



In the previous chapter we learned how ten elders of the nation were selected, all who were men of reputation, and whose names showed their pedigree and how they had great potential in the things of God. However, when they returned from spying out the land, they came back with a negative report of the land, fearful and faithless, intimidated by the warrior-like nations who were living in the land. The majority, ten out of the twelve decided that the effort to go into the land was not worth it. They showed great lack of leadership, and badly let down their nation themselves and God. However, in the same chapter we read how two of the spies disagreed vehemently,

Joshua and Caleb saying: *Let us go up and once and possess, we are well able to overcome it.* However, the voice of the unbelieving was louder than the voice of the faithful. *We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we... we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.* They were not far wrong there! Isaiah 40:22 *It is he that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in:*

But the same had been called to be Elohim – see Psalm 82:1,6, and rise above the creeping insect like behaviour of natural man. It was a terrible failure. Worse, they then infected the whole congregation with their depression and woe - like a contagion, it swept through the camp, so that the whole camp was wailing and a weeping, no doubt from a distance sounding like the buzz of grasshoppers. Agitated and restless, they wept all night, and complained bitterly if only we had stayed in Egypt, and died there or died in the wilderness, why have we been brought all this way just to die by the sword? They determined to choose a new leader and return to Egypt. Moses and Aaron were horrified, they fell prostrate to the ground, in a silent prayer in front of the camp. Joshua and Caleb protested and appealed and ran among the people telling them the truth, and reminding them of the promise of God, of His protection, there was nothing to fear – verse 9: *only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us:* [a bit like the English idiom – we can have them for breakfast] *their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.*

This was not just an upsetting time for Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb and other faithful Israelites, but also for their God. Isaiah 63:9,10: *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they*

*rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.*

The camp ignored the pleas and urged Joshua and Caleb be stoned. This in itself showed a gross ignorance and bad attitude, as the law had just be given to them whereby the collective punishment of stoning was for blasphemy and idolatry - (Leviticus 20:2,27; 24:23) how could they accuse these faithful men of such crimes – it reminds us of the way faithful Stephen was stoned for his testimony. It was a guilty conscience that caused such anger in the camp, and such a reaction.

God heard such wickedness, and rightfully condemned the people as a nation.- *I will smite them with a pestilence ...* It was within His power to choose an alternative route to fulfil His promises. Instead though He chose to teach a lesson to the people and gave a parable. Moses was the parable. Unwittingly, but because he was a faithful man, so God knew how he would react, Moses prayed fervently to God, seeking mercy for his people and interceding as a Mediator, showing great concern at how the God of Israel would be perceived by the other nations. Moses understood the purpose of God, how that His majesty and glory should be manifest to all the world through a multitude of people, but how could this be, if God destroyed the very people He had chosen, the nations would not think much of this God, who couldn't even manage to rescue His own people.

Moses was in this way acting as a type of Christ, an Advocate for his people, and that God would indeed turn away from His people, but would certainly rescue them, and bring them into the Promised land where they would stay for ever, and He would do so in a far more dramatic style than in any way the nations would ever imagine.

Moses in acting as a Mediator between God and man, calls upon the glorious character of the Mighty One: 18: *The Lord is longsuffering,*

*and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.*

As God of forgiveness, would He not forgive for His own Names sake?

*20 & 21 And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.*

God vowed that justice would be done. Justice is also part of His Holy Name. His purpose would also be harmed if justice were not performed, and sin condemned. God therefore condemned those who had seen His glory and His miracles , and who had tempted Him 10 times.

They had tempted him by not believing and

1. being frightened of the Egyptian army
2. complaining about lack of drinking water
3. about lack of food
4. storing up manna to breed maggots
5. complaining about lack of drinking water again
6. worshipping the golden calf
7. offering strange fire
8. complaining about hardships along the way
9. complaining about lack of meat
10. and now frightened of a few giants

Because of this, the generation guilty of such continual faithlessness would not live to see the Promised land, but with two exceptions: Joshua and Caleb, they would all wander around the wilderness until they died as nomads, but God would allow their children – who had no voice and no choice in the cowardice of their parents would be allowed to enter in.

So for each day that they searched out the land, and decided to ignore its beauty and promise, they would wander for a year in the wilderness to think upon their stupidity, and maybe they would repent of their wickedness.

This verse 34 is another example of where God's prophetic timespan is illustrated. Some call it inaccurately a day-for-a-year principle. But it is a useful passage to remember along with: Ezekiel 4:5-6; Genesis 29:27; Daniel 9:24-27.

Thus 40 became a time of probation for the whole congregation. 40 is often associated with a time of trial, and judgement –The first 40 years of Moses' life he was growing up in Pharaoh's household, a testing time then in the backside of the desert for 40 years. He knew what 40 years was like! The rain of the flood lasted 40 days. Judges Othniel, Deborah and Barak, Eli and Gideon, Saul, David and Solomon all judged for 40 years. Elijah went without food for 40 days, and so of course did the Lord Jesus Christ endure temptation in the wilderness for 40 days.

40 years is the equivalent to the adult lifetime in a position of health and strength. How do we compare in our time of probation?

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