

# Israel in the Palm of the Hand

Adapted by Chaim Miller; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

6. G-d, our G-d, spoke to us in Choraiv, saying, "You have been living too much [time] by this mountain.

7. Redirect yourselves [towards Arad and Charmah] and travel until you come to the Amorite mountain, and through its neighboring territories [Amon, Mo'av and Mount Se'ir], through the [forested] plain, on the mountain [of the king], through the lowlands [of the South], through [Gaza and Ashkelon] in the south and [Caesarea] by the seashore, [conquering] the land of the Cana'anites, and the Levanon, all the way until the great river, the Euphrates River.

8. See that I have [already] put the Land [into your hands] before you! [All you have to do is] come and take possession of the Land which G-d swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov, that He would give [the Land to] them and their descendants after them. [Nobody will even oppose you.]"

-- Devarim 1:6-8

## Classic Questions:

**How could the Jewish people "see" that the Land was "in their hands"? (v. 8)**

**Rashi:** [Moshe was saying:] "You can see this with your own eyes! I am not telling you this out of speculation or from hearsay."

**Nachalas Ya'akov:** Perhaps Moshe's statement, "You can see this with your own eyes," refers to the defeat of Sichon and Og, which had proven to be easy, despite the fact that they were powerful.

**Be'er Basadeh:** The solution of Nachalas Ya'akov is untenable, since here Moshe is recounting G-d's words at Mt. Sinai before the defeat of Sichon and Og. Rather, Rashi's statement, "You can see this with your own eyes," refers to the fact that G-d went ahead of the Jewish people to protect them, as is stated in Devarim 23:15.

**Pane'ach Raza:** G-d cast down the ministering angels of the nations and subjugated them before Moshe, as Rashi explains below (v. 8) that no weapons would be required for the conquest.

**How were the Jewish people to "come and take possession of the Land"? (v. 8)**

**Rashi:** [G-d was saying:] "No one will contest the matter, and you will not need to go to war." If they had not sent the spies [and had trusted G-d], they would not have needed weapons.

# The Rebbe's Teachings

## The Promise of Miraculous Conquest (v. 8)

Verses 8-9 describe G-d's promise to the Jewish people concerning the conquest of the Land of Israel, which was communicated by Moshe before the incident of the spies.

Rashi explains that G-d was promising a totally miraculous conquest, without the need for weapons, but this was forfeited by the Jewish people due to the incident with the spies.

Rashi's comments prompt the following questions:

1. On the words, "See that I have put the Land before you" (v. 8), Rashi comments, "You can see this with your own eyes!" I.e., Rashi makes it clear that the Torah is not using a metaphor here, but that the verse refers to actual, physical sight. This begs the question: At this point, the Jewish people were still encamped by Mount Sinai (as stated in v. 6), so how would it be possible for them to see the Land of Israel and its conquest with their eyes?
2. It is obvious that if one sees something with one's own eyes, no further confirmation is required. So why does Rashi add, "I am not telling you this out of speculation or from hearsay"?
3. In his second comment on verse 8, Rashi writes, "If they had not sent the spies, they would not have needed weapons." On what basis did Rashi conclude, at the literal level, that no weapons would be required?

## The Explanation

In verse 7, the Jewish people are told the details concerning the conquest of the Land of Israel: "Redirect yourselves and travel until you come to... the land of the Canaanites, and the Lebanon, all the way until the great river, the Euphrates River." Verse 8 then appears to state the general instruction to "come and take possession of the Land, etc."

So Rashi was troubled: Why are the Jewish people given the details concerning the conquest of the Land, in verse 7, before the general command to conquer it, in verse 8?

Rashi came to the conclusion that verse 8 is not merely an instruction to conquer the Land, but rather, it is a further description to the Jewish people about how they would conquer the land (and the actual command is in verse 7).

Up to this point, the Jewish people were aware that they would eventually conquer the Land from two sources:

1. They had heard from Moshe while they were still in Egypt that "I will bring you... to the land of the Cana'anites, the Hitites, the Amorites, the Perizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey" (Shemos 3:17), and "the people believed" (ibid. 4:31).
2. After the miracles which occurred when leaving Egypt, and the splitting of the Reed Sea, where they sang about coming to the Land (ibid. 15:17).

Since the Jewish people were familiar with these two points, Rashi concludes that our verse must be confirming the conquest of the Land in an even more powerful manner. Thus Rashi stresses: I am not telling you this out of speculation—as you may have speculated yourselves after seeing G-d's miracles when leaving Egypt—or from something I've heard—as I communicated to you G-d's promises while you were still in Egypt. Rather: You'll see it with your own eyes! I.e., the Jewish people will see the proof themselves, with their very eyes, that the conquest of the Land is about to occur.

But what exactly were the Jewish people going to be able to see while still camped at Mount Sinai? And how did Rashi conclude that Moshe promised them a totally supernatural conquest?

Rashi does not address either of these points directly, since the matter is self-understood from one of Rashi's earlier comments:

In verse 2, above, Rashi writes: "There is no shorter route from Choraiv to Kadaish-Barne'a than by way of Mount Se'ir, and even that is a journey of eleven days. But you covered it in three days!" (as Rashi continues to prove by a series of calculations). So when reaching our verse—which was said by Moshe before the journey from Choraiv to Kadaish-Barne'a (see v. 6)—the reader knows that the Jewish people are about to witness a phenomenal miracle, completing an eleven-day journey in just three days. Therefore, Rashi does not need to explain how the Jewish people would be given visual confirmation of their imminent conquest ("You'll see it with your own eyes!"), for the reader knows that the Jewish people are about to witness a miraculous beginning to their journey towards conquering the Land of Israel.

Similarly, Rashi does not need to bring any proof for his assertion, "No one will contest the matter, and you will not need to go to war," to the extent that "they would not have needed weapons," for the miraculous beginnings with which the conquest began suggest that the entire process will be totally supernatural.

## What Went Wrong?

We can now explain a further difficulty with Rashi's comment here:

Rashi writes, "If they had not sent the spies, they would not have needed weapons." Now, at first glance, the problem here was not the actual sending of the spies but the fiasco which followed, where the Jewish people lost faith in G-d's promises after the spies' negative reports. So why does Rashi not write, "If it were not for the sin of the spies...?"

However, based on the above, we can understand why the sending of the spies alone was sufficient to forfeit G-d's promises. For G-d had promised them (and had begun to show them) a totally supernatural conquest. Thus, as soon as they had sent out spies, which is a strategy only required for a natural conquest, the Jewish people had already demonstrated an open denial of the promise of supernatural conquest.

And this was Moshe's rebuke here to the Jewish people forty years later, as they were about to enter the Land: the importance of absolute trust in G-d.

(Based on Likutei Sichos vol. 34, p. 1ff.)

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### Adapted by Chaim Miller; From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

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