

# CHAPTER 1, VERSES 4-6

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

## (1,4)

*"From the Sinai Desert and this Lebanon area and up to the great Euphrates River, the entire Hitite land until the Mediterranean Sea in the west shall be your borders."* The basic borders of Eretz Yisroel are outlined here and resemble, for the most part, what Moshe Rabbeinu told the Jewish people in Parshas Eikev. However there are two differences in the text, and both of them are based on the present position of the Jewish people as they prepare to enter the land. According to the Vilna Gaon the Lebanon area refers to the eastern side of Eretz Yisroel which they were facing at this time and is therefore referred to as "this Lebanon area." And "the entire Hitite land" refers to the point of entry and its surrounding which the Jewish people were soon to conquer.

## (1,5)

*"No man shall stand firmly before you all the days of your life."* In truth, these exact words are stated in the plural form in Devorim (11:25), referring to the protection of the Jewish people from the foreign nations of the land. However, in this passage the promise appears in singular form, suggesting that it is directed towards Yehoshua's personal status as the leader of the Jewish people. This promise; therefore, continues the opening theme of the sefer - in which Hashem segregated Yehoshua from the people and placed total responsibility for them upon his shoulders. This passage develops this charge and guarantees that Yehoshua's authority would always be sound and uncontested by anyone. (see Malbim ad loc.)

Such promises are beneficial to anyone who rises to the position of authority and towers over colleagues who had not previously recognized his potential greatness. However, we note that the promise was not made in conjunction with Yehoshua's general leadership role, rather in regards to the conquest of the land. This guarantee is essential for Yehoshua to fulfill his overwhelming task of waging war with all the inhabitants of the land. In this situation total unity of the nation is a necessity from both a practical and a spiritual standpoint. In order to guarantee a successful conquest of the entire land, the Jewish people must stand united as one nation and follow unconditionally the directions of their leader. Therefore, Hashem promised Yehoshua that this would be the case, and that his authority would be uncontested.

## (1,5 continued)

The passage continues, *"As I was with Moshe, so I will be with you."* This guarantee against opposition came with a condition and an explanation for itself. Hashem explained that Yehoshua would forever

command the respect of his people when they would sense his subservience to Hashem. Yehoshua's constant focus on Hashem would produce a reciprocal response from Hashem, that is, His constant focus on Yehoshua. In fact, Chazal tell us that the actual presence of Hashem could be seen on Yehoshua's face which glowed with similar radiance to that of his great teacher Moshe Rabbeinu (see Rashi to Bamidbar 27:20). Moshe Rabbeinu's glow reflected Hashem's Divine Presence at all times. On a related level, the same was true of Yehoshua. This constant glow would assure Yehoshua and the nation that Hashem would always be there for him. The hidden reference of this passage could be that just as no one opposed Moshe Rabbeinu (upon whom the Divine Presence was always seen), similarly no one will oppose Yehoshua (upon whom the Divine Presence would also be seen).

**(1,6)**

*"Be strong and encouraged because you will secure this nation with their inheritance of the land promised their fathers."* These words reflect Moshe's initial charge to Yehoshua of his dual responsibility: to conquer the land and to divide it amongst the individual families. However, these words of encouragement seem to relate to a very distant dimension in the final stages of the conquest. Why would this initial charge make reference to the physical division of the portions, a phenomenon which wouldn't transpire for years to come?

In answer to this we note the particular point at which mention is made of the promise to the fathers. We surprisingly discover that the promise of the land was not found earlier when discussing the entry into, deliverance of, or conquest of the land. It is only mentioned regarding the physical inheritance of the land. This suggests that this promise was made specifically regarding the individual proportioning of the land. Chazal (based on the passage in Shemos 6:8) reveal that there was, in fact, a specific promise made to those leaving Egypt to personally inherit the land (see Baba Basra 117b) In addition to all promises to the Patriarchs regarding the land, a special promise was made to the Jewish people before leaving Egypt. Hashem informed them that the final stages of their redemption would include their personal inheritance of portions of land. Apparently, this is the promise Hashem referred to when giving Yehoshua this charge. Hashem reminded Yehoshua that although the road of conquest ahead would be difficult, he must not limit his goals to conquest itself. The Jewish exodus can not be considered complete until each family receives its personal portion of land. Therefore, from the outset Yehoshua was told to set his goals on dividing the land because then and only then would his mission be fulfilled.

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