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Moshe Remembered Isra'el's Lack of Faith

1: 26-33

Moshe Remembered Isra'el's lack of faith DIG: To which generation was Moses speaking? But who was he speaking about? What is the point he was trying to get across? Why was this rebellion the most serious and the costliest of all? When faced with the choice between faith and fear, why did they choose fear? How were they stiff-necked? How did the LORD address the real issue? How does he build his case? With what images? Toward what end?

REFLECT: God carried Isra'el as a father carries a son. What do you recall about your father "carrying you?" Did that help or hinder your learning to trust God's love? How so? If you had no such human father, were you able to lean on your heavenly Father? No matter how big our obstacles seem to us, the faith that YHVH is willing to give us is much stronger. When have you found it so?

In spite of the LORD's command that Israel should conquer Canaan, His unconditional divine promise to fulfill the grant of the Land (Genesis 15:18-21), and the recent evidence of the Land's abundance (1:25), Isra'el lacked the faith to move forward.

In recounting the failure of **the Exodus generation** thirty-eight years previous, **Moses** remembered that all agreed **the Land** was **good**, and that **it** had been promised to **the Israelites** by **YHVH**. Nevertheless, **they** failed to act (see the commentary on **Numbers**, to see link click Cc - **The Report of the Spies**). **Three reasons for the people's lack of faith are given:**



First, grumbling rebellion (1:26-27): Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of ADONAI your God (1:26). In your tents you grumbled (1:27a). This tradition of grumbling dates back to their journey from **Egypt** to Mount Sinai (see the commentary on **Exodus Cq - If Only We Had Died by the LORD's Hand in Egypt**). The **grumblers** looked back to **Egypt** with an imagined preference for the conditions of slavery; they looked forward to the **Promised Land** and only saw obstacles. **Stiff-necked** had become **Moshe's** favorite term for **them**, echoing **YHVH's** own opinion (**Exodus 32:9, 33:3, 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6**). But this time there is something of a climax. Of all **their** rebellions this was surely the most serious and the costliest. The bitterness of **their** disobedience is expressed in **their** words in which **they** accused **God** of absurd motives in what **He** had done to **them**.⁴⁵ **Because ADONAI hates us, He has brought us out from the land of Egypt to hand us over to the Amorites, to destroy us (1:27b)! The people's** rebellion had completely perverted **their** understanding of the nature of the **LORD**. They said **ADONAI hates us**, and yet the essence of the covenant was the love of **God**. They said **their God** had only brought **them out from Egypt** only to **hand them over to the Amorites**, but the truth of the **Exodus** was that **YHVH** had brought **them out of Egypt** and would deliver **the Amorites** into **their hands**. They said that **Ha'Shem** wanted to **destroy them**, but the purpose of **ADONAI** was to give **them** life.⁴⁶

Secondly, paralyzing fear (1:28): The people's exclamation: **Where are we going?** Was a cry of despair in the face of promise. **Our brothers (the spies) have discouraged our hearts** saying: **The people living in the Land are greater and their cities are fortified and very large. We even saw the sons of Anak there. We also saw the Nephilim there, and we seemed like grasshoppers in our eyes as well as theirs (Deuteronomy 1:28; Numbers 13:28 and 33)! The Anakites, also called the Nephilim in Numbers, belonged to a race of giants known as the Rephaim (2:10-11 and 21). Og of Bashan, an**

Anakite, had an iron bed that was over thirteen feet long (see [Av - The Conquest of Og](#)). **The Rephaites** and **Anakites** were also found in **Philistia** (see the commentary on [the Life of David Eg - David's Heroes](#)).⁴⁷

The spies had their eyes open. **They** had discovered a number of obstacles which **they** reported to **the people**:

1. **The people living in the Land are powerful (Numbers 13:28a).**
2. **The cities are fortified and very large (Numbers 13:28b).**
3. **They** would encounter people who had previously given **them** problems (**Numbers 13:29**).
4. **They** saw **themselves** as weaker than **their** enemies (**Numbers 13:31**).
5. **They** stressed the negative rather than the positive (**Numbers 13:32**).
6. **They** saw **themselves** as inadequate and perceived that **their** enemies saw **them** in the same light (**Numbers 13:33**).

But there was an oasis of encouragement within this discouraging report. **Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "We should definitely go up and capture the Land, for we can certainly do it (Numbers 13:30)! Isn't it interesting that Caleb and Joshua saw the same Land as the other ten spies, yet they wanted to attack the enemy while the others screamed no? Why the difference? We see things not as they are, but as we are. They were focusing on the problems instead of the possibilities.**

This is what happened with **the spies**. **Ten** saw the barriers; **two** saw the blessings. **Ten** saw giants; **two** saw **ADONAI**. **Ten** saw fortified cities and **their** faith crumbled; **two** possessed faith and saw the fortified cities crumble. **Two** said, "The best is yet to come," **ten** said, "The best is not to come."⁴⁸

Thirdly, stubborn unbelief (1:29-33): In the face of such cowardice **Moses** encouraged **the people** in terms **they** understood, saying: **Don't tremble or be afraid of them (1:29)**. One antidote to **fear** is a good memory. **Moshe** urged **the Israelites** to be unafraid in view of what **they** had already experienced in **their** own recent past. **ADONAI your God, who goes before you, He Himself will fight for you - just as He did for you in Egypt before your own eyes.** Not only did **they** see **His** works in **Egypt, and in the wilderness,**

where you saw how **ADONAI your God carried you as a man carries his son, everywhere you went until you came to this place.** What was the response of **the people** after the many blessings of **Ha’Shem**? Unfortunately, again, the plea fell on deaf ears (and hard hearts). **Moses** summed it up when **he** said: **Yet for all this you did not trust in ADONAI your God (1:30-32).** In spite of such evidence, however, **they** would not move forward in **faith**. And **faith** was no leap in the dark, but a perfectly reasonable step forward with **their** eyes opened wide to what **YHVH** had done in the past and **He** had promised to do in the future.⁴⁹

The Israelites should have been full of confidence because **Ha’Shem is the One who goes before you**, a phrase implying military leadership. **He is ADONAI-Tzva’ot, the LORD of heaven’s angelic armies (Second Kings 19:31; Psalm 24:10; Second Corinthians 6:18), on the way to scout out a place for you to camp and to show you the way you should go, in fire by night and in the cloud by day (1:33).** **Moshe** found out that **YHVH’s** blessings do not automatically produce grateful hearts. As far as **the Israelites** were concerned, the glorious past was immediately negated by the discouraging present. In **their** fears, **they** forgot **ADONAI** and **His** blessings.⁵⁰ **Isra’el’s** refusal in this case was not prudence or realism, but stubborn unbelief that exhausted **ADONAI’s** patience and led to judgment.

It is hard to imagine how **the apple of His eye (32:10)** could have turned against **their LORD**. Yet, we ought to be warned. The stubborn wavering displayed here is not unique to **the generation of the Exodus**. We suffer from the same disease of sin. **James** needed to warn **his** believing readers – who after the crucifixion and resurrection of **the Lord Yeshua Messiah** never had cause to doubt **God’s** love or power – not to hesitate as they approached **ADONAI**. **“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all without hesitation and without reproach; and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without any doubting – for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord – he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:5-8).**⁵¹

Only after **Moshe** interceded for **Isra’el** (see the commentary on **Numbers Cf - The Intercession of Moses**), did **ADONAI** relent from **His anger at the people**. However, the decree had already been made: because of **their** unbelief, **Isra’el’s** entry into **the Promised Land** would be delayed for no less than **40 years** – a year for each day **the spies** were in **the Land** (with two years already served). During this exile, every person 20 years of age and older were destined to die in the wilderness – except for **Joshua** and **Caleb, the**

two **spies** who showed faith in the word of **the LORD**. The other **ten spies** were immediately killed by a **plague** send by **Ha’Shem** (see the commentary on **Numbers Cj - The Death of the Evil Spies**).

*Dear Loving and Gracious Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that No power or enemy is too much for **You**. You never are too busy, or too sick, or too tired to care for each of **Your** children. Bigger than any personal problem is when Satan and all the armies of the world will march out against **You**. Yet it is as nothing to **You**, for **You** defeat them with the sword coming out of your mouth. **Also, I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the One who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and along with him the false prophet who had performed the signs before him by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast, as well as those who had worshiped his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the One riding on the horse. (Revelation 19:19-21a).***

*Help me to keep my eyes on **You** and not on the problem. As I choose to meditate on the many times **You** have shown your gracious love and mighty power, my problem becomes smaller. I will place hard situations into the big and mighty hands of my **Sovereign God** who is more than able to handle it. I love **You, Father**, and delight in pleasing **You**. In the name of **Your** holy **Son** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*