

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel; of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them (i.e., a blue ribbon panel, indeed; every one being the cream of the crop of the tribe sending him). And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran; all those men were heads of the children of Israel.” Num. 13:1-3. (We may be sure, Beloved, that each of these twelve choice delegates was a notable political, religious, military, and civic leader among the tribes.) “And these were their names: of the tribe of Reuben, SHAMMU’A the son of Zaccur. Of the tribe of Simeon, SHAPHAT the son of Hori. Of the tribe of Judah, CALEB the son of Jephunneh. Of the tribe of Issachar, IGAL the son of Joseph. Of the tribe of Ephraim, JOSHUA the son of Nun. Of the tribe of Benjamin, PALTI the son of Raphu. Of the tribe of Zebulun, GADDIEL the son of Sodi. Of the tribe of Joseph, namely of the tribe of Manasseh, GADDI the son of Susi. Of the tribe of Dan, AMMIEL the son of Gamalli. Of the tribe of Asher, SETHUR the son of Michael. Of the tribe of Naphtali, NAHBI the son of Vophsi. Of the tribe of Gad, GEUEL the son of Machi.” Numbers 3:4-15.

Quite an imposing delegation, with no less an assignment than to pass judgment on the merits and/or demerits of God’s Heaven itself, and on the desirability and/or undesirability of God’s prescribed terms and conditions of employment in serving the King here below. Because, Canaan stands for two things in the Scriptures; to wit: Canaan is a type of Heaven, and Canaan is a type of the believer’s walk with God in this life.

Sometimes in song and sermon the two types are mixed. E.g., “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks I Stand.” And, “Beulah Land,” or, “I’ve Reached the Land of Corn and Wine.” And, “Angel Band;” to wit: (1) *“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand, And cast a wishful eye, to Canaan’s fair and happy land, where my possessions lie. Oh, the transporting, rapt’rous scene, That rises to my sight! Sweet fields arrayed in living green, and rivers of delight! There gen’rous fruits that never fail, On trees immortal grow; There rocks and hills, and brooks and vales, With milk and honey flow. All o’er those wide, extended plains shines one eternal day; There God the Son forever reigns, and scatters night away. No chilling winds or pois’nous breath, can reach that healthful shore; Sicknes and sorrow, pain and death, are felt and feared no more. When shall I reach that happy place, and be forever blest? When shall I see my Father’s face, and in his bosom rest? Filled with delight, my raptured soul can here no longer stay; Though Jordan’s waves around me roll, Fearless I’ll launch away.”*

(2) *“I’ve reached the land of corn and wine, and all its riches freely mine; Here shines undimmed one blissful day, For all my night has passed away. O Beulah Land, Sweet Beulah Land! As on thy highest mount I stand, I look away across the sea, Where mansions are prepared for me, And view the shining glory shore – My heav’n, my home, forever more! My Savior comes and walks with me, And sweet communion here have we; He gently leads me by his hand, for this is Heaven’s BORDERLAND. A sweet perfume upon the breeze, is borne from ever-vernal trees; and flow’rs that never fading grow, where streams of life forever flow. The zephyrs seem to float to me, Sweet sounds of Heaven’s melody, as angels with the white-robed throng, Join in the sweet redemption song. O Beulah Land, Sweet Beulah Land! As on thy highest mount I stand, I look away across the sea, where mansions are prepared for me, and view the shining glory shore – my heav’n, my home forever more.”*

(3) *“My latest sun is sinking fast, My race is nearly run. My strongest trials now are past; my triumph is begun. O, Come, angel band. Come and around me stand. O, Bear me away on your snowy wings, to my immortal home, O, Bear me away on your snowy wings, to my immortal home. I know I’m near the holy ranks, of friends and kindred dear; I brush the dew on JORDAN’S BANKS. The CROSSING must be near. O, Come, angel band, Come and around me stand. O, Bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home. O, Bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home.”*

Hence you see how vital, how important, the mission of Israel’s brightest and best was, who were sent to spy out Canaan, the Promised Land – and to render a full and accurate report of the glories of the place in light of the ancient promises of God to Israel. For centuries the Lord God had been promising Israel that He would lead them out of Egypt and into Canaan, the Land *“flowing with milk and honey”* (which means that the Land would be beautiful, bountiful and productive above all other lands on Earth); to wit:

“And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the Lord your God; In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into A LAND THAT I HAD ESPIED FOR THEM, FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY, WHICH IS THE GLORY OF ALL LANDS.” (Ezek. 20:5,6)

“The glory of all lands,” indeed. To wit: *“And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.”* Ex. 3:7,8. To wit:

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it; And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; UNTO A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY.” (Ex. 33:1-3)

With the unconditional promises of God to give the land of Canaan to Israel, the mission of the Twelve was only to search out the best route, and the most vulnerable cities to attack first – NOT TO DECIDE THE FEASIBILITY OF THE ENTERPRISE ! How carefully the Twelve were chosen and identified; to wit: *“These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.”* Num. 13:16.

Gill: *“‘Send thou men,’ etc. Which is rather a permission than a command. So, Jarchi interprets it, Send men according to thy mind. I do not command thee, but if thou pleaseth, send. This, he observed, was agreeable to Moses, and to the Israelites, and therefore granted it, or ALLOWED THEM TO TAKE THEIR OWN WAY, which issued badly, as it always does, when men are left to their own counsel; ‘that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel;’ (Num. 13:2.) Called the Land of Canaan, though it consisted of seven nations, from Canaan being the largest of them; which God had given in promise to the children of Israel, and had now brought them to the borders of it; nay, had given them orders to go up straitway and possess it; BUT THEY WERE FOR SEARCHING IT FIRST, to know what sort of land it was, and which was the best way for entering into it, which is here permitted them, see, Deut. 1:18-23;”* to wit:

“And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do. And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-Barnea. And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged. AND YE CAME NEAR UNTO ME EVERY ONE OF YOU, AND SAID, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again BY WHAT WAY WE MUST GO UP, and, INTO WHAT CITIES WE SHALL COME. And the saying pleased me well; and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe.” (Deut. 1:18-23)

Beloved, beginning with this awkward prelude, there follows one of the truly saddest episodes in human history. Although several sins of the flesh and spirit are implicated, and some unique sins such as rebellion against the Lord’s commands, bringing a slander upon the good land, filing an evil report regarding their spying mission, the sin of rabid unbelief of the promises of God, etc., the sin that stands out in bold colors throughout the episode is the sin of rampant murmuring against the dear Lord and His servants. Also, the heinousness of the sin may also be measured by the severity of the punishment; to wit:

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which MURMUR against me? I have heard the MURMURINGS of the children of Israel, which they MURMUR against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. YOUR CARCASSES SHALL FALL IN THIS WILDERNESS; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, WHICH HAVE MURMURED AGAINST ME, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye despised. But as for you, Your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me; In this wilderness they shall be consumed; and there they shall die. And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned and made all the congregation to MURMUR against him, by bringing up a SLANDER upon the land, Even those men that did bring up the EVIL REPORT upon the land, died by the PLAGUE before the Lord.” (Num. 14:26-37)

The thing that seemed to enrage the Lord most seems to have been the dramatic confrontation between Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb (four men on one side and the ten popular, rebellious spies on the other side) – and with the whole cowardly congregation joining in – upon return of the spies from spying out the land of Canaan; to wit: ***“And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and SURELY IT FLOWETH WITH MILK AND HONEY; and this is the fruit of it. (Huge grapes, pomegranates, and figs.) NEVERTHELESS, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very***

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great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south; and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. (By this time the people were fit to be tied, by the words, demeanor, and body language of the ten cowardly spies, all apparently speaking more or less at the same time and in manifest fear and trembling.)” Num. 13:25-29.

At this point Caleb jumped into the fray and *“stilled the people,”* whom The Wicked Ten had terrorized by bringing up an *“evil report, and slander”* upon the blessed land of Promise; to wit: *“and Caleb said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for WE ARE WELL ABLE to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, WE BE NOT ABLE to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land.”* Num. 13:30-32.

Beloved. Herein lies the conflict of the ages, involving every child of Adam, including all those sitting before me and listening to me on the Internet; to wit: The believer, who is bound for the Promised Land; and the unbeliever, who is bound for the eternal wilderness. Heaven vs. Hell. Listen to the weeping, Hell-bound, Murmurers; to wit:

***“And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel MURMURED against Moses and against Aaron; And the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or, would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their cloths; And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it, is AN EXCEEDING GOOD LAND. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; A LAND WHICH FLOWETH WITH MILK AND HONEY. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shown among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them.”* (Num. 14:1-12)**

Beloved. In the dark catalogue of the sins of the righteous – which imperil our fellowship with our Father – MURMURING stands at the head of the list. It attacks the love of God, the sovereignty of God, and the grand doctrine of predestination.

Further, it dries up the wellspring of thanksgiving, worship and praise – which ultimately destroys all peace and joy in the Lord.

***“But with many of them God was not well pleased... they were overthrown in the wilderness. Neither MURMUR ye, as some MURMURED, and were destroyed of the destroyer.”* (1 Cor. 10:5-10)**

I love you.

Amen.