

This chapter repeats the well known narrative of the people of Israel building their golden calf. That day 3000 of them died. The Lord also sent a plague among them. But this is not the only demonstration of their stubborn hearts. Verses 22-23 tell of four more outbreaks of resistance against the Lord.

Taberah (*burning*): Right after the people of Israel set out from Sinai, with the cloud before them and the ark among them, they grumbled about their supposed misfortune. The Lord sent a fire that burned some parts of the camp.

Massah (and **Meribah**) (*testing and quarreling*): Before the law was given the people received manna. Learning nothing from the free provision of food, they complained about the lack of water. The Lord graciously told Moses to strike the rock and water springs forth.

Kibroth-hattaavah (*graves of craving*): The

Israelites greedily gathered an overabundance of migrating quail, causing the Lord to send a plague for their gluttony.

Kadesh-barnea (city at the southern boundary of Canaan): With God's promises of victory still in their ears, the people held back in fear and refused to set forth. The Lord condemned a generation to die in the desert before Israel could enter the land.

Are the people of Israel morally better than those they are journeying to destroy? Are they more deserving of God's mercy? Not really. Their only claim is God's covenant with Abraham. Their only righteousness is from the Lord.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy (Titus 3:4-5).

Questions:

1. In verse 8, what provoked the Lord to anger at Horeb (Sinai)?
2. What are the two occasions where Moses fasts on the mountain for forty days? Who else does this? Are there any lessons for us?
3. Which commandment(s) did the people of Israel break at Horeb?

4. What does the Lord threaten to do in verse 14? How does Moses respond?
5. What did Moses command the people to do with the detestable calf they had made? Is there a lesson for us?
6. Moses intercedes for his people here, asking the Lord to relent in His anger. What is the case that Moses makes in verses 26-29?
7. Can you find other occasions where Moses intercedes with the Lord?
8. We know that the Spirit intercedes for us (Romans 8:26-27) and the Lord Jesus advocates for us (1 John 2:1). How might their intercession be similar to Moses's?