

3/5/89

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NUMBERS  
"Discouraged and Rebellious"  
Numbers 14:1-10

LOOK BACK

1. At chapter 9--Promise of direction with cloud by day; fire by night.
2. At chapter 10--Promise of direction with trumpets; error with Hobab, expectation of Lord's help.
3. At chapter 11--Complaint (general) complaint (specific--food) complaint (personal--Moses).
4. At chapter 12--Complaint about Moses' authority.
5. At chapter 13--Complaint of spies about the promised land.

Camp of Israel full of negative attitude.

LOOK NOW

1. AT THE PEOPLE (congregation) vv. 1-4

- a. Their mood (vv. 1, 2)

Four verbs describe the whole congregation:

- 1) Lift up. This shows personal involvement and expression.
- 2) Give forth. This verb is linked with the noun for voice together. The thought is: to give forth the voice in crying (cf. Gen. 45:2).
- 3) Wept. This is the common verb for weep. Its root is to distil or drop, hence with tears. This was done all night long.
- 4) Murmur. This verb is used in modern Hebrew "to spend the night." Derivatively it means to be stubborn, to show oneself obstinate (cf. v. 29).

- b. Their request v. 2b

Twice a wish or desire is expressed in this verse. In both instances Egypt and the wilderness are declared to be good burial places--better than to live in the land! This is utterly incredible, but consistent with unbelief.

- c. Their complaint v. 3

In view of the majority report (13:26-29) the congregation could only view defeat by the inhabitants of the land. This meant death by the sword (war) and women and children carried off as booty. Word used for children means little ones so called because of their quick and tripping gait. They felt it better to return to Egypt. How quickly the pain of Egypt is forgotten.

- d. Their plan v. 4

Rather than accepting the Lord as Head, the people decided to choose one (obviously other than the Lord (or Moses)). Captain is "head" in Hebrew. Back to

Egypt was their cry. Incredible for that is diametrically opposed to God (Deut. 17:16) and His purpose (Hosea 11:5).

2. AT THE LEADERSHIP vv. 5-9

a. Their identification

1) Moses/Aaron v. 5. This was not to plead for their lives or position, but at the sacrilegious blasphemy of the people. Here it is also an expression of awe, worship, and possible judgment from God (cf. Gen. 17:3; Lev. 9:24; Num. 16:4, 22, 45; 20:6).

2) Caleb/Joshua v. 6. The rending of clothes is a gesture of deep distress (cf. Gen. 37:29, 34; Lev. 13:45) and is associated with mourning for the dead (Jud. 11:35), a possible hint of subsequent events! This is also Joshua's first public association with Caleb's report.

b. Their exhortation vv. 7-9

1) To re-consider the land vv. 7, 8. Remarkably, they say the land is an "exceedingly (double use of adverb meaning "mightily") good" one. It also flows (i.e. affluence, abundance) with milk and honey.

2) To re-consider the Lord v. 8. The real issue is not the inhabitants of the land etc., but their own relationship with the Lord. He delights (favorably disposed) to obedience! Assuming the Lord is with Israel, He will bring the people into the land--period! That is faith on God's given promise.

3) To re-consider their attitude v. 9. 1) About the Lord. Disobedience is actually rebellion against God. Moreover explicitly it is recorded that Jehovah God is with them! 2) About the inhabitants of the land. Twice the exhortation is: do not fear. Two reasons are given: a) They are bread to Israel (i.e. we can swallow them up). b) They have lost their defence (Hebrew is shadow, a figure of speech for protection). Today we would say: it's apple pie to conquer the land!

LOOK AHEAD 1. At the congregation v. 10. They act against the leadership, not as a mob lynching group, but giving appropriate penalty for false witnessing. Stoning was for major crimes (Lev. 20:2, 27; 24:15-16, 23; Num. 15:36; Deut. 13:13; 21:21; 22:1, 24). 2. At the Lord v. 10. He appears in glory over the tabernacle. This is His visible Presence (cf. Ex. 16:10; 24:16-18). God will have the last word.