

Numbers 9 Commentary

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Numbers: Journey to God’s Rest-Land by Irving Jensen- used by permission

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS								
"Wilderness Wandering"								
WALKING			WANDERING			WAITING		
Numbers 1-12			Numbers 13-25			Numbers 26-36		
Counting & Camping Nu 1-4	Cleansing & Congregation Nu 5-8	Carping & Complaining Nu 9-12	12 Spies & Death in Desert Nu 13-16	Aaron & Levites in Wilderness Nu 17-18	Serpent of Brass & Story of Balaam Nu 21-25	Second Census 7 Laws of Israel Nu 26-30	Last Days of Moses as Leader Nu 31-33	Sections, Sanctuaries & Settlements Nu 34-36
Law & Order			Rebellion & Disorder			New Laws for the New Order		
Old Generation			Tragic Transition			New Generation		
Preparation for the Journey: Moving Out			Participation in the Journey: Moving On			Prize at end of the Journey: Moving In		
At Sinai Mt Sinai			To Moab Mt Hor			At Moab Mt Nebo		

En Route to Kadesh (Mt Sinai)	En Route to Nowhere (Wilderness)	En Route to Canaan (Plains of Moab)
A Few Weeks to 2 Months	38 years, 3 months, 10 days	A Few Months
Christ in Numbers = Our "Lifted-up One" (Nu 21:9, cp Jn 3:14-15)		
Author: Moses		

Numbers 9:1 Thus the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

- **in the first month:** Nu 1:1 Ex 40:2
- [Numbers 9 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Wilderness of Sinai (see below red marker which is Paran)

THE SECOND YEAR AFTER DELIVERANCE

Warren Wiersbe - The code name for the enterprise was "[Operation Overlord](#)." The more popular name was "D-Day"—June 6, 1943, when the combined Allied forces landed on "Omaha Beach" and signaled the beginning of the end of the war in Europe. It was the largest assembly of military personnel and materiel in the history of warfare. Historian Samuel Eliot Morison wrote, "The Allied forces of soldiers, sailors, aviators and supporting services amounted to 2.8 million men in England." Moses was about to launch his own "Operation Overlord," and his greatest desire was that Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, truly be Lord over the whole enterprise. More than 2 million Jews were anticipating entering Canaan, conquering the inhabitants, claiming the land, and enjoying their promised inheritance. But before all of this could happen, Moses had to organize this assembly of former slaves who had been enjoying their freedom for only a year. It wasn't an easy task. His preparation for conquest involved four stages: celebrating the Passover (Nu 9:1–14) (**ED: NOTE THIS ACTUALLY PRECEDED THE NUMBERING**), numbering the soldiers (Numbers 1), organizing the tribes (chap. 2), and assigning the priestly duties (chaps. 3–4). (Be Counted)

NET Note - The chapter has just the two sections,

1. the observance of the Passover (vv. 1–14) and
2. the cloud that led the Israelites in the wilderness (vv. 15–23). It must be remembered that the material in Nu 9:7–9 is chronologically earlier than Nu 9:1–6, as the notices in the text will make clear. The two main discussions here are the last major issues to be reiterated before dealing with the commencement of the journey.

Let's quickly review the things that occurred preceding leaving Mount Sinai for the Promised Land...

1. Children of Israel left Egypt;
2. accepted a conditional covenant w/God
3. rested near Sinai (full year).
4. took a census;
5. organized an army;
6. organized their priests;
7. purified their camp;
8. dedicated certain people & offerings
9. now are ready to celebrate their 1st Passover since Egypt.

Thus the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying - They were **in the wilderness of Sinai** but still camped at Mount Sinai. Note that the events of this chapter **in the first month of the second year** preceded the beginning of the census described in Numbers 1:1+ which took place "on **the first of the second month**, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt."

Merrill - God gave Moses this regulation a month before the events with which this book opened (9:1; cf. 1:1) to prepare the people

for their first Passover outside of Egypt. (CBC)

Gilbrant - The first month of the second year. These were busy times. The Tabernacle was set up on the 1st day of the first month (Exo. 40:2). Moses began the organization of the army on the 1st day of the second month (Num. 1:1). The first Passover after leaving Egypt was celebrated on the 14th day of the first month (Num. 9:3). The nation left Sinai on the 20th day of the second month of that second year (Num. 10:11). Obviously, the first chapters of Numbers (and probably some of the later chapters also) are not in chronological order.

Wiersbe - The events recorded in Numbers 1–6 were preceded by those described in Numbers 7:1–9:15. We are now in the second year of Israel's national history (Nu 1:1; 9:1). The tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month (Ex. 40:2, Ex 40:17 = "Now in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected."). The twelve tribal leaders began to bring their gifts on that day (Nu 7:1), a procedure that lasted twelve days (Nu 7:78). On the thirteenth day, the Levites were consecrated (Nu. 8), and on the fourteenth day, the Jews celebrated Passover (Nu 9:1–14). (Ibid)

NET Note - This verse indicates that a full year had passed since the exodus and the original Passover; now a second ruling on the Passover is included at the beginning of the second year. This would have occurred immediately after the consecration of the tabernacle, in the month before the census at Sinai.

Ryrie on Nu 9:1-8 These instructions were given just after the completion of the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:17) and before the census of Num. 1:2.

Ronald Allen summarizes **The chronology of the first two months of the second year after the Exodus is as follows:**

1. The setting up of the tabernacle (Nu 7:1) was declared to be completed on the first day of the first month of the second year (Ex 40:2). It was on this day that the cloud covered the tabernacle, as we will see later in this chapter (Nu 9:15–23). Then, in response to the symbol of God's presence over the completed tabernacle, it was also on that day that the first of the offerings from the twelve leaders of the tribes was given to the Lord (Nu 7:3–17). The presentation of the gifts from each tribe extended until the twelfth day of the first month.
2. The setting apart of the Levites (Nu 8:26) would have followed immediately after the twelve days of gifts, perhaps on the thirteenth day of the month. It seems unlikely that the setting apart of the Levites would have been on the same day as the last of the tribal gifts; to have another significant action on that day would have minimized the importance of the gifts of Ahira of Naphtali (Nu 7:78–83).
3. The second Passover was celebrated on the **fourteenth day of the first month** (Nu 9:5).
4. The census began on the **first day of the second month** (Nu 1:1)
5. Those who were ceremonially unclean at the time of the second Passover were permitted to celebrate it on the **fourteenth day of the second month** (Nu 9:11).
6. Then the cloud lifted and the march from Sinai began on the **twentieth day of the second month** (Nu 10:11). (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

Numbers 9:2 "Now, let the sons of Israel observe the Passover at its appointed time."

- **observe:** Ex 12:1-20
- **his appointed:** Nu 28:16 Ex 12:6,14 Lev 23:5 De 16:1,2 Jos 5:10 2Ch 35:1 Ezr 6:19 Mk 14:12 Lu 22:7 1Co 5:7,8



THE SECOND PASSOVER

Recall that the first Passover was held in Egypt (cf Ex 12+) and was celebrated in haste and this Passover is one year later. Sadly, this would be the last Passover Israel would celebrate for the next 38 years until Joshua 5:10 because of God's judgment in

Numbers 14. In fact this second Passover was the last Passover all of the sons of Israel would **ever** celebrate, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb! When Joshua led the new generation into Canaan, the second generation males received circumcision, the sign of the covenant (they had not been circumcised) and God restored His people into His good favor (Josh. 5:2–9) giving them grace to begin again and to celebrate Passover (Joshua 5:10), which was only the third Passover in 40 years! .

Irving Jensen - The words of the Lord, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. 12:13), may not have been put to music in that day, but they were surely spoken with an authority and impact whose ring will continue to reverberate throughout the halls of time and into the boundless spaces of eternity. At that first Passover event, the Israelites were given the command to "observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever" (Exod. 12:17). The memorial Passover was to be an annual feast, the first ceremony of which was to fall on the fourteenth day of the first month, at even (Exod. 12:18). Because it was a memorial feast, its main point was to remind the Israelites of their great deliverance from Egypt's bondage. No wonder, then, that it becomes a meaningful point of record in Numbers. For the people had been so delivered. Would they now remember the Lord and keep the feast?

Currid - Passover is the first festival celebrated within the organized worship structure of Israel; that is appropriate because it symbolizes redemption and deliverance from Egypt, and the fact that the people now belong to Yahweh alone (Exod. 12:26–27).

"Now, let the sons of Israel observe the Passover at its appointed time- Hebrew literally = "Let the children of Israel make or do the passover." Passover commemorated God's deliverance of His people from Egypt and reminded them that as a result they belonged to Him.

The appointed time - That is, on the fourteenth day of the first month, in memory of their signal deliverance from Egypt, as also of their exemption from the desolating judgment which befell the first-born of that country. (Bush)

Wiersbe - This feast was the constant reminder that their redemption depended on the blood of the lamb and the power of God. Every blessing they experienced came through the blood, even as with the church today (Eph. 1:3ff). (WEOOT)

Wiersbe - It was only fitting that the Israelites began their second year of freedom by commemorating the awesome night when God delivered them from Egyptian bondage, "A night of solemn observance to the Lord" (Ex. 12:42, NKJV). In looking back, the people would appreciate what God had done for them, and they could teach their children the significance of Israel's "independence day" (Ex. 12:26–28; 13:8–16). Unless parents remind their children of what the Lord has done, it won't be long before the next generation will drift from the faith (Deut. 6:1–9; see 2 Tim. 2:2). (Be Counted)

Passover (06453) ([pesach/pesah](#)) is a masculine noun thought by some writers (Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon) to have its origin from **pacach/pasah** which apparently means to pass over; to spare (Ex 12:13, 23, 27+ - "Jehovah will pass" = pasah). [Pesach/pesah](#) virtually always refers to the Passover, either the feast or the Passover animal. Note that the Passover is combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread by Luke who writes "the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**...is called the **Passover**, was approaching." (Lk 22:1+) **Rooker** adds that "These two ceremonies were apparently combined at the beginning, for the Passover lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread (Ex 12:8+)." (New American Commentary). **NET Note** adds that "The word פֶּסַח (pesakh)—here in pause and with the article—has become the technical name for the spring festival of Israel. In Ex 12 the name is explained by the use of the verb "to pass over" (פָּעַח, 'avar), indicating that the angel of death would pass over the house with the blood applied. Many scholarly attempts have been made to supply the etymology of the word, but none has been compelling enough to be accepted by a large number of biblical scholars. **All uses of pesach in Numbers** - Num. 9:2; Num. 9:4; Num. 9:5; Num. 9:6; Num. 9:10; Num. 9:12; Num. 9:13; Num. 9:14; Num. 28:16; Num. 33:3

Appointed time (04150) [moed](#) from the verb **ya'ad** meaning to appoint or fix) can refer to either a time or place of meeting (eg, place in "tent of meeting"). In the present context moed refers not to an appointed place, but rather to an appointed **time** (Ex 12:6, 14; Lev 23:5).

Related Resources:

- [How did Jesus fulfill the meanings of the Jewish feasts?](#)
- [Yeshua and the Feast of Unleavened Bread](#)
- [Passover - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia \(see intro for etymology\)](#)
- [Feasts of Israel - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary - scroll down for "Passover"](#)
- [Passover](#) - Wikipedia
- American Tract Society [Passover](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Passover](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Passover](#)

- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Passover](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Passover](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Passover](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Passover](#) [Passover \(I.\)](#) [Passover \(II. in Relation to Lord's Supper\)](#)
- [What is Passover?](#)
- [What is the Passover Lamb? How is Jesus our Passover Lamb?](#)
- [If Jesus is our atonement, why did He die at Passover instead of the Day of Atonement?](#)
- [How do the elements of the Passover Seder point to Christ?](#)
- [Should Christians celebrate Passover?](#)
- [What is the meaning and importance of the Last Supper?](#)

Numbers 9:3 "On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall observe it at its appointed time; you shall observe it according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances."

- Ex 12:7-11
- **the fourteenth:** 2Ch 30:2,15
- **at twilight:** :, Ex 12:6 Heb 9:26
- according to all the rites: Nu 9:11,12

THE APPOINTED TIME FOR THE PASSOVER

On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall observe it at its appointed time; you shall observe it according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances - The Passover took place in the month of Aviv, the first month of the year (Ex 12:2+) **on the fourteenth day of this month**. The lamb was slaughtered, roasted and eaten that same night (Ex 12:5-8). On **statutes** and **ordinances** see Ex 12:1-49, Ex 34:25; Lev 23:5; Dt 16:1-8.

Wenham points out "Exactly how the regulations in Exodus 12 were carried out is not stated: possibly the blood was smeared on the tents instead of on the lintels and doorposts."

Twilight (also in Nu 9:5, 11) Hebrew literally = "between the two evenings. This describes the end of one day and the beginning of the next. This is why the celebration of Sabbath days began in the evening, and would last from "sunset to sunset"

Allen has an interesting note on **twilight** - The official determination of the precise moment of twilight in Jewish tradition became that point where one could no longer distinguish between a white or a black thread when standing outside in the growing darkness. (EBC)

NET Note - The word קֶחָק (khoq) is a binding statute, something engraved and monumental. The word מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat) means "judgment, decision," but with a more general idea of "custom" at its core. The verse is making it very clear that the Passover had to follow the custom and form that was legislated in Egypt.

Numbers 9:4 So Moses told the sons of Israel to observe the Passover.

So Moses told the sons of Israel to observe the Passover.

Passover (06453) see notes on [pesach/pesah](#)

Numbers 9:5 They observed the Passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the sons of Israel did.

- **They observed:** Jos 5:10
- **according:** Nu 8:20 29:40 Ge 6:22 7:5 Ex 39:32,42 Dt 1:3 Dt 4:5 Mt 28:20 Joh 15:14 Ac 26:19 Heb 3:5 11:8

Related Passage

(Ex 12:18+) In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.

They observed the Passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the sons of Israel did - Notice the emphasis on the obedience of the sons of Israel. Allen adds "Verse 5 is a report of compliance—yet another example of the obedience of Israel to the demands of the Lord in these early chapters of Numbers. Reports such as this assure us that things were as they should have been. Yet these same reports ill-prepare us for the dreadful rebellion of Israel at Kadesh, described in the following chapters."

Believer's Study Bible - Having dedicated the altar and consecrated the Levites, Israel was ready for this second observance of the Passover (cf. Ex. 12).

Wiersbe - Think of the thousands of lambs that were slain so that the people might obey God! (ED: SOME ESTIMATE IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN UP TO 50,000 LAMBS TO ACCOMMODATE MORE THAN 2 MILLION PEOPLE). Think of the Lamb of God who died for the whole world (John 1:29+)! (WWBC)

Passover (06453) see notes on [pesach/pesah](#)

Numbers 9:6 But there were some men who were unclean because of the dead person, so that they could not observe Passover on that day; so they came before Moses and Aaron on that day.

- **who were unclean:** Nu 5:2 6:6,7 19:11,16,18 Lev 21:11 Joh 18:28
- **they came:** Nu 15:33 27:2,5 Ex 18:15,19,26 Lev 24:11

DEFILEMENT PREVENTED CELEBRATION OF PASSOVER

But - Term of contrast. Not all could observe the Passover. Note that this passage describes a new stipulation not included in the instructions in Ex 12:1-49.

There were some men who were unclean because of the dead person, so that they could not observe Passover on that day; so they came before Moses and Aaron on that day - Clearly they desired to celebrate the Passover.

As Wenham says " If someone ate sacrificial meat when he was unclean, he might be cut off (Lev. 7:19–21). There is no mention of the danger of uncleanness in Exodus 12, but, given all the regulations set out in Leviticus 11–15, such a concern was now appropriate." (TOTC-Nu)

NIVSB - Since death was the antithesis of life, contact with death resulted in ritual impurity and made all persons unfit for entering sacred space and taking part in the life of the community—until they were purified (Nu19:11–13; compare Nu 6:6–12+).

Believer's Study Bible - (vv. 6-13) If someone were ceremonially unclean or on a journey (v. 13) at the time of the Passover, they were allowed to celebrate it one month later (v. 11). Such a supplementary Passover was held during the last week of Israel's stay at Sinai (cf. 10:11), after the census (1:1, 2). See chart, "Chronology of Israel in the Pentateuch," Ex. 40:17.

Unclean (02931)(**tame**) describes that which is (ceremonially) defiled or impure, ritually impure and unfit for use or consumption. It describes that which is not cleansed in a ceremonial sense and that which must be abstained from according to the Levitical law, lest impurity be contracted. Uses in Numbers - Num. 5:2; Num. 9:6; Num. 9:7; Num. 9:10; Num. 18:15; Num. 19:13; Num. 19:15; Num. 19:17; Num. 19:19; Num. 19:20; Num. 19:22; The [Septuagint](#) usually uses [akathartos](#) and pertains to that which may not come into contact with that which is holy and set apart. In the [Septuagint](#) akathartos refers almost universally to ceremonial uncleanness or to whatever (or whomever) is ritually defiled .

Passover (06453) see notes on [pesach/pesah](#)

Ronald Allen helps our modern minds grasp the significance of the OT concepts of clean and unclean which are foreign to our culture...

The concept of ritual impurity is so foreign to modern thinking as to be nearly unintelligible to most readers. The idea of being "unclean" is not simply that of being physically soiled, of course; though that which is dirty is

a physical presentment of what is “unclean.” The best way to think of the notion of “uncleanness” is as a teaching device to remind the people of Israel of the holiness of God. The idea that any person at all might have the effrontery to dare to approach the presence of the Lord is audacious in itself. Only by his grace may anyone come before him to worship. By developing a concept of ritual purity, an external symbol, the notion of internal purity might be presented. Ever in the Bible the notions of external symbols are representative of internal realities. Only the obdurate miss the point here. In our Lord’s confrontation with the Pharisees, the principal battle was not over the essential demands of God but on the tendencies the Pharisees had in focusing on external compliance without due attention to internal meaning. In our passage the recognition of ceremonial uncleanness on the part of some people and their consequent inability to participate in the activities of celebrative worship in the Passover speaks of their high level of compliance to the dictates of Torah and the keen desire they had to worship the Lord in spirit and truth (see John 4:24). (EBC)

Irving Jensen points out that “The date of this celebration of the Passover at Mount Sinai, the fourteenth day of the first month, was prior to the date of the opening words of the book of Numbers, the first day of the second month. Why, then, was the recording of this Passover delayed until this point in Numbers? The answer is to be found in the circumstances around the “little Passover” described in Nu 9:6–14.

The main Passover was the great annual feast. Because it was the people’s old covenant gospel of the grace of God speaking to them, through the main symbol of the shed blood, of the Lord’s gracious deliverance, it was a fitting national celebration on the eve of departure on the journey from Sinai to Canaan.

But God wanted all His people eligible to partake to join in the soul-searching events of the feast. For most of the people, there were no major hindrances. To be sure, the task of administering all the parts of the feast to such a multitude was a staggering one, but one can now see why God directed such order and efficiency and participation by so many servants in the services of the tabernacle. It is possible that at least fifty thousand lambs were required for this feast for its approximately two million participants. It was the priests’ task to sprinkle the blood (probably on the altar of burnt offering), assisted in this service by the Levites. This was a task of Herculean proportion, but nonetheless very possible (cf. the sprinkling of the blood of 256,500 lambs upon the altars of the temples in Emperor Nero’s time). Whatever the staggering tasks facing the servants of God, His inviolable commandment was, “Let the children of Israel keep the passover in its appointed season” (Nu 9:2). And no commandment of God regarding the journey was impossible, even if miraculous help was necessary. With sincere and holy simplicity the record answers, “And they kept the passover ... according to all that Jehovah commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel” (Nu 9:5).

But some men found themselves, at the time of the Passover, victims of an unfortunate circumstance. They had defiled themselves by contact with human corpses (see Lev. 19:28 for the violation). The desire of their hearts was to join with their brethren in this great and happy, though solemn, celebration. Their own words reveal this intense desire to participate: “Why are we kept back, that we may not offer the oblation of Jehovah in its appointed season among the children of Israel?” (Nu 9:7).

Moses wisely sought an answer from the Lord, and received one. And in that answer is reflected again the intention of the Lord to let all His people join in this happy occasion. Though such a man was ceremonially unclean, said the Lord, “yet he shall keep the passover” (Nu 9:10)—but one month later (Nu 9:11). The same provision of postponed celebration would also apply to one who was on a distant journey at the regular date of the Passover. But the shirkers among the Israelites (and every society has them) could not postpone their keeping the Passover if they were eligible at the time; in fact, for them not to keep the Passover meant being cut off from the people (Nu 9:13).

Finally, God would also include the foreigner sojourning among the Israelites who wanted to keep the Passover, as long as he fulfilled the same requirements of the feast. For there was not to be a double standard; rather, “one statute, both for the sojourner, and for him that is born in the land” (Nu 9:14).

It is in the provision for a one-month delay that we can understand the placement of the Passover section here in the account of Numbers. The majority of the Israelites had already participated; now the special cases were brought up; now it could be said that all the people were ready for the journey. (EvBC-Nu)

James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THIRTY DAYS OF GRACE Numbers 9:6–14

In this chapter we see grace upon grace. The Passover was to be kept on the fourteenth day of the first month, but the question here is raised: If a man was not in a condition to observe that feast on the day appointed, was he to be debarred for a whole year? Some men found in this position were heard saying, “Wherefore are we kept back?” (v. 7). This was a new difficulty, and Moses deals with it as we should deal with all such when they suddenly spring up before us. He took it to the Lord. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all liberally. The answer was plainly given. A special Passover feast was to be held on the

fourteenth day of the second month. It was a special provision to meet a special case. Such is the riches of His grace, grace sufficient for every need.

Here the way of salvation is clearly taught.

1. **Unfitness.** "Certain men were defiled that they could not keep the Passover on that day" (v. 6). The cause of their unfitness to profit by the provision made by God on the fourteenth day of the first month was their uncleanness. They were not in a state to receive it. Such was man's condition at the giving of the law—God's first provision. Being already sinners, the law could not save them, but only help to show their sinfulness. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Unbelief unfits a man from receiving the benefits of Christ's redeeming death. The defilement was of their own making.

2. **Confession.** "Those men said, We are defiled" (v. 7). They confessed their unfitness, and sought not to justify themselves. They presented themselves as ones disqualified because of their defilement, and begged for the mercy and grace that might reach their need and satisfy their souls. The grace of God, like a river, flows down into every open crevice, or like the light of the sun, it never refuses to enter, no matter how dark or dirty the corner may be, if only there is an opening toward it. If any man open the door, I will come in to him. Confession is the opening of the door. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us" (1 John 1:9).

3. **Provision.** "Ye shall keep the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month" (vs. 9–11). Between the first and second Passover there were thirty days. These were days of grace. After that there was no possibility of receiving a Passover blessing for that year. This little Passover, instituted for the benefit of those who were disabled, is a beautiful little picture of the grace of God devising a plan of salvation for helpless sinful man. To help these men Moses was utterly helpless. He could only say, "Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you" (v. 8). Salvation is of the Lord. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. It is suggestive that this provision of special grace was for the defiled, or the man that was "afar off" on a journey, and so could not keep the great feast of Passover. The Gospel of His grace offers cleansing to the defiled, and to bring nigh to God those who were afar off (Eph. 2:12, 13).

4. **Warning.** "But the man that forbearth to keep the Passover shall be cut off from among the people" (v. 13). The Passover speaks of redemption: "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." To those who wilfully neglect this there is nothing for them but a fearful looking for of judgment. It is counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:26–31). To despise or neglect grace is to choose death. How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?

5. **Invitation.** "If a stranger will keep the Passover, so shall he do" (v. 14). Any stranger sojourning with them may become a participant of the blessing of this memorable feast. As it denotes, redemption by the Blood of the Lamb is offered to all who will come into the camp. How fitting all this is, as typical of the great salvation, through the Blood of the Lamb of God. "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take" (Rev. 22:17). After you have come and taken your part of this God-offered grace, you will be no more strangers, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God (Eph. 2:17–19).

Numbers 9:7 Those men said to him, "Though we are unclean because of the dead person, why are we restrained from presenting the offering of the LORD at its appointed time among the sons of Israel?"

- we may not offer: Nu 9:2 Ex 12:27 De 16:2 2Ch 30:17-19 1Co 5:7,8

As noted earlier the material in vv. 7–9 is chronologically earlier than vv. 1–6.

Those men said to him, "Though we are unclean because of the dead person, why are we restrained from presenting the offering of the LORD at its appointed time among the sons of Israel?"

Unclean (02931) see notes on [tame](#)

Numbers 9:8 Moses therefore said to them, "Wait, and I will listen to what the LORD will command concerning you."

- **Wait,:** Ex 14:13 2Ch 20:17
- **I will:** Nu 27:5 Ps 25:14 85:8 Pr 3:5,6 Eze 2:7 3:17 Joh 7:17 17:8 Ac 20:27 1Co 4:4 11:23 Heb 3:5,6

**MOSES SEEKS ANSWER
FROM THE LORD**

Moses therefore said to them, "Wait, and I will listen to what the LORD will command concerning you- Moses did not know the answer to the question in Numbers 9:7 and had the proper response -- he went to the LORD. This is a good pattern for all believers to follow when we did not have a clear sense of what we are to do in a particular situation. Today we go to Him in His Word and wait on Him prayer with an open Bible and an open (willing) heart.

THOUGHT - Moses' response is described in James 1:5-8+ "But if any of you lacks wisdom, **let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**" 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways

Numbers 9:9 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Allen remarks "The grace of God is to be seen, not only in the words of his response to Moses, but in that he responded at all. We need to grasp anew the concept of the audacity of faith: by what right, excepting only God's great grace, dare even Moses go before Yahweh, the Creator of the universe, asking for a provision for exception from his demands? All God's actions and words to his people are gracious, undeserved, and unmerited. That he speaks at all, even in demands, is a mark of his condescension; that he speaks favorably in response to the request of Moses is a marvel. Throughout we have the sense of the ongoing wonder of grace." (EBC)

Numbers 9:10 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If any one of you or of your generations becomes unclean because of a dead person, or is on a distant journey, he may, however, observe the Passover to the LORD.

- **unclean:** Nu 9:6,7 Ro 15:8-19 16:25,26 1Co 6:9-11 Eph 2:1,2,12,13 3:6-9
- **he may, however, observe :** Mt 5:24 1Co 11:28

JEHOVAH GRANTS AN EXCEPTION

Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If any one of you or of your generations becomes unclean because of a dead person, or is on a distant journey, he may, however, observe the Passover to the LORD - God's mercy and grace are clearly reflected in this passage. Note the phrase **'If any one of you or of your generations** indicates that this divine exception applied to following generations, not just the Israelites in the wilderness.

Wiersbe applies this "exception" - There are also exceptions to consider (vv. 6–14). The legalist makes no exceptions, and the anarchist makes everything an exception; but the child of God waits on the Lord for His orders. Each problem in life is an opportunity to learn how to wait on God and discover His will. Let's not fear exceptions. Our job is to be obedient even if what we do does not always appear to be consistent.

Unclean (02931) see notes on [tame](#)

Passover (06453) see notes on [pesach/pesah](#)

Numbers 9:11 'In the second month on the fourteenth day at twilight, they shall observe it; they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

- **fourteenth:** Nu 9:3 Ex 12:2-14,43-49 2Ch 30:2-15 Joh 19:36
- **eat it:** Ex 12:8

PASSOVER DELAYED BY ONE MONTH

In the second month on the fourteenth day at twilight, they shall observe it; they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs - Other than the one month delay, there was no difference in the celebration of the Passover feast for those who had been defiled by a corpse and were now ceremonially clean..

Wiersbe - The Lord permitted these men to observe the feast later, in the second month, which shows that even under the rigid Law of Moses there was freedom when circumstances demanded it (see 2 Chr 30:13–15). Interestingly, when **Nicodemus** and **Joseph** took the body of Jesus down from the cross on Passover, they defiled themselves and could not participate in the feast (John 19:38–42). However, they had found salvation in Christ, the true Lamb of God. (WEOOT)

NET Note - The delay of four weeks for such people would have permitted enough time for them to return from their journey, or to recover from any short termed defilement such as is mentioned here. Apart from this provision, the Passover was to be kept precisely at the proper time.

Numbers 9:12 'They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it.

- **shall leave:** Ex 12:10+ = "And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire."
- **break a bone:** Ex 12:46+ = "nor are you to break any bone of it."
- **according:** Nu 9:3 Ex 12:43

They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it - This passage is alluded to in the Gospel of John in John's description of the sacrifice of the true Passover Lamb "For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, **"NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN."** (John 19:36, cf Ex 12:46+ , Ps 34:20+)

Ryrie - None of the Lamb of God's bones was broken (John 19:33, 36).

Passover (06453) see notes on [pesach/pesah](#)

Wenham - The New Testament sees Jesus as the true paschal lamb 'who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7). At his crucifixion none of his bones was broken 'that the scripture might be fulfilled' (John 19:36; cf. Num. 9:12). Furthermore, 'unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you', but those who eat and drink unworthily are 'guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord ... that is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died' (John 6:53; 1 Cor. 11:27, 30). In this way the New Testament re-asserts the threat of cutting off, both on those who fail to participate in the Christian passover when they can, and on those who do eat it when unclean (Num. 9:7, 13; cf. Lev. 7:20). (Ibid)

Numbers 9:13 'But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and yet neglects to observe the Passover, that person shall then be cut off from his people, for he did not present the offering of the LORD at its appointed time. That man will bear his sin.

- **yet neglects:** Nu 15:30,31 19:13 Ge 17:14 Ex 12:15 Lev 17:4,10,14-16 Heb 2:3 Heb 6:6 10:26-29 12:25
- **for:** Nu 9:2,3,7
- **bear his sin:** Nu 5:31 Lev 20:20 22:9 Eze 23:49 Heb 9:28

PENALTY FOR NEGLECT OF PASSOVER

But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and yet neglects to observe the Passover, that person shall then be cut off from his people, for he did not present the offering of the LORD at its appointed time. That man will bear his sin - This teaches that each individual is held responsible for his own sins. It also teaches that sin breaks fellowship with others and of course with God (1 John 1:7). It also teaches that ultimately sin can be very costly, for many think that the verb **cut off** means that the offending party was killed! This particular stipulation was not given in the original instructions in Exodus 12 for no one would refuse to take the passover meal and forfeit a firstborn son!

Wiersbe - What is meant by "cut off" isn't explained here; it might mean exclusion from the camp, or it could mean death. Just as

Passover was a serious matter to the Jews, so the Lord's Supper must be taken seriously by Christians (1 Cor. 11:28–30). (Be Counted)

MacArthur- If any Israelite did not keep the Passover at the appointed time and was not unclean or away from the land, he was to be “cut off,” which implies that he was to be killed. (MSB)

Wenham - This punishment (cut off) is repeatedly referred to in the Pentateuch for various religious and sexual sins (e.g. Lev. 17:4, 9; 20:6, 18; 23:29; Nu. 15:30f.; 19:13). It is a threat of sudden death at the hands of God, and may also hint at punishment in the life to come. Thus, both participation in the passover when unclean and abstention for no good reason are equally dangerous. (Ibid)

NET Note - The verb לִחַדַּל (khalal) means “to cease; to leave off; to fail.” The implication here is that it is a person who simply neglects to do it. It does not indicate that he forgot, but more likely that he made the decision to leave it undone. The pronouncement of such a person's penalty is that his life will be cut off from his people. There are at least three possible interpretations for this: physical death at the hand of the community (G. B. Gray, Numbers [ICC], 84–85), physical and/or spiritual death at the hand of God (J. Milgrom, “A Prolegomenon to Lev 17:11,” JBL 90 [1971]: 154–55), or excommunication or separation from the community (R. A. Cole, Exodus [TOTC], 109). The direct intervention of God seem to be the most likely in view of the lack of directions for the community to follow. Excommunication from the camp in the wilderness would have been tantamount to a death sentence by the community, and so there really are just two views.

Numbers 9:14 'If an alien sojourns among you and observes the Passover to the LORD, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its ordinance, so he shall do; you shall have one statute, both for the alien and for the native of the land.'

- Ex 12:48,49 Lev 19:10 22:25 24:22 25:15 De 29:11 31:12 Isa 56:3-7 Eph 2:19-22

RIGHTS OF THE ALIEN TO THE PASSOVER

'If an alien sojourns among you and observes the Passover to the LORD - An alien, like a Hebrew, had to be circumcised before he could celebrate Passover. Aliens were not required to keep the Passover, but were welcome to observe it. They were expected to observe the Sabbath and the Day of Atonement (Ex. 20:10+; Lev. 16:29+).

According to the statute of the Passover and according to its ordinance, so he shall do; you shall have one statute, both for the alien and for the native of the land - In Exodus we read that there was one condition for the alien to celebrate Passover "But if a **stranger (alien)** sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, **let all his males be circumcised**, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But **no uncircumcised person may eat of it.**" (Ex. 12:48+)

NKJVS comments that "As a stranger heard the story of God's gracious, powerful actions in the salvation of His people, that person would naturally question the Israelites on how he or she could participate in Israel's blessing."

Believer's Study Bible - Strangers or foreigners were excluded from the rite of the Passover unless they conformed to the laws of the Hebrews, including circumcision (15:14-16, note; Ex. 12:48, 49; Josh. 5:2-10).

Alien (stranger, sojourner) ([01616](#))(**ger** from **gur** = to live among people not one's blood relatives) is a masculine noun meaning sojourner, alien, stranger. The Septuagint translates here in Nu 9:14 with [proselutos](#) ("proselyte"). It describes someone who did not enjoy rights usually possessed by residents. It describes a person who does not belong to the nation of Israel by ancestry. **Baker** adds that **ger** "indicates in general anyone who is not native to a given land or among a given people (Ex. 12:19). The word is used most often to describe strangers or sojourners in Israel who were not native-born Israelites and were temporary dwellers or newcomers. All uses in Numbers - Num. 9:14; Num. 15:14; Num. 15:15; Num. 15:16; Num. 15:26; Num. 15:29; Num. 15:30; Num. 19:10; Num. 35:15;

NET Note - The words translated “resident foreigner” and “live” are from the same Hebrew root, גִּיר (gur), traditionally translated “to sojourn.” The “sojourner” who “sojourns” is a foreigner, a resident alien, who lives in the land as a temporary resident with rights of land ownership.

Numbers 9:15 Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle, until morning.

- **on the day:** Ex 40:2,18
- **the cloud:** Nu 14:14 Ex 14:19,20,24 33:9,10 40:34 Ne 9:12,19 Ps 78:14 105:39 Isa 4:5 Eze 10:3,4 1Co 10:1
- **evening:** Ex 13:21 40:38

Related Passages:

Exodus 40:34-38+ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; 37 but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. 38 For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.



Shekinah Cloud

THE CONTINUAL CLOUD

NET Note on the continual **cloud** - This section (Num 9:15–23) recapitulates the account in Ex 40:34 but also contains some additional detail about the cloud that signaled Israel's journeys. Here again material from the book of Exodus is used to explain more of the laws for the camp in motion.

Jensen has a good summary to this point in Numbers writing that "The Israelite hosts had been numbered, organized, sanctified, given adequate spiritual leadership. They had themselves given gifts and oblations to God, and had celebrated the memorial feast of the Passover. In God's estimate they were now ready for the journey as He gave them one last command: know and follow your leaders." (Ibid)

Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected the cloud([Shekinah glory cloud](#)) **covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle, until morning** - This recalls Ex. 13:21–22+ where Moses described "The LORD was going before them in a **pillar of cloud by day** to lead them on the way, and in a **pillar of fire by night** to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 22He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

THOUGHT - The pillar was a cloud by day and a fire by night. God frees us from bondage, and He also guides us to the inheritance He has prepared for us. His Word is like that pillar of cloud and fire, and He will show us the way if we will trust Him. God always makes His will clear to those who are willing to follow (John 7:17). He saves us, feeds us, guides us, and protects us—and yet we do so little for Him! (Warren Wiersbe)

NET Note - The cloud apparently was centered over the tent, over the spot of the ark of the covenant in the most holy place. It thereafter spread over the whole tabernacle.

Believer's Study Bible - The last matter needing attention before the departure from Sinai was the means by which God would guide His people in the wilderness. The cloud (vv. 15-23) was already present. It was the visible sign of Yahweh's presence and His moving with His people (cf. Gen. 28:15). Its movements indicated the guidance of God. When the glory of God filled the Most Holy Place, the cloud lingered above, and the people would remain encamped. When the cloud moved from the tabernacle, the people moved (cf. Ex. 13:21, note). The Decalogue, which summarized the principles of God's covenant with Israel, was contained in the

ark of the Testimony as the promise of God's gracious presence inside the tabernacle, just as the cloud outside represented the pledge of His presence. This cloud has often been referred to as the "Shekinah," a nonbiblical term which first appears in the Aramaic Targums. The term was employed in the Talmud also and means "that which dwells."

Related Resources:

- Shekinah glory cloud -
- Tony Garland's [The Abiding Presence of God](#)
- [Overview: The Glory of the LORD](#) - departure in Ezekiel, chart of past,present, future glory, OT manifestations of Shekinah glory

Numbers 9:15-23 Following The Master

At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed. —
Numbers 9:23

At a dog show near my home, I watched a Cardigan Welsh corgi named Trevor perform. At his master's command, he ran several yards away and immediately returned, he jumped fences, and he identified objects using his sense of smell. After finishing each exercise, he sat down at his master's feet and waited for more instructions.

Trevor's careful attention to his master's instruction reminded me of the devotion God desired from His people as they followed Him through the wilderness. God led in a unique way. His presence appeared as a cloud. If the cloud ascended, He wanted His people to move to another area. If the cloud descended, they were to stay put. "At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed" (Nu 9:23). The Israelites followed this practice day or night, regardless of how long they had to remain in one place.

God wasn't simply testing the Israelites; He was leading them to the Promised Land (10:29). He wanted to take them to a better place. So it is with us when God asks us to follow Him. He wants to lead us to a place of closer fellowship with Himself. His Word assures us that He is loving and faithful in leading those who humbly follow Him.

In fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.
—Sammis

God asks His children to follow the Leader.

INSIGHT: The tabernacle (Num. 9:15) was not only a place of worship, it was intended to be the center of Israel's national life. This "tent of meeting" also foreshadowed the incarnation of Christ, the living Word who "dwelled" (that is, "tabernacled") among us in a tent of human flesh (John 1:14).

Numbers 9:15-23 To Work Or to Wait?

"Be still, and know that I am God." - Psalm 46:10

A gifted and active Christian woman was stricken with an illness that confined her to bed. On her wall hung a motto, 'Be Strong - And Work For the Lord', based on 1 Chronicles 28:20. But those words, which used to bring her encouragement and strength, now brought only distress.

A friend recognized her troubled state of mind and read the last part of Numbers 9 to her. She pointed out that during Israel's wilderness wanderings, they rested whenever the guiding cloud remained over the tabernacle. But when the cloud moved on, they journeyed forward.

The friend then said that there are times when God expects us to move ahead in our work for Him. At other times He expects us to rest. To emphasize her point, she walked over to the wall, took down the first motto, and replaced it with a new one: 'Be Still, And Know that I Am God' (Psalm 46:10).

All of us need to recognize that God in His wisdom not only leads us into service but also provides times of rest. Often we desire the thrill of activity when He knows we will draw closer to Him through peaceful stillness. A real test of consecration is the ability to wait when we prefer to work. - H G Bosch

Whenever your plans are thwarted,
Just Quietly keep still,
And wait for God's sure leading,
His timing, and His Will.
-Anon.

Thought for the Day:

God orders our stops as well as our steps.

James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - THE HOLY CLOUD Numbers 9:15–23

“He leads round, but He leads right,
All the way is in His sight;
Be it rough, or be it long,
Void of joy, or set to song,
Bringing much, or mite by mite,
He leads round, but He leads right.

He leads round, but He leads right,
Cloud by day and fire by night;
Morn by morn, let God arise,
Scattering all our enemies;
And will sing with evening light,
He leads round, but He leads right.”

It did look like infinite madness that the children of Israel should be led “about by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea.” It was indeed a roundabout way, but it was the right way, for God in the pillar of cloud led them. This holy, because divinely possessed, cloud was both a standing and a moving miracle, and a witness to the stability and mobility of God’s dealings with His people. No storm could shake it, yet it moved as a guiding lamp for the feet of the pilgrims. Let us think for a little of its—

1. Origin. Of how this cloud was formed we have no account. Like the body of Jesus, it had a common appearance, yet there was a great mystery about it. God was in it. It was to the Israelites the visible body of the invisible God. Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. The flesh of Jesus Christ was the visible body in which the invisible Father spoke and wrought. “The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works” (John 17:9, 10). Know ye not that your body is the temple of God, and that God dwelleth in you?

2. Coming. “On the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered it” (v. 15). When all had been set in order, and everything yielded up for the service of God, then the cloud rested on it and took possession of it. It is so still with regard to our individual lives. When all is surrendered to Him for His glory He will find a dwelling place in us, and use us for His own Name’s sake.

3. Character. “The cloud covered the tabernacle” (v. 15). This covering signified protection as well as possession. His presence is a covering presence. The same thought is here that we have in the atonement—covering. Covered by the wings of the Almighty. The Lord thy keeper, the Lord thy shade, hidden in His pavilion.

4. Significance. “The cloud covered the tent of the testimony” (v. 15). The tent, or tabernacle, was a testimony for God after it was covered with the cloud of His presence. We have only the form without the power till we are covered with the Holy Anointing One. It is His presence that makes the tent of our life a testimony for Him. Cloudless tents are very common, but very useless as witnesses for God.

5. Appearance. “The cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night” (v. 16). It had the appearance of fire until the morning (v. 15). During the absence of the sun the symbol of the Divine Presence took the likeness of fire. Is it not so now? During the absence of the Son of God the Holy Ghost takes the appearance of tongues of fire. This holy fire during the night of this world’s unbelief is indispensable until the morning of His appearing. Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Acts 1:5).

6. Authority. The moving of the cloud is called “The command of the Lord” (vs. 17–20). A most impressive symbol of the Holy Spirit.

1. WHERE IT ABODE THEY ABODE (v. 17). Their communion with God depended on their keeping in touch with the pillar of cloud. Walk in the Spirit, and abide in Him, then your fellowship will be unbroken.

2. WHEN IT MOVED THEY MOVED (v. 21). As they followed the moving pillar, so we must be ready to follow the guiding Spirit. To be led by the Spirit of God is an evidence of sonship (Rom. 8:14).

3. AS LONG AS IT TARRIED THEY TARRIED (v. 22). It was not theirs to decide how long they should stay in a place. To move without the cloud was just to move into a godless condition. To go into a new sphere without the Spirit of God leading is to get into a state of spiritual powerlessness and disobedience. Christian worker, remember that the moving of the Holy Spirit is the commandment of the Lord. Grieve Him not by impatience or fearfulness.

Numbers 9:16 So it was continuously; the cloud would cover it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

- Nu 9:18-22 Ex 13:21,22 40:38 De 1:33 Ne 9:12,19 Ps 78:14 105:39 Isa 4:5,6 1Co 10:1 2Co 5:19 Rev 21:3

SUMMARY OF THE CLOUD

So it was continuously; the cloud would cover it by day, and the appearance of fire by night- This was not a cloud like we see in the sky today for it never needed a weatherman or woman to give the forecast. Every day and every night Israel's camp was "cloudy!"

Henry Morris - So it was alway. This was another daily miracle during the wilderness years, in addition to the manna and the water. The "shekinah" cloud, assuring the people of God's continual presence (Exodus 33:14), guided them by day and night from the time they built the tabernacle until this time (Exodus 40:36,38). (Defender's Study Bible)

TSK - This cloud not only enlightened the Israelites, but also protected them, and was a continual pledge of God's presence and protection. To this manifestation of the Divine glory, the prophet Isaiah alludes, when he says, (Isa 4:5,) "The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." God is the director, protector, and glory of His people.

Numbers 9:17 Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp.

- when the cloud: Nu 10:11,33,34 Ex 40:36-38 Ps 80:1,2 Isa 49:10 Joh 10:3-5,9
- and in the: Ex 33:14,15 Ps 32:8 73:24 Joh 10:3,4,9

FOLLOWING THE STARTS AND STOPS OF THE CLOUD

Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp

Irving Jensen explains that "If up to this point there was any question in an Israelite's mind as to who was really the captain leading the hosts and planning the strategy, there could be none now. For in a clearly visible, undeniably miraculous way, the caller of the signals, the Captain of the hosts, was identified—the God of creation. The visible object was a miraculous cloud. That the cloud was miraculous is seen by the facts: (1) it never dissipated; (2) it did not move according to normal meteorological functions—it might even tarry in one spot for an indefinite period (Nu 9:22); (3) at night it took on the appearance of fire (Nu 9:16). The sequence was not, whenever the Israelites stopped the cloud stopped. Rather, whenever the cloud stopped the Israelites were to stop. The principle was that of leadership and following. If the cloud moved, the Israelites must follow; if the cloud stopped, the Israelites must obey (Nu 9:17). (Ibid)

Numbers 9:18 At the command of the LORD the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped.

- **at the:** Nu 9:20 10:13 Ex 17:1 2Jn 1:6
- **as long as:** 1Co 10:1

At the command of the LORD the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped

Irving Jensen explains that "The action of the cloud was very explicitly identified with the voice of the Lord as Captain: "At the commandment of Jehovah the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of Jehovah they encamped" (Nu 9:18). Again and again in Nu 9:15–23 this point is reiterated. In no other place in Numbers is this emphasis by repetition even matched. The point must have been clear to the Israelites: follow the signals of God!" (Ibid)

THOUGHT - "Note the sequence: obeying the Lord, waiting on the Lord, following the Lord. God has His times and His routes, and we must watch for His leading. Perhaps the most difficult time for us is when God tarries and we have to wait (Nu 9:19). It is also the most dangerous time, for human nature wants to rush ahead. We must "rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him" (Ps. 37:7+). Never be afraid of the will of God; God's will is the expression of God's love, and it comes from His heart (Ps. 33:11). It is food, not medicine (John 4:31–34), and nourishes us as we obey. Oswald Chambers was correct when he said, "Doing God's will is never hard. The only thing that is hard is not doing His will." Are you doing His will now?" (Wiersbe - WWBC).

TSK - There is no time lost, while we are waiting God's time. It is as acceptable a piece of submission to the will of God, to sit still contentedly when our lot requires it, as to work for him when we are called to it.

G Campbell Morgan - Num. 9:18

At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they encamped.-Num. 9.18. Our chapter brings us to the moment when everything was ready, so far as Divine provision was concerned, for the march to the promised land. The hosts of God waited only for the Divine will. This was to be made known through the cloud. The first appearing of this cloud was in connection with the actual exodus, and from henceforth it was the appointed symbol and token of the Divine presence. It was a remarkably suggestive one, at once mystic and revealing. There has been a good deal of speculation as to the nature of this cloud. It is surely best, reverently to consider it as a supernatural manifestation, indicating the presence and guidance of God. The instructions given were most definite, that the people were only to move in obedience to the movement of the cloud. It was at once a beneficent and drastic provision. It lifted. all responsibility from them, except that of simple obedience. They were not called upon to consider the time or direction of their march, but they were not allowed to object or delay. We have no longer any such visible means of guidance, but the guidance is as sure for us as for them; and it is given to us to know it by the life of maintained fellowship with the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit. In proportion as that is maintained by our fulfilling of the true conditions, there need be no place or time in which we may not discover what is the will of God for us

Numbers 9:19 Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep the LORD'S charge and not set out.

- **keep:** Nu 1:52,53 3:8 Zec 3:7

ISRAEL OBEYS

Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep the LORD'S charge and not set out - Again we see emphasis on Israel's obedience in following Yahweh's leadership. They were not following Moses but Moses' God.

Note the repetition in Nu 9:15-23 - "The repetitious nature of vv. 15–23 enhances the expectation of continued complete obedience to the Lord's direction of Israel's movements through the wilderness. The tragedy of their subsequent disobedience (ch. 11) is heightened by this paragraph on their obedience." (NIVSB)

Keep (careful, guard, kept, observe, watch) (08104)(**shamar**) means to keep, watch, preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, to be on one's guard.

The first use of **shamar** in Ge 2:15 is instructive as Adam was placed in the garden (a perfect environment) and was commanded to "**keep**" it which in the [Septuagint](#) is translated with **phulasso** (which is used to translate **shamar**) which means to guard like a military sentinel would at his post. Clearly Adam did not do a good job at "keeping" the garden safe from intruders! And because of this failure he was cast out of the garden and angels stationed to "**guard** (Lxx = **phulasso**) the way to the tree of life" so that he would not eat of it (Ge 3:24+). After Cain murdered Abel he answered God "Am I my brother's **keeper**?" (Ge 4:9)

Shamar is used 6 times in the seven verses of Psalm 121 and most notable is our Keeper (3b "He who **keeps** you will not slumber. Behold, He who **keeps** Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD is your **keeper**; ...7 The LORD will **protect** you from all evil; He will **keep** your soul. 8 The LORD will **guard** your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.: see [commentary](#))

Uses in Numbers - Num. 1:53; Num. 3:7; Num. 3:8; Num. 3:10; Num. 3:28; Num. 3:32; Num. 3:38; Num. 6:24; Num. 8:26; Num. 9:19; Num. 9:23; Num. 18:3; Num. 18:4; Num. 18:5; Num. 18:7; Num. 23:12; Num. 28:2; Num. 31:30; Num. 31:47

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

When the cloud tarried.

This was the supreme test of obedience. It was comparatively easy to strike the tents, when the fleecy folds of the cloud were slowly gathered from off the Tabernacle, and it floated majestically before the host. Change is always delightful; and there was excitement and interest in the route, the scenery, the locality of the next halting-place. But, ah, the tarrying! Sometimes the cloud tarried for two days, or a month, or a year; then, however uninviting and sultry the location, however trying to flesh and blood, however irksome to the impatient disposition, however perilously exposed to danger — there was no option but to remain encamped. The Psalmist says, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." And what He has done for the Old Testament saints He will do for believers throughout all ages.

Still, God often keeps us waiting. Face to face with threatening foes, in the midst of alarms, encircled by perils, beneath the impending rock. May we not go? Is it not time to strike our tent? Have we not suffered to the point of utter collapse? May we not exchange the glare and heat for green pastures and still waters? There is no answer. The cloud tarries, and we must remain, though sure of manna, rock-water, shelter, and defence. God never keeps us at a post without assuring us of his presence, and sending us daily supplies.

Wait, domestic servant, before you give notice! Young man, do not be in a hurry to make a change! Minister remain at your post! Until the cloud clearly moves, you must tarry (Numbers 9:8). Wait, then, thy Lord's good pleasure! He will be in plenty of time!

Numbers 9:20 If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, according to the command of the LORD they remained camped. Then according to the command of the LORD they set out.

ISRAEL OBEYS AGAIN

If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, according to the command of the LORD they remained camped. Then according to the command of the LORD they set out - This repeats the idea of Israel's obedience noted in Nu 9:19.

Numbers 9:21 If sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would move out; or if it remained in the daytime and at night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out.

- Ne 9:12,19

ISRAEL OBEYS A THIRD TIME

If sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would move out; or if it remained in the daytime and at night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out - This again repeats the idea of Israel's obedience noted in Nu 9:19.

Numbers 9:22 Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out.

- Nu 9:17 1:54 8:20 23:21,22 Ex 39:42 40:16,36,37 De 1:6,7 2:3,4 Ps 32:8 48:14 73:24 77:20 107:7 143:10 Pr 3:5,6 Ac 1:4



Shekinah Glory Cloud

AGAIN REITERATES ISRAEL'S OBEDIENCE

Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it- (shakan ~ rested or tabernacled) (Ex24:16 Nu10:12): shakan gives rise to the rabbinic word "Shekinah" ("that which dwells") although this word per se is not found in the OT.

the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out- They are manifesting a good start in their wilderness journey, but sadly we begin to see them "slip" (or backslide) in Numbers 11:1ff+ and then fully "fall" in Numbers 14 where they fail to "set out" to the promised land of Canaan. A good start does not guarantee a good finish, which is why the writer of Hebrews says "since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance ([hupomone](#)) the race (the [agon](#), the specific race God has laid out for each of us to run until we are "out of breath!" - stay in your lane!) that is set before us," (Hebrews 12:1+)

THOUGHT - There is a powerful application of this OT pattern to our lives today (for we also are in a "wilderness" called the "world!"). Just as the Israelites had to continually be ready to "move out," and do so with an obedient spirit, so too believers need to be ever sensitive to the leading to the Holy Spirit and Holy Word, and ever ready and willing to "move out" in Spirit enabled obedience in various areas of our lives.

Numbers 9:23 At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out; they kept the LORD'S charge, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.

- they kept: Nu 9:19 Ge 26:5 Jos 22:3 Eze 44:8 Zec 3:7

FOLLOWING GOD'S WILL

At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out; they kept the LORD'S charge, according to the command of the LORD through Moses - Command is a key word in Numbers 9 occurring 9x in 5 verses (Nu 9:5 Nu 9:8 Nu 9:18 Nu 9:20 Nu 9:23) and in each use we see that Israel obeyed. Note that Israel has not actually set out, so this and the preceding passages are somewhat of a parenthetical explanation.

NKJVS - The cloud and the fire were manifestations of God's will. When the cloud rose, the people were to set out. When the cloud settled, the people were to encamp. There was nothing predictable in the movement or settling of the cloud; all was dependent on God's sovereignty. The people saw the glory and the will of God in the cloud's actions.

TSK - Some of the Levites may have been appointed to watch the moving of the pillar, and to give timely notice to the camp of its beginning to stir; and this is called "keeping the charge of the Lord." It is uncomfortable staying when God is departed, but very safe and pleasant going, when we see God go before us, and resting where he appoints us to rest.

Keep (careful, guard, kept, observe, watch) ([08104](#)) see note on [shamar](#)

Life Application Study Note - The Israelites traveled and camped as God guided. When you follow God's guidance, you know you are where God wants you, whether you're moving or staying in one place. You are physically somewhere right now. Instead of praying, "God, what do you want me to do next?" ask, "God, what do you want me to do while I'm right here?" Direction from God is not just for your next big move. He has a purpose in placing you where you are right now. Begin to understand God's purpose for

your life by discovering what he wants you to do now!

Wenham applies this section on Israel's being led by the cloud - The New Testament also uses cloud imagery to describe the presence of God. Our Lord was overshadowed by the cloud at his transfiguration, and disappeared into a cloud at his ascension (Luke 9:34; Acts 1:9). He indeed was the perfect tabernacle in which 'the Word ... dwelt among us' (John 1:14). Paul and Peter both compare the body to a tent, a temporary dwelling to be replaced after death (2 Cor. 5:1-4; 2 Pet. 1:13-14). Like the tabernacle, the Christian's body is no empty tent, but a temple for the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Filled by the Spirit he may follow in his Lord's footsteps and resist the temptations of Satan even in the wilderness (Luke 4:1ff.). 'Let the fiery, cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.' (TOTC-Nu)