

## Who is Caleb in the Bible?

The story of Caleb, a faithful man of God, begins in the book of Numbers. After being delivered from bondage in Egypt, the Israelites were led by God to the border of the land of Canaan, a land “flowing with milk and honey” that God had promised they would inherit (Exodus 3:8, 17). Moses had chosen twelve men, one from each tribe, to scout the land before entering. Among them was Caleb, representing the tribe of Judah. The twelve men spied out the land for forty days and then came back to Moses. They reported that the land was indeed fruitful but its inhabitants were the mighty descendants of Anak. Terrified by the size and strength of the Canaanites, ten of the spies warned Moses not to enter Canaan (Numbers 13:23-33).

Caleb silenced the murmuring, fearful men by saying, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it” (Numbers 13:30). Caleb took his stand because he followed the Lord wholeheartedly (Joshua 14:8-9). Caleb knew of the promises of God to the Israelites, and, despite the evidence of his own eyes regarding the obstacles, he had faith that God would give them victory over the Canaanites.

Unfortunately, the people of Israel ignored Caleb and listened to the report of the other spies. They were so frightened that they wept all night and even wished they had died at the hands of their slave masters in Egypt (Numbers 14:1-4). They turned on Caleb and Joshua (the spy from Ephraim) and wanted to stone them on the spot (Numbers 14:6-10). God was exceedingly angry with the people and threatened to destroy them until Moses interceded for them. God relented, but He decreed that the people would wander in the wilderness until all of that faithless generation had died. But God said that “my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly” and gave him the promise that he would own all the land he had seen as a spy (Numbers 14:11-24).

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years until all of that generation, except Joshua and Caleb, died (Numbers 14:29-30). After the forty years of wandering and five more years of war within Canaan, Caleb was 85 years old; yet he was as strong as ever and able to fight the same Anakites that had frightened his countrymen. His confidence was born out of his absolute faith in the promises of God (Joshua 15:13-14).

Caleb's territory in Canaan included "Kiriath Arba, that is, Hebron. (Arba was the forefather of Anak.) From Hebron Caleb drove out the three Anakites—Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai, the sons of Anak. From there he marched against the people living in Debir (formerly called Kiriath Sepher)" (Joshua 15:13-15). Othniel, a nephew of Caleb, captured Kiriath Sepher and was given Caleb's daughter Aksah to wed (verses 16-17). Later, Aksah asked her father to include some springs of water as part of her inheritance (verses 18-19), and Caleb gave them to her. Later still, Othniel, Caleb's son-in-law, became Israel's first judge (Judges 3:7-11).

From the accounts of the life of Caleb, we see a faithful man who trusted God to fulfill His promises when others allowed their fears to override their small faith. Even into his later years, Caleb remained steadfast in his faith. God blessed Caleb for his faithfulness and patience, an encouragement to us to believe God. Like Caleb, we should be prepared to follow God in every circumstance, patiently waiting for Him to fulfill His promises and ready to take action when the time is right.