

represents the unfaithful spies as opposing the attempt to conquer the land on the ground that its people are too powerful, while the other represents them as saying that it is not a good land at all. Such a claim rests upon an interpretation of this verse which makes it stand absolutely alone, since all other statements about the land in chapters xiii and xiv speak of it as fertile and desirable. Except for this one phrase, the entire stress in verses 31-33 is on the ferocity and strength of the inhabitants; this is true both of verse 31 which precedes this phrase, and of 32b ~~which/it/~~ and 33 which follow it. When the Israelites threaten to return to Egypt (xiv.4) they do so, not on the ground that Canaan is not a good country, but that the attempt to conquer it will cause them to fall by the sword and their wives and little ones to become a prey (xiv.3). Thus the whole content of the two chapters runs contrary to the idea that this one phrase means that the land is not a good land.

To determine the meaning of the phrase we must look at its use elsewhere. It occurs in two places: Lv.xxvi.38 and Ezk.xxxvii.13-14. In both passages, as in the passage before us, the phrase indicates that there is something about a land which leads to the early death of its inhabitants. In Ezk.xxxvi.13-14 the factor in view is lack of sufficient crops, since the passage is a promise that the land of Canaan, -which became a land of famine during the exile, would again yield its fruit (cf. xxxvi.8,11). In Lv.xxvi.38, however, the situation is quite different. If the phrase specifically referred to death as a result of famine, it would have been used in Lv. xxvi.20 or 26, where famine is in view, rather than twelve verses later, in 38. There, as in our present passage, death from the ferocity of an enemy is what is meant. When the spies said that the land eats up its inhabitants, perhaps they were referring to the constant wars between cities and between regions, which cursed Canaan at this time (as is evidenced by the El Amarna tablets). The inhabitants of the land were in constant danger from this source: what then would be the fate of a people, inexperienced in war, who would attempt to conquer a land of giants, battle-conditioned by constant strife? To make the phrase contain a denial