

Numbers 11:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

Analysis

The escalating time periods 'not one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days' build dramatic tension. The repetition creates anticipation—how long would the meat provision last? The graduated progression (1, 2, 5, 10, 20) suggests abundance beyond imagination. God's provision would far exceed anything Israel could expect or even desire. Yet this abundance would prove to be judgment, not blessing, demonstrating that more is not always better when received in unbelief.

The rhetorical structure emphasizes that God's response would not be minimal or temporary but overwhelming and prolonged. Where the people complained about lack, God would provide surplus. Where they claimed deficiency, God would demonstrate excess. The irony is profound: they would receive exactly what they demanded and discover it couldn't satisfy. This illustrates the emptiness of idolatrous cravings—even when fulfilled, they leave the soul unsatisfied because created desires can only be satisfied by the Creator.

This verse's placement (between stating they will eat flesh and stating the duration) creates suspense that drives home the point: God's provision in response to sinful complaint becomes its own punishment. The New Testament teaches that God sometimes gives people over to their sinful desires as judgment (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). When we persist in demanding what God has wisely withheld, He may grant our request and allow us to experience the consequences, teaching us that His 'no' was actually merciful.

Historical Context

The progression of days (1, 2, 5, 10, 20) serves rhetorical purpose, building toward the shocking climax in verse 20: a whole month. In ancient Israelite culture, meat was not a daily food but reserved for special occasions and sacrifices. The people's demand for meat daily was itself excessive. The specification of time periods also demonstrated God's sovereign control—He would determine both the abundance and duration of provision, showing that even in judgment, divine sovereignty directs outcomes.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the escalating time progression in this verse illustrate that God's responses to our complaints often exceed our expectations, whether in blessing or judgment?
2. What does this pattern of graduated increase teach about the nature of idolatrous desires—that even when satisfied, they demand more and ultimately cannot fulfill?

Interlinear Text

יָמִים:	וְלֹא	חֲמִשָּׁה ה'	יָמִים:	וְלֹא	אֶחָד ד'	יָמִים:	לֹא
H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808
day	neither	nor five	day	neither	one	day	day
H3117	H6235	H2568	H3117	H6235	H259	H3117	H3117
יָמִים:	עֶשְׂרִים יָמִים	וְלֹא	יָמִים:	עֶשְׂרֵי יָמִים	וְלֹא	יָמִים:	עֶשְׂרֵי יָמִים
H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808
day	nor twenty	day	day	nor twenty	day	day	day
H3117	H6242	H3117	H3117	H6242	H3117	H3117	H3117

