

Psalms 78:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

Analysis

Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?—the rhetorical question exposes functional atheism: Israel intellectually affirmed YHWH's existence while practically doubting His ability. The phrase 'ārak šulhān (furnish a table) means to arrange a formal banquet, not merely provide sustenance. They wanted Egyptian luxury, not covenant manna.

This doubting question contrasts sharply with David's confident declaration: 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies' (Psalm 23:5). What Israel thought impossible—God hosting a feast in hostile territory—becomes the believer's assured experience. Jesus transforms this wilderness table into the Eucharist, the 'true bread from heaven' (John 6:32-35) that manna only prefigured.

Historical Context

Israel's 'table in the wilderness' demand came after witnessing the Red Sea crossing, Marah's healing, manna provision, and water from rock—approximately two years of miracles. Yet abundance didn't produce faith; it exposed the heart's idolatry.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What circumstances make you question whether God 'can' provide, despite His proven track record?
2. How does Communion remind you that God sets a table even in your wilderness seasons?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּדְבֹּר ו	בְּאֵל ה' יִם	אָמְרוּ	הִי וְכֹל	אֵל ל	לַעֲרֹךְ	שֶׁלֹּם
Yea they spake	against God	they said	Can	God	furnish	a table
H1696	H430	H559	H3201	H410	H6186	H7979

בַּמִּדְבָּר:

in the wilderness

H4057

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 21:5 (References God): 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.

Psalms 23:5 (Parallel theme): Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Exodus 16:3 (References God): And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

Numbers 11:4 (Parallel theme): And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

Numbers 20:3 (References God): And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

Numbers 11:13 (Parallel theme): Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

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