

I. Where are we?

- The Israelites are leaving Sinai after a year of being camped there. The cloud that is guiding them moves from the tabernacle to the wilderness of Paran.
- They break camp, pack up and head out, led by the tribe of Judah.
- Right away, they begin to grumble and complain about food. Moses complains to the Lord (11:10-15), stating that he prefers death to dealing with all this heartache and burden of leading an unfaithful people.
- The Lord provides help for Moses in the form of 70 elders appointed to help govern and waves of quail 3 ft. deep (a punishment more than a blessing). It is interesting that Moses seems to infer that all the livestock, flocks and even obtainable fish will not supply enough (11:22). The Lord, as we see, is not limited like Moses' mind.
- Miriam and Aaron begin to speak against Moses out of spite for his wife (Zipporah?) and jealousy that he is the Lord's prophet. The Lord punishes Miriam with leprosy and Aaron with humility towards Moses (addresses Moses as 'my lord' in 12:11). It is interesting that Aaron, who just spoke against Moses, asks Moses for mercy on Miriam. The Lord hears Moses' request for mercy on Miriam and grants her healing, but she must be out of the camp 7 days (unclear just when she was healed).
- It is a high compliment to Moses from the Word of God that is listed in 12:3. It rings of the unique attributes assigned to Noah and Solomon in regards to their unique standing in righteousness and wisdom, respectively.

II. Spies, report and punishment

- Leaders, one from each tribe, are to be sent into Canaan to reconnoiter the land.
- An interesting name change is given to the spy chosen from the tribe of Ephraim (one of Joseph's sons);
 - Hoshea, in Hebrew "hosea" (*ho-shay-ah*), meaning "salvation" or "deliverer", changed to:
 - Joshua, in Hebrew "yehosua" (*yeh-ho-shoo-ah*), meaning "YHWH-saved" or "the Lord is Salvation"
- An interesting footnote comment: the rabbis of Judaism sometimes attribute the unfaithful characteristic of the 10 spies to the fact that they were selected by Moses, not the Lord.
- They spy out the land for 40 days and bring back information and a sample of the grape crop. There are two critical points in the report by the majority of the recon team:
 1. The land is indeed as the Lord promised, full of milk and honey and rich in produce.
 2. It contains, however, large, fortified cities and the "descendants of Anak" (giants, see also Deuteronomy 2:11 and Joshua 11:21, 22). Anak means "long-necked". The Amalekites are in the south, the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites are in the mountains and the Canaanites are by the sea and River Jordan.
- Caleb vocalizes his disagreement. He is not simply optimistic about their chances for success, he is certain of it.
- The others counter by reinforcing (and perhaps exaggerating) their previous claims. The inhabitants are stronger than Israel, the men are ALL of great stature, the land is vast (swallows up the inhabitants) and in addition, there are giants that made them seem like grasshoppers. It is strange that if the spies were so much smaller and weaker than the natives, why were they not recognized and accused of being spies? The Amalekites already knew they were on the march a year earlier (Exodus 17:8-15), having fought and lost to Joshua.
- The negative tone of the unfaithful spies gets all of Israel fired up and panicked. They are worried now about dying in the wilderness or being killed by their enemies. They blame the Lord directly for bringing this on them (14:3).
- Mutiny is in the air and they desire to appoint a leader who, of all things, will take them back to Egypt. This logic is so absurd it defies comprehension. Just what do they think will be their fate if they return? A group who openly defied the king, plundered the peoples, caused the death of their firstborn children and indirectly wiped out some large portion of the Egyptian army would receive less than a warm welcome. One can surmise that being forced to gather their own straw would be mild in comparison to the yoke put on their back should they return.
- Joshua joins in the plea to invade, describing the land as good and putting faith in God that He will help them overcome the people in Canaan. He and Caleb plea for the people not to rebel against the Lord. The crowd's reaction is to make preparations to stone them.

- The glory of the Lord appears at the tent of meeting. He is ready to punish and plague the angry and rebellious nation of Israel, inflicting pestilence on them and cutting them off from Him. He informs Moses of his plan and tells Moses that the Lord will make a new and mightier nation from him.
- Moses, obviously the man described in 12:3, desires none of this. He pleads with the Lord to spare the people and cites good reason. The people of Canaan and Egypt will see that the Lord freed his people, but was unable to save them in the long run. The Lord and His power will be mocked and scorned by the nations. Whatever lessons Egypt learned about the God of Abraham will be undone.
- Moses pays beautiful tribute to the Lord in 14:18, 19, describing Him as:
 - Slow to anger
 - Abundant in loving-kindness (mercy) but also
 - A punisher of wrongdoing
- The Lord lives up to the praise of Moses in His response, lifting the “death” sentence, but still inflicting punishment. Because they have tested God 10 times, this generation will not see the land promised to their fathers. Only Caleb, Joshua and the current population 19 and younger will go into Canaan. Moses and Aaron will not enter into the Promised Land either, but not because of this incident. Miriam and Aaron die in Numbers 20 and Moses just before Joshua leads the nation into Canaan at the close of Deuteronomy.
- The time it takes to weed out the cursed generation shall be 40 years, one year for each day they spied out the land. This means that all those who enter the Promised Land (except Joshua and Caleb) will be 59 and younger.
- The 10 spies who doubted the power of the Lord and incited the people are inflicted with a plague right away and die. Interestingly enough, they are not made to endure the 40 years in the wilderness.
- Some portion of the Israelites, upon hearing the terms of their punishment from God via Moses, suddenly find new bravado and confidence in their military power. They decide to attack and enter Canaan without the Lord’s blessing. Neither the Ark of the Covenant nor Moses is involved. The Amalekites and Canaanites rout the Israelite forces.