

PARSHAT VA'ET'CHANAN- "NACHAMU"- 2014, 5744

Despite the fact that Moshe was informed that he will not be permitted to enter the Land of Israel, (Devarim 1:37), Moshe pleads with G-d to forgive the decree (3:23-25). The Gemara Sotah (14a) asks, why did Moshe desire so greatly to enter the Land? Was it to eat from its fruits? To which the Gemara responds, that for a man like Moshe Rabbeinu to desire pleasure, even from holy objects is not a goal in itself.

The Gemara answers that Moshe wished to fulfill the Mitzvot that depend on the Land; namely, removing Terumah and Ma'aser (Priestly and Levitical portions). Following these acts and then to dedicate his first fruits in the Mishkan, and to set aside cities of Arei Miklat (cities of refuge)

The Rashbatz, (R'Shimon ben Tzemach Duran, 1361- 1444) in Responsa 3:198 asks a powerful question. He points out that the land where Moshe was standing, on the banks of the Jordan, was already Halachically part of Eretz Yisrael. In a very short time, the women and children of the tribes of Re'uvan, Gad and half tribe of Menasheh would settle there, while the men went on to join the other tribes in their fight for conquering Eretz Yisrael. All the land-related Mitzvot –Ma'aser, Terumah, Bikkurim, etc- applied there. So Moshe could not have desired to enter Israel simply to fulfill those Mitzvot because he could already fulfill them on the east bank of the Jordan River.

Therefore, explains the Rashbatz, Moshe desired to fulfill the national Mitzvah of *Ve'horashtem Et HaAretz* (Bamidbar 33:53) conquering the Land, fighting its battles, establishing a government (Kingship) and building a Bet HaMikdash. His plea to HaShem was to allow him to take part in the glorious task of creating a Jewish state, leading the people into its final stage of development. Moshe Rabbeinu was a true Religious Zionist. Our Chazal (Sages) comment, that had the people been led into the Land of Israel by Moshe, we would never have suffered subsequent galut (exile).

We pray to HaShem to maintain His commitment to fight with us, whether up front or behind the scenes. And to protect our Chayalim (IDF soldiers) who are risking their lives in Gaza engaged in a Milchemet Mitzvah protecting the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael from the murderous enemies all around us.

We are saddened this Shabbat Nachamu from the losses we have sustained to our Chayalim and civilian residents of our land. But we are gladdened by the many stories of soldiers who reported seeing the Yad HaShem (Hand of G-d) miraculously saving them during battle. May we do our best to be better people and better Jews-with increased acts of Chessed and Mitzvot.