

## Text Study: Holding the Future in Your Hands

After saying the blessing before study, read the following text and discuss the questions that follow.

Arriving at the wilderness of Paran, the Israelites are given their first opportunity to enter the Promised Land. Moses sends 12 men, each a leader among the Israelites, to scout out the land. The scouts are to collect information about the strengths and weaknesses of the military, economic, and natural resources of the land of Canaan. They return with ripe fruits and with conflicting reports about the challenges ahead.

### במדבר פרק יג - יד א

וַיָּשׁבוּ מִתּוֹרֵי הָאָרֶץ מִקֶּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם: וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיְבִיאוּ אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל-כָּל-עֵדוּת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-מִדְבַּר פָּאֲרָן קִדְשָׁה וַיָּשִׁיבוּ אֹתָם דְּבַר וְאֶת-כָּל-הַעֲדָה וַיִּרְאוּם אֶת-פְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ: וַיִּסְפְּרוּ-לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּאֲנוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתֶּנּוּ וְגַם זֶבֶת חֶלֶב וְדֹבֶשׁ הוּא וְזֶה-פְרִיָּהּ: אֲפֹס כִּי-עַז הָעָם הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּאָרֶץ וְהָעָרִים בְּצֻרוֹת גְּדֹלוֹת מְאֹד וְגַם יְלְדֵי הָעֵנָק רָאִינוּ שָׁם... וַיִּהְיֶה כָּלֵב אֶת-הָעָם אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר עֲלֶה נַעֲלֶה וַיִּרְשְׁנוּ אֹתָהּ כִּי-יָכוֹל נוּכַל לָהּ: וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא נוּכַל לַעֲלוֹת אֶל-הָעָם כִּי-חֲזָק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ: וַיֵּצִיאוּ דְבַר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תָּרוּ אֹתָהּ אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר... וְנָהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחַגְבִּים וְכֹן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם: וַתִּשָּׂא כָל-הַעֲדָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת-קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ הָעָם בְּלֵילָה הַהוּא:

At the end of forty days they (the 12 scouts) returned from scouting the land. They went straight to Moses and Aaron and the whole community at *Kadesh* in the wilderness of *Paran* and they made their report to them and to the whole community, as they showed them the fruit of the land. This is what they told them, "We came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who inhabit the country are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large, moreover, we saw the *Anakites* (giants) there... Caleb hushed the people before Moses and said, "Let us by all means go up, and we shall gain possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it." ... But the men who had gone up with him said... and we looked like grasshoppers to ourselves and so we must have looked to them." The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night. (Numbers 13: 25-14:1)

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## Questions for Discussion:

1. The 12 scouts return in agreement about the future state: the Promised Land is flowing with milk and honey. They hold its abundant fruit in their hands. However, they differ in their reports about the challenges ahead. Based on your reading of this text, what are the differences between the majority report and the one delivered by Caleb? What explanation does the text hint at as to why the majority of the scouts held a pessimistic outlook?
2. Thinking back to the five Conditions for Change, which of them are present and which missing in the majority report? Which of them are present and which missing in Caleb's report? What else could Caleb have said or done to respond to the community as it wept in the face of what lay ahead?
3. As a Task Force member, you will begin to see a vision of the future. You will even begin to taste some of its fruits. But as you move forward and the work becomes more challenging, the costs of change clearer and more daunting, what will enable you to acknowledge those challenges and still speak in a clear and confident voice about the congregation's ability to overcome them?

### Conditions for Long Lasting, Far Reaching, Significant Change

**Impetus for Change:** The impetus for change comes from identifying the gap between what exists now and what could be. An impetus for change emerges when the standard for success has changed.

**Practical First Steps:** Practical first steps move core values and concepts emerging through the visioning process from the abstract to the concrete. Practical first steps give the larger community ways to be actively engaged in contributing to positive change.

**Belief that Change is Possible:** The conviction that you can act to make change happen. Expanding the horizon of imagination to overcome anxiety about the unknown.

**Clear Vision of the Future State:** Vision is “a compelling organizing image of a future state of an organization.” (Burt Nanus, Visionary Leadership) It motivates and sustains the leadership and stakeholders, enabling them to make decisions and set priorities that are consistent with the vision.

**Community:** Community binds people together. It builds trust, deep knowing, and common language. Community is developed when everyone's voice is heard and respected.



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