

Things That Are Unlike

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Numbers 13:25-14:31

The flip side of comparison is contrast – things that are unlike. We could say in Bible study, as in love, opposites attract. At least they attract the eye of the observant reader. There are several ways the Biblical writers signify contrast . . . the word *but* is a clue that a change of direction is coming.

This passage occurs just as the twelve spies return from scouting out the Promised Land. The nation of Israel has come out of the slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea, and across the desert. They are poised at the brim of the land to which God has led them. They've faced a lot of challenges and done a lot of grumbling, but all they need is a report from their advance men and they can complete their journey.

Read **Numbers 13:25-14:10**. If you look carefully, you'll notice that almost every time a positive theme starts to develop, you'll find a word such as *but* or *nevertheless* followed by a section quite unlike what had preceded it. Where are the turning points in this passage? (You should find at least three.)

In an ironic twist, God begins to speak to Moses and pass judgment on the people. His sentence is a hard one, clear about the suffering and death that will take place during the next forty years. And in this section, almost every place you find the word *but* it is to make a positive exception. Read **Numbers 14:11-31**. Look for the occasional *buts* and an occasional *except*, and note whom God singles out as being unlike the rest of the unfaithful Israelites.