

## Caleb

My name is Caleb. You probably know me as a spy, although I would rather be called a “fact-finder” or “investigator.” Let me explain that the most accurate assessment of my role in the history of my nation was “dissident!”

Have you ever been completely sure that your position was right and yet find yourself overruled? Well, let me summarize the history in case you have forgotten or never heard. My people had been slaves in Egypt and God, through the leadership of Moses (who did not want to be leader, by the way) brought us out after a series of spectacular miracles, and inexplicably, with much of the wealth of the land.

After receiving the Law, we marched to the Promised Land and Joshua, who had been an aide to Moses, and I, were chosen, along with one representative from each of the other tribes to spy out the land. It was an amazing land – all God had promised to us and our forefathers. But can you even guess what the **majority** of the spies said? “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.”

Excuse me? Hadn’t the LORD defeated Egypt and brought us through the Red Sea? Then they even said, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” I think you have an expression for the way Joshua and I felt, “It blew us away!”

We filed a minority report. The LORD would surely give us the victory. We sincerely believed that the people would overrule the foolish opinion of the other spies who had to be a non-representative sample. The rest of the people would certainly not be afflicted by such poor memory and lack of faith. But, incredibly, the people reacted to our report by talking about stoning us.

The LORD God intervened with a plague to destroy the nay-sayers. But for the prayers of Moses the whole nation might have been wiped out! Then some of the remainder of the people repented and thought that now they would obey the LORD and invade the land. Talk about slow learners! That opportunity was gone! They were defeated, of course.

The whole adult population was sentenced to die in the desert over 40 years, and the children that they had claimed would be killed by the inhabitants of the land, would be the only ones who were eventually allowed to enter it.

But the problem was not just with the “popular vote.” The leaders – the recognized elders – also failed to see the point. Korah and a couple other Levites – the tribe designated for holy duties under the authority of the priests – together with 250 leaders from all the tribes -- challenged the leadership of Moses and Aaron. They said, “You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD’s assembly?”

Do any of you have adolescent children? Then you might understand the tearing pain of Moses’ heart. But God himself took over the discipline, told the people to separate from Korah and his people, and to have the 250 leaders offer incense before the Lord. The ground opened up and swallowed Korah and all his followers and their families, and then fire came down from heaven to destroy the 250.

Joshua and I suffered the fate of the rest of the nation as far as wandering for 40 years, but we entered the land and experienced great victories. There were a few defeats to remind us that it was only by obedience to the LORD that we can be victorious.

It you find yourself on the wrong side of public opinion, make sure that you are on the right side of God’s opinion, and then stand firm!

Numbers 13-16, Joshua 14