

Deuteronomy 9:22-24

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Moses outlines other instances of Israel's rebellion and the adverse consequences brought by the disobedience to exhort this generation to follow God wholly.

The molten calf incident at Mount Sinai was not the only sinful action the Israelites committed against the LORD. Moses reminded them that *at Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah they provoked the LORD to wrath*. The first incident at *Taberah* is recorded in [Numbers 11:1-3](#). According to this passage, the Israelites complained because God wasn't providing circumstances to their liking. They were not willing to trust that God was providing the circumstances they needed, that were in their best interest. So the LORD disciplined them with fire, and the people cried out and repented.

The second incident, at *Massah*, records Israel's response to a lack of water in the wilderness. This incident is recorded in [Exodus 17:1-7](#). Instead of asking God to provide drinking water for them, and trusting He would do so as He had done in the past ([Exodus 16](#)), the people started demanding God perform for them according to their desires, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" ([Exodus 17:7](#)).

Although God was not pleased with His people's approach, He provided water for them. He asked Moses to "strike the rock" to bring water for the thirsty people ([Exodus 17:6](#)). And Moses did so in the sight of the Israelites. Moses called the place "Massah," which means "testing," in reference to their testing of God ([Exodus 17:6-7](#)). When Jesus was tempted by Satan to jump off the pinnacle of the temple and test God to see if He would deliver on the Bible's promise to have His angels watch over and guard Him, Jesus answered by quoting [Deut 6:16](#), which mentions the incident at *Massah*: *You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah*. The people demanded God perform like a genie in a bottle at *Massah*, which was another form of disobedience.

The third incident at *Kibroth-hattaavah* pertains to Israel's rejection of God's provision in favor of the foods of Egypt. In [Numbers 11:31-34](#), the Israelites grumbled about God's miraculous provision of manna, saying, "Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt" ([Numbers](#)

11:18). Of course the people had forgotten the reality that they were abused slaves in Egypt. The Suzerain God answered their complaint and fed His people quail, but it turned into a punishment for their complaining. Those who were most eager to eat meat were punished, for “while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very severe plague.” The place was named Kibroth-hattavah because these words mean “graves of craving” ([Numbers 11:33-34](#)).

Furthermore, Moses reminded the Israelites of their unbelief and unrighteousness using a fourth incident. He said to them, “*When the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, ‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; you neither believed Him nor listened to His voice.*” This incident is recorded in [Numbers 13-14](#)

According to [Numbers 13](#) and [14](#), the Suzerain God commanded Moses to “send out” men to spy the land of Canaan. So, Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He sent out twelve spies, one man from each tribe, and commissioned them to go to the land to map it out. Upon their return, the spies carried with them “some of the pomegranates and the figs” to show to Moses, Aaron, and to the rest of the people (v. 23). They “brought back word to them and showed them the fruit of the land” (vv. 25-26). The spies gave the Israelites a mixed report about the land when they said to them, “We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there” (vv. 27-28).

Despite the statement of the scouts that the land of Canaan does flow with milk and honey, the Israelites rebelled against God’s command to go up and conquer the land. Instead of focusing on God’s promise, and God’s faithfulness up to that point, the people chose to focus on the fearful portion of the report. Therefore, God decreed that all those who *rebelled against the command* of God to *go up and possess the land which* God had granted to them, and *neither believed God nor listened to His voice* should not see the good land which He promised to give them ([Numbers 14:28-30](#)).

Moses brought all these incidents to the attention of the Israelites to demonstrate to them that Israel had a history of continuous rebellion against their Suzerain (Ruler) God. He stated, *You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you.* When they disobeyed, they suffered serious

adverse consequences. Moses is giving them this “locker room speech” before the “big game”: the Israelites crossing the Jordan river to take the land of Canaan. God has always been faithful, and they always prospered when they trusted Him. But their Suzerain God also disciplined them when they refused to trust, and walked in disobedience. Moses is preparing them to walk in obedience, and go in and possess the land of Canaan, that was *given* to Israel so that God might *confirm the oath which the LORD swore to their fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* ([Deuteronomy 9:6](#)).

Biblical Text:

²² “**Again at Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the Lord to wrath. ²³ When the Lord sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, ‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God; you neither believed Him nor listened to His voice. ²⁴ You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day I knew you.**