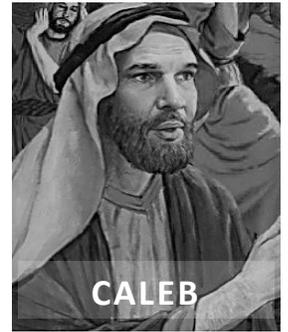




THE DOWNRIVER DISCIPLES PROJECT

explores

THE TWELVE SPIES



The journey of the Twelve Spies can be found in the [Old Testament](#) (1) book of [Numbers](#) (2), the 4th book of the [Holy Bible](#) (3). The narrative in [Numbers 13:1-33](#) discloses the account of a group of Israelite leaders who were hand selected by [Moses](#) (4) to scout Canaan, the land set aside by [God](#) (5) Himself as the future home for the [Twelve Tribes of Israel](#) (6) after their [Exodus from Egypt](#) (7) (explore [Exodus 12:31-42](#)).

(NOTE: The region of Canaan is also known as the "[Promised Land](#)" (8) as it was previously promised by the LORD to [Abraham](#) (9) ([Genesis 12:1-7](#), [Genesis 15:1-20](#)) and his descendants. This sworn oath was subsequently reaffirmed by the LORD with Abraham's son, [Isaac](#) (10) ([Genesis 26:1-6](#)), and again with Abraham's grandson, [Jacob](#) (11) ([Genesis 28:10-15](#)). This promise, or "[Covenant](#)" (12), is later fulfilled in [Deuteronomy 1:8](#).)

[Numbers 12:16](#) tells us the Israelites are encamped in the Desert of Paran and are finally nearing their long awaited destination of Canaan. The Lord commanded Moses to send one man from each ancestral Tribe to explore the region prior to the entire Israelite Nation entering. Moses gave the Twelve explicit instructions on where and what to explore - is the soil fertile or poor, are the inhabitants strong or weak, are the towns fortified or unwallled, etc. Since this was the season for the first ripe grapes, Moses directed them to bring back a sample of the fruit of the land.

(NOTE: Before the Israelites arrived on scene, [Deuteronomy 7:1-2](#) tells us that Canaan was inhabited by seven regional ethnic divisions or nations- the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (see also [Genesis 10:15-19](#)). It also discloses God's command for the Twelve Tribes to defeat, drive out and destroy the seven nations, and to show them no mercy in doing so.)

So, following the directions given by Moses, off the Twelve went into Canaan. During their travels, they cut a branch containing a cluster of grapes to bring back from their journey. After [40](#) (13) days, the Twelve ended their exploration and returned to their people. Upon arrival back in the Desert of Paran, the Twelve Spies gave a report to Moses, [Aaron](#) (14) and the entire community. They showed everyone the branch of grapes they brought back and shared that the land did, indeed, flow with milk and honey. But there were naysayers within the Twelve, who disclosed they saw powerful people and large, fortified cities in Canaan. This brought in a fear over the Israelites.

Caleb, one of the Twelve and an [obedient](#) (15) servant of God, wanted nothing to do with the negativity of the report. He silenced the group and recommended to Moses that they should take possession of the land "for we can certainly do it."

Numbers 13 concludes with the men who went with Caleb into the Promised Land continuing to spread a fearful report amongst the Israelite community. They lamented that they saw the Nephilim there- descendants of Anak- who were stronger and larger than them. By the time the report was finished being given, the damage was done and the seeds of doubt were firmly planted in the camp. Rather than trust that God had perfectly chosen their land for His children, they succumbed to the word of mortal men.

Chapter 14 picks up with the frightened Israelites lamenting they should never have left Egypt, where they were brutally enslaved for 400 years before God rescued them from bondage. Imagine God hearing their words! But there were a few who stayed the course with Him, namely Moses, Aaron, [Joshua](#) (16) and Caleb.

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They told their community, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

The assembly was not sold. Rather than believe in the Most High, they talked of stoning Moses and those aligning themselves with him.

God had heard enough. He appeared to the entire Israelite community and said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they." Moses responded to God by begging Him to forgive the Israelites who doubted.

As His stiff necked children rebuke His gift of land, God leaves no stone unturned in voicing His anger. He replied, "I have [forgiven](#) (17) them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it."

Most have heard about the Israelites [wandering in the wilderness](#) (18) for 40 years. This [disobedience](#) (19) to God is the very reason. [Numbers 14:26-35](#) discloses God's continued anger towards His children and, as a result, the consequences that now await them. Here, God is meting out punishment to the Israelites, telling them they will suffer for 40 years - "one year for each of the forty days you explored the land." With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the entire Israelite community will die off in the wilderness before the Promised Land, so very near, is entered. This account is also recorded in [Deuteronomy 1](#).

To follow the journey of the Israelites from this point until God permits them to enter Canaan, explore the remaining chapters of Numbers and the last book of [The Law](#) (20), Deuteronomy. Their entry into Canaan begins with [Joshua 1](#).

For a chart listing the Twelve Spies, explore page 3. Footnotes appear on page 4.

Modifications are welcome at goodnews@downriverdisciples.com.

TRIBE	LEADER	HERITAGE	SCRIPTURE
Reuben	Shammua	Zakkur	Numbers 13:4
Simeon	Shaphat	Hori	Numbers 13:5
Judah	Caleb	Jephunneh	Numbers 13:6
Issachar	Igal	Joseph	Numbers 13:7
Ephraim	Joshua	Nun	Numbers 13:8
Benjamin	Palti	Raphu	Numbers 13:9
Zebulun	Gaddiel	Sodi	Numbers 13:10
Manasseh	Gaddi	Susi	Numbers 13:11
Dan	Ammiel	Gemalli	Numbers 13:12
Asher	Sethur	Michael	Numbers 13:13
Naphtali	Nahbi	Vophsi	Numbers 13:14
Gad	Geuel	Maki	Numbers 13:15

FOOTNOTES

- (1) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/old-testament>
- (2) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/numbers>
- (3) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/the-good-news>
- (4) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/moses>
- (5) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/god-of-the-bible>
- (6) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/twelve-tribes-of-israel>
- (7) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/exodus-from-egypt>
- (8) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/promised-land>
- (9) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/father-of-many-nations>
- (10) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/isaac>
- (11) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/jacob>
- (12) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/covenants>
- (13) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/40-in-the-bible>
- (14) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/aaron>
- (15) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/obedience>
- (16) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/joshua-1>
- (17) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/forgiveness>
- (18) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/wilderness-wandering>
- (19) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/disobedience>
- (20) <https://www.downriverdisciples.com/the-law>