

Exodus 17:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

Analysis

And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD—The dual name memorializes Israel's sin: Massah (מִשָּׁה, 'testing') and Meribah (מִרְיבָּה, 'strife, contention'). Their 'chiding' (רִיב, riv, legal contention) and tempting (טָסָה, nasah, putting to trial) mark the place permanently. The question they asked—'Is the LORD among us, or not?'—constitutes the ultimate tempting: demanding proof despite continuous miracles (Red Sea, manna, pillar of cloud/fire). This question reveals unbelief's core: requiring new evidence daily despite mountains of previous proof. Christ condemns this: 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign' (Matt 12:39). Psalm 95:8 warns future generations: 'Harden not your heart, as in...Meribah.'

Historical Context

The naming of places after Israel's failures served as permanent memorial and warning. Massah and Meribah became proverbial for unbelief (Ps 95:8, Heb 3:8).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the question 'Is the LORD among us?' after continuous miracles reveal unbelief's nature?
2. What does permanently naming the place after sin teach about the seriousness of tempting God?

Interlinear Text

וַיְקַרְא	שָׁם	בַּמְקָם	וּמִשְׁמָךְ	עַל	וּמְרִיבָה	הַמִּזְבֵּחַ	וְנִפְתַּח
And he called	the name	of the place	Massah	and Meribah			
H7121	H8034	H4725	H4532	H4809	H5921		
בְּנֵי	וְעַל	וְשָׁרָא	לְ	וְנִפְתַּח			
because of the chiding	of the children	of Israel		and because they tempted			
H7379	H1121	H3478	H5921	H5254			
אֱתָה	לִאמְרָה	בַּיּוֹם	יְהִי הָ	בְּקָרְבָּנוּ	אָמֵן	אֲמִן:	
the LORD	saying	Is	the LORD	among	H518	H369	
H3068	H559	H3426	H3068	H7130			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 81:7 (Parallel theme): Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

Psalms 95:8 (Parallel theme): Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Numbers 20:13 (References Lord): This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

Deuteronomy 9:22 (References Lord): And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath.

Exodus 17:2 (References Lord): Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?

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