years, as in (<sup>4006</sup>Ezekiel 4:6);



*shall ye bear your iniquities, [even] forty years*: which number is given, being a round one, otherwise it was but thirty eight years and a half ere they were all cut off, and their children entered the land:

*and ye shall know my breach of promise*; God never makes any breach of promise; his covenant he will not break, nor alter what is gone out of his lips; men break their promises, and transgress the covenant they have made with him, but he never breaks his, (<sup><1884></sup>Psalm 89:34); this should rather be rendered only, “ye shall know my breach”; experience a breach made upon them by him, upon their persons and families by consuming them in the wilderness: the Targum of Jonathan is,

“and ye shall know what ye have murmured against me;”

this same word is used in the plural in (<sup><1830></sup>Job 33:10), and is by the Targum rendered “murmurings” or “complaints”; and so the sense is, ye shall know by sad experience the evil of complaining and murmuring against me. The Vulgate Latin version is,

“ye shall know my vengeance;”

and so the Septuagint,

“ye shall know the fury of my anger”

which give the sense, though not a literal version of the words.

**Ver. 35.** *I the Lord have said*, etc.] Determined, resolved on doing what I have declared, and again repeat it; the decree is absolute and peremptory, and will never be revoked:

*I will surely do it to all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me*; against his ministers, Moses the chief magistrate, and Aaron the high priest; and this is interpreted gathering, conspiring, and rebelling against the Lord himself, on account of which they might be truly called an evil congregation, and therefore it was a determined point with him to destroy them:

*in this wilderness they shall be consumed*; by wasting diseases:

*and there they shall die*; as they wished they might, (<sup><0442></sup>Numbers 14:22); with respect to which this was so often repeated, (<sup><0263></sup>Exodus 16:3); and which the Jews interpret not only of a corporeal death, but of an eternal one; for they say <sup>f190</sup>

“the generation of the wilderness (of those that died there) have no part in the world to come, nor shall stand in judgment, as it is said, “in this wilderness”, etc. (<sup><0445></sup>Numbers 14:35).”

**Ver. 36.** *And the men which Moses sent to search the land*, etc.] Ten of them,

*who returned*; as they all did, who were sent to search it:

*and made all the congregation to murmur against him*; against, Moses that sent them; they murmured themselves, and made others murmur:

*by bringing up a slander upon the land*; that it ate up its inhabitants, and that the inhabitants of it were of such a stature, and so gigantic and strong, and dwelt in such walled cities, (<sup><0433></sup>Numbers 13:28,29), that there was no probability of subduing them, (<sup><0431></sup>Numbers 13:31-33).

**Ver. 37.** *Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land*, etc.] They, and they only at this time:

*died by the plague before the Lord*; either by the pestilence immediately sent upon them by the Lord, or by a flash of lightning from him, or in some other way; however, by the immediate hand of God, and in his presence, being in the tabernacle of the congregation, (<sup><0410></sup>Numbers 14:10); though the Jews differently relate the manner of their death; some say worms came out of their navels, and up to their jaws, and ate them and their tongues; and others that they came out of their tongues, and entered their navels, which they take to be a just retaliation for sinning with their tongues: and the time of their death they differ about; some say, as the Targum of Jonathan, that it was upon the seventh, and others that it was on the seventeenth of Elul or August they died <sup>f191</sup>.

**Ver. 38.** *But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh*, etc.] Here Joshua is set first, as Caleb is in (<sup><0430></sup>Numbers 14:30); which shows that they were equal in dignity, and therefore are indifferently put, sometimes the one first, and sometimes the other:

*[which were] of the men that went to search the land*; were two of the spies, and were for the tribes of Judah and Ephraim, (<sup><0406></sup>Numbers 13:6,8),

*lived [still]*; were not stricken with death, when the other spies were; though perhaps upon the very spot, and in the same place, and among

them, when they were struck dead; but these remained alive, and continued many years after, and entered the good land, and possessed it.

**Ver. 39.** *And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel,* etc.]

That all that had murmured, who were of twenty years old and upwards, should die in the wilderness, and never see nor enter into the land of Canaan, on the borders of which they now were:

*and the people mourned greatly;* because of their unhappy case, that they should be cut off by death in the wilderness, and be deprived of the enjoyment of the good land; their sorrow seems to have been not a godly sorrow, or true repentance for sin committed, but a worldly sorrow that works death; it was not on account of the evil of sin, the pardon of which they did not seem to seek after, but on account of the evil that was likely to come to them by it.

**Ver. 40.** *And they rose up early in the morning,* etc.] The next morning after they had heard the bad news of their consumption in the wilderness; not being able, perhaps, to sleep that night with the thoughts of it, and being now in a great haste to go up and possess the land of Canaan, as they were before to return to Egypt:

*and gat them up into the top of the mountain;* which was the way the spies went into the land of Canaan, (<sup>Q1E37</sup>Numbers 13:17); this they did not actually ascend, as appears from (<sup>Q1H44</sup>Numbers 14:44,45); but they determined upon it, and got themselves ready for it:

*saying, lo, we [be here];* this they said either to one another, animating each other to engage in the enterprise; or to Moses and Joshua, signifying that they were ready to go up and possess the land, if they would put themselves at the head of them, and take the command and direction of them;

*and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised:* the land of Canaan:

*for we have sinned;* in not going up to possess it, when they were bid to go, and in listening to the spies that brought an ill report of it, and by murmuring against Moses and Aaron, and the Lord himself, and proposing to make them a captain and return to Egypt, (<sup>Q1H42</sup>Numbers 14:2-4); but this acknowledgment and repentance were not very sincere, by what follows.

**Ver. 41.** *And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord?* etc.] Which was to turn back into the wilderness, and go the way that leads to the Red sea, (<sup><04:25></sup>Numbers 14:25); instead of which now they were for going forward into the land of Canaan, though averse to it just before:

*but it shall not prosper*; their attempt to enter into it.

**Ver. 42.** *Go not up, for the Lord [is] not among you*, etc.] And therefore could not expect success, for victory is of the Lord; the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“the ark, and the tabernacle, and the cloud of glory move not,”

which were a plain indication that the Lord would not go with them, and therefore could not hope to prevail over their enemies and enter the land, but on the contrary might expect to be defeated by them, as follows:

*that ye be not smitten before your enemies*; of which they would be in great danger should they attempt to go up the hill, and the Lord not with them.

**Ver. 43.** *For the Amalekites and the Canaanites [are] there before you*, etc.] Having removed from the valley, (<sup><04:25></sup>Numbers 14:25); or else had detached a party to defend the pass on the top of the mountain, and where perhaps they designed to feign a retreat if they found it proper, and draw them into a combat in the valley:

*and ye shall fall by the sword*: by the sword of the Amalekites and Canaanites:

*because ye are turned away from the Lord*: from the word of the Lord, from hearkening to and obeying his command:

*therefore the Lord will not be with you*; the consequence of which must be bad for them.

**Ver. 44.** *But they presumed to go up unto the hill top*, etc.] In a bold, audacious, and presumptuous manner; they attempted to go up to the top of the hill, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Moses against it, and the danger they would be exposed unto; but withdrawing themselves from God and his ministers, and lifted up in themselves, and confident of their own strength, ventured on this rash enterprise: the Vulgate Latin version is,

“being darkened they went up”: either having their understandings darkened, and being given up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart; or else they went up in the morning while it was dark, before daylight; which latter sense is favoured by the Targum of Jonathan,

“and they girded (or armed) themselves in the dark, before the morning light;”

and the former by an ancient exposition, called Tanchuma, mentioned by Jarchi,

“they went obscure (as it were in the dark) because without leave:”

*nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp*; the cloud not being taken up, but abiding on the tabernacle, which was the signal for resting, both for the ark, and for the camp, the Kohathites did not move with the ark: the Jews<sup>f192</sup> have a notion, that there were two arks which went with Israel in the wilderness, one in which the law was put, and another in which the broken pieces of the tables were left; that in which the law was, was placed in the tabernacle of the congregation, and of this it is written, “the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not”, etc. but that in which the broken pieces of the tables were, went in and out with them: but this does not clearly appear; and it is highly probable no ark went with them at this time; nor did Moses, the leader and commander of the people, stir from the camp of the Levites; wherefore it was a bold and hazardous undertaking the other camps engaged in without God going with them, and their general before them, or Joshua his minister; for if one did not go, the same may be concluded of the other.

**Ver. 45.** *Then the Amalekites came down*, etc.] The hill; met the Israelites as they ascended: and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill; the same with the Amorites, one of the seven nations of Canaan, (<sup>(-04139)</sup>Numbers 13:29);

*and smote them*; with the sword, having the advantage of them in coming down the hill upon them:

*and discomfited them even unto Hormah*; the name of a place, so called from what happened there; as Jarchi says; either from this destruction of the Israelites at this time by these their enemies, or from the destruction of the Canaanites by Israel, (<sup>(-04204)</sup>Numbers 21:4); and so here has its name by anticipation; or it may be from both these events, and seems to be

confirmed by a third of the like kind, having been in former times called Zephath, (<sup><0017></sup>Judges 1:17); (see <sup><0650></sup>Joshua 15:30); though some take it to be an appellative here, and not the proper name of a place, and render it even unto destruction, as the Targum of Jonathan, denoting the very great destruction and havoc that were made among them: how many were destroyed is not certain; the judgment threatened them of God soon began to take place, that their carcasses should fall in that wilderness.