



habits of collecting and composing written texts. Jerome Creach (*Interpretation Commentary*, Logos Systems) remarks:

Scholars have recognized that before the Old Testament was conceived as a three-part collection, and before Joshua was understood as the head of the Prophets, the book was bound in other literary relationships with the material around it. Nevertheless, the two main hypotheses about how Joshua was originally composed confirm the book's central importance. The leading theory is that Joshua initially was part of the Deuteronomistic History, a literary complex stretching from Deuteronomy through Kings that promotes Deuteronomy's sense of religious purity as the standard by which Israel should be judged. In other words, Joshua was intended to be read with Deuteronomy, and only later was separated from it for canonical purposes. Joshua's importance in the Deuteronomistic History, however, is similar to its importance in the Jewish canon. Namely, it inculcates adherence to the teachings of Moses as the primary requirement for Israel's successful life in the land.

Another theory about Joshua's composition is that it began as part of a Hexateuch, which told the story of Israel's salvation, beginning with God's pledge to give Israel the land of Canaan in Genesis 12 and concluding with the fulfillment of that promise in Joshua. This thesis has been largely abandoned as an explanation of Joshua's origins (some of the literary links between Joshua and Genesis–Numbers are now thought to be secondary to Joshua's relationship with Deuteronomy, which is stronger and more extensive). Nevertheless, the theory properly acknowledges that the patriarchal narratives anticipate the story of Joshua and are really incomplete without it.

Thus determining the precise answer to the standard "reporter questions"<sup>2</sup> raised in historical analysis of an ancient document remains elusive. The Jewish Talmud simplistically assigned the document to Joshua himself, but few modern Jewish or Christian scholars agree with such a conclusion. Assuming the Deuteronomistic nature of the document then, we can generally understand the final shape of the document to have been derived late in Israelite history. To be sure, segments and sources utilized in the book reach back many centuries, and probably to the time of Joshua himself. Creach (*Interpretation*, Logos Systems) continues:

The book of Joshua gives few clues as to the exact identity of its author. Although tradition holds the book was composed by Joshua himself, a notion supported in a limited way by Joshua 8:32 and 24:26, some features of the book indicate it was written long after the period of Joshua.

The most obvious of these is the recurring comment that

<sup>2</sup>These are: Who wrote the document? Where was it written? When was it written? To whom was it written? Why was it written?

some practice in the time of the conquest continues "until this day" (Josh. 5:9; 6:25; 7:26; 9:27; 14:14; 15:63; 16:10). Such statements reflect the perspective of an editor far removed historically from the events that are narrated (see Childs, "A Study of the Formula 'Until This Day'"). There are also indications that multiple authors and editors were involved in the process. The book shows evidence of a protracted development: (1) Joshua's farewell speech in chapter 23 seems like a logical conclusion, but it is followed by an account of Joshua gathering the tribes at Shechem for a covenant renewal ceremony in which he again charges the Israelites to be faithful to the Lord; (2) the book seems twice to draw to an end, each time bringing an aged Joshua to his last acts of office, first with a final distribution of the land (Josh. 13:1), second with his final words to the Israelites (Josh. 23:1); (3) the book twice reports that Caleb receives a territorial allotment (Josh. 14:6–15; 15:13–19); (4) the final reports on land distribution in chapters 13–22 differ markedly from earlier accounts of conquest and capture of the land in chapters 1–12; the vocabulary and style within these two distinct sections of the book indicate the work of different authors. Although our purpose here is not to reconstruct each stage of development or the various audiences these stages of growth have behind them, it is helpful to observe that some material in the book appears to be supplementary, producing "seams" in the work. We will offer a sketch of what is likely the earliest version of Joshua and identify two prominent types of additions made to the early work, showing the theological impact these supplements have on the completed book.

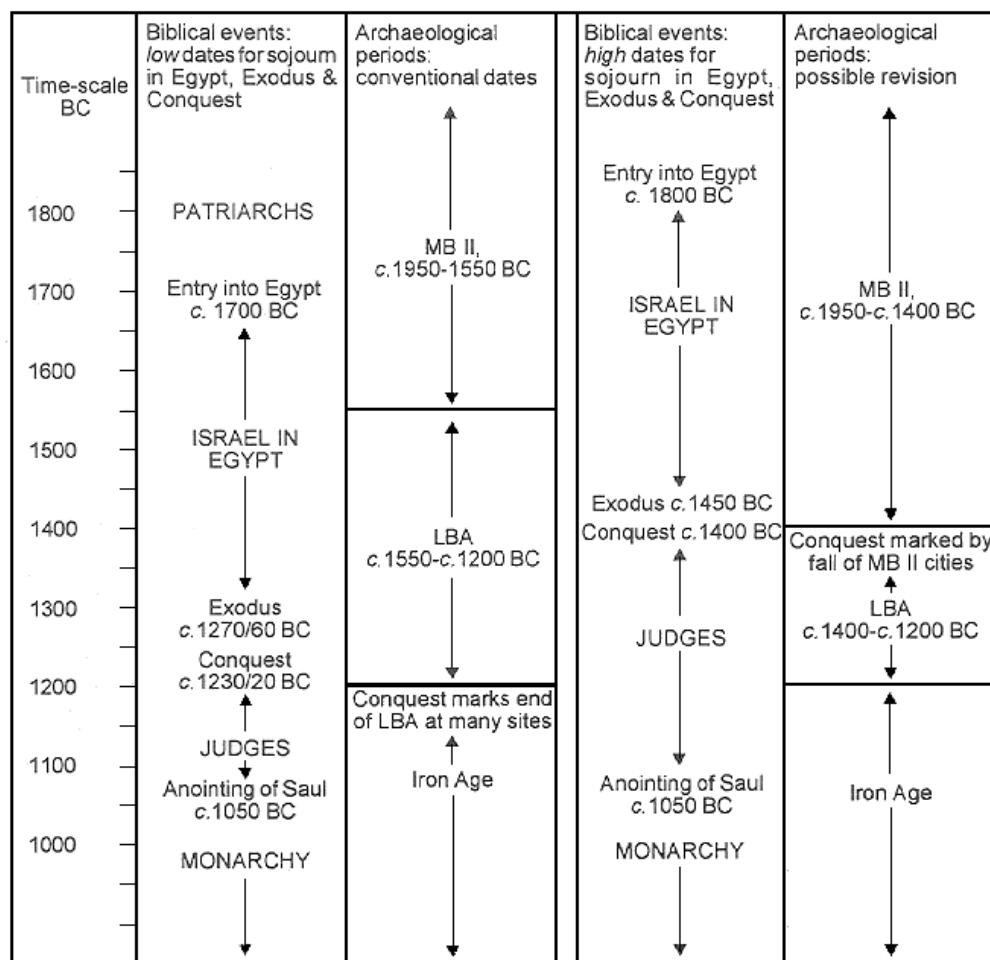
**Internal History.** The time and space markers inside 1:1–9 are limited. The primary time marker is "after the death of Moses" (v. 1). This alludes back to [Deut. 34:1–8](#), where Moses' death is described.

1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, 3 the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. 4 The Lord said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

5 Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command. 6 He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. 7 Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. 8 The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

Exactly when this happened is subject to considerable debate. A common view is to see the conquest





Moses died. There Moses had delivered his farewell addresses to the Israelites, and these comprise the bulk of the book of Deuteronomy that stands in front of the book of Joshua in the sequence of OT books.

The delineation of the boundaries of the territory are somewhat unclear, especially when compared to similar declarations in Deuteronomy and Genesis. Creach (*Interpretation*, Logos Systems) calls attention to a few of these:

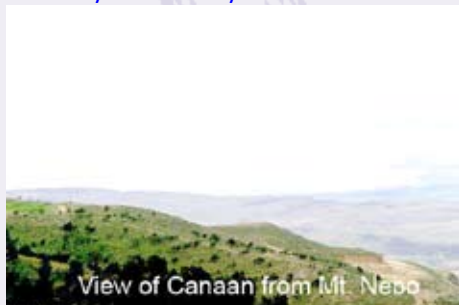
The central subject in this first segment of the Lord's address to Joshua is the acquisition of Canaan, but the text is unclear concerning the extent of the territory the Lord promised. Verse 4 is unique among biblical descriptions of the land. Deuteronomy 11:24 offers the most similar description, but Joshua 1:4 deviates from the Deuteronomy text in

of Palestine by Joshua around 1230 to 1220 BCE. If this is a correct assumption, then God's speaking to Joshua falls at the beginning of this period. But the "early date tradition" posits the conquest around 1400 BCE, almost 200 years earlier. See above chart from the *New Century Bible* (Logos Systems) for details on how this flows.

The place markers inside the passage stress the boundaries of the land to be conquered.

v. 2b. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory.

At this time the Israelites were encamped on the east side of the Jordan River in the plains of Moab near [Mt. Nebo](#) where



View of Canaan from Mt. Nebo



significant ways (cf. Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7). For instance, Deuteronomy 11:24 clearly lays out the expanse of a territory from south (the wilderness) to north (Lebanon) and from east (the great river) to west (the Great Sea), reflecting the farthest extent of the Davidic-Solomonic empire (2 Sam. 3:9–10; 24:1–9). To be sure, elements of Joshua 1:4 are parallel: “the Lebanon” clearly refers to the mountainous area that formed the united monarchy’s northwestern border; from this boundary the land grant stretches to the Euphrates in the east; the Mediterranean Sea circumscribes the western limits of the territory. In contrast to Deuteronomy 11:24, however, the present wording of Joshua 1:4 focuses the span on the northern part of the land, beginning and extending “from the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river.” In addition, Joshua’s outline of the territory emphasizes an east-west axis, yet does not draw a cogent line from south to north, as does Deuteronomy 11:24. Furthermore, the meaning of the reference “from the wilderness” is unclear. Does the writer mean the eastern region from which the Israelites will enter the land or the southern desert (the Negev) as referred to in Genesis 15:18 in another outline of the land (“from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates”)? In addition to these differences between Joshua and other boundary lists, Joshua 1:4 uniquely names the territory to be captured as “all the land of the Hittites.”

Theological interests played the more important role, rather than a concern to provide carefully delineated boundary definitions. Comparison of the different parallel texts, as done above, reveals some of these theological interests. Creach (*Interpretation*, Logos Systems) draws some conclusions at this point.

Some scholars explain the obfuscatory features of verse 4 as the result of scribal mistakes. They assume

that Joshua 1:4 conformed originally to the pattern of Deuteronomy 11:24, but copyist errors, and subsequent attempts to correct them, resulted in a description of the land that differs in some significant ways from the Deuteronomy prototype. While this view may be correct, it does not help us to understand Joshua 1:4 as it now stands. What is clear is that Joshua’s authors intended to make a magnificent claim in this verse about the territory to be captured now by the military prowess of the people empowered by the Lord. The reference to the Hittites encodes this message. Assyrian and Babylonian historical documents dating from about the time of Joshua’s composition refer to the territory west of the Euphrates as the “land of the Hittites.” The mention of the Hittites in these documents identifies the land with the powerful Anatolian kingdom that dominated much of the ancient Near East in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (1550–900 B.C.). The Hittites rivaled the Egyptians, boasting a fierce fighting force that struck fear into the city-states and territories it attacked. By the time Joshua was written, this empire was in the dustbin of history, but the memory of it was so enduring that the territory was identified by the Hittite name. Joshua’s original audience, perceiving the relationship in style between Joshua’s land description and the battle accounts from Assyria and Babylon, likely sensed that Joshua’s author was placing Israel in a category with these large, dominant empires of their day. Whatever the process of development, Joshua 1:4 aggrandizes Joshua’s army as a dominant world power. This idealized portrait of Israel was meant to inspire a people and forge a grand faith that nothing was impossible with their God.

Thus, the modern reader should be looking for geographical *approximations* and note more helpfully the theological motives behind the depictions.

## b. Literary

**Genre.** The book of Joshua is comprised of a variety of literary forms, most of which were common in the ancient world. K. Lawson Younger (“Joshua,” *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 3rd ed., 314) describes it this way:

The historiographic materials used in the book of Joshua correspond to those found in the ancient Near East as a whole. There are traditional stories, etiologies, boundary and town lists, summary accounts and lists, and accounts patterned after redundant annalistic documents. These have been woven together with ritual and covenantal materials and other matters of priestly interest to communicate the book’s ideological message.

Our passage, 1:1–9, can be considered as a distinct literary unit, or as is more common in recent OT scholarship, as the first part of 1:1–18. This larger unit is often labeled “commissioning” narrative, and in particular vv. 1–9, since it describes God’s com-

missioning of Joshua to lead the people into the conquest of the Land of Promise. The Old Testament contains numerous such forms. In these God appears to an individual and assigns them a task. This is to be carried out as a part of His covenant promise to Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites. The content of the task can vary substantially, but the common theme is to carry out some job that God has given to the individual on behalf of His people. Such is the case with verses 1–9 in our study.

**Literary Setting.** Coming at the very beginning of the book, our passage occupies a significant role in the contents of the entire document. The literary context of 1:1–9 is sum-



# Joshua

## and the Conquest

marized well in the *Translator's Handbook* (Logos Systems):

The book of Joshua divides naturally into two parts of approximately equal length. The first twelve chapters narrate the conquest of Canaan, while the last twelve chapters are concerned primarily with the division of the land.

Chapters 1–5 provide the setting for the conquest, which is then described in chapters 6–11. Chapter 12 is a summary chapter, providing a list of the kings defeated by Moses (verses 1–6) and by Joshua (verses 7–24). The theme for the entire book is summarized in 1.1–9: After the death of Moses, the Lord calls Joshua to be his successor. He commands him to prepare the people of Israel to cross the Jordan River and capture the land that he had promised them. The borders of their future territory are defined, and the Lord promises to be with Joshua, as he was with Moses, thus guaranteeing success in the campaign. But in order to receive what the Lord has promised, the people of Israel must rely absolutely upon him and obey the whole Law that his servant Moses gave them. They must be sure that it is always read in their worship. It must be studied day and night, and everything written in it must be obeyed. Only then will they be prosperous and successful.

## II. Message

**Literary Structure.** The arrangement of ideas inside vv. 1-9 flows at two levels. At the surface level of the grammar, the narrative introduction in verse one introduces God's verbal instructions to Joshua in verses two through nine. In the larger unit of vv. 1-18, God's speaking to Joshua is followed by his instructions to the leaders of the Israelites in verses ten through fifteen. Their response to Joshua is given in verses sixteen through eighteen.

Inside God's speech to Joshua, two basic commands form the organizing structure: 1) "Now proceed to cross the Jordan," v. 2, and "Be strong and courageous," v. 6. This will form the organizing structure of our study of the passage.



**a. Cross over, vv. 1-5**

## LXX

1 Καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὴν  
τελευτὴν Μωυσῆ εἶπεν  
κύριος τῷ Ἰησοὶ υἱῷ Ναυη  
τῷ ὑπουργῷ Μωυσῆ λέγων  
2 Μωυσῆς ὁ θεράπων  
μου τετελεύτηκεν, νῦν  
οὖν ἀναστὰς διάβηθι τὸν  
Ιορδάνην, σὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ  
λαὸς οὗτος, εἰς τὴν γῆν,  
ἣν ἐγὼ δίδωμι αὐτοῖς.  
3 πᾶς ὁ τόπος, ἐφ' ὃν ἂν  
ἐπιβῇτε τῶ ἰχνεῖτων ποδῶν  
ὑμῶν, ὑμῖν δώσω αὐτόν, ὃν  
τρόπον εἴρηκα τῷ Μωυσῆ,  
4 τὴν ἔρημον καὶ τὸν  
Ἀντιλίβανον ἕως τοῦ  
ποταμοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου,  
ποταμοῦ Εὐφράτου, καὶ  
ἕως τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς  
ἐσχάτης ἀφ' ἡλίου δυσμῶν  
ἔσται τὰ ὅρια ὑμῶν.  
5 οὐκ ἀντιστήσεται

**NASB**

1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the

**NRSV**

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, 2 "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be

## NLT

1 After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said, 2 "Now that my servant Moses is dead, you must lead my people across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. 3 I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Everywhere you go, you will be on land I have given you – 4 from the Negev Desert in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and all the land of the Hittites.' 5 No



ἄνθρωπος κατενώπιον  
ὑμῶν πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας  
τῆς ζωῆς σου, καὶ ὥσπερ  
ἦμην μετὰ Μωυσῆ, οὕτως  
ἔσομαι καὶ μετὰ σοῦ  
καὶ οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψω  
σε οὐδὲ ὑπερόψομαί σε.

sun will be your territory.  
5 No man will *be able to*  
stand before you all the  
days of your life. Just as  
I have been with Moses,  
I will be with you; I will  
not fail you or forsake  
you.

your territory. 5 No one  
shall be able to stand  
against you all the days  
of your life. As I was with  
Moses, so I will be with  
you; I will not fail you or  
forsake you.

one will be able to stand  
their ground against you  
as long as you live. For I  
will be with you as I was  
with Moses. I will not fail  
you or abandon you.

### Notes:

The literary function of vv. 2-9 is set forth by Younger (NOAB, p. 316) as follows:

The Lord's speech outlines the means of success for Joshua and the Israelites: obedience to the book of the law. The Lord's speech also anticipates the main themes of the book: the crossing of the Jordan (1.1-5.12), the conquest (5.13-12.24), the distribution of the land (13.1-22.34), and obedience to the law of Moses (23.1-24.33).

Thus these verses play a significant role beyond their immediate content.

**First, a narrative introduction** sets the stage for the giving of God's instructions to Joshua.

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, ...

Several aspects surface here in order to set up the book of Joshua, as well as the speech of God to Joshua.

Most importantly, this event took place after the death of Moses. For more details on the historical aspects of this time marker see the [Internal History](#) section above. His death was recorded in [Deut. 34:5-8](#), with some mysterious aspects attached to it.

5 Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord's command. 6 He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. 7 Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. 8 The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

1) He died "at the Lord's command." As Bernard Levinson ("Deuteronomy," *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 3rd ed, 307) observes, "the unusual formulation greatly honors Moses, who, despite advanced age, does not die of old age nor succumb to physical or intellectual infirmity." 2) He "was buried," which literally in the Hebrew text, the Qal Imperfect verb form of קבר, means "He buried him." God buried Moses rather than the leaders of the Israelites, as had been the case with Aaron (cf. Deut. 32:50). To be sure all manner



of speculation in both Jewish and Christian interpretive history has arisen over this highly unusual circumstance. The simple affirmation of the biblical text is that God assumed the responsibility of taking care of this highly significant responsibility in behalf of one considered to be especially favored by the Lord. 3) "No one knows his burial place to this day." Unlike the Egyptian pharaohs who built the huge pyramids to commemorate their burial, Moses' burial place remains hidden.

And in the words of the Deuteronomistic editor "to this day," implying that centuries later the location of Moses' tomb was unknown. 4) At 128 years of age, Moses' "sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated," according to the Deuteronomistic editor. Thus Moses died an old but still vigorous man without the humiliating aspects of impaired health that usually come with advanced age. This motivation for the narrative becomes clear in the final words of [Deut. 34:10-12](#):

10 Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. 11 He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, 12 and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

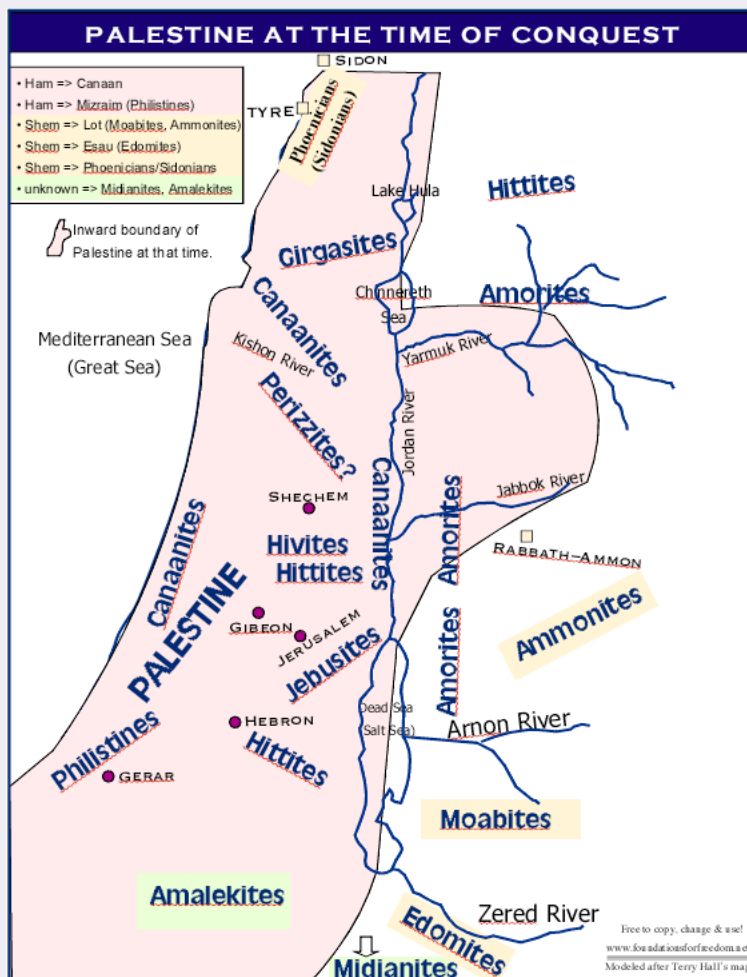
The Deuteronomic text editors set the stage for Joshua's ascent to leadership with their declaration in [Deut. 34:9](#)

Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Joshua comes to the leadership role in the shadow of Moses. Moses had commissioned him by laying hands on him. The people obey him because he follows the teachings of Moses.

**Second, God speaks to Joshua** (vv. 2-5).

2 "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given



**The command:** “Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people.” Clearly Moses was not permitted to lead the children of Israel into the land of Canaan because of his failure to follow God’s instruction to the letter of the law, as [Deut. 32:50-51](#) asserts:

48 On that very day the Lord addressed Moses as follows: 49 “Ascend this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites for a possession; 50 you shall die there on the mountain that you ascend and shall be gathered to your kin, as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his kin; 51 because both of you broke faith with me among the Israelites at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, by failing to maintain my holiness among the Israelites. 52 Although you may view the land from a distance, you shall not enter it—the land that I am giving to the Israelites.”

Thus the responsibility came to Joshua, Moses’ assistant, to carry out this task of conquering the land. At this point in time [Canaan](#) was occupied by a wide variety of tribal groups, as is reflected on the above map. The entry of the children of Israel into this territory would not go unopposed. Only by military conquest would the Israelites be able to take control of it. Thus much of the book of Joshua is going to focus on

the brutality of war and the destruction of the existing peoples in the land. In a modern pluralistic society this emphasis poses challenges.

But in order to grasp the true significance of this text one must seek to understand the “theology of the land.” First and foremost the land was perceived as “the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites.” The land was a gift from God. Their claim to it rested on the legitimacy of this divine promise to give them this land. Implications of this are amplified by Trent Butler (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems):

Central to the thought of the book of Joshua is the land given by God, inherited by Israel, and conquered by Joshua. In contrast to the superpowers of her environment, Israel did not claim possession of her land from primeval times on. Her land belonged originally to the Canaanites (Gen 11:31; 12:5; Deut 1:7; etc.) or to a long list of former inhabitants (e.g. Exod 3:17). Israel claimed the land only because Yahweh chose to punish the original inhabitants (Gen 15:16; Deut 9:4–5). He thus promised the land to Abraham. The motif of the promise of land to the patriarchs may rest on a nomadic tradition of

to you, as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. 5 No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you....”

In God’s instructions to Joshua, the literary thrust is the ancient Jewish thought pattern of command / promise: “you do this; and I will do that.” Creach (*Interpretation*, Logos Systems) comments:

The first segment of the two-part charge to Joshua (vv. 2–6) contains two imperatives: “proceed to cross the Jordan” (v. 2); “be strong and courageous” (v. 6). The commands are somewhat lost, however, amidst six promises of the Lord’s action: “I have given,” “as I promised,” “shall be your territory,” “no one shall be able to stand against you,” “I will be with you,” “I will not fail or forsake you.” Such divine pledges highlight the power of God and render human action rather superfluous. This accent on divine action is evident particularly in the subjects and in the tenses of the verbs that follow the command to cross the Jordan.



divine direction during the change of pasture land (V. Maag, "Der Hirte Israels," *Schweizer Theologische Umschau* 28 [1958] 2–28; "Malkût YHWH," *VTSup* 7 [1960] 129–53). It has been applied specifically to the land of Canaan as early as the settlement (C. Westermann, *Die Verheissungen an die Väter* [FRLANT 116. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976] 133–38). It is used to link the various sections of the Pentateuch together theologically (Gen 50:24; Exod 3:8; 6:4; 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Num 11:12; 14:16, 23–24; 32:11–12; Deut 1:8; 4:38; 6:3, 10, etc.). The language of such theological editing is closely related to that of the Deuteronomic school (cf. Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem*, 40–45, 51–70, 75–79). The book of Joshua takes up the land theme in dependence upon Deuteronomy and brings the theme to its completion. The promise to the fathers is realized; the punishment of the inhabitants carried through; the hope of the Pentateuch fulfilled; the inheritance from Yahweh is received....

The motif of land as הֶחָוֶה is central for Deuteronomy (G. von Rad, "Promised Land," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays* [Tr. E. W. T. Dicken; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966] 91). This has normally been translated "inheritance" and used as the basis of a theology. G. Gerleman ("Nutzrecht und Wohnrecht," *ZAW* 89 [1977] 313–25) has recently called such theologizing into question by showing that the term means "home, place of residence, security of home." The verb means "to settle, to cause to occupy a territory." Deuteronomy uses the term in a unique way, referring to the home of all Israel, whereas earlier sources spoke of the homestead of individuals or individual tribes (e.g. Mic 2:2; 1 Kgs 21:3; Num 16:14). The term thus unifies the nation into a homeland for Deuteronomic theology, a homeland never before experienced by the wandering, landless, homeless Israelites. At the same time the term limits the claim of Israel, for it shows that the homeland comes from God, not from natural rights nor from human claims of possession or power (see P. Diepold, *Israel's Land* [BWANT 95. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1972] 81–84).



#### **The borders of the land, vv. 3–4.**

Several depictions of these borders can be found in the Pentateuch. Here stands a description reflecting later Israelite adoption of a broader understanding. Again, Butler (*WBC*, Logos Systems) provides a helpful assessment of this variety of depiction:

Israel has two sets of borders, that in which her own people live and that which is the land of promise. The first can be described simply as from Dan to Beersheba (2 Sam 24:2–8, 15; 2 Kgs 4:25; cf. Deut 34:1–3), including land beyond the Jordan (2 Sam 24:5–6). The land of promise stretches from the Brook of Egypt to the Euphrates and from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean (Gen 15:18; Exod 23:21; Num 13:21; 34:1–12; Deut 1:7; 11:24, 1 Kgs 5:1 (Engl. 4:21); 8:65; 2 Kgs 14:25; Amos 6:14; 1 Chr 13:5; 2 Chr 7:8). The book of Joshua knows both types of boundaries. The conquest covered only

the first (10:41; 11:17, 22; 13:2–7), but the promise was for more. Behind each of the border descriptions stood a specific historical reality. Dan to Beersheba represented the land actually occupied by Israelites and governed directly by the Israelite kings. The second represented the traditional description of the land of Canaan by Egyptian sources of the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries as adopted by the Israelite tradition (cf. Y. Aharoni, 58–72). The use of the latter system results in the land of the Trans-Jordan tribes being viewed as not belonging to the land of the Lord (Josh 22:9–34). On the few occasions that Israel controlled the territory described by the second system, she governed territory outside the Dan to Beersheba limits through a system of tributary states (1 Kgs 5:1).

**The promise of God, v. 5:** "No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." Joshua would need God's help to carry out this daunting task of conquering the land. God promises him success based on divine intervention in the battles with the Canaanites. Time and again throughout the remainder of the book the intervention of God on the battlefield was the decisive difference between victory and defeat for the Israelites. Defeat came only when the Israelites abandoned God.



What do these verses have to do with us today? For one thing, they signal the reason why every tax payer in the United States contributes hundreds of dollars annually to the defense of the modern state of Israel. The US government commitment to defend Israel grows out of this OT concept of divine right by the Jews to possess the territory of the modern state of Israel. Whether one agrees with this or not, it is simple reality.

But beyond this, come spiritual truths that are more relevant and important. One important lesson is the principle of smooth transition of leadership. Moses clearly stands at the top of the list of Israelite leaders. His successor could have faced impossible demands in order to “measure up.” But in the plan-

ning of God, Joshua had been groomed by Moses for this leadership role. God clearly placed His stamp of approval on this succession to power by Joshua. Thus the ancient Israelites moved from a beloved leader to a successor without major disruption. That would happen only a few times in their subsequent history.

Joshua was given a job to do by God, and with that assignment came the promise of God’s help to carry it out to completion. God is still in the business of assigning His people jobs. And with the job comes the promise of God’s help. Jesus will echo this theme later in [Matt. 28:16-20](#) where He essentially told His disciples, “Disciple the nations, and I will be with you to the very end.”

**b. Be strong and courageous, vv. 6-9**

**LXX**

6 ἴσχυε καὶ ἀνδρίζου, σὺ γὰρ ἀποδιαστελεῖς τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ τὴν γῆν, ἣν ὤμοσα τοῖς πατράσιν ὑμῶν δοῦναι αὐτοῖς. 7 ἴσχυε οὖν καὶ ἀνδρίζου φυλάσσεσθαι καὶ ποιεῖν καθότι ἐνετείλατό σοι Μωυσῆς ὁ παῖς μου, καὶ οὐκ ἐκκλινεῖς ἀπ’ αὐτῶν εἰς δεξιά οὐδὲ εἰς ἀριστερά, ἵνα συνῇς ἐν πᾶσιν, οἷς ἐὰν πράσσης. 8 καὶ οὐκ ἀποστήσεται ἡ βίβλος τοῦ νόμου τούτου ἐκ τοῦ στόματός σου, καὶ μελετήσεις ἐν αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός, ἵνα συνῇς ποιεῖν πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα, τότε εὐδοωθήσῃ καὶ εὐδώσεις τὰς ὁδούς σου καὶ τότε συνήσεις. 9 ἰδοὺ ἐντέταλμαί σοι, ἴσχυε καὶ ἀνδρίζου, μὴ δειλιάσῃς μηδὲ φοβηθῇς, ὅτι μετὰ σοῦ κύριος ὁ θεός σου εἰς πάντα, οὗ ἐὰν πορεύῃ.

**NASB**

6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

**NRSV**

6 **Be strong and courageous**; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. 7 Only **be strong and very courageous**, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. 9 I hereby command you: **Be strong and courageous**; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

**NLT**

6 Be strong and courageous, for you will lead my people to possess all the land I swore to give their ancestors. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Obey all the laws Moses gave you. Do not turn away from them, and you will be successful in everything you do. 8 Study this Book of the Law continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed. 9 I command you – be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”



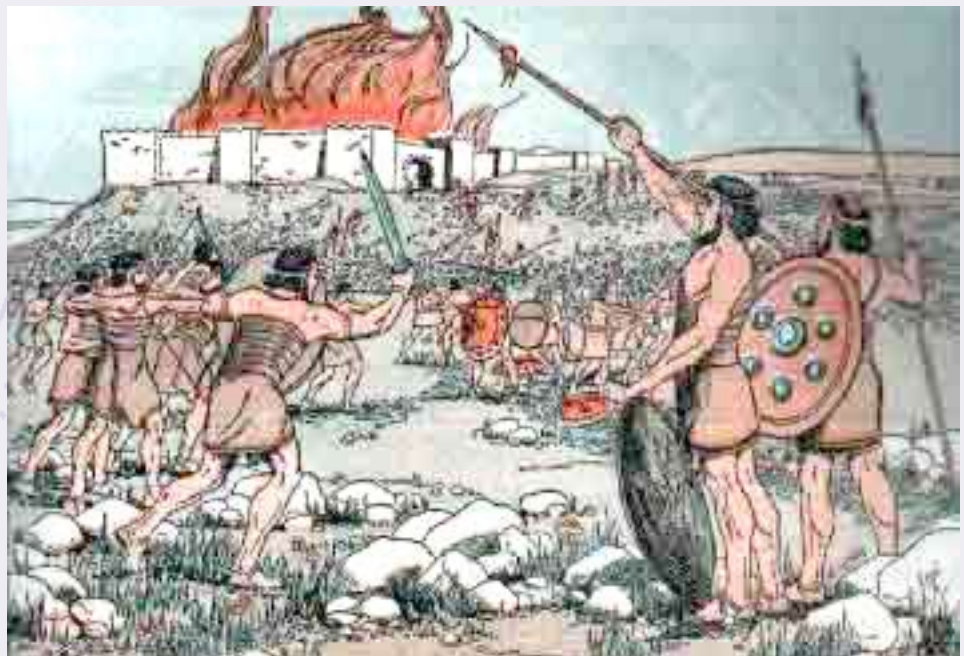
## Notes:

The dominant theme of these verses is the threefold repetition of “be strong and courageous,” vv. 6, 7, and 9. A variety of English translation patterns attempts to capture the richness of the Hebrew admonitions, as is noted in the *Translator’s Handbook on Joshua* (Logos Systems):

Verse 6 opens with a command expressed in Hebrew by two synonymous verbs: “be strong and be courageous” (also verses 7, 9, 18). These are translated in a variety of ways: NEB “be strong, be resolute”; Jerusalem Bible (<sup>3</sup>JB) “be strong and stand firm”; An American Translation (<sup>4</sup>AT), *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible* (<sup>5</sup>TOB) “Be strong and brave”; Moffatt (<sup>6</sup>MFT) “Be strong, be brave.”

James Creach (*Interpretation*, Logos Systems) calls attention to additional insights:

The second section of the Lord’s oration to Joshua (vv. 7–9) begins and ends with the same injunction that appears in verse 6a: “Be strong and very courageous.” The use of these words in verse 7, however, is different from that in verse 6a. This time the imperatives are followed by an important purpose clause, “to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you.” By these words the Lord galvanizes Joshua, making him “strong and courageous,” not only in confidence concerning the Lord’s promises (as in v. 6a), but also as a foundation for obedience. That is, the Lord instructs Joshua to be stout of heart *in order that* he may act according to Moses’ words. The implications for the use of this phrase are profound. In the first set of instructions the Lord’s charge to be strong and courageous intends to evoke faith that the land was a grant from God (vv. 2–6). Hence, where one expects a military commander to be given some concrete and measurable task (to take the land), his call is to believe in God’s action. In the second segment of the address, the Lord indeed prods Joshua to particular action; yet his appointed



deed is not conquest but obedience to divine law. To be sure, conquest and obedience are never fully separable in Joshua—the Israelite capture of Canaan is always judged by compliance with what “Moses the servant of the Lord commanded” (Josh. 11:12). Nevertheless, in the Lord’s opening speech, obedience is clearly the consummate call to Joshua and the Israelites.

The repeated admonition is couched first with “for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them.” Here is an indirect command to Joshua to be the instrument of God’s keeping His promise to the ancestors of the present Israelites. God’s honor is then dependent on Joshua’s assuming a strong leadership role.

Next, it is couched with “being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go.” This is the central emphasis of this section, and is elaborated on by the following declarations (v. 8): “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.” Joshua’s leadership was to be defined by God’s Torah, that had been given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Trent Butler (*WBC*, Logos Systems) amplifies the meaning of these words in a helpful manner:

The final motif which underlines Joshua 1 is Torah, specifically the Torah commanded by Moses. Torah designated the teaching of the priests (Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26; Hos 4:6). Particularly important

<sup>3</sup>JB JERUSALEM BIBLE

<sup>4</sup>AT AMERICAN TRANSLATION

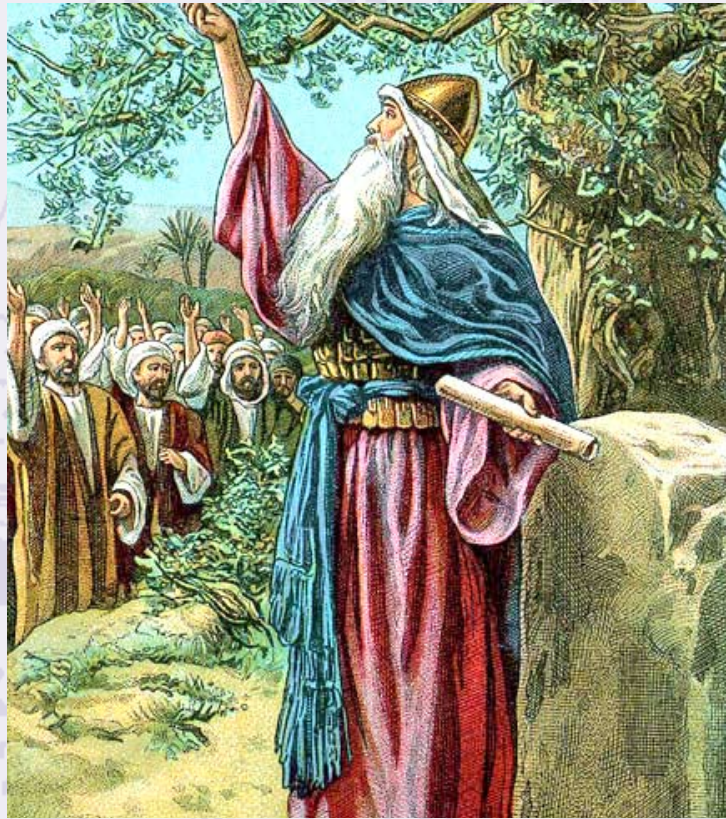
<sup>5</sup>TOB TRADUCTION OECUMÉNIQUE DE LA BIBLE

<sup>6</sup>MFT MOFFATT



here was the information given members of the community who asked questions of the priests (e.g. Hag 2:11–13). Torah was not confined to the priests. The teaching of Isaiah was Torah for his disciples (8:16). The wise man also produced Torah (Prov 13:14), a task which may have ultimately had its roots in the family (Prov 1:8; 4:4, 11).

Hosea chaps. 4 and 8 introduce the idea of a collected body of traditions called Torah. This may rest on a similar tradition as that found infrequently in the Tetrateuch (Gen 26:5; Exod 13:9; 16:4, 28). Torah is attributed to Moses in the earlier sources only in Exod 18:16–20; 24:12. Even the basic core of Deuteronomy does not appear to make use of the term (for the appearances in chaps. 17, 27, 28, cf. Lohfink, *Das Hauptgebot*, 58). Torah, particularly Torah written in a book, becomes a central theological



motif for the Deuteronomistic historian (Deut 1:5; 4:8, 44; 29:20, 28; 30:10; 31:9–12, 24–26; 32:46; 33:4, 10; Josh 1; 8:31–35; chaps. 22–24; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 10:31; 14:6; 17:13, 34, 37; 21:8, 11; 23:24, 25). The Deuteronomist defines precisely which book of Torah he means, that one given to Moses after he defeated Sihon and Og (Deut 1:1–5) and written down by Moses to be placed in the ark of the covenant entrusted to the Levitical priests (31:24–26). It was this Torah by which the kings of Israel and Judah were judged (e.g. 2 Kgs 17:37) and which sparked the Josianic reformation (2 Kgs 22–23). Again in Josh 1 a motif with primary Mosaic connections, but only secondary Joshua connections, surfaces.

Third, the admonition to be strong and courageous is couched with “do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” The opposite, fear and dismay, defines the meaning of strong and courageous with antithetical parallelism. Then God reaffirms His promised

presence to Joshua wherever he travels in this journey of conquest.

What can we learn from these verses? Several things come to mind. One thing is that serving God, especially in leadership roles, demands strength and courage. Moses set the model for the successive Israelite leaders. The spiritual leader must find ways to combine strength and resolve with compassion

and understanding of the people. Joshua is admonished to become that kind of leader of the Israelites as they enter into one of the more challenging eras of their history.

Also important from these verses is the promise of the Divine Presence. God promised that He would never fail nor abandon Joshua. That promise remains true to this day for the people of God. At times we have difficulty sensing that Presence at work, but none the less God still is moving to bring about His purposes and obedience to Him

on our part. For believers, that Presence takes the form of the leadership of the Holy Spirit with a similar promise of God’s blessings, as Paul affirmed in Gal. 5:16 (NASB), “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

Central to God’s blessing to Joshua was his obedience to the teachings of God given to Moses in the book of the Law. In God’s Word came the boundaries defining obedience to God. Joshua was admonished to faithfully lead the people inside those boundaries. Stepping outside them would bring disaster and defeat. For Christians, the Bible stands as the anchor point defining the parameters of faith and obedience to God. Thus we stand in the tradition of the OT emphasis on God’s Word, but with the expanded perspective of the New Covenant established through Jesus Christ.

God can teach us a great deal from these opening words to the book of Joshua. Our task is to hear them and apply them to our lives.

**LXX**

1 Καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν Μωυσῆ εἶπεν κύριος τῷ Ἰησοῖ υἱῷ Ναυη τῷ ὑπουργῷ Μωυσῆ λέγων 2 Μωυσῆς ὁ θεράπων μου τετελεύτηκεν, νῦν οὖν ἀναστὰς διάβηθι τὸν Ιορδάνην, σὺ καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς οὗτος, εἰς τὴν γῆν, ἣν ἐγὼ δίδωμι αὐτοῖς. 3 πᾶς ὁ τόπος, ἐφ' ὃν ἂν ἐπιβῇτε τῷ ἴχνει τῶν ποδῶν ὑμῶν, ὑμῖν δώσω αὐτόν, ὃν τρόπον εἴρηκα τῷ Μωυσῇ, 4 τὴν ἔρημον καὶ τὸν Ἀντιλίβανον ἕως τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου, ποταμοῦ Εὐφράτου, καὶ ἕως τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς ἐσχάτης ἀφ' ἡλίου δυσμῶν ἔσται τὰ ὅρια ὑμῶν. 5 οὐκ ἀντιστήσεται ἄνθρωπος κατενώπιον ὑμῶν πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς σου, καὶ ὥσπερ ἡμηνμετὰ Μωυσῆ, οὕτως ἔσομαι καὶ μετὰ σοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐγκαταλείψω σε οὐδὲ ὑπερόψομαί σε. 6 Ἰσχυε καὶ ἀνδρίζου, σὺ γὰρ ἀποδιαστελεῖς τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ τὴν γῆν, ἣν ὤμοσα τοῖς πατράσιν ὑμῶν δοῦναι αὐτοῖς. 7 Ἰσχυε οὖν καὶ ἀνδρίζου φυλάσσεσθαι καὶ ποιεῖν καθότι ἐνετείλατό σοι Μωυσῆς ὁ παῖς μου, καὶ οὐκ ἐκκλινεῖς ἀπ' αὐτῶν εἰς δεξιὰ οὐδὲ εἰς ἀριστερά, ἵνα συνῆς ἐν πᾶσιν, οἷς ἐὰν πράσσης. 8 καὶ οὐκ ἀποστήσεται

**NASB**

1 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 2 "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3 Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. 5 No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to

**NRSV**

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, 2 "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. 5 No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For

**NLT**

1 After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said, 2 "Now that my servant Moses is dead, you must lead my people across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them. 3 I promise you what I promised Moses: 'Everywhere you go, you will be on land I have given you – 4 from the Negev Desert in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and all the land of the Hittites.' 5 No one will be able to stand their ground against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you will lead my people to possess all the land I swore to give their ancestors. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Obey all the laws Moses gave you. Do not turn away from them, and you will be successful in everything you do. 8 Study this Book of the Law continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed. 9 I command you – be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."



ἡ βίβλος τοῦ νόμου  
τούτου ἐκ τοῦ στόματός  
σου, καὶ μελετήσεις  
ἐν αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ  
νυκτός, ἵνα συνῇς ποιεῖν  
πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα,  
τότε εὐδοθήσῃ καὶ  
εὐδώσεις τὰς ὁδούς  
σου καὶ τότε συνήσεις.  
9 ἰδοὺ ἐντέταλμαί σοι,  
ἴσχυε καὶ ἀνδρίζου, μὴ  
δειλιάσῃς μηδὲ φοβηθῇς,  
ὅτι μετὰ σοῦ κύριος ὁ  
θεός σου εἰς πάντα, οὗ  
ἐὰν πορεύῃ.

do according to all that  
is written in it; for then  
you will make your way  
prosperous, and then  
you will have success. 9  
Have I not commanded  
you? Be strong and cou-  
rageous! Do not tremble  
or be dismayed, for the  
LORD your God is with  
you wherever you go.”

then you shall make your  
way prosperous, and  
then you shall be suc-  
cessful. 9 I hereby com-  
mand you: Be strong and  
courageous; do not be  
frightened or dismayed,  
for the Lord your God is  
with you wherever you  
go.”

רמאל השם תרשם וינזב עשוהילא הוהי רמאי הוהי דבע השם תומ ירחא יהי 1

לארשי ינבל סהל ותנ יכנא רשא קראהל הז סעהלכו התא הזה ודריהתא רבע סוק התען תמ ידבע השם 2

השםלא יתרבד רשאכ ויתתנ סכל זב סכלגרפך דרדת רשא סוקמלכ 3

סכלובג יהי שמשה אובמ לודגה סיהדען סיתחה קרא לכ תרפרהנ לודגה רהנהדען הזה ונבלהו רבדמהמ 4

דבזשא אלן דפרא אל דמע היהא השםסע יתייה רשאכ דייח ימי לכ דינפל שיא בציתראל 5

סהל תתל סתובאל יתעבשנרשא קראהתא הזה סעהתא ליחנת התא יכ קמאן קנח 6

דלת רשא לכב ליכשת ועמל לואמשו ימי ונממ רוסתלא ידבע השם דוצ רשא הוותהלכב תושעל רמשל דאמ קמאן קנח קר 7

ליכשת זאן דכרדתא חילצת זאיכ זב בותפהלכב תושעל רמשת ועמל הלילו סמוי זב תיגהו דיפמ הזה הוותה רפס שומראל 8

פ דלת רשא לכב דיהלא הוהי דמע יכ תחתלאן קרעתלא קמאן קנח דיתיוצ אולה 9