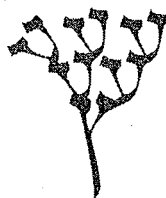


עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



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²⁵At the end of forty days they returned from scouting the land. ²⁶They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran, and they made their report to them and to the whole community, as they showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷This is what they told him: "We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸However, the people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the Anakites there. ²⁹Amalekites dwell in the Negeb region; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites inhabit the hill country; and Canaanites dwell by the Sea and along the Jordan."

³⁰Caleb hushed the people before Moses and

וַיָּשׁוּבוּ מִתּוֹר הָאָרֶץ מִקֶּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם: ²⁵
וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-
כָּל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-מִדְבַּר פָּאֵרָן
קְדָשָׁה וַיֹּשִׁיבוּ אֹתָם דְּבַר וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵדָה
וַיִּרְאוּם אֶת-פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ: ²⁷ וַיִּסְפְּרוּ-לוֹ
וַיֹּאמְרוּ בָּאנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּנוּ
וְגַם זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ הִוא וְזֶה-פְרִיָהּ:
²⁸ אֲפֶס כִּי-עַז הָעֵם הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ וְהָעָרִים
בְּצֻרוֹת גְּדֹלֹת מְאֹד וְגַם-יְלָדֵי הָעֵנָק רָאִינוּ
שָׁם: ²⁹ עַמְלָק יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב וְהַחִתִּי
וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּהָר וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי
יוֹשֵׁב עַל-הַיָּם וְעַל יַד הַיַּרְדֵּן:
³⁰ וַיִּהְיֶה כָּלֵב אֶת-הָעָם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר

THE REPORT (vv. 25–33)

26. Kadesh The site is identified with a group of oases 50 miles (80 km) south of Beer-sheba, one of which still bears the name 'Ain Qadesh.

27–28. him That is, Moses. The prior verse tells us that a report was made to Moses and to the entire community. This indicates the possibility of different traditions.

flow with milk and honey Literally, "ooze with . . ." This is the traditional phrase for the fruitfulness of the Promised Land.

fortified The walls of ancient Canaanite cities were 30 to 50 feet (9 to 15 m) high, and sometimes 15 feet (4.5 m) thick.

29. Amalekites A nomadic tribe whose domain extended from the Negeb of Judah into the Sinai Peninsula, virtually the same sweep as Israel's wilderness trek.

Hittites The non-Semitic Hittite Empire of Anatolia (located in Asia Minor, in present-day Turkey) was destroyed around 1200 B.C.E. The Hittite language and culture, carried by Hittite enclaves, persisted in northern Syria for another 500 years. Although there is no evidence of such enclaves in Canaan, Hittite refugees may have entered Canaan from the north.

Jebusites This term appears in biblical narrative from the time of the conquest of Canaan. The Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem when King David conquered it (2 Sam. 5:6).

Amorites In ancient Akkadian, "amurru" means "west"; the term was used in Mesopotamian

cuneiform sources as early as the second half of the 3rd millennium to designate Semitic herdsmen and their territory in the Syrian steppe west of the Euphrates. In the Bible, "Amorite" occurs only as an ethnic label and does not refer to the Amurru kingdom, which disappeared around 1200 B.C.E. Sometimes the term is used as an alternative for "Canaanite," referring to all inhabitants west of the Jordan.

Canaanites Canaan was Egypt's Asian province, ruled by Egyptian governors and local princes. Its boundaries matched closely those of the Promised Land (34:1–12). In a number of biblical passages, the name "Canaanite" refers to a merchant class (Isa. 23:8; Ezek. 17:4; Prov. 31:24). Its equivalent in ancient Akkadian, *kinahhu*, also means "red-purple." The dye that served as the source of that much-desired color was extracted from sea creatures along the eastern Mediterranean and was handled exclusively by Canaanite (*kinahhu*) merchants, who came to be named after their product. (The Greek word "Phoenician" has the same link between the red-purple dye and the people.)

Negeb . . . hill country . . . Sea . . . Jordan These areas correspond to the four major geographic divisions of the Promised Land: the southern wilderness; the central mountain chain above it from Beer-sheba northward and the plains on either side; the sea coast; and the Jordan rift (the steep valley to the west and to the east of the Jordan River).

said, "Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it."

³¹But the men who had gone up with him said, "We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we." ³²Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land they had scouted, saying, "The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers. All the people that we saw in it are men of great size; ³³we saw the Nephilim there—the Anakites are part of the Nephilim—and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them."

עֲלֵה נַעֲלָה וַיִּרְשְׁנוּ אֹתָהּ כִּי־יָכוֹל נוֹכַל לָהּ:

³¹וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נוֹכַל לַעֲלוֹת אֶל־הָעָם כִּי־חֹזֶק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ: ³²וַיּוֹצִיאוּ דְבַת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ אֶרֶץ אֲכָלֹת יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ הוּא וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אֲנָשֵׁי מְדוֹת: ³³וַשָּׁם רָאִינוּ אֶת־הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֶנֶק מִן־הַנְּפִילִים וַנִּהְיֶה בְּעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְגָּבִים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם:

14 The whole community broke into loud

וַתִּשָּׂא כָל־הָעֵדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת־קוֹלָם יד

30. Caleb does not contradict the content of the other scouts' reports, only their conclusions.

before Moses The negative report of verses 28–29 probably set off an audible murmuring, which Caleb and, presumably, Moses, tried to quell.

32. among the Israelites The scouts appear to have bypassed Moses and Aaron (v. 26) to spread their calumnies (vv. 32–33) directly among the people.

devours its settlers The nature of the Land is such that it will keep its inhabitants at war perpetually. It may also refer to the difficulty of finding enough food, especially in the Negeb, during years of drought.

33. Nephilim Literally, "fallen ones." The ancient Greek translation reads "giants." See Gen. 6:4, where they are the products of marriages between divine beings and mortal women, possibly superhuman creatures. In the scouts' first report they are called Anakites (v. 28). Their identification with Anakites could have only one purpose—to instill even greater fear in the hearts of the people, because to the stature and strength of the Anakites is now added the dimension of the earliest giants.

grasshoppers The smallest edible creature (Lev. 11:22), a hint that this land that "devours its settlers" would easily devour the Israelites.

31. We cannot attack The verb used here for "attack" (*la-alot*) also means "to go up." Thus the scouts are pictured as saying, "We cannot rise to the occasion." The problem is not with the Canaanite fortifications but with ourselves (Arama).

it is stronger than we The word translated as "than we" (*mi-mennu*) can also be read as "than Him," namely, God. Their lack of faith in themselves came to include a lack of faith in God's power to bring them to victory (BT Sot. 35a).

33. we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves Conveys the essence of the scouts' failure. The problem was that the Israelites did

not believe in themselves. They had no way of knowing what the inhabitants of the Land thought of them. Indeed, we learn from chapter 22 that the Moabites were terrified of the Israelites, and from Joshua 2 (see the *haftarah*) that the inhabitants of Jericho were equally afraid to confront them. Because the Israelites saw themselves as "grasshoppers," weak and ineffectual, they assumed that others saw them the same way.

so we must have looked to them God's response: Why are you so concerned about how you look in the eyes of the Canaanites, to the point that it distracts you from your sacred task? (Menaḥem Mendel of Kotzk).

cries, and the people wept that night. ²All the Israelites railed against Moses and Aaron. "If only we had died in the land of Egypt," the whole community shouted at them, "or if only we might die in this wilderness! ³Why is the LORD taking us to that land to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be carried off! It would be better for us to go back to Egypt!" ⁴And they said to one another, "Let us head back for Egypt."

⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembled congregation of the Israelites. ⁶And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, of those who had scouted the land, rent their clothes ⁷and exhorted the whole Israelite community: "The land that we traversed and scouted is an exceedingly good land. ⁸If the LORD is pleased with us, He will bring us into that land, a land that flows with milk and honey, and give it to us; ⁹only you must not rebel against the LORD. Have no fear then of the people of the country, for they are our prey:

THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE (14:1-5)

3. back to Egypt They now wish to return to bondage willingly in the country where they had been forced into slavery.

4. Let us head Hebrew: *nitnah rosh*; literally, "let's set the head." The phrase can mean "set the mind, decide" or "appoint." Here it could mean "appoint a leader," implying a complete break with Moses and God. New leadership would be required if the defecting militia were to succeed.

5. fell on their faces To propitiate the people or as an act of helplessness and despair.

THE RESPONSE OF JOSHUA AND CALEB (vv. 6-10)

6. of those who had scouted the land This ex-

ויִבְכוּ הָעָם בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא: ² וַיִּלְנוּ עַל-
מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ
אֲלֵהֶם כָּל-הָעֵדָה לוֹ-מִתְנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
אוּ בַמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה לוֹ-מִתְנוּ: ³ וְלָמָּה יְהוָה
מְבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנַפֵּל
בְּחָרֹב נַשִּׁינוּ וּטְפָנוּ יְהִיו לָבוֹז הַלֹּא טוֹב
לָנוּ שׁוּב מִצְרַיִמָּה: ⁴ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-
אָחִיו נַתְנֶה רֹאשׁ וְנִשְׁוָבָה מִצְרַיִמָּה:
⁵ וַיִּפְּלוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם לִפְנֵי
כָּל-קְהַל עֵדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ⁶ וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ
בֶּן-נּוּן וְכָלֵב בֶּן-יִפְנֶה מִן-הַתָּרִים אֶת-
הָאָרֶץ קָרְעוּ בְּגָדֵיהֶם: ⁷ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-כָּל-
עֵדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
עָבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֶתְּהָ טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ מְאֹד
מְאֹד: ⁸ אִם-חָפֵץ בָּנוּ יְהוָה וְהִבִּיא אֹתָנוּ
אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְנִתְּנָה לָנוּ אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-
הוּא זֹבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ: ⁹ אַךְ בִּיהוָה אֶל-
תִּמְרְדוּ וְאַתֶּם אֶל-תִּירְאוּ אֶת-עַם הָאָרֶץ

planation is needed either because Joshua has not yet been introduced into the dialogue, or simply to indicate that the other spies did not rend their clothes.

rent their clothes Out of grief and distress over the humiliation heaped on Moses and particularly because of the implied rebellion against God.

7. good In answer to Moses' query concerning the Land (13:19) and in contrast to the "good" of returning to Egypt ("it would be better for us," v. 3).

9. prey Literally, "food" or "bread." To eat prey means to conquer.

protection Hebrew: *tsel* (literally, "shade"), an appropriate term for those who live under a

CHAPTER 14

2. If only we had died A sense of helplessness, a feeling of inadequacy, and inability to deal with one's problems can lead to a person's giving up on life and wishing for death. In contrast, a sense of hope in the possibility of a brighter future, a belief that God can help us to

do what we find hard to do unaided, can banish that sense of futility and restore the will to live.

6-10. Joshua and Caleb risk their lives by acting with integrity and standing up to a misguided majority. In the end, it is the majority who will die in the wilderness and the people of integrity and courage who will survive to see their dreams realized.

their protection has departed from them, but the LORD is with us. Have no fear of them!"¹⁰ As the whole community threatened to pelt them with stones, the Presence of the LORD appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites.

¹¹And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me, and how long will they have no faith in Me despite all the signs that I have performed in their midst? ¹²I will strike them with pestilence and disown them, and I will make of you a nation far more numerous than they!" ¹³But Moses said to the LORD, "When the Egyptians, from whose midst You brought up this people in Your might, hear the news, ¹⁴they will tell it to the inhabitants of that land. Now they have heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people; that You, O LORD, appear in plain sight when Your cloud rests over them and when You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵If then You slay this people to a man, the nations who have heard Your fame will say, ¹⁶'It must be because the LORD was powerless to bring that people into the land He had promised them on oath that He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' ¹⁷Therefore, I pray, let my Lord's forbearance be great, as You have declared, say-

Mediterranean sun. Here it is a metaphor for divine protection.

10. them That is, Moses and Aaron.

Presence Hebrew: *kavod*, the cloud-encased fire that descended over the tabernacle. God descends to speak to Moses and to deter Israel from attacking Moses and Aaron. While God appears to the Israelites in the tabernacle courtyard, Moses enters the tent to hear God's command.

GOD'S RESPONSE (vv. 11-38)

12. God's initial reaction was virtually identical at the apostasy of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32:10).

disown Israel will no longer be God's inheritance (Deut. 32:9).

far more numerous Literally, "greater and mightier than," in a physical sense.

13-19. Moses intercedes. How is God to

כִּי לְחַמְנוּ הֵם סָר צֶלֶם מַעֲלֵיהֶם וַיְהִי הָאֱלֹהִים אֲתָנוּ אֶל-תִּירָאִים: ¹⁰ וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל-הָעֵדָה לְרִגּוֹם אֹתָם בְּאֲבָנִים וַיְכַבֹּד יְהוָה נִרְאָה בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד אֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ¹¹ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה עַד-אָנָּה יִנְאַצְנִי הָעָם הַזֶּה וְעַד-אָנָּה לֹא-יֵאֱמִינּוּ בִּי בְּכָל-הָאֲתוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ: ¹² אֲכַנּוּ בְּדַבָּר וְאוֹרְשָׁנוּ וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אִתְּךָ לְגוֹי-גְדוֹל וְעַצוֹם מִמֶּנּוּ: ¹³ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה וּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי-הֵעֵלִיתָ בְּכַחֲךָ אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה מִקִּרְבּוֹ: ¹⁴ וַאֲמָרוּ אֶל-יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲאֵרָץ הַזֹּאת שָׁמְעוּ כִּי-אֲתָהּ יְהוָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ הָעָם הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה אֲשֶׁר-עֵינֶיךָ בָּעֵינֶיךָ נִרְאָה אֲתָהּ יְהוָה וְעַתָּה עִמָּד עֲלֵהֶם וּבְעַמֵּד עִנּוּ אֲתָהּ הַלָּךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם וּבְעַמִּוֹד אֵשׁ לַיְלָה: ¹⁵ וְהִמַּתָּה אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד וַאֲמָרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-שְׁמִיעֶךָ לֵאמֹר: ¹⁶ מִבְּלַתִּי יִכְלַת יְהוָה לְהַבִּיאַת אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל-הָאֵרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם וַיִּשְׁחָטֵם בַּמִּדְבָּר: ¹⁷ וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל-נָא* כֹּחַ אֲדֹנָי כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר:

v. 17. * רבתי לפי מהדורת לעטעריס

punish Israel and yet maintain a reputation of power in the world?

the nations That is, Egypt and Canaan.

promised them on oath The oath is recorded as given to Abraham (Gen. 15:18, 22:16, 26:3) but not to the generation of the Exodus. The original oath, however, must be assumed in God's promises of fulfillment (Exod. 3:8,17). God's promise is equivalent to a new oath.

forbearance Hebrew: *ko-ah*; literally, "strength." It denotes the strength to hold back from destroying the people Israel.

great In response to the Lord's wish to make Moses great (v. 12), Moses asks God to make divine forbearance great.

not remitting all punishment This means, "will definitely not acquit [the guilty]."

children All the ancient Aramaic versions understand this as "rebellious children."

ing, ¹⁸The LORD! slow to anger and abounding in kindness; forgiving iniquity and transgression; yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children, upon the third and fourth generations.' ¹⁹Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt."

²⁰And the LORD said, "I pardon, as you have asked. ²¹Nevertheless, as I live and as the LORD's Presence fills the whole world, ²²none of the men who have seen My Presence and the signs that I have performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, and who have tried Me these many times and have disobeyed Me, ²³shall see the land that I promised on oath to their fathers; none of those who spurn Me shall see it. ²⁴But My servant Caleb, because he was imbued with a different spirit and remained loyal to Me—him will I bring into the land that he entered, and his offspring shall hold it as a possession. ²⁵Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites occupy the valleys. Start out, then, tomorrow and march into the wilderness by way of the Sea of Reeds."

²⁶The LORD spoke further to Moses and Aaron, ²⁷"How much longer shall that wicked

¹⁸ יְהוָה אֶרְךָ אַפִּים וְרַב־חֶסֶד נִשְׂא עֵוֹן וּפָשַׁע וְנִקָּה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד עֵוֹן אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים עַל־שְׁלִשִׁים וְעַל־רַבְעִים: ¹⁹ סִלַּח־נָא לְעֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כַּגְּדֹל חַסְדְּךָ וּכְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאתָה לְעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד־הַנֶּה: ²⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה סִלַּחְתִּי כַּדְבַרְךָ: ²¹ וְאוֹלָם חִי־אֲנִי וַיִּמְלֹא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: ²² כִּי כָל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרְאִים אֶת־כְּבוֹדִי וְאֶת־אֲתֹתַי אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וּבַמִּדְבָּר וַיִּנְסּוּ אֹתִי זֶה עֲשָׂר פְּעָמִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי: ²³ אִם־יִרְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבוֹתָם וְכָל־מִנְאֲצֵי לֹא יִרְאוּהָ: ²⁴ וְעַבְדִּי כָלֵב עֶקֶב הִיִּתָּה רוּחַ אַחֲרָת עִמּוֹ וַיִּמְלֹא אַחֲרָי וְהִבִּיאֹתִי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרַךְ שְׁמִי וְזִרְעוּ יוֹרְשֶׁנָּה: ²⁵ וְהָעַמְּלָקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּעֵמֶק מְחֹר פָּנָיו וְסָעוּ לָכֶם הַמִּדְבָּר הַרְרָה יַם־סוּף: פ ²⁶ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ²⁷ עַד־מַתַּי לְעֵדָה הָרַעָה הַזֹּאת

²⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה סִלַּחְתִּי כַּדְבַרְךָ: ²¹ וְאוֹלָם חִי־אֲנִי וַיִּמְלֹא כְבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: ²² כִּי כָל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרְאִים אֶת־כְּבוֹדִי וְאֶת־אֲתֹתַי אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וּבַמִּדְבָּר וַיִּנְסּוּ אֹתִי זֶה עֲשָׂר פְּעָמִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי: ²³ אִם־יִרְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבוֹתָם וְכָל־מִנְאֲצֵי לֹא יִרְאוּהָ: ²⁴ וְעַבְדִּי כָלֵב עֶקֶב הִיִּתָּה רוּחַ אַחֲרָת עִמּוֹ וַיִּמְלֹא אַחֲרָי וְהִבִּיאֹתִי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרַךְ שְׁמִי וְזִרְעוּ יוֹרְשֶׁנָּה: ²⁵ וְהָעַמְּלָקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּעֵמֶק מְחֹר פָּנָיו וְסָעוּ לָכֶם הַמִּדְבָּר הַרְרָה יַם־סוּף: פ ²⁶ וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר: ²⁷ עַד־מַתַּי לְעֵדָה הָרַעָה הַזֹּאת

19. Pardon Hebrew: *salah*, used only of the deity; it means "forgiveness of offenses against God."

21. as I live Human beings swear by God; because there is no superior entity, this vow is sworn by God's own "life" (essence or being).

fills the whole world God has the power to fulfill this oath.

24. Caleb will be granted the right to enter the land he scouted (13:22) and to bequeath it to his children as their inheritance.

25. Amalekites . . . Canaanites The scouts frightened Israel by mentioning these nations, which posed no threat. Now that Israel has spurned God, they will indeed become a threat.

occupy the valleys The Canaanites are located along the sea, and the Amalekites in the Negeb. All the entrances are blocked.

26. Aaron and the Levites are also exempt from God's oath of retribution because the tribe of Levi was not represented among the scouts.

27. wicked community The scouts.

22-23. Why does God, who forgave Israel for the Golden Calf and other acts of faithlessness, condemn to death an entire generation for this offense? God is prepared to forgive such slights against Heaven, but not sins against the idea of the Jewish people as the people of God (Spektor).

27. community Hebrew: *edah*, used here for a group numbering exactly 10, the scouts who offered a negative report. Jewish law used this as the source for the ruling that 10 is the minimum number of adults required for a group to be counted as a community, a *minyan*.