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Moses Went

31: 1-8

Moses went DIG: What events are about to take place? Who will cross the Jordan before Isra'el? What does that mean in context? Why would the people be afraid here? Where would Isra'el get the strength and courage to go on without Moshe? How will Joshua follow in his steps?

REFLECT: Would you be afraid or discouraged in a situation like this? For what do you need strength and courage in your life today? Where will you find it? Who has been your mentor? What have you learned? Enough to succeed him or her? Explain.

Parashah 52: vaYelekh (He Went) 31:1-30

**(In regular years read with Parashah 51, in leap years read separately)
(To see link click [Af](#) - Parashah)**

The Key People: Moshe, speaking to all Isra'el and Joshua.

The Scene: In the wilderness east of **the Promised Land**, ready to **cross over the Jordan**.

The Main Events: include **the 120-year-old Moses** going out to continue **his** words to Isra'el to **be strong and of good courage**; **Joshua's** role as **Isra'el's** new leader; **Moshe** writing down **Torah** to be read every seven years so all could hear and learn to obey; **Moses** and **Joshua** at the **Tent of Meeting** with **YHVH**; **the LORD** telling about **Moshe's death** and **the people's** rebellion; **a new song** for **Moses** to write down and teach as a witness against **the people**; command for **the Levites** to carry **the Torah** in **the ark**; and **people** gathering to hear the Ha'azinu song.⁶⁵⁵

The approaching death of Moshe, which had already been anticipated, now becomes the central focus for the remaining chapters of the book.

The day before Moses died.

Chapter 31 begins a brief account of the concluding stages of **Moshe's** life. A significant

feature of these closing chapters is that they too exhibit some traces of the treaty pattern (**to see link click [Ah](#) - Treaty of the Great King**). Accordingly, **they** are instructed to keep a copy of **the covenant** in the ark (**31:24-29**), a reference to the appointment of **Joshua** as the visible head of **the covenant** community (**31:1-8** and **14-23**), a promise of **the blessings** to be enjoyed by the tribes (**Chapter 33**), and a fascinating chapter that reminds us of the standard indictment document issued to an erring vassal (**Chapter 32**). The book concludes with a touching account of the death of **Moses (Chapter 34)**.⁶⁵⁶

As **Moses** approached death, **he** gave a series of instructions to **the people (31:1-6)**, to **Joshua (31:7-8)**, and to **the priests (31:9-13)**, each concerned in some way with the maintenance of **the covenant**. Here, we see the instructions to **the people** and **Joshua**.

According to Jewish tradition, it was now the seventh day of Adar, and the Heavenly Voice called out to Moshe, "This is your last day on earth." Moses then went to speak with the children of Isra'el and to bid them farewell.

Instructions to the people (31:1-6): Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Isra'el. He said to them, "I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in." Although **he** still had all **his** strength (**34:7**), it was time for **him** to depart and make room for another to lead **the nation**. **ADONAI has said to me, 'You are not to cross over this Jordan' (31:1-2)**. **His** advanced age may have limited **his** effectiveness to lead **the nation** into war, which was just around the corner for **them**. More significantly, however, was **YHVH's** refusal to allow **Moshe** to enter **the Promised Land (3:23-29)**.

The transfer of leadership is a critical time for any country. The Bible actually focuses on the issue quite frequently: **Samuel** to **Sha'ul**, **David** to **Solomon**, **Elijah** to **Elisha**, **Yeshua** to **His apostles**, and even **Paul** to **Timothy**. **Moshe's** capacity for leadership[may have diminished, but **YHVH** was still **their Commander-in-Chief (1:30, 3:18-21, 7:1-2 and 17-24, 9:3-4, 20:1-4)**, who would lead **their** army, **destroy** the Canaanites, and deliver **the Land** to **His chosen people**. That reality did not change when **Moses** passed from the scene.

ADONAI your God - He will cross over before you. The people could be free from anxiety. **God** would neither desert **them** after the death of **Moses**, nor leave **them** without a human leader. **He will destroy these nations from before you, and you will dispossess them. Joshua will cross over before you, just as ADONAI has promised.** What **God** did in **their** past, **He** would do in **their** near future. **ADONAI will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. ADONAI will give them over to you, and you are to do to them**

according to all the mitzvot that I commanded you (3-5).⁶⁵⁷ With full confidence in the presence of **God** in **their** midst, the army of **the LORD** could not fail to be victorious in the conquest, and soon **the Land** which had been promised so long ago would become their possession in reality.



Since the accomplishment of this daunting task rested on **YHVH** alone, **Isra'el** had no need to fear. **Chazak! Be courageous! Do not be afraid or tremble before them.** For **ADONAI** your God - **He is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you or abandon you (31:6a).** These words were not merely for a psychological boost. They were based on two great truths. First, **the Israelites** were those whose very existence proved the faithfulness of **God (31:7b).** **ADONAI** had invested **His Word** and **His Name** in the future of **His people** and, therefore, the ultimate responsibility for **them** was, and is, **YHVH's** - a fact which **Moshe** used so effectively in **his** intercession (see **Cl - Cut Two Tablets of Stone**). Secondly, whoever led **the people** could count on the unfailing presence of **God**. What was true for **the people**, "**I will not fail you or abandon you**" (31:6b), would be no less true for **their** leader, "**I will never leave you, I will never forsake you**" (31:8a).⁶⁵⁸

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, What a comfort **You** are stronger than all the armies of the world (**Revelation 19:11-21**), and yet also the loving **Father (John 1:12)** of all who have chosen to love and to follow **You (Romans 10:9-10)**! Praise **You** for always being with **Your** children so we can always run into **Your** arms for safety: **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you,"** so that with confidence we say, "**The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What will man do to me**" (**Hebrews 13:5b-6**)? We also want to bless and love **You**, "**Yes, Lord,**" he said to Him, "**You know that I love You**" (**John 21:15b, 16b**). In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection Amen*

Instructions to Joshua (31:7-8): Just as **David** had been anointed three times to lead **the nation** (**First Samuel 16:1-3, Second Samuel 2:1-7 and 5:1-5**), and **his son Solomon**

was anointed three times to lead **the Israelites** after **his father's** death (**First Kings 1:28-53; First Chronicles 17:1-15 and 29:21-25**), **Joshua** was also anointed three times. **He** had already been set apart by **Moses** before **Eleazar the high priest** and **the congregation** to assume leadership after **his** death (**Numbers 27:18-23**). **Then** here, **Moses summoned Joshua the people and said to him in the sight of all Isra'el (31:7a)**. Finally, **YHVH commissioned Joshua** privately in **the Tent of Meeting (31:14)**.

The concept of the Holy War (see [Ag - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh](#)) lies very close to the surface in these words to **Joshua**. **"Be strong! Be courageous! For you are to go with this people into the land ADONAI has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you are to enable them to inherit it. ADONAI - He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you"** (see the commentary on [Hebrews De - Believer's Behavior in Relation to Ourselves](#)). Hence there was no need to **fear or be discouraged (31:7b-8)**.