

CHAPTER 1, VERSES 1-3

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

(1,1)

The sefer begins with the recognition that Moshe, the servant of Hashem (G-d) has passed on and; subsequently, Hashem spoke to Moshe's servant, Yehoshua. The feeling conveyed here is based on the realization that Yehoshua was not even close to the greatness of Moshe Rabbeinu, who was the perfect representative of Hashem. Consequently, there was room for grave concern over the extent of Hashem's future involvement and relationship with the Jewish nation. How accurate would the message of Hashem be conveyed through Yehoshua and how spiritual would be the level of the Jewish people without their paradigm, Moshe?

The answer comes in the introductory words of this sefer. Although Yehoshua was certainly not at the spiritual level of Moshe, he was nevertheless a perfect *reflection* of his teacher. Rashi (see Devorim 31, 29) informs us that Moshe Rabbeinu even regarded Yehoshua as a perfect extension of himself. Moshe considered himself alive and functioning throughout the lifetime of his student, Yehoshua. With this introduction we approach the lessons of this Sefer Yehoshua as an extension and reflection of the lessons from the greatest teacher and prophet of all times, Moshe Rabbeinu. When studying the life of Yehoshua we bear in mind a man who reflected the purity and sanctity of the greatest man ever to live in this world. (see Devorim Rabba 11, 3) Through Yehoshua, the mirror image of Moshe Rabbeinu, it was therefore feasible for the Jewish people to attain the lofty spiritual heights necessary for them to merit the open revelations of Hashem which would continue throughout their lifetime.

(1,2)

Hashem continues and instructs Yehoshua, "Cross the Jordan River, you and this entire nation, and go to the land which Hashem is giving the Jewish people. The wording, "You and this entire nation" suggests an individuality to Yehoshua, singling him out from the nation. This may be a reference to the specific instruction Hashem gave Yehoshua earlier. Rashi (Devorim 31,7) notes that Moshe's charge to Yehoshua was, "To come with this nation into Eretz Yisroel." Rashi explains this to mean that Yehoshua would be accompanied by the elders of his time and that policy decisions would ultimately be determined by them. However, Rashi notes that when Hashem repeated this charge He stated, "That you will bring this nation." The word *bring* rather than *come* indicates that the sole control would be in the hands of Yehoshua. We can therefore understand Hashem's present comment, "You and the people," to be dictating that Yehoshua remain segregated from the people, including the elders, and individually lead them into Eretz Yisroel.

(1,3)

"Wherever you tread, I have given that land to you." Our Chazal (Sifri Devarim 15) understand this introductory statement to refer to B'nai Yisroel's (the Children of Israel) ability to annex outside areas to Eretz Yisroel. It's quite perplexing why this opportunity was shared with them even before they were commanded with the basic obligation of conquering Eretz Yisroel proper.

The lesson taught to B'nai Yisroel here can be understood in the following manner. After reflecting on the words, "Wherever you tread" we realize that this refers to the potential of the miraculous clearance of the land without any war or effort. Even their mere treading on the land would deliver it into their hands. The presence of the Jewish people accompanied by the Divine Presence of Hashem would automatically repel the enemy. If the Jewish people had merited this experience, all the remaining seven nations would have fled from before the Jewish people as did the Gergeshi Tribe. (see Rashi Shemos 34, 11)

The surprising factor here is that this experience was not limited to Eretz Yisroel proper. Yehoshua was told from the outset that no matter where the Jewish people tread throughout the world for the purpose of conquest, immediate results would occur, and the land would be automatically cleared of its inhabitants. (see Ramban Devorim 11,24) The presence of Hashem would be so evident amongst the Jewish people that everyone would stand back in awe. This encouraging statement served as a powerful assurance to the Jewish people of their intimate relationship with Hashem and its far-reaching effects.

Subscribe to ***Yehoshua Reflections*** and receive the weekly class via e-mail.

Kollel Toras Chesed of Skokie
3732 West Dempster
Skokie, Illinois 60076
Phone: 847-674-7959 Fax: 847-674-4023
E-mail: kollel@arlin.net
