

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Viktor Frankl in his book, "Man's Search for Meaning," describes the reactions of two brothers with the same heredity, the same environment, in the same concentration camp under the Nazis. One became a saint and the other a swine. Frankl tells us the reason why. He said, "Each man has within him the power to choose how he will react to any given situation." God has given us the power of choice. Some people today do not wish to accept the responsibility for their actions. They blame society. They blame the environment. They blame the schools. They blame the circumstances. But Adam sinned in a perfect environment under perfect circumstances. We can't blame it all on somebody else. We must accept the blame ourselves for our part. Society is made up of individuals. If we have social injustice, we're the ones who are wrong; we're part of it. Let's accept our responsibility to do something about it. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil means that the one thing that Adam and Eve were NOT free to do was to delineate for themselves what is good and what is evil. As soon as they did that, they put themselves in the place of God. Only God can delineate what is good and evil. When God commanded Adam not to take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He was showing him what choice he should make. God wanted him to choose life, not death. Much later, when God brought Israel out of Egypt, He gave them a similar choice: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Theme: 1:19-46: Israel's failure at Kadesh is recalled

Sections

- I. 1:19-21: Leaving Horeb, arrival at Kadesh-Barnea
- II. 1:22-25: spies sent out to the land
- III. 1:26-33: the people rebel
- IV. 1:34-40: the punishment on the people, on Moses, but not the children who have no knowledge
- V. 1:41-46: this punishment is irrevocable, even though they are repentant

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- I. 1:19-21: Leaving Horeb, arrival at Kadesh-Barnea
 - a. They leave Horeb
 - b. They set out
 - c. "Set out" is modified by "into that great and terrible wilderness."
 - d. They saw this wilderness on the way to the hill country of the Amorites
 - e. They had seen this when traveling "as the Lord commanded us." This is in 1:2 where it said it was an 11 day journey.
 - f. Verse 20 Moses is talking about what he told them.
 - g. Verse 21: Moses is telling them that this is the land. This is the land the Lord is giving them.
 - h. They are encouraged to not be afraid.
 - i. See Joshua 1:6 and 1:9
 - j. Kadesh-Barnea is on the edge of the promised land.
 - k. Moses is warning them not to make the mistakes their fathers made.
 - l. It has been some 38 years since the account of the spies and the lack of faith.

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- m. In verse 20 Moses says that he “said to ‘you.’” This would be the parents of the current generation. The people Moses is talking to now were either children at the time or not yet born.
 - n. Deuteronomy repeatedly addresses the current generation as being present through the parents.
 - o. Dr. Constable shares: *Deuteronomy 1:19 (TCENB): The Hebrew word translated “take possession” (v. 21), referring to the Promised Land, occurs over 50 times in Deuteronomy. God’s great desire for His people had been that they possess what He had promised them. Unfortunately the older generation would not because of fearful unbelief.*¹
- II. 1:22-25: spies sent out to the land
- a. Verse 22: they approached Moses with the idea of the spies. This comes from Numbers 13:1-3:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, “Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers’ tribes, every one a leader among them.”

- 3 So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel.²
 - b. This passage mentions this being the Lord’s command.
 - c. This does not mean there is a discrepancy.
 - d. It certainly could have been the Lord moving through the people to tell Moses. The Lord could have spoken to the elders to talk with Moses about this idea of sending out spies.
 - e. Life Application Study Bible: Deut 1:22
The scouts had been sent into the land to determine not whether they should enter, but where they should enter. Upon returning, however, most of the scouts had concluded that the land was not worth the obstacles. God would give the Israelites the power to conquer the land, but they were afraid of the risk and decided not to enter. God gives us the power to overcome our obstacles, but just as the Israelites were filled with fear and skepticism, we often let difficulties control our lives. When we follow God regardless of the difficulties, we demonstrate courageous, overcoming faith.
 - f. Verse 23: this idea pleased Moses.
 - g. Verse 24 tells where and how they spied the land.
 - h. Verse 25 is consistent with Numbers except in Numbers there was a good report and a negative report.
 - i. Numbers 13:30-32 we see the negative report and Caleb’s good minority report.
 - j. Notice Caleb’s trust in God in Numbers 13:30: *Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it.”*³
 - k. Numbers 14 records the people rebelling and the death of everyone 20 and older. Numbers 14:29 records: *your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men,*

¹ <http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/deuteronomy.pdf>

² *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Nu 13:1–3.

³ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Nu 13:30.

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*according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me.*⁴

- III. 1:26-33: the people rebel
- a. This is what we see in Numbers 14
 - b. This records the peoples lack of faith
 - c. Verse 26: “yet you were not willing to go up...”
 - d. They rebelled against the “command” of the Lord.
 - i. This was a commandment to take the land
 - ii. they were disobedient.
 - iii. The positive report of the spies was juxtaposed with the people’s rebellion.
 - iv. Deuteronomy records the people’s culpability.
 - v. This is reinforcing that the current generation does not follow their father’s footsteps.
 - e. Next few verses record what they said:
 - f. Verse 27: they grumbled in their tents.
 - g. They said, “the Lord hates us.” “He brought us out of Egypt to kill us.”
 - i. They said this even though they had seen many miracles.
 - ii. Remember this is the parents of the current generation.
 - iii. It has been roughly 38 years and everyone 20 or older at this time has died and so now the people Moses is talking with are 58 and younger except Caleb, Joshua and himself.
 - h. They made other excuses:
 - i. The people are bigger
 - ii. The cities are large and fortified to Heaven.

The Anakim: Tyndale Bible Dictionary: **ANAK, ANAKIM*, ANAKITES** Ancestor of a race of giants in old Canaan. When Israel first reached Canaan, the Anakim were well established in Hebron. Ten of the 12 spies Moses sent into Canaan (Nm 13:17–22) were terrified by the size of the Anakim (Nm 13:31). Their terror led to a rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (Nm 14:39–45; Dt 1:19–46) and another 38 years of wandering. When the Israelites were finally ready to enter Canaan, God promised his help against the famed Anak giants (Dt 9:1–3).

The two spies who were not afraid of the Anakim were both involved in their defeat. Joshua defeated the Anakim living in Hebron, Debir, Anab, and all the region of Judah (Jos 11:21–23). Those who survived were left only in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. The other spy, Caleb, was responsible for the defeat of the Anakim chiefs Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi at Hebron; Caleb’s nephew Othniel was the hero of Debir (Jos 15:14–17). Hebron had earlier been called Kiriath-arba for Anak’s father Arba, a great hero of the Anakim (Jos 14:15; 21:11). The fact that the Anakim survived in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod leads to the supposition that Goliath of Gath may have been a descendant of these giants (1 Sm 17:4–7).

See also Giants.⁵

The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary:

⁴ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Nu 14:29.

⁵ Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, [*Tyndale Bible Dictionary*](#), Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 44.

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Anakites. *The descendants of Anak are specifically mentioned in Numbers 13:22, 28. When names are given, they are Hurrian (biblical Horites; see comment on Deut 2). The descendants of Anak are generally considered “giants” (Num 13:33; Deut 2:10–11; 2 Sam 21:18–22), though the description “gigantic” may be more appropriate. There is no mention of the Anakites in other sources, but the Egyptian letter on Papyrus Anastasi I (thirteenth century B.C.) describes fierce warriors in Canaan that are seven to nine feet tall. Two female skeletons about seven feet tall from the twelfth century have been found at Tell es-Sa’ideyeh in Transjordan.⁶*

The NET Bible gives note:

Anakites were giant people (Num 13:33; Deut 2:10, 21; 9:2) descended from a certain Anak whose own forefather Arba founded the city of Kiriath Arba, i.e., Hebron (Josh 21:11).⁷

- i. Verse 29: Moses encourages them not to be shocked or fear them.
 - j. The NET Bible gives note: *Heb “do not tremble and do not be afraid.” Two synonymous commands are combined for emphasis.⁸*
 - k. Verse 30:
 - i. I love this verse.
 - ii. The Lord will fight for you like He did in Egypt.
 - iii. This idea is repeated in the Old Testament: Ex 14:14; Deut 3:22; 20:4; Neh 4:20⁹
 - l. Verse 31 is significant and a picturesque and touching thought. The Lord will carry you as a man carries his son. Think about that. A son is safe and comforted in his father’s arms. Moses is saying you will be safe like a child in his fathers arms.
 - m. The Zondervan NIV Bible shares: *Verse 31 is the second time the OT explicitly describes God as a “father” to his people (cf. Exod 4:22). This is the beginning of a spiritual journey that will end with disciples from all nations calling God “Abba , Father” (Rom 8:15).*
 - n. Verse 32: you still did not trust the Lord.
 - i. Other verses about their lack of trust:
 - ii. Num 14:11; Ps 106:24; Heb 3:19; 4:2; Jude 5¹⁰
 - iii. Dr. Constable shares: Verse 32:
Deuteronomy 1:19 (TCENB): Such familial language was common in ancient Near Eastern treaty texts where the maker of the covenant would be ‘father’ and the receiver ‘son.’”¹¹
 - iv.
 - o. Verse 33: the Lord was leading them with a pillar of fire by day and cloud by night.
- IV. 1:34-40: the punishment on the people, on Moses, but not the children who have no knowledge
- a. Verse 34-35: the Lord is angry with the people and brings about consequences

⁶ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 1:28.

⁷ Biblical Studies Press, [*The NET Bible First Edition Notes*](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 1:28.

⁸ Biblical Studies Press, [*The NET Bible First Edition Notes*](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 1:29.

⁹ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹¹ <http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/deuteronomy.pdf>

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- b. Num 14:28–30; Heb 3:18: again, everyone 20 and older will die in the land.
- c. God says through Moses that they could not enter the “good” land. The land was good.
- d. This is reflected on in the Psalms as well as the prophets and the New Testament.
- e. Ps 95:11; 106:26; Ezek 20:15; 1 Cor 10:5; Heb 3:14–19¹²
- f. Verse 36: Caleb “wholly” followed the Lord
- g. Verse 37: Even Moses the Lord was angry with. Moses was frustrated with the people and in anger struck a rock in Numbers 20:2-13.
- h. Verse 38: Joshua
 - i. Joshua will enter the land and he should be encouraged
 - ii. Joshua will cause them to enter the land.
- i. Verse 39: The irony is that the children who they thought would be prey will be the ones to inherit the land: Num 14:3, 31
- j. This is to show also the idea that children who die go to Heaven. God does not punish children who cannot choose right from wrong.
- k. Dr. Constable shares: Verse 39:
Deuteronomy 1:19 (TCENB): Moses connected entering the Promised Land with the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The new generation of Israelites was in a position similar to the one in which their original parents found themselves. They had “no knowledge of good or evil” and so had to depend on God to “give it to them” as a gracious father (v. 39; cf. 32:6). The instruction (Torah) that Moses gave the people was the means that God would use to provide for their good (cf. 30:15–16).¹³
- l. The NET Bible gives a note: *Do not know good from bad. This is a figure of speech called a merism (suggesting a whole by referring to its extreme opposites). Other examples are the tree of “the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9), the boy who knows enough “to reject the wrong and choose the right” (Isa 7:16; 8:4), and those who “cannot tell their right hand from their left” (Jonah 4:11). A young child is characterized by lack of knowledge.¹⁴*
- m. Verse 40 is God telling them to the wrong way rather than enter the land: Num 14:25
- n. The NET Bible notes about the Red Sea: *Heb “the Reed Sea.” “Reed” is a better translation of the Hebrew רִיד (suf), traditionally rendered “red.” The name “Red Sea” is based on the LXX which referred to it as ἐρυθρὰς θαλάσσης (eruthras thalassēs, “red sea”). Nevertheless, because the body of water in question is known in modern times as the Red Sea, this term was used in the translation. The part of the Red Sea in view here is not the one crossed in the exodus but its eastern arm, now known as the Gulf of Eilat or Gulf of Aqaba.¹⁵*
- V. 1:41-46: this punishment is irrevocable, even though they are repentant
 - a. Verse 41: they are repentant.
 - b. They strap on their weapon to fight.
 - c. Verses 42-43: Moses tells the people from the Lord not to fight because He is not with them.
 - i. Whether we win a battle or not is about the Lord.

¹² [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹³ <http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/deuteronomy.pdf>

¹⁴ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 1:39.

LXX Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament, translated between 250–100 BC)

¹⁵ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 1:40.

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- ii. The Israelites won because of the Lord, not because of them.
 - iii. Moses tells them this and they rebel and disobey again.
 - d. Verse 44:
 - i. they lose.
 - ii. Interesting imagery that they were chased down like bees.
 - e. Verse 45: they return and weep
 - i. Interesting the Lord would not listen.
- Psalm 66:18: *If I had harbored sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*¹⁶
- ii. Deut. 2:14 records that they were there for 38 years:
 - iii. ^{2:14} *Now the length of time it took for us to go from Kadesh Barnea to the crossing of Wadi Zered was **thirty-eight years**, time for all the military men of that generation to die, just as the LORD had vowed to them.*¹⁷

Dr. Constable shares:

Summary:

*Deuteronomy 1:19 (TCENB): chapter 1 sets up what Deuteronomy is about. It will echo and anticipate disobedience and unwillingness to live by promise and instruction. Further, the chapter gives us clues about the purpose and context of Deuteronomy. It is a word of instruction about how to live in the land, addressed to a people whose history reflects persistent faithlessness and disobedience . . .*¹⁸

¹⁶ Biblical Studies Press, [*The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible*](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), Ps 66:18.

¹⁷ Biblical Studies Press, [*The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible*](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2005), Dt 2:14.

¹⁸ <http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/deuteronomy.pdf>