

Deuteronomy 1:41-46

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-1/deuteronomy-141-46/>

The story continues. The disobedient Israelites decided to go up and fight with their enemies against the will of God. Consequently, their tentative conquest was unsuccessful and shameful.

After rebelling against God's command to conquer Canaan, the Israelites rebelled once more against God. First, they refused to fight when God told them to. Next they refused to refrain from fighting when God told them to. The people of God rightly said, "*We have sinned against the LORD,*" then wrongly added, "*we will indeed go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.*" They *girded on their weapons of war*. Now, instead of considering an invasion impossible, they *regarded it as easy to go up into the hill country*. It seems they had a great talent for believing just the opposite of what God told them.

The LORD then told Moses: "*Say to them, 'Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; otherwise you will be defeated before your enemies.'*" Their window for obedience had passed. God had given them ample chances to gain their reward. Now the opportunity was gone. This is a principle throughout the Bible. God provides ample opportunity for obedience. And God greatly rewards obedience. But at some point, the opportunity to obey passes, and the consequence of disobedience prevails.

The Israelites proceeded to sin against God once again. They *would not listen*. Once again, they *rebelled against the command of the LORD*. They *acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country* to fight. But they were defeated, as God had promised. The Amorites chased them as *bees do and crushed them from Seir to Hormah*.

The parallel account in Numbers is worth noting, for it explicitly states that the decision of the Israelites was a deliberate act of disobedience. [Numbers 14](#) states, "When Moses spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, the people mourned greatly. In the morning, however, they rose up early and went up to the ridge of the hill country, saying, 'Here we are; we have indeed sinned, but we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised'" ([Numbers 14:39-40](#)). This decision shows that the Israelites have displayed

minimal respect for God and have “turned back from following the LORD” (Numbers 14:43).

Despite Moses’ warning that the LORD would not be with the people, they marched up *into the hill country* and fought anyway. Consequently, neither Moses nor the ark of the covenant which symbolized the presence of the LORD departed from the camp (Numbers 14:44). This resulted in shame and defeat of the Israelites by the Amorites who *crushed* them *from Seir*, that is, Edom, to *Hormah* (a Canaanite city in the Negev). The people finally returned to Kadesh with tears in their eyes and *wept before the LORD* in vain. For the *LORD did not listen to their voice nor give ear* to them. They made their choice, now they had to live with the consequences.

The people then *remained in Kadesh many days*. Now, instead of entering the Promised Land as they ought, the people are in limbo. It is said that people who are ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it. By recounting Israel’s history, Moses is making it clear to the second generation the critical importance of obedience, the provision of God to deliver on His promises, and the immense adverse consequences of disobedience. He is preparing them to make a critical decision whether they are going to follow Joshua and enter the land or turn back as their fathers did.

Biblical Text:

⁴¹ “Then you said to me, ‘We have sinned against the Lord; we will indeed go up and fight, just as the Lord our God commanded us.’ And every man of you girded on his weapons of war, and regarded it as easy to go up into the hill country. ⁴² “And the Lord said to me, ‘Say to them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; otherwise you will be defeated before your enemies.”’ ⁴³ “So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. Instead you rebelled against the command of the Lord, and acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country. ⁴⁴ “The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do, and crushed you from Seir to Hormah. ⁴⁵ “Then you returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord did not listen to your voice nor give ear to you. ⁴⁶ “So you remained in Kadesh many days, the days that you spent *there*.