

People Rebel

Key Verse:

“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?”
—Numbers 14:3

Selected Scripture:
Numbers 14:1-25

port given by ten of the spies who surveyed the conditions in Canaan, that the Israelites would be unable to conquer that land, the people once again murmured and expressed the wish that they had either died in Egypt or in the wilderness.—Num. 14:1,2

The Key Verse underscores their rebellious and blasphemous attitude towards God as though it was his design to have the men and their families perish, as opposed to leading them into a land of promise. They also proposed organizing their efforts to return to Egypt, much to the grief of Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. (vss. 4-6) The congregation violently rejected the counsel of Joshua and Caleb to trust God and instead threatened to stone these two faithful servants.—vs. 10

“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 shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.”—vss. 11,12

Upon hearing these words Moses, more mindful of the LORD’s honor than that of his own, interceded with

God on the people's behalf. He appealed that if such a course were taken, the Egyptians would surely learn of it and inform Israel's enemies, who would declare that God was unable to bring his people into the promised land and, therefore, slew them in the wilderness.—vss. 13-16

Moses made this petition in harmony with the Divine law, not asking God to clear the persistently willful sinners, but in accordance with his justice and holiness, pardon their iniquity as he had done in the past. Instead of consuming them in his wrath would he extend his merciful forgiveness towards Israel as he had been doing since they had departed from Egypt.—vss. 17-20

God hearkened unto Moses and granted the people a pardon as a manifestation of his grace. (vs. 21) Nevertheless, a sentence was imposed upon those adults who had constantly murmured against God and they died in the wilderness. "Ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, . . . But your little ones, . . . them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."—vss. 29-31

The example of Moses pleading to God on behalf of Israel contains an important lesson for the Lord's people today. We have the duty and privilege of praying for our brethren even when they are overtaken in a fault. (Gal. 6:1) Let us also beware of any tendency towards disloyalty toward God by rebelling against him and expressing a desire to return to the world after having pledged to do his will.

The typical nature of Israel's experiences were recorded for the edification of the Gospel Age church. "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—I Cor. 10:10-12 ■