

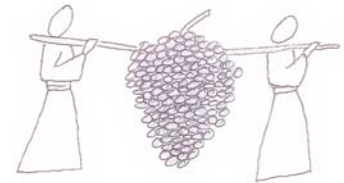
Grasshopper Complex

Read Numbers 13:1-3, 25-33.

I. God's Command (verses 1-3)

In Numbers 13, God commanded Moses to send the spies into the Promised Land to survey it and bring back a report. God's vision for the land was that it would be a land inhabited by faithful Israelites. He was ready to give them the Land. It was theirs. The property deed was in hand. God had set the closing date and the moving date. The Land was no longer the Promised Land it was the Given Land! The spies were being sent into the Land *not* to see who they had to fight, but to see what great blessings were *waiting* for them in the Land.

When Moses sent the spies out from the Israelite camp, they were camped in the wilderness of *Paran*. The Hebrew word *Paran* means "the place of caverns." This "place of caverns" symbolizes the effects of sin. Sin makes us want to hide from God as one who seeks a cavern seeks a place of shelter and seclusion (see Genesis 3:8). Where is your *Paran*? Where and how do you hide from God? *Paran* comes from the Hebrew root word *pa'ar* which means "to glorify oneself." The original sin of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 can be boiled down to this: self-establishment. Sin causes us to live independently of God. What does this have to do with Numbers 13? Numbers 13 is the story of rebellion and how God deals with it.



Number 13:23

Located in Paran is the city of Kadesh. *Kadesh* is similar to the Hebrew word for holy – *qadosh*. Kadesh (qadesh) is a pollution of the word Qadosh. A *Qadesh* was a male prostitute who worked in the temple and performed on the altar of Baal. The worship of the Canaanite god Baal was a fertility cult which centered around the belief that when Baal and his consort Asherah had sexual relations the earth would become fruitful. The Canaanites believed that male and female prostitutes could excite Baal and Asherah by engaging in an orgy on the altar. This usually spread to the "congregation" and pretty soon everyone was wild, naked, and fornicating. God wanted to use Israel to purify this place of counterfeit holiness and sexual immorality and make it a land flowing with more than milk and honey. God wanted the Land to flow with Holiness!

God's plan was that the Israelites would walk in and possess the Land. For God, it was that simple. The enemy was already defeated. It was a done deal. The way God sees things, we've got it whipped. Our victory is already won. We are victorious. His will is done. His Word has been spoken. Will He have to wait on us?

II. The Spies Vision (verses 25-31)

The spies reported that the Land was abundant – *but...* The fruit of the Land was obvious. The evidence was a great cluster of grapes so large it had to be carried on a pole between two men something like the prize animal of a hunt might be carried between two hunters. God was giving them a great place that would satisfy not only their needs but also their wants. The spies reported that the land was abundant *but* the people were powerful and the cities were large and fortified. They were afraid to attack because the people were stronger. Their faith was in their own ability and not in God. Questioning their ability to take possession of the Land, the spies led the people into fear and doubt. Their ability should not have come into play. Frequently there is a chasm between our perception and reality. There are a host of "reality" shows on television. In fact, there is a television network devoted to reality shows. Truly, they are *perception* shows. In my reality, no one I know eats worms or lies in an acrylic casket of snakes. The *perception* of the ten unfaithful spies and the people was that the Canaanites were giants, therefore the Land was unattainable. In reality, the Canaanites were already defeated.

The spies spread a bad report among the people that undermined the faithful testimony of Caleb and Joshua. These two alone stood firm along side Moses and Aaron. These two alone walked into the Land forty years later. It was bad enough that the people doubted themselves, but they also doubted

God. Doubt spread like a cancer in the camp. Amazingly, the people didn't rise up in consternation against the ten unfaithful spies and cry, "What? You don't think we can do this?! Instead they participated and perpetuated the bad report and spread the cancerous doubt. The words of the spies rang louder in their ears than the voice of God. "We are like grasshoppers *in our own eyes*, and the people are giants." What hope could they have had? What could they have expected except to be squashed under the foot of these "giants?" They had forsaken the realization of the enormity of their God. Their "reality" was tainted by the *perception* that their cause was already lost.

"What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; and what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; and what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten" (Joel 1:4 NASB). There are four types of locusts in Joel 1:4; creeping, stripping, gnawing and swarming. Creeping locusts were baby locusts that were too young to fly, so they fed along the ground and were unable to move with the swarm. Stripping locusts were young locusts that ate all the time. Gnawing locusts gnawed the bark off of trees which killed the trees. Swarming locusts were fully mature locusts that produced more locusts. Each of these locusts had a different destructive ability. Together they destroyed any place on which they landed. A swarm of locust seen in the distance was terrifying. Nothing could be done to stop them. Destruction was inevitable.

Middle Eastern locusts grow to about 2½ inches long, have two sets of wings and have legs that are built for hopping. A swarm of locusts can fly for over 17 hours at a time and travel over 1500 miles. Primarily they travel wherever the wind blows them. A swarm may number as many as ten billion, cover over 100 square miles and be so dense as to blot out the sun.

As God had sent a swarm of locusts on the idolatrous people of Israel in Joel 2, so he would have sent Israel as a swarm on the idolatrous people of Canaan. The Israelites, however, didn't see themselves as locusts. They saw themselves as grasshoppers. The Hebrew word in Numbers 13:33, *hagab*, is not any of the words used in Joel 1:4. Only once is *hagab* (grasshoppers) used to show any kind of power – and then it is a pestilence against Israel. There is nothing good about being a grasshopper. A swarm of locusts accomplishes something – destruction. But following that destruction is always new growth. This was God's plan for the Israel in the Land. First Israel would come in like ten billion locusts to destroy the idolatry and immorality of the inhabitants of the Land, and then they would experience new growth and populate the Land.

The spies saw themselves through human eyes that recognized their weaknesses and limitations. In Numbers 13:31 they complained, "We are not able to go up against the people [of the Land], for they are too strong for us." Of this they were correct. The people of the Land were strong, fortified, trained and equipped. The Israelites were fresh out of slavery and ill equipped for battle. The people of the Land were too strong for them but not too strong for God.

The spies saw themselves as a swarm, but they couldn't see their people as unified. They were like a swarm in that they went wherever the wind blew. Unfortunately, it was the wind of fear and doubt that directed them and not the wind of the Holy Spirit. Consider a sail boat. A sail boat goes nowhere unless the wind blows. When the sails are up, the wind fills the sails and the boat moves forward directed by the wind, the sails and the rudder. We are like a sail boat. When our sails are up and we tuned into God, the Holy Spirit blows on us and puts us into motion. Our direction depends on where He is blowing but also on how we trim our sails and which way we turn our rudder.

God saw His people as empowered to possess the Land. The spies defeated themselves and their own nation. The spies saw the "ites" of the Land. Each of these nations mentioned in verses 28 and 29 represent a particular spiritual illness. This is found in examining the Hebrew root word for each "ite." The descendants of *Anak* are "descendants of the earth" and represent the things of man. The *Amalekites* are "those who toil" and represent the rebellion in the human nature that strives to make its own way. The *Amorites* represent self-promotion and prominence. The *Canaanites* are peddlers and represent a peddling spirit that would buy righteousness through manipulation. The *Nephilim* represent those who easily "fall away." The *Hittites* represent the terror and confusion that leads to defeat. Finally, the *Jebusites* represent the faithless that are easily trodden under foot.

III. Caleb's Vision (verses 30)

Caleb had a different vision. "We can do it!" Caleb's voice was a voice of faith. A voice of trust! He saw the giants as God saw them – *defeated*. They were still giants – but they were defeated. Caleb saw them as defeated because he believed God's promise that they would inherit the Land. He saw the people of the Land as a people that God was displacing from the Land of promise. Who, or what, are your giants? What is God trying to displace in your life? What does God need to displace? God has already defeated those things that stand in opposition to His plans and promises for you.

IV. Everyone Gets Their Just Dessert

In Chapter 14 everyone got their just dessert. The tribes' trip through the desert was extended by 40 years. The spies were struck dead. Caleb and Joshua received the Land of Promise and Blessing.

The desert was the land of miracles where God met their needs every time the need arose. He calls us, however, to leave the land of miracles and enter the Land of Blessing. He calls us to enter into the Promised Land of relationship with Him. God calls us to be Calebs – full of faith and trust.

God calls us to leave our daily supply of manna and water from rocks. He calls us to leave the land of miracles and follow Him into the Promised Land – the land of blessing where God provides in abundance. When we live in the Promised Land we can be a blessing to others as we give out of the abundance God has given us.

This passage is full of priorities. God's priority was the people – to bless them beyond measure and put them in a place where they could control the region for God. This area was known as the King's Highway. It was the "road" everyone used when traveling from Egypt to Assyria. With desert east of the mountains, the only reasonable path was through the Promised Land. Whoever possessed the Land exerted great influence on the world. By controlling the region they had the opportunity to influence all who passed through. Caleb had priorities. Caleb's priorities were God and God's will for the people. He was a man of faith, who did not doubt God's ability and desire to deliver His promises. The spies and the people had priorities too, but their priorities were selfish in nature. They were more concerned with position than possession. Maintaining their position among the people intimidated them into playing it safe. By playing it safe, they could maintain their status among the people. If they tried to enter the land and failed, they would lose their political position. Position is disobedience – possession is abundance. God's doesn't call us to strive for position but to receive abundance. Many Christians are more concerned with position in their local church than they are concerned with God having possession of the church. what about you? Are you concerned about position or possession?

We must be more interested in the Miracle Giver than the miracles themselves. Manifestations of the Holy Spirit are wonderful, but they are no substitution for the Holy Spirit. We mustn't get so hung up on manifestations of the Holy Spirit that we miss the Holy Spirit Himself. Many are so busy looking for miracles, signs and wonders that they miss the Holy Spirit. Are you a taker or receiver? A taker takes what they want and leaves the rest behind. A receiver receives all that's given. As I write this it is almost Christmas. The tree and all the decorations will be put up at my house tonight. Soon beautifully wrapped packages will be placed under the tree and some of those will be for me! I am a receiver. I will receive every gift given to me, and I will not "re-gift" a single one of them! God calls us to be receivers of His love, mercy and grace at whatever time and in whatever forms they may come. Have you "re-gifted" the things of God?

We must be more interested in worship than religion. The Israelites were just beginning to move into worshipping God. They had a long way to go, but God was beginning to shape His relationship with them through worship. The "ites" of the Land, on the other hand, had a religion. They participated in vile acts believing those acts pleased their idols. Most of us have a long way to go in terms of worship, but if we are truly interested, purity in worship is possible.

We must be more interested in knowing God than knowing about God. The church that is in love with God doesn't teach theology as much as they seek a relationship with God. Knowing theology and

doctrine are extremely important, but they are of no real value if your relationship with God is empty.

We must be more interested in peace than comfort. The Western understanding of peace is the absence of strife. The Middle Eastern understanding of peace is knowing that God has got your back in the midst of conflict. Sometimes, in our spiritual life, we will encounter “giants” and “ites” that want to steal and rob us of the blessings of God. Peace is a quiet assurance that God is the God of the Land and no weapon formed against us will prosper.

We must be more interested in growing than going – *growing in* Jesus rather than *going for* Jesus. We, too often, want to do a good thing rather than a God thing. Working for God is wonderful when that work is born out of a relationship with Him. When we work because it’s the “right” thing to do, we are wasting time and will ultimately be unfulfilled.

The Promised Land is out there and we’re called to take possession of it. The Promised Land is the place where we can influence the world. It may not seem like much from here, but it’s the land flowing with milk and honey.

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 NASB) Our goal is to resist the grasshopper complex – the complex that tells us we are defeated – the complex that tells us that our mission is not worth pursuing. If we are to resist the grasshopper complex then we must resist the temptation to settle for the land of miracles. Some of us are praying for and looking for a miracle in our lives when God is calling us to be the miracle in someone else’s life. We must resist the temptation to be less than God has called us to be. We mustn’t settle for complacency instead of challenge. We mustn’t settle for the desert when we can have the Land.

Let’s make sure that we are not living in *Paran* – hiding in caverns. Let’s make sure that we are not *pa’ar* – glorifying ourselves. Let’s make sure that we are *qadosh* and not *qadesh* – truly holy and not a counterfeit of holiness.

Overcoming the grasshopper complex requires that we turn away from the giants of toil, self-promotion and prominence, peddling, falling away, terror and confusion, and trodden underfoot. Be faithful – step into the Given Land!