

Deuteronomy 31:7-8

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-31/deuteronomy-317-8/>

In the presence of all the Israelites, Moses presented Joshua as his successor and commands him to be strong and courageous because the LORD promised to be with him and support him.

Having commanded the Israelites to be strong and courageous (vv. 1–6), the next task to be done was to announce to the people that *Joshua* was going to take his place as their leader (Numbers 27:8 – 23; Deuteronomy 1:38). To do this, he *called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel* (v. 7). All of the Israelites needed to witness this transfer of leadership to Joshua. That way, there would be no grounds for doubting Joshua’s authority.

Moses urged Joshua to *be strong and courageous*. Joshua was not to let his heart waver because he was chosen to go with the *people into the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give them, and he was to give it to them as an inheritance*. God had sworn to Abraham to give the land of Canaan to his descendants, and told Abraham they would return to the land after four hundred years, the fourth generation (Genesis 15:13,16).

Part of the reason for the long delay between God’s grant of the land and the people taking possession was that at the time of God’s promise to Abraham He said “the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.” God gave the pagan nations time to repent, and they had not. So now Israel’s invasion would fulfill the promise as well as bring justice upon the Canaanite nations, and their exploitative culture (Leviticus 18).

Here Moses made it clear that the promise God made to Israel’s fathers included their occupation of the Promised Land. They would occupy it by conquest after the LORD defeated their enemies (see v. 4). Therefore, because the LORD guaranteed their success, their leader, *Joshua*, was to stand firm and determined to accomplish the task leading to the fulfillment of that promise.

Moreover, Moses encouraged Joshua by telling him that he would not lead Israel alone. The Suzerain God was going to be the principal leader of the

Israelite army: *The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you* (v. 8). Yet again, the LORD guaranteed His constant presence with Joshua and His people. God had entered a covenant with Israel, and God would keep His word, as He had promised (Exodus 19:7-8).

Joshua needed to keep in mind that God would be with him just like He was with Moses during his many years of leading Israel, from Egypt to the plains of Moab. Since God is faithful and true, He would not fail *Joshua* or forsake him. So, Moses reminded *Joshua* to *not fear or be dismayed*. The word for dismayed (Hebrew “ḥātat”) literally means “be terrified”. These two negative commands express the certainty regarding Israel’s occupation of the land and serve as motivations for Joshua to act as a strong leader for Israel.

This makes clear that God intended to do His work through the faithfulness of His people. God could have just cleared them out on His own, as He did to the Egyptian army when He destroyed them in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-30). But these words instruct Joshua and Israel to understand that God’s deliverance would be implemented through the courageous actions of His people, Israel.

Joshua had no need to fear or be dismayed because the occupation of the Promised Land was assured, if Israel would be courageous and follow God’s leadership. It was already granted by God and thus was guaranteed to happen, if Israel would be faithful.

Biblical Text:

⁷Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. ⁸The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’