

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 (וְיָשָׁב אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בְּעַלְמָיוֹם)—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 יְהָוָה, 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

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| וְאֵת | וְאֵת | הַיּוֹם | כַּעֲדֵל | יְמִינָה | מִסְפָּרְיוֹת | עַל |
| And so it was | H834 | H1961 | when the cloud | H6051 | days | was a few |
| H3426 | | | | H3117 | H4557 | H5921 |
| בְּמִשְׁכָּן | עַל | גַּם | יְהִי | בְּיַד | וְיָשְׁבָה | וְיָשַׁבְוּ |
| upon the tabernacle | H5921 | according to the commandment | H6310 | of the LORD | they abode | |
| H4908 | | | H3068 | | H2583 | |
| וְעַל | גַּם | יְהִי | וְעַל | | | |
| H5921 | according to the commandment | of the LORD | they journeyed | | | |
| | H6310 | H3068 | H5265 | | | |

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org