

Moses Intercedes for the People

Key Verse: *"In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now."*

—**Numbers 14:19**,
New International
Version

Selected Scripture:
Numbers 14:11-20

SUBSEQUENT TO THE NARRATIVE in last week's lesson, the whole assembly of Israel talked about stoning Joshua and Caleb. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to the people and God 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 miraculous 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."—Num. 14:10-12, *NIV*

Moses interceded for the people, and said to the Lord, "If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them." Then Moses summarized God's character, saying, "The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished." Moses then spoke the words found in our Key Verse.—vss. 15-19, *NIV*

God replied to Moses, "I have forgiven them." He continued, however, saying, "Not one of the men who

saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers.” “As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you [those who believed the ten spies] the very things I heard you say: In this desert your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me.”—vss. 20-23, 28, 29, *NIV*

God then said to Israel, “Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins.” Then the ten spies who had given the evil report were “struck down and died of a plague.” (vss. 33, 34, 37, *NIV*) This clearly showed to all the Israelites God’s displeasure with the ten spies. The Scriptures tell us, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” (Prov. 14:12, *NIV*) How true that was for the ten spies and their slanderous report which had influenced the Israelites.

The Lord continued, saying, “Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land.” (Num. 14:24, *NIV*) Caleb, along with Joshua, fully followed the Lord by giving a good report. They did this by telling the Israelites, “The LORD is with us. Do not be afraid.” (vs. 9, *NIV*) While nearly all the other Israelites were fearful and doubting, Caleb and Joshua placed their trust in God, rather than in human strength.

As spiritual Israelites, God has also given us this same important promise that he is with us. “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.” (Heb. 13:5, 6, *NIV*) Let us continually keep before our minds God’s wonderful promises and fully trust in him.—Eph. 6:10; II Tim. 1:7; I Pet. 5:7 ■