

# CHAPTER 1, VERSES 7-9

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

## (1,7)

*"But be very strong and determined to guard to do all the Torah."* In addition to the previous words of encouragement regarding his sense of leadership, Yehoshua received the above powerful charge to carefully adhere to all the Mitzvos. Our Chazal (Brachos 32b) extract from here an important principle about the performance of Mitzvos. They say that Torah study and good deeds require constant focus and encouragement. Rashi (adloc.) explains this to mean that one must constantly exert all his energy towards this end. Perfect fulfillment of Hashem's will does not come naturally and requires enormous effort and constant focus.

It is interesting to note that this key principle was not revealed to us in the Torah itself. Instead, it was reserved for Sefer Yehoshua and introduced in connection to the Jewish people's conquest of the land. This provides us with an important insight about the spiritual demands of Yehoshua's times. The mere existence of the Jewish people in the hostile Canaanite environment was nothing short of a miracle. Every nation occupying the land of Canaan recognized the threat of the invading Jewish nation and was determined to remove it. The existence and, more importantly, the success of the Jewish people required outstanding merit. Hashem told Yehoshua that the key to his success would be perfection. If the Jewish nation desired total protection, they would need to adhere to Hashem's Mitzvos with total perfection.

We now understand the timely lesson taught to them about perfection. They were warned that perfect performance of Mitzvos was no simple task and required their full energy and total focus. However, in their case it was essential for their survival and ultimate success to achieve this perfection, to the best of their ability.

## (1:7, continued)

*"To do all the Torah which My servant Moshe commanded you don't stray from it left or right."* We know that the commandments of the Torah were given to us by Hashem and not by His servant, Moshe. Why then does Hashem give Moshe so much credit here and warn Yehoshua to adhere to the teachings of Moshe?

The Gaon of Vilna reflects that Sefer Devorim differed by nature from the preceding four books of the Torah. Whereas in the previous seforim Moshe directly relayed Hashem's message to the Jewish people, Sefer Devorim was often transmitted long after Moshe received the actual message from Hashem. Understandably, the degree of perfection pertaining to the transmittal of Hashem's words

would be in question. Yehoshua was therefore reminded of Moshe's total devotion to Hashem's will and thereby assured that Moshe's every word was weighed and presented with perfect accuracy. Although Sefer Devorim was uniquely expressed by Moshe Rabbeinu, it nevertheless reflected his total subservience to Hashem and contained the perfect transmittal of the will of Hashem.

In the scope of the conquest of the land, this dimension was quite significant. The formula and road map for the entire sefer Yehoshua were contained within Sefer Devorim, the final sefer of the Torah. Yehoshua was told that his careful adherence to each and every word of Sefer Devorim would yield guaranteed success. The words of Hashem's loyal servant Moshe were in truth the perfect expression of Hashem's will and projected with perfection the ultimate success and outcome of every step of Yehoshua's leadership role.

**(1:8)**

*"The Sefer Torah should not depart from your lips and you shall engage in it day and night... for then you will be successful and accomplished."* This passage is understood to be the primary description of every Jewish person's obligation in Torah study. In essence, one is obligated to study Torah whenever the time is available and he is never permitted to depart from it. It is for this reason that we recite one blessing over all the Torah study of the day. Although we may at times repeatedly interrupt this study, one blessing is still sufficient for the entire day. Since one must return to his study whenever the opportunity presents itself, he never actually departs from it. As expressed by the words of Tosfos in Brochos (11b), "It is as if he is sitting and engaging himself in Torah study all day long."

With these words we can understand the guarantee stated at the end of this passage. Hashem says, "For then you will be successful and accomplished." Chazal in Tractate Avoda Zara (19b) make a profound statement based on the above passage. Rav Yehoshua ben Levi says, "Whoever is engaged in Torah study will be successful in his ways." This is drawn from our passage which promises a successful road in exchange for constant Torah study. With the above understanding of Torah study, we now see one's worldly activities as acts done amidst Torah study. In essence, by returning to one's studies whenever possible all his activity is regarded as part of his Torah study experience. From this vantage point all daily activities will be blessed with the merit of Torah. Yehoshua was therefore guaranteed that if he and the people would study Torah in this way, even his paths of battle and conquest would be blessed with success. Their battle time, always flanked by Torah study, would be regarded as part of their Torah study program and deserved to be blessed through the immeasurable merits of Torah.

**(1:9)**

*"Have I not commanded you to be strong and determined. Don't be frightened or broken because Hashem is with you wherever you go."* These final words of encouragement completed the picture. Drawing from the above mentioned words of Chazal in Brachos, we discover a third dimension of strength and encouragement. Amongst the principles requiring constant strength and total focus are

profession and occupation. Rashi (ad loc.) explains that constant determination is necessary to succeed in any field, business, skilled work and even battle. In addition to Yehoshua's charge for leadership, for adherence to Mitzvos and for engagement in Torah study, he was reminded to concentrate wholeheartedly on the strategies and tactics of battle. Finally, the picture was complete and with all aspects of encouragement Yehoshua was amply prepared to enter into the war and fulfill his mission faithfully.

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