

Numbers 27:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;

Analysis

God commands Moses to commission Joshua as his successor, describing him as 'a man in whom is the spirit.' This phrase (Hebrew 'ish asher-ruach bo', איש אשר־רוּחַ בּוֹ) indicates divine enablement and spiritual qualification for leadership. Joshua possessed God's Spirit, providing supernatural wisdom, courage, and guidance necessary for leading Israel. The instruction to lay hands on Joshua represented formal ordination and authorization, publicly transferring leadership from Moses to Joshua. The requirement to do this 'before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation' ensured legitimate succession witnessed by both spiritual and communal authorities. This prevented later challenges to Joshua's authority and established precedent for orderly succession of leadership. The phrase 'that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient' acknowledges that leadership requires both divine calling and communal recognition. Joshua's Spirit-empowerment qualified him internally; Moses' ordination and public commissioning established him externally. This combination of spiritual qualification and formal recognition prevents both chaotic individualism (claiming Spirit-leading without community accountability) and dead institutionalism (formal position without spiritual power).

Historical Context

Joshua (originally named Hoshea, Numbers 13:16) had served as Moses' assistant since the Exodus (Exodus 24:13; 33:11). He was one of the twelve spies who

brought a faithful report (Numbers 14:6-9), sparing him from the judgment that killed the unfaithful generation. Moses' impending death (due to his Meribah sin, Numbers 20:12) necessitated appointing a successor. God chose Joshua rather than Moses' sons, establishing the principle that spiritual leadership passes to the qualified rather than automatically following biological descent. The public commissioning occurred before Eleazar the high priest (Aaron's son who succeeded him) and the entire congregation, creating formal authority structure for the conquest period. Joshua would lead Israel across the Jordan, conquer Canaan, and distribute the land to the tribes—an enormous responsibility requiring divine empowerment. His Spirit-anointing qualified him for this task. Later, the Spirit's role in empowering leaders would continue through the judges, kings, and prophets, ultimately fulfilled in Christ who possessed the Spirit without measure (John 3:34).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Joshua's qualification as 'a man in whom is the Spirit' establish that effective leadership requires divine enablement beyond human capability?
2. What does the combination of spiritual qualification and formal public commissioning teach about legitimate leadership in God's people?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְמֹשֶׁה תִּקְחֶה לְבָנֵךְ אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
said And the LORD unto Moses Take thee Joshua
H559 H3068 H413 H4872 H3947 H0 H853 H3091

בֶּן נָנָן אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר בְּרִית מֹשֶׁה וְלֹא תִּפְרַכְתָּ
the son of Nun a man in whom is the spirit and lay
H1121 H5126 H376 H834 H7307 H0 H853 H5564

יָדְךָ תְּלַבֵּב
thine hand H3027 H5921

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 34:9 (Spirit): And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Genesis 41:38 (Spirit): And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

Numbers 27:23 (References Lord): And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

Deuteronomy 31:23 (Parallel theme): And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee.

Acts 19:6 (Spirit): And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Deuteronomy 3:28 (Parallel theme): But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.

Judges 3:10 (Spirit): And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

John 3:34 (Spirit): For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

Daniel 5:14 (Spirit): I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.

Judges 11:29 (Spirit): Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

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