

# Ministry of Grace Church

## Numbers Chapter 13 – Speaker Notes

Let me start out by asking you all a question. Why do we need to study the Old Testament? It's all about the Law and how the children of Israel rebelled against *Yahweh* time and time again, right? It's about *Yahweh* teaching the Israelites what faith is all about. It's about the spiritual failures of the Jews. So, why are we studying it? We live in a totally different world than they did. They lived in an ancient world; we live in a modern world! They walked through the wilderness for 40 years. Most of us couldn't even walk for 40 blocks, and if we did, we'd have blisters.

Again, let me say that the Old Testament is all about teaching the Israelites how to have a strong faith. But – the children of Israel, with a few exceptions, had very little faith. The problem is that the Israelites lived in a physical world and never got beyond it. Their vision was physical vision, not spiritual vision. Their hopes and dreams were based on this physical world. They totally missed the fact that we don't just live in a physical world, we also live in a spiritual world. They knew that *Yahweh* was their God, but they didn't really know what that means. They tried to connect with *Yahweh* through physical things, through actions and offerings. The bottom line is that the Israelites wanted *Yahweh's* blessings but, they wanted His physical blessings. They totally missed the spiritual blessings. As we go through this chapter in the book of Numbers, let's keep in mind what the writer of Hebrews said:

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

### **Numbers 13:1-3**

**The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel. From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a chief among them.” So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the people of Israel.**

It appears from this verse that it was initially God's suggestion to send spies into the land. However if we look at Deuteronomy chapter one, we see:

“Then we set out from Horeb and went through all that great and terrifying wilderness that you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us. And we came to Kadesh-barnea. And I said to you, ‘You have come to the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. See, the LORD your God has set the land before you. Go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has told you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’ Then all of you came near me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, that they may explore the land for us and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up and the cities into which we shall come.’ The thing seemed good to me, and I took twelve men from you, one man from each tribe. (Deuteronomy 1:19-23)

If we stop and think about it, why would God want them to go spy out the land, had He not already done so? God knew what the land was like and He knew how to lead them into the land. The reason the people wanted to spy out the land was their own lack of faith.

It appears that the chronology of events was this:

1. They arrived at Kadesh-barnea

2. Moses commanded the people to go up to take the land
3. The people suggested sending spies first (because their faith was not strong enough to trust *Yahweh*)
4. Moses liked the idea and took it to *Yahweh*
5. *Yahweh* told Moses to send men to spy out the land

Why would the people be so reluctant to go up and take the land? Why would Moses be so willing to listen to the voice of the people and not command them to follow the Lord as they had been doing since coming out of Egypt? If we read the book of Joshua carefully we will see that the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not accompany them into Canaan. It is likely (though nowhere stated) that they were to go up into the land at Kadesh-barnea while the pillar of cloud remained behind. If this is the case, it is understandable that the people would want to “check out” the land before sending everyone in. This would also explain why Moses was so quick to like the idea.

From each of the 12 tribes, Moses was to send “a chief.” This comes from the Hebrew word *nasiy*, which is formed from *nasa*, meaning “to lift.” It refers to someone who is lifted up among the people, that is, “a chief” or “a leader.” This word is often used to describe those who have been elevated by the people through an election or selection process. So, it is possible that these leaders were not chosen by God or by Moses, but by the people.

### **Numbers 13: 4-16**

**And these were their names: From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur; from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori; from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh; from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph; from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun; from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu; from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi; from the tribe of Joseph (that is, from the tribe of Manasseh), Gaddi the son of Susi; from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli; from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael; from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi; from the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi. These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua.**

If you compare this list with the captains of the army who are named in **Numbers 1:5-15**, you will notice that none of the men selected to spy out the land were among the captains of the army. Nor are their names mentioned in Numbers chapter seven as the leaders who offered up the tribal offerings at the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness while they were at Sinai.

Here we are told that, “**Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.**” This is not the occasion on which Moses renamed Joshua, as it may appear in the English translation. A literal translation might read, “Hoshea, however, was named Joshua by Moses.” This is simply an explanation of the fact that the man is called Hoshea in the list of names, but Moses called him Joshua. The fact that Moses used the name Joshua from the first mention of him in the Exodus narrative is indicative of the fact that that is what he called him all along. It is quite likely that Moses gave him that name after the defeat of the Amalekites in Exodus chapter seventeen.

Hoshea means “desire of salvation” or “help me” and Joshua (which is a contraction of Jehoshua) means “*Yahweh* saves” or “savior.” The Greek equivalent of Joshua is “Jesus.”

### **Numbers 13:17-20**

**Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, “Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and**

**whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.**

Hebrew *negeb* (or *negev*), meaning “dry or arid,” is a description of the region around Kadesh-barnea. After the Israelites conquered the people and established the nation of Israel, the *negeb* was at the extreme southern part of the country. Hence, the word *negeb* soon took on the meaning of “south.” This desert area is not like we think of as sand dune desert, rather it is more like a steppe, an area of sparse grasslands and sand, more often used for animal grazing than cultivation of crops. Today, this area is mostly dry-land shrubs and some grasses, suitable for some animal grazing.

The spies were directed to go into the Negev and proceed into the mountain country. They were instructed to:

- See what the land is like, namely:
  - See whether the inhabitants were strong or weak and how many of them there were
  - Determine the quality of the land (good or bad). This is probably a reference to whether the land is well watered (plenty of rivers and streams), if it is easily traversable, and if it is suitable for large groups of people to exist.
  - See if the cities are fortified with massive protective features around them or if they are primarily made up of temporary structures and are open to attack.
  - Assess whether the land is rich or poor. This is probably a reference to the fertility of the land. They were to see if the land grew abundant crops or if the people had to work hard to produce food.
  - See if there are lots of trees.
- Be courageous. They were not to act afraid of the people they met, rather they were to trust that they would not be harmed on their journey
- Bring back some of the fruit of the land.

Moses adds the fact that it was the season for the first ripe grapes. This would be in late July and early August. The significance of this statement may have been to explain why they were to be brave. If the grapes were just beginning to ripen, it is likely that they would have drawn suspicion from the local inhabitants by picking and carrying away the fruit of the land.

### **Numbers 13:21-22**

**So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)**

The “Wilderness of Zin” identified here is not the same as the Wilderness of Sin along the southwestern edge of the Sinai Peninsula. The Wilderness of Zin is situated between the wilderness of Paran (the heart of the Sinai Peninsula) and the habitable land to the north.

“Hebron,” also known as Kiriath-Arba or, “the city of Arba.” According to **Joshua 14:15**, Arba was the greatest among the Anakim and in **Joshua 15:13**, he is referred to as “the father of Anak.” The children of Anak are compared to the Emim and they were called “giants” or “Rephaim.”

The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim. Like the Anakim they are also counted as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim. (**Deuteronomy 2:10-11**)

These tribes of giants existed as far back as the time of Abraham:

In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. ([Genesis 14:5-6](#))

### **Numbers 13:23-25**

**And they came to the Valley of Eshcol and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they also brought some pomegranates and figs. That place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster that the people of Israel cut down from there. At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land.**

Though there is no specific evidence of where the Valley of Eshcol was located, it appears from the text of this passage that it was encountered after passing near Hebron, on the way back to Kadesh-barnea. So, it is likely that this valley is to the south of Hebron somewhere. The Hebrew word *eshcol* means “a bunch” or “a cluster.”

Even to this day in the vineyards southwest of Hebron it is not uncommon to find a single cluster of large grapes (some grapes the size of plums) that weighs twelve to fifteen pounds. The reason for carrying the cluster on a pole is not so much because of the weight, but so that the cluster could be kept whole and undamaged.

### **Numbers 13:26, 27**

**And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.**

Throughout Moses’ commentary of the wanderings he often refers to this place simply as Kadesh. That it is the same as Kadesh-barnea is evident from Joshua’s use of this name:

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 word again as it was in my heart. ([Joshua 14:7](#))

After spying out the land for forty days, the twelve leaders returned and reported to Moses and the people, showing them all the abundant fruit of the land.

The twelve spies even gave witness to the fact that the land is just as *Yahweh* promised them, a land flowing with milk and honey, abundant in fertile land producing large crops and able to support large flocks and herds.

### **Numbers 13:28-29**

**However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.”**

In spite of having just corroborated what *Yahweh* claimed about the land, that it flowed with milk and honey, ten of the spies were frightened by what they saw. They reported that the cities are large and fortified, but what would that matter to a God who had just destroyed Egypt, the most powerful country in the world. They also saw the descendants of Anak there. As we have already pointed out, the sons of Anak were a race of giants.

Not only were there giants there, but the Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. Once again, we see the spies having a very short memory, for the Israelites had already defeated an army of the Amalekites

at Rephidim. There was no reason to think that God would do any less to these Amalekites. By their description, the Amalekites lived in the lowland between the Israelites and the mountains where the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites lived. The implication is that even if the Israelites could defeat the Amalekites again, they couldn't go up against the people in the mountains. They also claimed that the Canaanites lived both on the western shore (the Mediterranean Sea) and along the Jordan River, thus guarding the lowlands of the country on both sides. In short, the spies claimed that it would be futile for them to try to go up into the land because they would be destroyed by the inhabitants of the land.

### **Numbers 13:30**

**But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."**

Upon hearing the majority report from ten of the spies, Caleb demonstrated his faith in *Yahweh* and His promises by proclaiming "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." Notice that he didn't argue against the size of the inhabitants nor did he argue against the fact that their cities were well fortified. Caleb (and Joshua, as we will discover later) had faith that God would keep His promises. It appears from the text that there was no one else among all the Israelites who believed in the promises of *Yahweh*!

### **Numbers 13:31-33**

**Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."**

Apparently, not wanting the people to become encouraged once again, the ten spies who brought the bad report immediately spoke up against Caleb, saying that the inhabitants of the land were stronger than the Israelites. (Apparently, they had forgotten that the Egyptians had been stronger than the Israelites also!) They reported that they had seen the giants and previously they had said that they saw the sons of Anak there as well.

The word *Nephilim* is sometimes translated as "giants." It is derived from the Hebrew word *naphal*, meaning "cast down." There are two scripture passages that seem to talk about the origin of these giants.

the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. (**Genesis 6:2-4**)

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— (**Jude 1:6**)

From these passages it appears that the sons of God (angelic beings who can take on human form) had sexual relations with human women and produced a race of giants. Some people argue that these Nephilim can't be the offspring of angels and human women because of what **Matthew 22:30** or **Mark 12:25** claim.

For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (**Matthew 22:30**)

For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. (Mark 12:25)

To argue that angels can't have sexual relations based on Matthew 22:30 or Mark 12:25 is misleading at best, since these passages simply say that angels in heaven don't get married. These passages do not say that angels can't get married or procreate here on earth. However, to do so would require the angels to leave their proper domain.

The ten spies who brought the bad report were so focused on earthly things that they failed to recognize who their God is and what He had already done for them. When they compared themselves to the sons of Anak, they claimed to feel like grasshoppers next to them (a clear exaggeration).

At this point, we need to insert the words of Moses from the book of Deuteronomy where he is recounting the events of the exodus from Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness:

“Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. And you murmured in your tents and said, ‘Because the LORD hated us he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying, “The people are greater and taller than we. The cities are great and fortified up to heaven. And besides, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.”’ Then I said to you, ‘Do not be in dread or afraid of them. (Deuteronomy 1:26-29)

Because of the bad report that the ten spies brought back, the entire Israelite population was discouraged from following the leading of *Yahweh*. Even Moses' words of encouragement, “Do not be in dread or afraid of them” (Deuteronomy 1:29) seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

## **So What?**

### **Eyes of Faith or Eyes of Fear**

When the Israelites arrived at Kadesh-barnea they should have been filled with anticipation. They had come through the wilderness and they were standing just outside the Promised Land. They should have remembered what *Yahweh* did in Egypt, at the Red Sea. They should have remembered that daily since the Wilderness of Sin *Yahweh* provided manna, at Rephidim, *Yahweh* provided water from the rock and there He defeated the Amalekites, at Mt. Sinai, all the people saw the cloud and heard the very voice of *Yahweh*, and at Kibroth Hataavah, He provided a month's worth of quail. *Yahweh* had repeatedly demonstrated that He is a God of power and provision. When the spies reported that the land was indeed a land of milk and honey, just as *Yahweh* had promised through Moses, they should have been filled with joy and eager anticipation. But when they heard that there were giants to face, giants who were living in fortified cities, the hearts of the people melted within them. Why? Because they forgot who had brought them out of Egypt. They looked upon the situation with their eyes of fear instead of their eyes of faith. They forgot about the miracles and the defeated armies. They forgot who *Yahweh* is, the wonder of His power, and the love He has for His people. They also had forgotten the promise made to Moses by *Yahweh*:

I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (Exodus 33:2)

Instead of focusing on the all-powerful loving One, the people focused on the frightening giants. They held fast to hopelessness. They wallowed in despair.

As for the ten spies who brought the bad report, they looked with their eyes of fear instead of their eyes of faith. They forgot the past as they looked to the future. They saw the world with their own eyes (“we were like grasshoppers compared to them”), instead of seeing it with God's eyes (“though they may be

large to us, they are like grasshoppers in God's eyes"). The inhabitants of the land were bigger than the Israelites, but were they bigger than the God of Israel? The inhabitants of the land were stronger than the Israelites, but were they stronger than the God of Israel? No! The cities of the giants were fortified against the Israelites, but were they fortified against *Yahweh*? No! Instead of trusting in *Yahweh's* word, they let discouragement and depression fill their hearts. Instead of praising *Yahweh*, they complained to Him. Do you remember what Paul taught the Thessalonians?

give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.  
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Even when you are facing what appears to be sure disaster, give thanks to God, and offer yourself to Him. That's what He wants from you!

Are you in the middle of a wilderness right now? Are you facing a challenge that you know you can't overcome? Do they look like giants to you? If so, then quit looking with your own eyes of fear and look, instead, with God's eyes of faith... and give Him thanks. It's possible that you are in the predicament you are in because lately you haven't been listening to God's voice. It's even possible that you're where you are because you blatantly turned from God to do your own thing, knowing full well that it wasn't what God wanted you to do. Or, perhaps, you've been faithful and have been following God carefully. The truth is that it doesn't matter why you're in the fix you're in, God can get you out. All you have to do is humble yourself, give Him thanks, listen to Him, and trust Him.

Remember what we learned last week? Do you remember we said that the first key to following God's leading is humbling yourself before Him? Moses was the most humble of all men, that's why God spoke to him face to face. But Aaron, even though he was the High Priest of Israel was drawn into Miriam's sin because he took his focus off God and had it on himself instead. Even if we are listening to God's still, small voice, if we're looking at the world with our fleshly eyes, we will have a hard time seeing the land flowing with milk and honey because all we will see are the giants and the walled cities.

I am reminded of the story of the Prophet Elisha and his servant when they were surrounded by the army of the Syrians. The servant was looking with his eyes of fear, but Elisha was looking with his eyes of faith:

So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:14-17)

Whatever the giant is that you are facing right now, you need to humble yourself before God, you need to give Him thanks for the situation you're in, you need to listen carefully to what He is saying to you through His Word, the Bible, and you need to step out in faith believing that He will do what He said He would do. Then, and only then, will you be able to see with your eyes of faith instead of your eyes of fear.

### **Only listen to one voice**

We have been meeting as a church here for two years. Some would say that we're not really a church because there are only a handful of us who meet here regularly or because we don't have a church building. Some have accused us of being a cult. Others might say that we must not be doing what God wants us to be doing because we are not growing in numbers. But none of this matters if we are where God wants us to be. On a couple of occasions, we have set aside time to humble ourselves before God,

confessing our sins, and seeking God's will for each one of us. In just a minute we will once again humble ourselves before Almighty God.

It's difficult sometimes to have to get the house cleaned and ready for church, week in and week out. It's difficult sometimes to spend 15 or 20 hours, week in and week out, preparing a lesson that only ten or twelve people are going to hear. It's difficult for you, week in and week out, to come together not knowing how God wants you to be ministering in such a small group of people, and to think that what you're doing doesn't count. Most of all, it's difficult when people ask what church you go to and after telling them that it's a small house church you are asked how many people there are in the church.

How do you answer that?

Joshua and Caleb stood alone against the other ten spies and against all the children of Israel. They didn't receive applause from the people and they didn't win any friends ... except with God. God was well pleased with them and gave them special privileges in the Promised Land. All of their unbelieving friends passed away in the wilderness, but I'm sure that both Joshua and Caleb have since heard these most blessed of words, uttered by their Mighty God,

“Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Do you want to hear these words of praise? Or, do you want to hear praise from the people of this wilderness world?

You won't hear both!

The bottom line is this: We have to live our lives in this world and if we want to please God, we have to live our lives by faith, because:

... without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Is what you are seeking in this life going to mean anything in eternity? Wouldn't you rather hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant”?

Let's pray.