

NEVER LOST

by Rabbi Label Lam

I entreated HASHEM at that time, saying, "HASHEM- G-d, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand, for who is [like] G-d in heaven or on earth who can do as Your deeds and Your might? Pray let me cross over and see the good land that is on the other side of the Jordan, this good mountain and the Lebanon." ... and HASHEM said to me, "It is enough for you; speak to Me no more regarding this matter. Go up to the top of the hill and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward and see with your eyes, for you shall not cross this Jordan. But command Yehoshua and strengthen him and encourage him, for he will cross over before this people, and he will make them inherit the land which you will see." (Devarim 3:23-28)

Moshe begs HASHEM to enter the Land of Israel and not only is his passionate request denied but he is told to ask no more. That would be enough to frustrate his aspirations. What happens next is extremely puzzling. Moshe is told, to go up to the top of the hill and lift his eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward and see the entire land. Then it is explained to him that he will not cross the Jordan but rather Yehoshua will lead the Nation of Israel into the Promised Land.

It seems Moshe is being taunted and teased. Imagine a child petitioning his father for a toy he desperately wants and the father flatly refuses, telling him not to ask again. Instead of giving the boy what he wants, he brings the child to Toys r Us and leads him throughout the store. After whetting his appetite the father informs him that his little brother will be granted his choice in the store. This approach would seem to further compound Moshe's desperation and frustration!?

Why is Moshe being treated this way? What is the purpose? Let us consider a few approaches.

We can appreciate that Moshe did not want to enter the Land of Israel for some frivolous desire. He wanted to do the Mitzvos that could only be performed by entering the Holy Land. Our sages tell us that if a person tries to do a Mitzvah but is prevented by circumstances beyond his control, then it is considered as if he did it! If I go to visit someone in the hospital but he got better and went home, then I get the Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim.

I must first do everything in my power to accomplish the task. I cannot sit at home and wait for someone to heal and then say I wanted to visit. By begging HASHEM and looking deeply into the land Moshe had effectively done everything in his power and was therefore granted the fulfillment of having done the Mitzvos of the Land of Israel.

Moshe did not want to enter just for himself. His entire life was given over to guiding and teaching

his people. Knowing that Yehoshua would be a reliable leader to continue his work is a source of comfort and not a point of jealousy.

In the Kabbalistic literature Moshe is aligned with the Sefira, the trait of Netzach- Victory- Eternity. What is the relationship between the two meanings of Netzach- Victory and Eternity? When a person struggles mightily and is victorious versus negative forces he has forged an eternal bond. Nobody represents this idea more than Moshe.

Everything he strove to do made a lasting impression. The Exodus he led from Egypt is remembered daily -yearly until and including the Era of Moshiach! The Torah he landed on earth is forever! The people he dutifully shepherded are an eternal people, outlasting the life of other nations.

Moshe's looking into the Land of Israel was no simple survey. It was a gaze that installed in the Nation of Israel a focus and a direction we have **never lost**.