

Numbers 9:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed.

Analysis

When the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle (וַיֵּשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָעָנָן יָמִים, veyesh asher yihyeh he'anan yamim mispar al-hamishkan)—Yamim mispar (days of number, countable days) contrasts with v. 19's 'many days.' Variability itself is the pattern: sometimes long, sometimes short, never predictable. **According to the commandment of the LORD** (עַל־פִּי יְהוָה, al-pi YHWH, literally 'upon the mouth of Yahweh') appears twice—both for staying and going.

This unpredictability breaks human self-reliance. Israel couldn't develop routines or strategies independent of God's immediate direction. Proverbs 3:5-6 echoes this: 'Trust in the LORD...and He shall direct thy paths.' The Christian life isn't following rules but following a Person whose ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Historical Context

The wilderness was not merely geographic but pedagogical—a 40-year seminary in divine dependence. Israel's food (manna), water (the rock), clothing (never wore out, Deuteronomy 8:4), and movements (the cloud) all required daily trust. This

generation would enter Canaan knowing Yahweh as Provider, not merely Deliverer from Egypt.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does God's unpredictable timing wean us from false security in routines, plans, and human wisdom?
2. What areas of your life resist the 'few days' or 'many days' variability of God's sovereign leading?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּשׁ And so it was H3426	אֲשֶׁר H834	יְהוָה H1961	הָעָנָן when the cloud H6051	יָמֵי days H3117	מָסָפַּר was a few H4557	עַל H5921
הַמִּשְׁכָּה upon the tabernacle H4908	עַל H5921	כִּי H6310	יְהוָה of the LORD H3068	יָחַד they abode H2583		
יְהוָה H5921	כִּי H6310	יְהוָה of the LORD H3068	יָסְעוּ they journeyed H5265			