

What is the significance of Massah in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Massah-in-the-Bible.html>

Massah, or Meribah, is a place between the Wilderness of Sin and the Wilderness of Sinai. Massah is one of the places where the Israelites camped during their exodus from Egypt. The location was originally called Rephidim.

As they journeyed to the Promised Land, the Israelites witnessed many wondrous miracles. According to the Bible's record, after a long history of degradation and slavery, God's people gained their liberty as God sent a series of horrific plagues that humiliated and ultimately crushed Egypt's defiant Pharaoh. No one could doubt God's presence among the Israelites.

After the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22), a visually spectacular feat no one could forget, God manifested Himself as a pillar of cloud to guide the Israelites by day and a pillar of fire to comfort them by night (Exodus 13:21-22). Each meal was also a reminder of God's presence, for food was scarce in the wilderness. God provided manna, "bread from heaven," that nourished the wanderers until they entered the Promised Land (Exodus 16:15; Joshua 5:12).

But when the Israelites' water supply ran low at Massah, the people, who had seen miracle after miracle with their own eyes, began questioning the faithfulness of God:

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do

you test the Lord?” But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” So Moses cried to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” And the Lord said to Moses, “Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?” (Exodus 17:1-7, ESV)

Let us not be too hasty in condemning the Israelites for their faithlessness, for if we examine ourselves honestly, we, too, may discover we are of little faith. How often do we doubt the goodness of God in times of difficulty? How often do we question the faithfulness of God when troubles arise? And let us not feel superior to the grumbling Israelites by saying, “If I had seen the parting of a sea or tasted bread from heaven, I could never doubt God.” We have the infallible Scriptures in their entirety to instruct and encourage us, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to comfort and guide us, and a long history of blessings to remind us that God has, is, and will always be faithful. Yet we still doubt God at times.

When faced with needs, we are to “ask, seek, and knock” (Matthew 7:7). Jesus did not say we are to “grumble, complain, and whine.” It is interesting to note that Massah, the name given to the place where the Israelites provoked God, means “trial” or “temptation,” for the people tested the Lord rather than trusting in Him. Moses also

called the place Meribah, which means “strife.” May our steadfast faith in the Lord keep us from pitching our tents in Massah and Meribah.