

Numbers 11:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

Analysis

The climax: 'But even a whole month' far exceeds the escalating progression of verse 19, shocking the hearers with the extent of God's provision-turned-judgment. The imagery 'until it come out at your nostrils' (Hebrew *ad asher yetse' me'appekem*, עַד אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא מֵאַפְכֶם) vividly describes revulsion—meat would become so excessive that it would induce nausea and disgust. What they craved would become loathsome. This demonstrates the principle that sinful desires, when granted without restraint, produce disgust rather than delight.

The phrase 'it be loathsome unto you' (Hebrew *vehaya lakem lezara*, וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְזָרָא) indicates the meat would become repulsive, an object of horror rather than desire. The transformation from craving to disgust illustrates how sin promises satisfaction but delivers emptiness. What appeared desirable becomes detestable when consumed in rebellion rather than received in faith. This pattern appears in the prodigal son's experience (Luke 15:16) and characterizes all idolatrous pursuits—the desired object, once attained, reveals its inability to satisfy.

The explanation 'because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you' exposes the root sin: not merely wanting meat, but rejecting God's presence and provision. The Hebrew *ma'astem* (מֵאַסְתֶּם) translated 'despised' means to reject, spurn, refuse—strong language indicating deliberate repudiation. Their complaint wasn't about food but about God Himself. The phrase 'which is among you'

emphasizes God's immanent presence—Yahweh dwelt in the tabernacle among them, visible in cloud and fire, yet they despised Him. The final question 'Why came we forth out of Egypt?' summarizes their rebellion: questioning redemption itself, preferring bondage to freedom under God's leadership.

Historical Context

The month-long meat provision would be fulfilled through quail (verse 31-32), supernatural provision that became plague (verse 33). The historical account shows that many who ate died while the meat was still in their mouths (verse 33), demonstrating the severity of receiving sinful desires. The place was named Kibroth-hattaavah ('graves of craving,' verse 34), a permanent memorial to the danger of lusting after what God has not granted. This event became a warning throughout Israel's history (Psalm 78:26-31; 106:14-15) about the peril of demanding rather than trusting.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the progression from craving to revulsion illustrate the inevitable disappointment that follows when we pursue desires in rebellion against God?
2. What does the accusation 'ye have despised the LORD which is among you' teach about how complaining against God's provision is actually rejecting God Himself?

Interlinear Text

עַד H5704	חֹדֶשׁ H2320	יָמֵי H3117	עַד H5704	אֲשֶׁר H834	יָצָאנוּ H3318
	But even a whole month				Why came we forth
מֵאֶפְסֹךְ H639	וְהִנֵּה H1961	לָךְ H0	לִזְכָּא H2214	לְעַן H3282	כִּי H3588
at your nostrils			and it be loathsome	unto you because	
מֵאֲסָתָם H3988	אֶת H853	יְהוָה H3068	אֲשֶׁר H834	בְּקִרְבָּךְ H7130	וַתִּבְכּוּ H1058
that ye have despised		the LORD		which is among	you and have wept
לִפְנֵי H6440	לֵאמֹר H559	זֶה H2088	יָצָאנוּ H3318	מִמִּצְרַיִם H4714	
before	him saying		Why came we forth	out of Egypt	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 106:15 (Parallel theme): And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

Numbers 21:5 (References Egypt): And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

1 Samuel 10:19 (References Lord): And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.