



Parshas Vaeschanan

For the week ending 13 Av 5757
15 & 16 August 1997

Overview

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe now prays to be allowed to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special mitzvos. However, Hashem refuses his request. Moshe reminds the Bnei Yisrael of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah - that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on the Bnei Yisrael that the revelation of Sinai took place to an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jewish People will ever be able to claim that Hashem spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins the Bnei Yisrael to "pass over" the event of the gathering at Sinai to their children throughout all generations. Moshe accurately predicts that after the Bnei Yisrael have dwelled in Eretz Yisrael they will sin, be exiled from the Land, and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but eventually they will return to Hashem. Moshe designates three "cities of refuge" to which a person who kills inadvertently may flee. Moshe repeats the Ten Commandments and then teaches the Shema, the central credo of Judaism-that there is only one G-d. Then Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The Parsha ends with Moshe exhorting the Bnei Yisrael not to intermarry when they enter into Eretz Yisrael, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

Insights

FOREVER

"Ascend to the top of the cliff, and raise your eyes westward, northward,..... and see with your eyes, for you shall not cross this Jordan."
3:27

Picture the feelings of longing that Moshe must have had as he stood on top of the cliff, gazing out over the land that he given so much to enter.

There it was stretched out in front of him like a map. The Land of Israel. So close and yet so far. Hashem knew how much Moshe wanted to go into *Eretz Yisrael*, so why did He 'tantalize' Moshe by telling him to go up and gaze at this land that he knew he was never going to enter?

Furthermore, our Sages tell us that by prophetic insight Hashem showed Moshe every single square inch of *Eretz Yisrael* - which only must have increased his longing!

What was Hashem's purpose?

Each of the *Avos*, the Patriarchs, represent a specific quality: Avraham embodies *Chesed* (Kindness); Yitchak personifies *Gevurah* (Strength/Self-control); Yaakov *Emes* (truth). **The quality that Moshe represents is *Netzach* - Eternity.**

Everything that Moshe did was forever. Hashem gave the Torah though Moshe - because the Torah is eternal. If Moshe had gone into the land of Israel with the Jewish People, then their entry would have been an 'eternal entry' - everything that Moshe did had that touch of eternity. After such an entry, the Jewish People *could* never again leave the Land. Hashem knew that the Jewish People would *have* to go into exile for they would not be able to maintain the high spiritual standards that the Land requires. If they could not leave, and they could not stay, they would be caught, as it were, in a spiritual vise – the very real danger of annihilation (*r"l*).

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Thus, Moshe *could* not enter the Land of Israel.

However, Hashem made Moshe's non-entry into the Land serve a positive purpose: Hashem wanted to sear the memory of the Land of Israel into the collective psyche of the Jewish People. By showing Moshe every blade of grass, by taking him and showing him every corner of the land he was never to enter, Hashem planted in Moshe's heart a longing for the Land of Israel *which would be eternal*.

Look at our daily prayers. Look at the blessings after eating a meal. Our petitions to Hashem are saturated with the name of the Land to which we long to return to – as a Holy People.

Throughout the long, long night of exile, the Jewish People have never lost that same longing for *Eretz Yisrael* that Moshe felt when he stood on the top of the cliff and gazed into the Land he would never enter.

THE 516TH PRAYER

"Vaeschanan" 3:23

"Vaeschanan" means "I implored".

The *gematria* - the numerical equivalent - of *Vaeschanan* is 515.

There are 516 hours between the start of Rosh Hashana and the end of Hoshana Raba - which is the last chance to change a decree which was made on Yom Kippur.

In the last year of his life, between Rosh Hashana and Shmini Atzeres, Moshe prayed *every hour* - 515 times - that Hashem should forgive him and let him cross over the Jordan.

Finally Hashem told him *not to continue praying*.

From this we can learn the enormous power of prayer: Hashem told Moshe to stop praying to Him - implying that if Moshe had continued to pray, if he would have prayed the 516 prayer, Hashem would have acceded to his petition.

A GENTLE NUDGE

Haftorah: Isaiah 40:1-26

The Shabbos immediately following Tisha B'Av is called *Shabbos Nachamu* -- The Shabbos of Consolation. It takes its name from the first word of this week's Haftorah -- "Comfort, comfort my people says your G-d." The Prophet reminds the people that the time of the Exile of Jerusalem has come to an end. The Midrash tells us that Hashem asks Avraham to comfort Jerusalem, but he does not succeed. He is followed by Yitzchak and Yaakov and Moshe who are also unsuccessful. Finally Hashem Himself comes to comfort the Holy City.

"And you will love Hashem, Your G-d, with all your heart..." 6:5

The philosophers ask: How can you command love? Love is something instinctive which a person either feels or doesn't feel! Can a person be made to love on command?!

The answer is to be found in the question itself. From the fact that Hashem *commanded* us to love Him, it follows that it must be part of the nature of every Jew to be able to love The Creator. All that is required is to awaken this natural strength and give it a gentle nudge!

PRAYERLINE 1

"And I beseeched Hashem at that time, saying" (3:23)

The phrase "*At that time*" hints to a prayer for generations unborn: Whenever the Jewish People will find themselves in times of anguish, unable to pray properly because of the oppression of exile, Moshe's prayer will arise in their place.

Even in the most numbing unhappiness, when the cord of prayer that connects the lips to the heart is disconnected, and all we are able to do is merely utter the words, Moshe's prayer will arise for us. "*At that time*", when all we will be able to do is "*say*" and there will be no feeling in our words, this prayer of Moshe's will arise in front of Hashem.

PRAYERLINE 2

"With all your heart" (6:5)

A similar idea is hinted to in the phrase "*With all your heart*" in the Shema. Rashi explains the following phrase "*With all your soul*" to mean "even if He will take your soul." So, similarly – even if He will take your heart. Even when doubts gnaw away at your heart, even when it is confused and you don't see the Hand of Hashem, even then, serve Him – "*With all your heart.*"

Sources:

*Forever - Malbim, Rabbi Yerucham
Uziel Milevsky z"l*

*The 516th Prayer - Rabbi Mordechai
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*A Gentle Nudge - Sfas Emes
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PrayerLine 2 - Chidushei HaRim*



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