**Deuteronomy 9:7-14**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-9/deuteronomy-97-14/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-9/deuteronomy-97-14/)

*Moses recounts Israel’s disobedience with the molten calf at Mount Sinai to demonstrate God’s assertion that they are not gaining the land because of their righteousness.*

Having told the Israelites that the conquest of Canaan would be the outcome of the LORD’s will, Moses turned to history in order to prove his assertion in verse 5 that it was *not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land*. He asked them to remember how they insulted their Suzerain God. He said, “*Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness*; *from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD*.”

Moses reminded the Israelites that their history is one of continuous rebellion against their Suzerain. They had been unfaithful to God on numerous occasions. In fact, the people *provoked the LORD* their *God to wrath in the wilderness*, soon after He had redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. Their rebellion continued until they arrived on the plain of Moab. To show the extent to which Israel rebelled against the LORD, Moses stated, *Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath*. The mention of Horeb (Mount Sinai) here is significant because it was there that the LORD assembled His people to establish a covenant relationship with them. The Israelites provoked God to wrath at Horeb (on Mount Sinai), soon after they had willingly agreed to the terms of the covenant, saying, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!” ([Exodus 19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.8&t=NASB95)). Therefore, *the LORD was so angry* *with* them *that He would have destroyed* them.

Israel’s disobedience to the LORD could have resulted in death. The LORD *would have destroyed* them because He *was so angry.* But what did the Israelites do that provoked the LORD to such a wrath? Moses recounted the incident in verses 9-21, but the original account is recorded in [Exodus 24:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+24.18&t=NASB95); [Exodus 31:18-34:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+31.18-34.28&t=NASB95). In [Deuteronomy 9:9-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+9.9-10&t=NASB95), Moses reminded the Israelites that he had gone up *to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD had made with* Israel. This was the Ten Commandments.

While Moses *remained on the mountain forty days and nights*, and *neither ate nor drank water,*the people were down below having a pagan festival and breaking God’s commands*.*The people were not just worshipping an idol, they were engaging in the practices they had observed in Egypt. “They rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” ([Exodus 32:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+32.6&t=NASB95)).

*The LORD gave* Moses *the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken with* Israel *at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.*So the commands were not new. The people had heard them on the *mountain from the midst of the fire.*The commands were simply being written down. The people knew they were breaking God’s commands. Moses had only been absent forty days. But he was gone longer than they expected, so they decided to make a new god ([Deut 32:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deut+32.1&t=NASB95" \t "BLB_NW)).

In recounting the incident, Moses reminded Israel of the way they received God’s covenantal stipulations. While Moses was on the mountain, the LORD gave him the *two tablets of stone*which contained the Ten Commandments. The tablets of stone were special because they were *written by the finger of God,* not by the finger of man. It was given directly to them by their Suzerain God. On these *tablets*, God wrote down words which He *had spoken with Israel at the mountain from the midst of the fire.*On that *day of assembly*the people had shown great fear of God and willingness to obey Him fully. But now that God’s presence was removed, and His spokesman out of sight, they decided to go their own way.

God spoke the words that they might “perform them in the land” where they were “going over to possess it.” ([Deuteronomy 4:9-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+4.9-14&t=NASB95)).

Moses reminded the Israelites that, after Moses ascended Mount Horeb, at *the end of* *forty days and nights*, *the LORD gave* him *the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant,*and asked him to descend from Mount Sinai *quickly* because the Israelites Moses had *brought out of Egypt*had *acted corruptly* in Moses’ absence. The Israelites had *quickly turned aside*from following the *way the* LORD *had commanded them.*They *made a molten image* *for themselves.*

By making a *molten image for themselves*, the Israelites had turned away from following the true God to worship an idol. Their own statement to Aaron — “Come, make us a god who will go before us” in [Exodus 32:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+32.1&t=NASB95) — confirms their intention to exchange following the true God who had brought them out of Egypt, to following a god fashioned after the manner of Egypt. In doing so they violated the second commandment of the LORD which states, “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth” ([Exodus 20:3-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+20.3-4&t=NASB95)). That sinful act deserved God’s judgment.

Moses continued with the report of the incident by reminding Israel how the LORD described them. He said, *The LORD spoke further to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people*.’ The term *stubborn*literally means “hard of neck”. It suggests Israel’s unwillingness to obey their Suzerain (Ruler) God. It is first used to describe Israel within the context of the golden calf incident ([Exodus 32:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+32.9&t=NASB95); [33:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+33.3&t=NASB95), [5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+33.5&t=NASB95); [34:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+34.9&t=NASB95); [Deuteronomy 9:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+9.6&t=NASB95), [13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+9.13&t=NASB95); [10:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+10.16&t=NASB95); [31:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+31.27&t=NASB95)). The term describes a state of mind that refuses to listen to correction and discipline.

This stubbornness is evident in the golden calf episode, where the people are fashioning a new god while the True God is giving Moses the written Ten Commandments. To be “hard of neck” is like an animal, such as an ox, pulling against the reigns of its harness, resisting the direction in which its master is trying to lead it. Being “hard of neck” describes someone who willfully defies authority. Such a behavior often leads to destruction and shame. As the book of Proverbs succinctly puts it, “A man who hardens *his* neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy” ([Proverbs 29:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Proverbs+29.1&t=NASB95)).

God’s grant of land to Abram was irrevocable and permanent ([Romans 11:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.29&t=NASB95)). Now the Israelites had the opportunity to go in and possess and enjoy the Promised Land. Even though the Israelites were the ones who inherited the grant of land ([Genesis 15:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+15.16&t=NASB95)), it was not a reward for their virtues. It was *not because of*their *righteousness.* They were *a stubborn people*. It was for God to *confirm the oath which the Lord swore to*their*fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

Hence, due to Israel’s rebellious act of making a molten image as god, the Suzerain (Ruler) God was angry and said to Moses, *Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.*The expression “to blot out someone’s name” means to wipe a person’s name completely, a figurative expression which means to leave no oral or written trace of that name on earth, thus, leaving the person with no descendants and no memorials. This is what the LORD did to the original inhabitants of the land of Canaanz ([Deuteronomy 7:24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+7.24&t=NASB95)). This is the verb David used in [Psalm 51](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+51&t=NASB95) when he asked God to blot out his transgressions ([Psalms 51:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalms+51.1&t=NASB95)). Moses reminds the people that God proposed to Moses that he wipe Israel and start over from Moses. God would still be able to *confirm the oath*He had made to *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*through Moses.

And indeed, God proposed to build a *nation mightier and greater than*the current version of Israel. God proposed to make Moses a new Abraham, in the sense of being a patriarch. And through him [Moses] all the promises made to Abraham ([Genesis 12](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12&t=NASB95), [15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.15&t=NASB95), [17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.17&t=NASB95)) were going to be fulfilled. Moses however interceded for Israel, arguing that God would be diminished in the eyes of the Egyptians and other peoples if the nation perished. So God relented, and let the people live ([Deut 32:10-14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deut+32.10-14&t=NASB95" \t "BLB_NW)). This showed the amazing humility of Moses, who the Bible says was the most humble man in the whole earth ([Numbers 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+12.3&t=NASB95)).

**Biblical Text:**

**7Remember, do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord. 8Even at Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath, and the Lord was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you. 9When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the Lord had made with you, then I remained on the mountain forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. 10The Lord gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the Lord had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. 11It came about at the end of forty days and nights that the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. 12Then the Lord said to me, ‘Arise, go down from here quickly, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made a molten image for themselves.’ 13The Lord spoke further to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people. 14Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.’**