

THE COURAGE OF VISION

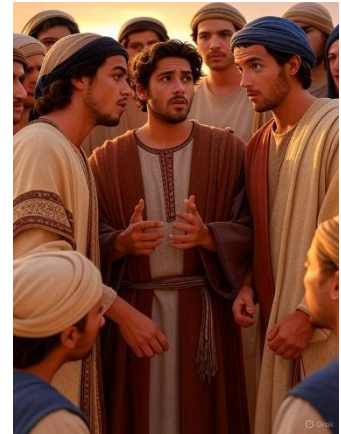
A Devotional Meditation on D'varim (Words)

Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22; Isaiah 1:1-27, 5:13; Hosea 4:6; John 10:22-30; Hebrews 3:7-11

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When we tell the story of Israel's Ten Spies, our usual conclusion is that they missed the fulfillment of God's promises because they chose to focus on the obstacles in front of them rather than the God Who redeemed them. We don't remember their names, but we do remember Joshua and Caleb, the leaders who saw not only the good land of Canaan, but the Creator Who had promised that land to them and their people. They had the vision to take what God had already said was theirs, and no obstacle would stand in their way.



Vision gave Joshua and Caleb the courage to stand on God's promises even when the majority came to a different conclusion. (Image generated by Grok, created by xAI.)

The ten men we don't remember probably weren't weak, wicked, or incompetent. Each of them was a leader and highly regarded in his tribe. Moses and Aaron would have counted on them to organize their people in the march out of Egypt, to establish and maintain order in their camps, and to set examples of godly righteousness. We don't know whether they succumbed to the temptations of the Golden Calf, but if they did, they were repentant enough to have survived that and the other incidents that tried God's patience between the Exodus and border of the Promised Land. So why did they instigate a rebellion on the eve of appropriating what God had given them?

They probably didn't intend to rebel, just like most people have no intention of doing anything wrong. There are those who practice calculated betrayal, proclaiming loyalty to rulers, friends, business associates, and family, but ever ready to turn on them when it suits their interests. Most people are not like that, although they are so wrapped up in the daily affairs of life that they are vulnerable to manipulation by the wicked schemers. That's why God laments that His people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

The story of the Ten Spies provides an illustration of this. After Moses told the people to go up and take possession of the land God had promised them, the people suggested they send out scouts to explore the land and map the way they should go. Moses explains what happened next:

The idea seemed good to me, so I took twelve men from among you—one man for each tribe. They turned and went up into the hill country, and they came to the Wadi Eshcol and spied it out. They took in their hands some of the fruit of the land and brought it down to us. They also brought back word to us and said, "Good is the land that *Adonai* our God is giving to us."

Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of *Adonai* your God. In your tents you grumbled and said: "Because *Adonai* hates us, He has brought us out from the land of Egypt to hand us over to the Amorites, to destroy us! Where are we going? Our brothers have discouraged our hearts saying, 'The people are

greater and taller than we are! The cities are great and fortified up to the heavens! Besides, we have even seen the children of Anakim there!”

Deuteronomy 1:23-28 TLV

All twelve of the scouts agreed with the good report about the land and the fact that God was giving it to them. The rebellion happened later, when the people went back to their tents and started thinking about the other part of the report – the part about the giants living in fortified cities. That’s when the vision of inheriting a large and fertile land faded from their minds, as did the memory of what they had seen God do to bring them out of Egypt and transform them into a nation of free, redeemed people. Whispered fears in their tents became shouted curses at the next public gathering. Instead of assembling as the armies of the LORD, they assembled as a mob demanding peace and safety for themselves and their children. What they got instead, as the author of Hebrews explains, was Divine rejection:

Therefore, just as the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* [Holy Spirit] says,
“Today if you hear His voice,
do not harden your hearts
as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness.
There your fathers put Me to the test,
though they saw My works for forty years.
Therefore I was provoked by this generation,
and I said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,
and they have not known My ways.’
As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

Hebrews 3:7-11 TLV

Conspirators among the Ten Spies or other leaders might have plotted to use this opportunity to revolt against Moses, but it’s equally possible that the people simply lost heart. That’s what happens when there is no vision. It’s the vision that gives identity and direction. Without it, people become sheep without a shepherd, easily scattered and vulnerable to wolves.

It’s not that God is negligent in imparting His vision to His people. Joshua and Caleb caught that vision and it transformed them into godly men of valor. There is no higher vision than the redemption of the world, and that’s the vision they received. God has imparted that vision to each generation since the first, and explained a bit more of it as time progressed. Today we probably know the Shepherd more intimately than Joshua and Caleb did, although it’s up to us whether we follow Him as loyally as they.

How do we remain loyal? By making the decision to know our Redeemer and learn His ways. We also must learn where He is leading us. Are we destined for some undefinable heavenly existence, or for a redeemed and restored earth where all the tribes and tongues and nations abide by the Torah that goes forth from Zion? It’s important to know. Clarity of vision translates to decisive action even in the face of insurmountable odds. Do we want to be remembered for that, or do we want to be remembered as yet another generation that missed out on the Promised Land?