

would hardly have travelled together, or in groups large enough to attract attention to themselves. The several groups searched the land from end to end, one group going as far as Rehob^f, as men come to Hamath, in the extreme north. Another group spent its time exploring the area around Hebron, where the sons of Anak lived (for discussion of the sons of Anak, see note on Dt.ii.10). At the brook of Eshcol, near Hebron, they cut down a branch with a cluster of grapes, as an example of the fruit which the land produced. Even today the grapes of Hebron are famous throughout Palestine.

b. The report of the spies (xiii.26-33)

After forty days (25) the spies returned to the congregation, which was now encamped at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran, the region from which the spies had started out (3). Since Kadesh is not mentioned in verse 3 it is possible that the movement to this place had occurred during the absence of the spies. The large desert regions known as the wilderness of Paran and the wilderness of Zin are not precisely delimited, and may even have overlapped, since they are not political designations. The general report contains two elements: first, the excellence of the land (27), which must have appeared beautiful indeed after more than a year of life in the desert; and second, the great strength of its inhabitants (28-29). Verses 28-29 present in crescendo the difficulties of conquest, and one can almost feel the people's terror mounting as they listen. Then one of the spies interrupts the report of the others, in an attempt to slow down this reaction. Caleb stilled the people (30), asserting that they were well able to conquer the land. However, the other spies flatly contradicted him (31-33), declaring the conquest to be impossible, as indeed it was, apart from divine aid. In their terror they exaggerated the difficulties, giving the impression that all of its inhabitants were giants, and calling the country a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof (32).

It is sometimes said that this contradicts verse 27, and proves that the account is really made up of a combination of two contradictory stories, one of which *f*