

מקראות גדולות

The
COMMENTATORS'
BIBLE

THE JPS MIQRA'OT GEDOLOT

NUMBERS במדבר

*With the 1917 and 1985 English translations of
the Jewish Publication Society TANAKH, the questions of Abarbanel,
the commentaries of Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and Nahmanides,
and selections from the Masorah and from the commentaries of
Bekhor Shor, Kimhi, Hizkuni, Gersonides, Abarbanel, and Sforno*

Edited, translated, and annotated by

MICHAEL CARASIK



2011 • 5771

NJPS frame by two of them—and some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴That place was named the wadi Eshcol because of the cluster that the Israelites cut down there.

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

RASHI saying is, "it had to be borne on a carrying frame—on two frames!" It took 10 of them to bring back this fruit—two on each pole of each frame, making eight; one carried a pomegranate; and one carried a fig. Joshua and Caleb carried nothing, since the others' whole point was to show that the fruit was so bizarrely huge that the inhabitants must be huge also. If you want to know how much weight each man carried, learn it from the stones that were set up at Gilgal, where Joshua told 12 men, one from each tribe, "Walk up to the Ark of the LORD your

God, in the middle of the Jordan, and each of you lift a stone onto his shoulder" (Josh. 4:5). Some of the Sages actually weighed those stones and found they weighed 40 seahs each—and the tradition given there is that a man can carry three times as much weight on his shoulder (if someone else puts it there) as he himself can lift. [B]

²⁵ **At the end of forty days they returned from scouting the land.** But the land measures 400 leagues on a side, and an average man can walk only 10 leagues in a day. So it would take 40 days just to walk the land from east to west. But they walked its whole length and breadth. The Holy One, however—knowing that He would decree a delay of one year for every day they spent scouting—miraculously shortened the journey for them.

²⁶ **They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community.** Literally, "they went and came." Just as they came back plotting, so too they had been plotting for the whole trip. **They made their report to them.** To Moses and Aaron.

²⁷ **It does indeed flow with milk and honey.** A lie that does not begin with a little bit of truth will never stand up.

²⁸ **Fortified.** "Fortified" perfectly captures the nuance of the Hebrew word, which implies "strength" but is translated by Onkelos with a word meaning "rounded citadels."

[B] See B. Sotah 34a. A seah is a measure of volume; 40 seahs of wheat (which is presumably what they meant) would be somewhere in the range of 10–15 bushels. A bushel of wheat nowadays weighs about 60 pounds.

NAHMANIDES ²⁷ **It does indeed flow with milk and honey.** This answers Moses' question of v. 20 about whether or not the land was fertile. **And this is its fruit.** This answers "Is it wooded or not?" (also v. 20). All these things were not merely true but in answer to questions Moses had instructed them to answer. Being obligated to answer truthfully, they were also obligated to tell him in reply to the questions "Are the people who dwell in it strong or weak?" (v. 18) and "Are the towns they live in open or fortified?" (v. 19) that "the people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified" (v. 28). Their sin was in introducing this answer with the word "however." The Hebrew word implies a situation where there is no possibility at all of success: "Has His faithfulness *disappeared* forever?" (Ps. 77:9); "Only among you is God, there is no other god *at all!*" (Isa. 45:14). They were telling Moses that the land was wonderful but it would be impossible to conquer because of the strength, might, and sheer size of the people.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS used the branch they had cut down to carry the cluster, supporting it on two other poles (Hizkuni). The story about eight men carrying the cluster on four poles is simply a bit of rabbinic exaggeration and hyperbole (Gersonides).

²⁴ **That place was named the wadi Eshcol.** The Canaanites gave it this name, which means "cluster"; since the cluster that the Israelites found was a normal one for Canaan, they were surprised the Israelites were making such a big deal about it. Hence the name (Sforno).

²⁵ **At the end of forty days they returned from scouting the land.** When the Sages said the land measures 400 leagues on a side, they had some intention other than the geographical; those who have actually traveled in that land testify that it is no longer than a four-day walk (Abarbanel).

²⁶ **They made their report to them and to the whole community.** This was their first crime; such missions, as part of military planning, are supposed to be conducted in secrecy (Abarbanel).

²⁷ **We came to the land you sent us to.** This was their second crime; they should have said, "to the land the Lord our God is giving us" (Abarbanel). **It does indeed flow with milk and honey.** This was their third crime—answering Moses' questions out of order (Abarbanel).

²⁸ **However.** Their fourth crime; they had no business using this word (Abarbanel). **The people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the Anakites there.** Had they said only that the people were

OJPS they took also of the pomegranates, and of the figs.—²⁴That place was called the valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from thence.—

²⁵And they returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days. ²⁶And 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. ²⁷And 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. ²⁸Howbeit the people that dwell in the land are fierce, and the cities are fortified,

וַיִּשְׂאוּהוּ בַמּוֹט בְּשֵׁנִים וּמִן-הָרְמוֹנִים וּמִן-
הַתְּאֵנִים: ²⁴ לְמָקוֹם הַהוּא קָרָא נַחַל
אֶשְׁכּוֹל עַל אֲדוֹת הָאֶשְׁכּוֹל אֲשֶׁר-כָּרְתוּ
מִשָּׁם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

²⁵ וַיָּשׁוּבוּ מִתּוֹר הָאָרֶץ מִקֶּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם:
²⁶ וַיָּלְכוּ וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-

כָּל-עֵדֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-מִדְבַּר פָּאֲרָן
קֹדֶשׁה וַיִּשְׁבּוּ אֹתָם דְּבַר וְאֵת-כָּל-הָעֵדָה
וַיִּרְאוּם אֶת-פָּרִי הָאָרֶץ: ²⁷ וַיְסַפְּרוּ-לוֹ
וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּאָזְנוֹ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּנוּ
וְגַם זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ הִוא וְזֵה-פְרִיָּהּ:
²⁸ אַפְסִי כִי-עֵזוּ הָעַם הַזֶּה לִישֹׁב בְּאָרֶץ וְהָעָרִים

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS + Since what the spies said (beginning in v. 27) was apparently true, what exactly was their sin?

IBN EZRA ²⁴ **That place was named the wadi Eshcol.** As in 26:59, the impersonal active verb is correctly translated as a passive.

²⁵ **At the end of forty days.** Rather, "at the end of day 40," which could mean either end of that day, the beginning or the end.

²⁶ **They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community.** OJPS translates literally, but NJPS has the sense. They did not go to their own tents when they reached the camp, but went directly to give their report.

²⁷ **This is what they told him.** "Him" being Moses, who had sent them.

NJPS 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 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

RASHI 29 Amalekites dwell in the Negeb region. Since the Israelites had already been burned once by the Amalekites, the spies invoked them in order to frighten them. **Canaanites dwell ... along the Jordan.** You will not be able to cross it.

30 Caleb hushed the people. Not just the spies—he silenced them all. **Before Moses.** Literally, he hushed them “for Moses”—he silenced them so they could hear what he had to say about Moses. He yelled, “Is this all that the son of Amram has done to us?” His hearers, who were all against Moses because of what the spies had said, assumed that he too was speaking negatively, and they quieted down to hear what else he would say against Moses. But he continued, “He split the sea for us, and brought down the manna for us, and swept the quail in from the sea for us, didn’t he?” You will find this verb “hush” used elsewhere, in “*Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD!*” (Zech. 2:17) and “he will say, ‘Hush!’—so that no one may utter the name of the LORD” (Amos 6:10). It is an onomatopoeic word—when someone wants to silence a crowd, he says, “Shhhh!” **Let us by all means go up.** “Up, up! Even if Moses told us to make ladders and go up into the sky, we would succeed in whatever he told us to do!”

31 It is stronger than we. But they used a Hebrew word that could just as well mean (so to speak) “than He.”

32 One that devours its settlers. Everywhere we went we found them burying

Moses and Aaron. Notice that they answered each of Moses’ questions except for “Are the people who dwell in it ... few or many?” (v. 18), on which they said not a word. And they carefully avoided using the word “good” to describe the land. For it was already their intent to disparage the land as “one that devours its settlers” (v. 32), meaning that only the strongest had survived.

30 Caleb hushed the people. The people had understood quite well what the spies were trying to imply, and had begun to whine. It was this complaining that Caleb silenced. **Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it.** It was this assertion by Caleb that silenced the people’s complaints. “Yes, they are powerful, but we can overpower both them and their fortified cities.” **For we shall surely overcome it.** “It” being not the people but the land itself with all its fortifications.

31 We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we. Even if they come out of their fortified cities to engage us in battle, we cannot “go up against them” (see OJPS) to fight in that land, much less conquer their great, fortified cities. — Compare Goliath’s challenge, “Choose one of your men and let him come down against me” (1 Sam. 17:8). The expression refers to open combat.

32 Thus they spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land. Having left Moses and Aaron and gone back to their own

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS powerful, we would have assumed the cities were unfortified; had they said only that the cities were fortified, we would have assumed that the people were weak. But they said both, and added that there were giants there as well! (Bekhor Shor). Their fifth crime was saying how powerful they were; the Canaanites were not really all that strong. And their sixth was saying that they saw the Anakites—as if the land were full of them. All they found there were the three “children of Anak,” as OJPS calls them (Abarbanel).

29 Amalekites dwell in the Negeb region. Don’t even think about the seven nations of Canaan until you have dealt with the people who dwell on the border—the Amalekites, who tangled with you when you came out of Egypt (Hizkuni). Their seventh crime. Moses had not asked anything about the Amalekites, but they were trying to make it look as if it would be impossible even to enter the land, let alone to conquer it (Abarbanel).

30 Caleb hushed the people before Moses. In some texts, the ם at the end of “hushed” is written larger than normal (Masorah). He hushed them so they could hear what Moses was saying, which Moses reports in Deut. 1:29–33 (Bekhor Shor). The people expected Caleb to speak as one of the spies—in fact, as the greatest of them, since he was the chieftain of Judah (Abarbanel). **We shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.** Since already “all the dwellers in Canaan are aghast” (Exod. 15:15), once we go up there they will flee from before us (Sforno).

31 We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we. Literally, we cannot “go up” against them (see OJPS)—they are stronger than we, so even if we were on the high ground and they on the low ground we would have to fear them (Bekhor Shor).

32 They spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land. They were afraid the people would heed Joshua and Caleb

OJPS and very great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. ²⁹Amalek dwelleth in the land of the South; and the

Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanite dwelleth by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan.”

³⁰And Caleb stilled the people toward Moses, and said: “We should go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.”

³¹But the men that went up with him said: “We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.”

³²And they spread an evil report of the land

RASHBAM 30 Caleb hushed the people. In a clever way.

IBN EZRA 30 Caleb hushed the people. According to Jonah ibn Janah, the verb literally means that he said, “Shhh.”

32 They spread calumnies among the Israelites about the land. In this case, the

NAHMANIDES 29 Amalekites dwell in the Negeb region; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites inhabit the hill country; and Canaanites dwell by the Sea and along the Jordan. There is no direction from which we can approach. All these people are equally mighty: the Amalekites in the south, the Canaanites on the east and the west, and the others farther north in the hill country. — By such hints “they turned the minds of the Israelites from invading the land” (32:9). They had to do so in this indirect fashion because they were afraid of

בְּצִרּוֹת גְּדֹלוֹת מְאֹד וְגַם יְלָדֵי הָעַקֵּק רָאִינוּ שָׁם: ²⁹ עַמְלֵק יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב וְהַחִתִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי וְהָאֱמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּהָר וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב עַל-הַיָּם וְעַל יַד הַיַּרְדֵּן:

³⁰ וַיְהִי סָלֵב בְּלִבְ אֶת-הָעָם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר עֲלֵה נַעֲלֵה וַיְרַשְׁנוּ אֹתָהּ כִּי-יָכוֹל נוֹכַל לָהּ:

³¹ וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר-עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֵאמֹר נוֹכַל לַעֲלוֹת אֶל-הָעָם כִּי-חֹזֵק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ: ³² וַיּוֹצִיאוּ דְבַת הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS + Why did Caleb not offer any arguments to support his claim that “we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it” (v. 30)? + When the spies said, “We cannot attack that people, for it is stronger than we” (v. 31), who did they mean by “we”? If they meant Israel alone, did they not realize that God was fighting with Israel? If they meant Israel together with God, how could they imagine that the Canaanites could achieve what the Egyptians had not been able to?

NJPS 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."

OJPS which they had spied out unto the children of Israel, saying: "The land, through which we have passed to spy it out, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. ³³And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

אַתָּה אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עָבַרְנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֹתָהּ אָרֶץ אֲבָלֹת יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ הִוא וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אַנְשֵׁי מְדוּת: ³³ וְשָׁם רָאִינוּ אֶת-הַנְּפִילִים בְּנֵי עֶנֶק מִן-הַנְּפִילִים וְנָהָי בְּעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם:

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS + Once the spies admitted that "we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves" (v. 33), why did they have to add, "and so we must have looked to them"? It is well known that people are much less ready to find fault in themselves—if they did so, what need to add that others did so as well?

RASHI people. — But the Holy One had arranged this on their behalf, so that the inhabitants would be too preoccupied with mourning to pay attention to the spies. **Men of great size.** Literally, "men of measure"—tall and big, a man so big he had to be measured, like Goliath, who was "six cubits and a span tall" (1 Sam. 17:4). See, for example, the Egyptian killed by Benaiah, "a giant of a man five cubits tall" (1 Chron. 11:23), or the "giant of a man" the Israelites encountered at Gath (2 Sam. 21:20).

RASHBAM ³³ **The Anakites are part of the Nephilim.** They come from the aboriginal Nephilim: "It was then ... that the Nephilim appeared on earth" (Gen. 6:4). **Like grasshoppers.** Short people look like grasshoppers to those much taller than they, for grasshoppers are extremely small: "It is He who is enthroned above the vault of the earth, so that its inhabitants seem as grasshoppers" (Isa. 40:22).

33 The Nephilim. These were giants who had descended from Shamḥazai and Aza'el, who fell (*naphal*) from heaven during the generation of Enosh. **[C] The Anakites are part of the Nephilim.** The Anakites got their name because they were so tall they could *anak* the sun—wear it around their necks. **And so we must have looked to them.** Literally, "so we were in their sight" (OJPS). We heard them saying to each other, "There are ants in the vineyards that look like people!"

IBN EZRA Hebrew idiom means that they were saying things that were untrue, which was not the case when "Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father" (Gen. 37:2). Notice that Joseph "brought" the reports, while these men (as the Hebrew really says) "produced" their report, "brought it forth." The noun itself simply refers to "speech"; see my comment to Song 7:10. **Devours its settlers.** Its climate is bad. **Men of great size.** Literally, "men of measure," but of course every man, big or small, has a measure of some kind. Yet calling someone a "man of measure" means that he has a *greater* measure than anyone else. In the same way, when Elihu refers in Job 34:34 to "men of brains," he means men with a *lot* of brains. This sort of expression is quite common in the Bible.

NAHMANIDES tents, they declared: **The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers.** In front of Moses and Aaron all they had dared to say was that, though the land was fertile, the people were strong. Caleb countered that the Israelites were indeed strong enough to overcome them, leaving the people undecided. Some of them still trusted in their own strength and others in God's help. That is when, behind Moses' and Aaron's backs, they once again "caused the whole community to mutter against him by spreading calumnies about the land" (14:36). For having seen this people "whose stature was like the cedar's" (Amos 2:9), they did their best to take the heart out of their fellow Israelites. When they saw that some of them were still bold enough to go up against the Canaanites, and that Joshua and Caleb were encouraging them, they began to spread false reports, simply lying to make sure that they would not have to go up against the Canaanites no matter what. (Note that the Hebrew word is simply "a report" in both cases; see OJPS. "He who promulgates a report is a fool" [Prov. 10:18] if it is a lie, but one who tells the truth may still be referred to as spreading a "report," as was Joseph in Gen. 37:2.) This is why "those who spread such calumnies about the land" were punished, and "died of plague" (14:37). **All the people that we saw in it are men of great size.** A land that "devours" its inhabitants—where the water is bad and the land causes bereavement—does not produce "men of great size," but men who are weak and scrawny. The calumny spread by the spies was that the land, its water, its climate, and its resources were so intense that men of average size could not cope with it, only giants and men of such great size that they themselves by nature had immense strength. This land, therefore, could produce only men of great size; it would kill all the others, as in fact coarse foods are known to do.

33 We saw the Nephilim there—the Anakites are part of the Nephilim. I have explained all this in my comment to "It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth" (Gen. 6:4). **[C]**

[C] Ibn Ezra says there that "Nephilim" comes from the root meaning "to fall," because they are so shockingly tall that one's heart falls when one sees them. "Later" means "after the Flood." The original Anakites descended from the Nephilim, who were originally of divine descent.

33 We saw the Nephilim there. Originally they only referred to the inhabitants as "Anakites"; now they called them Nephilim in order to exaggerate their strength. "We saw Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the three Anakites—they are of the primordial Nephilim of whom you've surely heard: 'They were the heroes of old, the men of renown' [Gen. 6:4]." Since the story of the Nephilim during Noah's time was known throughout the world, they told the others that these Anakites belonged to that group in order to frighten them into panic. That is why they then said: **We looked like grasshoppers to ourselves, and so we must have looked to them.**

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (Abarbanel). **The country that we traversed and scouted is one that devours its settlers.** People who are shunted from one climate to another may sicken or die, for each land suits the constitutions of those who are born in it. But these "calumnies" were completely fictional, and that was their eighth, and worst, crime. If they saw dead bodies during their travels, it was because (as the Sages said) the time of their trip, in July and August, is when people—there, like everywhere else—die of malaria. If people were dying at that particular time, it had nothing to do with the nature of the land (Abarbanel).

33 We saw the Nephilim there. "Nephilim" means "the amazing ones"; everyone who sees them is amazed at them (Bekhor Shor). Some explain "Nephilim" to mean "tall," since in Job 14:18 the word *nophel* is associated with a mountain (Hizkuni). The Nephilim were produced "when the divine beings cohabited with the daughters of men" (Gen. 6:4); they inherited such great size from their fathers that their small human mothers could not carry them for the full nine months. "Nephilim" refers to their being "dropped" (that is, miscarried) at seven months (Abarbanel). **The Anakites are part of the Nephilim.** They are Anakites on their father's side and Nephilim on their mother's side (Sforno). **We looked like grasshoppers.** They did not literally mean "grasshoppers," but "midgets" (Bekhor Shor).

NJPS 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

OJPS generation. ¹⁹Pardon, I pray Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, and according as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

²⁰And the LORD said: "I have pardoned according to thy word. ²¹But in very deed, as I live—and all the earth shall be filled

RASHI supposed to be 'slow to anger' only at the righteous?" Said Moses, "You told me You were slow to anger at the wicked too. "Therefore, I pray, let my Lord's forbearance be great" [v. 17] and fulfill Your word." **Yet not remitting all punishment.** The Hebrew reads, "As for remitting—He will not remit." "Remitting" is for those who repent. But "He will not remit" for those who do not repent.

20 As you have asked. More precisely, "according to your word" (see OJPS), that is, because of what you said the Egyptians might think.

21 Nevertheless. Even so, as surely as I live and as My Presence fills the world, so is it true that I will fulfill this word against them, that "none of the men who have ... disobeyed Me shall see the land that I promised on oath to their fathers" (vv. 22–23). — But this did not apply to the women; see my comment to 26:64. **As I live.** It is only this phrase, and not the rest, that invokes the oath; the syntax of these verses is difficult. What they say is this: I swear that none of these men shall see the land. But My Presence fills the

19 סְלַח-נָא לְעֹנֵן הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּגִדְל חַסְדְּךָ וּכְאִשְׁר נִשְׁאַתָּה לָעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם יְעַד-הַהֵּנָּה

20 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה סְלַחְתִּי כְדַבְּרְךָ: 21 וְאֹלָם חַי-אֲנִי וַיִּמְלֵא כְבוֹד-יְהוָה אֶת-כָּל-

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS + How could God tell Moses, "I pardon, as you have asked" (v. 20), when this in fact did not happen? For they all died in the wilderness. + When God swears, "as I live" (v. 21), what need is there to add "and as the LORD's Presence fills the whole world"?

RASHBAM 20 I pardon. The Hebrew form looks more like "I have pardoned" (OJPS). But NJPS is correct; the Biblical Hebrew perfect can indeed be used for an uncompleted action, as in "Let me pay the price" (Gen. 23:13). **As you have asked.** I will not strike them all down with pestilence at once—I will stretch it out slowly, over 40 years.

IBN EZRA 19 Pardon, I pray. In v. 20 God says that He is doing what Moses asked, yet in vv. 22–23 He swears that they will not see the land. We therefore understand that what Moses is asking God to do is not to "pardon" but to "relent." He wants God to exercise His "slowness to anger" and let them not all be punished immediately. Just so, when a chieftain brings a sin offering and Lev. 4:31 tells us that "he shall be forgiven" (using the same word translated "pardon" here in our verse), it does not refer to immediate forgiveness. He is forgiven only after he completely repents of his sin. **According to Your great kindness.** Rather, "since Your kindness is so great." **Ever since Egypt.** NJPS omits the words translated by OJPS as "even until now." Note that literally the phrase means "even until here"—from Egypt to this place. The Hebrew word can refer either to a duration of time or an extent of space. See also my comment to Gen. 44:28.

21 As I live. Rather, "while I live" My word will stand. **As the LORD's Presence fills the whole world.** It seems plausible that this means "when My Presence fills the world" in the future. I am doing this to make My Presence known in the world.

NAHMANIDES to whom it was given—but they had rebelled against their ancestors and had no desire for this gift that the Patriarchs so desired. How could Moses remind God that He had said, "Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to your offspring this whole land of which I spoke, to possess forever" (Exod. 32:13), when the "offspring" had plainly indicated, "We have no interest in this gift"? Moses could obviously not mention the attribute of "forgiving ... sin" (Exod. 34:7), since the Israelites were sinning quite deliberately. But I do not know why he did not say "compassionate and gracious" (Exod. 34:6). Perhaps he knew that the aspect of justice was arrayed against them and they would never be forgiven. So he asked only that God be "slow" to anger and not kill them all at once by slaughtering them in the wilderness like sheep. **Visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children.** Moses did mention this, hoping that if God would not wipe out their sin, He would at least visit it upon the children and in that way be "slow" to punish. From this came the decree that this night of the 9th of Av should be a night of weeping for them throughout the generations. For the Holy One visited their iniquity upon their children.

19 Pardon, I pray. Despite what Ibn Ezra says, I think "pardon" here does indeed mean setting punishment aside, as Onkelos translates. Sacrifices remove the weight of punishment from upon the inadvertent sinner, "for You, LORD, are good and forgiving" (Ps. 86:5).

20 I pardon, as you have asked. Since all Moses had asked was that He be "slow to anger" and "abounding in kindness," God was willing to comply. Moreover, He did pardon the people as a whole, agreeing not to carry out His threat of v. 12. Instead, He forgave them to the extent that their children would indeed inherit the land, and that they themselves would not die in a plague but that their corpses would "drop" (individually) there in the wilderness, each when his time came. Notice that Moses would later recall his prayer on their behalf after the Golden Calf incident (Deut. 9:18 and 9:26) and his prayer on Aaron's behalf (Deut. 9:20), but he did not mention there anything about praying for them in connection with this incident of the spies. This is for the reason I have already mentioned—he in fact did not pray that their sin be forgiven, merely that punishment be delayed and visited upon their children. Having not been completely on their side in this prayer, he did not mention it in Deuteronomy 9, for they would have had reason to complain about him.

21 As I live. Rashi's comment [E] is completely incorrect. Such an interpretation depends on a misreading of the Hebrew, which literally says, "I live and the Lord's Presence fills the world," and continues at the beginning of v. 23, "if they see the land" (and so forth)—then it is not so. The latter phrase is implied but not included, out of respect for the One on high. The same is true in the comparable

[E] Really that of Joseph Kara; see the note there.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS 20 I pardon, as you have asked. Rather, "I have pardoned" once already, as you asked, for the sin of the Golden Calf; but this time I will not pardon them (Hizkuni). I have pardoned them many times in the past when you asked (Abarbanel).

21 Nevertheless. I will not wipe them out all at once—but I will get My revenge (Gersonides). **As I live.** I have feelings, and their sinning against Me time after time is as hard for Me as a needle piercing living flesh (Abarbanel). **As the LORD's Presence fills the whole world.** Believe Me, I am not worried that the Egyptians will think I am powerless to bring them into the land. In the words of the prophet Malachi (1:11), "From where the sun rises to where it sets, My name is honored among the nations" (Abarbanel).

NJPS 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

OJPS with the glory of the LORD— ²²surely all those men that have seen My glory, and My signs, which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to proof these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice; ²³surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that despised Me see it. ²⁴But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall

הָאָרֶץ: ²² כִּי כָל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרְאִים אֶת־
כְּבֹדִי וְאֶת־אֲתֹנִי אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם
וּבְמִדְבָּר וַיִּנָּסוּ אֹתִי וְהָ עֵשָׂר פְּעָמִים וְלֹא
שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי: ²³ אִם־יִרְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְתָּם וְכִלְמִנְאֲצִי לֹא
יִרְאוּהָ: ²⁴ וַעֲבָדִי כָלֵב עֶקֶב הַיְהוָה רִוּחַ
אֱהָרָת עִמּוֹ וַיִּמְלֵא אַחֲרָי וְהִבִּיאֹתִיו
אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־בָּא שְׁמִיהָ וְרָעוּ יִרְשָׁנָה:

RASHBAM **22 These many times.** Literally, "these ten times" (OJPS), but NJPS understands the idiom correctly. Compare "changing my wages *time and again*" (Gen. 31:7); "ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven" (Lev. 26:26); "Time and again you humiliate me" (Job 19:3).

RASHI whole world! So I will not permit My name to be profaned by having the Egyptians think that I am powerless. Instead of a plague killing them all at once, they shall die a few at a time for the next 40 years. [—Joseph Kara] [E]

22 Who have tried Me. More precisely, "who have tested Me." **These many times.** Literally, "these ten times" (OJPS)—twice at the sea, twice with the manna, twice with the quail, twice about water, once with the calf, and once with the spies. (See B. Ar. 15.)

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS + Why does God mention Caleb's reward (v. 24) and not that of Joshua, who was equally deserving and did in fact live to enter the land? + The translations have God saying that Caleb's offspring "shall hold [the land] as a possession" (v. 24), but what He really says is that they will "dispossess" the Canaanites of it. How could He say this, when it was actually Caleb himself (see Josh. 15:14) who did so?

IBN EZRA **22 These many times.** Literally, "these 10 times," but NJPS understands correctly. "Ten" is used in this idiom because it is the most significant number, the end of the ones and the beginning of the tens, boosting the numbers into the second power.

24 Because he was imbued with a different spirit. Literally, "because he had another spirit with him" (OJPS)—for a total of two: one in his mouth and another in his heart. To the spies he said, "I'm in on your plan." But in his heart he spoke the truth. That is how he was able to hush the people (13:30), for the other spies were sure he would go along with them. That is why Caleb said, "I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him back word as it was in my heart" (Josh. 14:7)—not as it had been in my mouth. **Remained loyal to Me.** Literally, "he filled after Me," meaning "he filled *his heart* with the desire to follow Me." **The land that he entered.** Hebron will be given to him. **His offspring shall hold it as a possession.** Rather, as Onkelos translates, [F] his offspring shall drive out the Anakites and the other inhabitants of it. The verb is a Hiphil, not a Qal. [G]

23 None of those who spurn Me. Among their children.

[E] The comment on "As I live" is identified in our texts of Rashi as being by Kara; Nahmanides apparently had it as a comment by Rashi himself. [F] The standard text of Onkelos today does not translate this way; but some manuscripts and other Aramaic versions do. [G] See Special Topics, "Biblical Hebrew."

24 But My servant Caleb. He is mentioned without Joshua here as a reward for hushing the people (13:30), though Joshua will of course also enter the land. The Levites and the priests too did not fall under this oath, for there was no spy representing them. Moreover, they were not among those "who were recorded in your various lists from the age of twenty years up" (v. 29). Admittedly, there were next to no priests, but there were a lot of Levites. **A different spirit.** Than the other 10 scouts. **Remained loyal to Me.** He "followed Me fully" (OJPS), making sure to confirm My word that the land was very good and spreading no calumnies among the people.

NAHMANIDES language of vv. 28–30. Even in common language, people often leave such oaths implicit: "May God do thus to me and more" (2 Sam. 3:35)—that is, without specifying exactly what God should do. When Caleb told Joshua at Gilgal, "You know what instructions the LORD gave at Kadesh-barnea to Moses, the man of God, concerning you and me ... On that day, Moses promised *on oath*, "The land on which your foot trod shall be a portion for you and your descendants forever, because you were loyal to the LORD my God" (Josh. 14:6, 9), he was referring to v. 24 of our chapter. He referred to that promise as an oath because, as I have explained, "as I live" of our verse does indeed invoke oath language, and the oath continues through v. 24. (He did not mean that Moses himself had taken this oath, merely that Moses had mentioned it.) [F] But the True interpretation of "as I live and as the LORD's Presence fills the whole world" is that this was His promise to Moses to pardon the people (see my comment to v. 20). He was saying that His Presence would indeed fill the world, albeit through their children rather than through them.

23 None of those who spurn Me shall see it. Ibn Ezra's suggestion that this means "none among their children" makes no sense, unless perhaps he is alluding to the later generations who would be exiled from the land, as the Sages say. According to them, it is here that He established weeping throughout the generations on this night, when He would recall this first sin of theirs.

24 My servant Caleb. He does not mention Joshua because it was not appropriate at this time to describe Joshua's reward, which was that he was to replace Moses. This is also why God mentions Caleb ahead of Joshua in v. 30—because he went ahead and hushed the people (in 13:30). But Moses himself (in v. 38) puts Joshua first, because of Joshua's superior wisdom.

[F] See v. 39.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS **22 These many times.** The word "these" shows that "ten" is to be taken literally; when "these" does not appear is when it means "many" (Bekhor Shor).

23 None of those who spurn Me shall see it. This could mean that none of the Canaanites—the current inhabitants of the land, who "spurn Me"—shall see it any longer; "how then can I bring into it such a breed of sinful men as this?" (Abarbanel).

24 Because he was imbued with a different spirit. A spirit that was not prophetic, and therefore was different from that of Joshua, who is described in 27:18 as "a man in whom is spirit" (Kimhi). Joshua, who had a prophetic spirit and was moreover in place to succeed Moses, deserved no praise for not falling in with the plan of the spies; but Caleb, who had a merely human spirit, nonetheless **remained loyal to Me** and cannot be allowed to die in the wilderness like the others (Abarbanel).

NJPS 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 community keep muttering against Me? Very well, I have heeded the incessant muttering of the Israelites against Me. ²⁸Say to them: 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'I will do to you just as you have urged Me.

²⁹In this very wilderness shall your carcasses drop. Of all of you who were recorded in your various lists from the age of twenty years up, you who have muttered against Me, ³⁰not one shall enter the land in which I swore to settle you—save Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. ³¹Your children who, you said, would be carried off—these will I allow to enter; they shall know the land that you have rejected. ³²But your carcasses shall drop in

RASHI 25 Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites occupy the valleys. If you go there, they will kill you, since I am not with you. **March into the wilderness.** Turn back.

27 That wicked community. The spies. This is how we know that it requires a minimum of 10 to make a "community." **I have heeded the incessant muttering of the Israelites against Me.** Rather, "the mutterings that they [the spies] make the Israelites mutter against Me."

28 As I live. I swear. **I will do to you.** In the Hebrew, these words are preceded by the words "if not." The implication (God forbid) is "If I do not do this, it is as if I am not alive." **Just as you have urged Me.** "If only we might die in this wilderness!" (v. 2).

29 Of all of you who were recorded in your various lists. Anyone who was "numbered" (OJPS) in the lists to bear arms (ch. 1) or to pay the half-shekel (Exod. 30:13). Anyone on either of those lists shall die. That is: **From the age of twenty years up.** That excludes the Levites, who were not numbered from age 20 up.

32 Your carcasses. The Hebrew adds the word "you" (see OJPS); Onkelos understands the phrase this way: "Your carcasses—yours." This points up the contrast with "your children" of v. 31, who will be brought into the land.

NAHMANIDES 26 **The LORD spoke further to Moses and Aaron.** Aaron was included because he too fell on his face (in v. 5) to beg the people not to head back to Egypt. But "Say to them" of v. 28—in the singular in Hebrew—is addressed to Moses, for he was the main prophet.

28 I will do to you just as you have urged Me. Rather, "will I not do to you just as you have urged Me?" There are comparable examples in Ezek. 3:6 and Isa. 14:24.

30 I swore. Literally, "I lifted up My hand" (OJPS)—but God is merely using an idiom of human language. People lift their hands up to heaven when they swear. **Save Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.** Caleb is mentioned ahead of Joshua because he went ahead and hushed the people (13:30).

32 Your carcasses. Literally, "your carcasses, you" (compare OJPS, which, however, reverses them). "Your carcasses—that is, you—shall drop."

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS 25 **Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites occupy the valleys.** This phrase may be connected with v. 24, implying that their offspring would hold these areas, too, as a possession (Gersonides). **Start out, then, tomorrow.** The Hebrew word does not mean "the day after today" but "after a certain amount of time," as in Exod. 13:14, "when, in time to come, your son asks you" (Hizkuni).

28 Says the LORD. This expression, which occurs 250 times in the prophetic books, occurs only twice in the writings—Ps. 110:1 and 2 Chron. 34:27—and twice in the Torah, here and in Gen. 22:16 (Masorah).

29 From the age of twenty years up. The Sages say that this decree was also not directed at those over 60, who, like those under 20, were not eligible for military service and so did not refuse to fight (Bekhor Shor).

32 Your carcasses. This, like "not one shall enter the land" of v. 30, was directed at the spies (Bekhor Shor).

OJPS possess it. ²⁵Now the Amalekite and the Canaanite dwell in the Vale; tomorrow turn ye, and get you into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea."

²⁶And the LORD spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying: ²⁷"How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, that keep murmuring against Me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they keep murmuring against Me. ²⁸Say

וְהָעַמְלִיקִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי יוֹשְׁבֵי בְעֵמֶק מְדִיָּה 25
 פְּנֹו וְסַעְוֹ לְכֶם הַמִּדְבָּר דְרָךְ יַם־סוּף; פ
 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן 26
 לֵאמֹר: 27 עַד־מַתַּי לְעֵדָה הַרְעִיה הַזֹּאת
 אֲשֶׁר הִמָּה מְלִינִים עָלַי אֶת־תְּלָלוֹת בְּנֵי
 יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הִמָּה מְלִינִים עָלַי שְׁמַעְתִּי: 28
 אֲמַר אֱלֹהִים חַי־אֲנִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה אִם־לֹא
 בְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתֶּם בְּאֻזְנֵי פִי אֶעֱשֶׂה לְכֶם:
 בַּמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה יִפְּלוּ פְגָרֵיכֶם וְכָל־
 פְּקָדֵיכֶם לְכָל־מִסְפָּרְכֶם מִבְּנֵי עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה
 וְמִעֵלָּה אֲשֶׁר הִלִּינְתֶם עָלַי: 30 אִם־אַתֶּם
 תִּבְּאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יָדַי
 לְשָׁפֵן אֶתְכֶם בָּהּ בִּי אִם־כִּלְבִּב בֶּן־יִפְתָּה
 וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון: 31 וְטַפְכֶם אֲשֶׁר אִמַּרְתֶּם
 לְבִי יְהִיָּה וְהִבִּיאֲתִי אֲתֶם וַיִּדְעוּ אֶת־
 הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר מֵאַתֶּם בָּהּ: 32 וּפְגָרֵיכֶם

ABARBANEL'S QUESTIONS + Why must vv. 26-35 repeat what has already been stated in vv. 22-23?

unto them: As I live, saith the LORD, surely as ye have spoken in Mine ears, so will I do to you: ²⁹your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, ye that have murmured against Me; ³⁰surely ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I lifted up My hand that I would make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹But your little ones, that ye said would be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have rejected. ³²But as for you, your

IBN EZRA 25 **The Canaanites.** That is, the Amorites. They can be called Canaanites because all Amorites are Canaanites. The point here was not to mention specifically who they were but to distinguish between the Amalekites, who were descended from Shem, and the Canaanites, who were descended from Ham. When Moses recounts how "the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that hill country came down" (v. 45), he says, "the Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you" (Deut. 1:44)—for the Amorites (called in our verse simply Canaanites) were the main combatants. **Occupy the valleys.** In order to ambush you. So head back to the wilderness. — But others understand our verse to mean: Though the Amalekites and the Canaanites are occupying the valleys, march back toward the Sea of Reeds and have no fear.

26 The LORD spoke further to Moses and Aaron. Because Israel had not taken the opportunity to repent.

29 Your carcasses. Their bodies. **You who have muttered against Me.** Compare "All the Israelites railed against Moses and Aaron" (v. 2), which uses the same Hebrew verb in a different conjugation.

People lift their hands up to heaven when they swear. Caleb is mentioned ahead of Joshua because he went ahead and hushed the people (13:30).

compare OJPS, which, however, reverses them). "Your carcasses—that is, you—shall drop."