

Numbers 9:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed.

Analysis

Whether it were two days, or a month, or a year (אוֹיָמִים אוֹחֹדֶשׁ אוֹיָמִים, o-yomayim o-hodesh o-yamim)—The Hebrew yamim (days) can mean an extended period, hence 'year' in translation. This comprehensive summary emphasizes complete unpredictability. **The children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not** (וַיָּחֲנוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יָסְעוּ, yahanu veney-yisra'el velo yisa'u)—perfect obedience to divine timing regardless of duration.

But when it was taken up, they journeyed (וַיִּקָּלְעוּ וַיֵּסְעוּ, uv'he'aloto yisa'u)—nasa (to journey) in immediate response. This pattern shaped Israel's identity: a people defined not by place but by presence—wherever God's glory dwelt. The church is likewise mobile, sent (apostolic), following the Lamb wherever He leads (Revelation 14:4).

Historical Context

This section (Numbers 9:15-23) concludes the cloud theology begun in Exodus 40:34-38. Written before Israel entered Canaan, it established a precedent: God's presence, not land possession, defines His people. Even after settlement, the ark (representing God's presence) moved—from Shiloh to Jerusalem—teaching that sacred geography follows divine presence, not vice versa.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Israel's identity as a 'presence-following people' rather than a 'place-possessing people' challenge modern church's focus on buildings and geography?
2. What would change in your discipleship if you viewed yourself primarily as 'following the cloud' rather than 'holding the fort'?

Interlinear Text

אִם	יָמֵי יוֹם	אִם	חֹדֶשׁ	אִם	יָמֵי יוֹם
H176	Or whether it were two days	H176	or a month	H176	Or whether it were two days
	H3117		H2320		H3117
בְּהָאֵר יִרְ	הָעֶנָּה	עַל	הַמִּשְׁכָּן	לְשָׁכָה	עַל יוֹ
tarried	that the cloud	H5921	upon the tabernacle	remaining	H5921
H748	H6051		H4908	H7931	H2583
בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְלֹא	בְּמִשְׁכָּנֵיהֶם	וַיִּסְעוּ	
thereon the children	of Israel	H3808	in their tents and journeyed		
H1121	H3478		H5265		
וְכִהְיֶה עֲלֵהּ	בְּמִשְׁכָּנֵיהֶם	וַיִּסְעוּ			
not but when it was taken up	in their tents and journeyed				
H5927	H5265				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 32:8 (Parallel theme): I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

