

Job 33:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.

Analysis

So that his life abhorreth bread (wezihāmātû ḥayyātô lāḥem, וְזִיחָמָתוֹ חַיָּאתוֹ לֶחֶם)—The verb zāham means to loathe, feel disgust, or abhor. Life (ḥayyāh) itself recoils from bread (leḥem), the staff of life. This depicts severe illness where appetite vanishes—the body rejects sustenance necessary for survival. Physical revulsion toward food signals mortal danger, the body shutting down its basic drives.

And his soul dainty meat (wěnapšô ma'ākal ta'āwāh, וְנִפְשׁוֹ מְאָכַל תַּאֲוָה)—Even delicacies (ma'ākal ta'āwāh, food of desire or appetite) that normally stimulate hunger become repulsive. The soul (nepeš) refuses what once gave pleasure. This progression shows suffering advancing from pain (v.19) to systemic shutdown. Elihu's description mirrors Job's own testimony: 'I have no appetite for food' (3:24, literal translation). The loss of desire for life's basic goods signals proximity to death.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern culture viewed appetite and eating as signs of vitality and divine blessing. Abraham prepared a feast for angelic visitors (Genesis 18:6-8), and shared meals sealed covenants. Loss of appetite signaled serious illness or depression (1 Samuel 1:7, Psalm 102:4). Without modern medical intervention, prolonged inability to eat meant certain death. Elihu describes suffering's progression toward mortality.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does losing appetite for life's normal pleasures during suffering redirect attention to deeper spiritual needs?
2. What does this description teach about empathy for those experiencing severe illness or depression?
3. How might God use the loss of earthly appetites to create hunger for Himself alone?

Interlinear Text

וְזָהַרְתִּי	כִּי־יָתִיד	לֶחֶם	וְנַפְשִׁי	לִמְאֹכַל	תַּאֲוָה:
abhorreth	So that his life	bread	and his soul	meat	dainty
H2092	H2416	H3899	H5315	H3978	H8378

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