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Moshe Remembered Sending in the Spies

1: 19-25

Moshe remembered sending in the spies. DIG: In verse 21, is God making an offer they can't refuse, or one they can? Was their strategy in verse 22 borne out of fear or faith? Head or heart? Wisdom or folly? Can you fill in the details of the spy mission (see Numbers 13-14)?

REFLECT: How can you see beyond the problems and see the opportunities? Spying might be a delaying tactic. How do you try to confirm God's will rather than do it? Are your eyes of faith bigger than your stomach of fear? How so?

Reviewing the history of the generation of the Exodus, the Israelites traveled from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea. It was a grueling journey, but God had spoken and the people must go forward. From there, twelve spies traveled through the whole Land (Numbers 13:21), and their report was initially positive.

From Horeb to Kadesh-barnea (1:19-21): Remembering the journey that **he himself** had taken forty years ago with **the Exodus generation, Moses** recalled: **Then we journeyed from Horeb** (which is the name used for **Mount Sinai** in **Deuteronomy**) **and went through** a waterless limestone plateau, **a great and terrible wilderness, that you saw on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as ADONAI our God commanded us.** It was a **journey** of more than a hundred miles, and over those dusty and dry miles the prospect of **the Promised Land** must have become very inviting.⁴⁰ **Then we came to Kadesh-barnea,** a major oasis in the arid south **(1:19).** This place was prominent in **Isra'el's** history as a familiar stopping place on **her journey (Numbers 13:23-27, 32:8-15).**⁴¹ **They** were not in **the Promised Land** yet, but **they** were close. No doubt there was excitement in the camp. At last **the Exodus** generation was about to realize the promise that had been given hundreds of years before to **their** father **Abraham.**

Every great accomplishment begins with a vision. We have to see it before we can

seize it. Our vision is the picture of what we can be one day. Therefore, **Moshe said to the people, "You have come to the hill country of the Amorites, which ADONAI our God is giving to us. See, ADONAI your God has set the Land before you - go up, take possession, as ADONAI God of your fathers has promised you."** The present reality of **the Land** being given by **the LORD** to **Isra'el** is based on **YHVH's** perspective. As far as **He** is concerned, the conquest is an accomplished fact. Only **Isra'el's** actual conquest of **the Land** awaited fulfillment. Reference to **ADONAI God of your fathers** cements the link between the commanded conquest of Canaan and **the LORD's** past promises to **Abraham** (see the commentary on **Genesis Dy - Go, Walk Through the Land, for I am giving it to You**), **Isaac** (see the commentary **Genesis Go - Isaac Went to Abimelech King of the Philistines in Gerar**), and **Jacob** (see the commentary **Genesis li - Jacob Returned from Paddan Aram and God Appeared to Him at Bethel**). This great leader also understood that many people see the obstacles but not the objective. Not wanting this to happen, he added: **Do not be afraid or discouraged (1:20-21).**

Far too often, however, some believers feel that ability to see an obstacle is the mark of maturity and insight. However, usually the problems are the easiest things to see. The sad truth is that many of us look for problems, then use them as an excuse to stay right where we are. **The LORD** wants us to see beyond the difficulties and give encouragement to those facing challenges.



Moshe remembered sending in the spies (1:22-25): **Moshe** remembered that **he** was ready for an assault on inhabitants of Canaan. The community of **Isra'el**, however, was more cautious and wanted to send out a scout team that would be able to advise the best line of attack and give **the people** some idea of the kind of opposition to expect and the size of the cities.⁴² **Then all of you came near to me**

and said: **Let's send men ahead of us to explore the Land for us and bring us back word about the best way we should go, and the cities we will attack first (1:22)**. Notice, there is no mention of basing the decision whether to go or stay on **the spies'** mission. The issue was not whether they should or should not possess **the Land**. The will of **YHVH** had already been spoken: **The people** were to go forward. **The spies** were sent to map out the strategy for **Isra'el's** conquest of **the Land**.⁴³

Moses remembered approving the mission, saying: **The idea seemed good to me, only because you demanded it, so I took twelve men from among you – one man for each tribe (1:23)**. This is an interestingly different way of describing the initiative of sending out **the spies** from how it is described in **Numbers**, where it is said to be at the command of **YHVH (Numbers 13:1-3)**. But there is no need to assume that everything **Moshe** interpreted as a word or command from **Ha'Shem** had to come by direct revelation. **The LORD** could speak to him through the ideas and suggestions of others. In a similar way, **1:9-14** describes a proposal that originally came from Jethro as if it were **Moshe's** own idea. It is perfectly natural to envision a suggestion of **the people** being interpreted by **Moses** as the will of **God**, and then the actual command being given by **Moses himself**.⁴⁴

They turned and went up into the hill country, and they came to the beautiful Wadi Eshcol (so named because of the grape-cluster, *eshcol*, which was taken from there) in a fertile valley near Hebron, **and spied it out (1:24)**. **The Land the spies** explored was a striking contrast to the great and terrible **wilderness** through which **they recently** passed (see the commentary on **Numbers Bx - Spying Out the Land**). **The twelve men** explored **the Promised Land** for forty days and returned to the camp with the enthusiastic, unanimous report that everything **YHVH** had said about **it** was accurate. The report shouldn't have surprised anyone because **God's** Word is always true.

They took in their hands some of the fruit of the land and brought it down to us from the mountainous country in the south which they had traveled. **They also brought back word** (Hebrew: *ha-d'varim*, meaning *words, matters, things, commandments, events or reasons*) **to us and** said: **Good is the Land that ADONAI our God is giving to us, it truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit (Deuteronomy 1:25; Numbers 13:26-27)**. **All the spies, even the ten who brought an evil report about the impossibility of conquering the country, spoke well of the Land itself in the presence of**

Moses and the authorities. The report that **the Land is good** is a kind of climax, which confronted **the people** with a decision. This alone would have been enough for the eyes of faith to see. **ADONAI** had not deceived **them**. The evidence lay before **their** eyes. **He** is trustworthy.

It has been said that faith is not believing in spite of the evidence – that’s superstition – but obeying in spite of the circumstances and consequences. How much more evidence did **the people** need that **their God** was able to defeat the enemy, and be with **them** as **they** took possession of **their Land**? Hadn’t **He** defeated and disgraced all the false gods of Egypt, starting with Pharaoh himself, protected **Isra’el**, and provided for **them** on **their** journey through **the wilderness**? **Ha’Shem’s** commandments always provide a way to carry them out. The righteous of the TaNaKh, then, and believers, today, need only trust and obey.

*Dear Mighty **Father God**, How much I love **You**! How wonderful to have **You** by my side, guiding and caring for me. I praise **You** for **Your** faithful steadfast love. Even when life seems full of “giants” about to attack, help me remember that nothing is beyond **Your** mighty power. **You** saw this problem before it happened, and **You** hold the solution in **Your** hand – **For nothing will be impossible with God (Luke 1:37)**. Praise **You** that **Your** love delights in helping **Your** child. I want to serve and worship **You** always. In **Your** holy **Son’s** name and power of resurrection. Amen*