

## ❖ PARSHAT VA'ETCHANAN

"Don't you see?" we insist when the person we're arguing with won't recognize the shining truth that's staring us both in the face. "Oh, I see..." we concede when yet another comfortable fallacy is debunked. We may have five senses with which to apprehend our world, but somehow "I smelled it with my own nose" or even "I felt it with my own hands" doesn't carry the authority of "I saw it with my own eyes." What we "see"--whether literally or figuratively--is unequivocally, incontestably real.

"Let me cross over," Moses implored G-d as the people of Israel camped on the eastern bank of the Jordan, "and let me see the good Land." But G-d refused. We all know the tragic tale. Moses, who had taken the people out of Egypt, who had climbed Mount Sinai to receive the Torah for them and returned to teach them the word of G-d, who for forty years tended to their hungers and thirsts, their doubts and complaints and rebellions--Moses was to die and be buried in the plains of Moab, and his disciple, Joshua, was to lead a new generation of Jews into the Promised Land. But upon closer examination, Moses' prayer was at least partially answered. Moses asked to cross over and to see the Land; G-d refused the first part of the request and granted the second. "Ascend to the top of the summit" G-d said to Moses, "... and see it with your eyes; for you shall not cross this Jordan."

Our sages note that all Moses' achievements are eternal and everlasting. Moses liberated us from slavery, and from that moment we have been inherently, irrevocably free: nations may subjugate us physically, but no force on earth can subdue the Jewish soul. Moses gave us the Torah, and never shall the Torah depart from Israel. Even the Mishkan, the "temporary" Sanctuary built by Moses in the desert, was never destroyed (as were the permanent Divine abodes built by Solomon and Ezra in Jerusalem), but mysteriously hidden away in an undisclosed place, where it remains intact to this very day.

Chassidic teaching explains that this is the deeper reason why Moses was not allowed to enter the Land of Israel. If Moses would have settled us in the Land, we could never have been exiled from it. If Moses would have built the Holy Temple, it could never have been destroyed. If Moses would have established the people of Israel in their homeland as a "light unto the nations," that light could never have been dimmed.

If Moses would have crossed the Jordan, that would have been the end: the end of the struggle, the end of history. G-d wasn't ready for the end yet. So He decreed that Moses remain in the desert. But He did allow him to see the Land. And because Moses saw it, and because the effect of everything Moses did is everlasting, we, too, can see it. At all times, and under all conditions, we have the power to ascend a summit within us and see the Promised Land. No matter how distant the end-goal of creation may seem, we have the power to see its reality, to know its truth with absolute clarity and absolute conviction. We are still in the midst of the struggle. It is a difficult, oft-times painful struggle; but it is not a blind struggle. Moses has seen to that. (From: chabadonline.com, Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Yanki Tauber)

**"Hear O Israel G-d is our G-d, G-d is the One and Only... and when you lie down and when you rise up" (6:4,7) QUESTION:** Why is the Shema read in the evening and repeated again in the morning? **ANSWER:** "Night" represents dark and difficult times and "day" is analogous to good and pleasant periods. In the Shema the Jew accepts upon himself absolute submission to the yoke of heaven. The recitation of Shema in the evening and again in the morning is a message that under all conditions, regardless if things appear good or difficult, pleasant or gloomy, a person should never forsake his attachment to Hashem. The

daily recitals of Shema start in the evening to emphasize that while it is easy to praise Hashem when things are comfortable and pleasant, one must also praise Hashem "in the evening" when things seem dark and difficult. (From: Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky)

## ❖ FIFTEENTH OF AV

This Shabbat, the Shabbat after Tisha B'Av, is called Shabbat Nachamu. It is thus called after this week's Haftora, which begins with the words, "Nachamu, nachamu ami, -- Take comfort, take comfort, My people." Shabbat is the continuation and completion of the past week. Thus, eventhough during this week we commemorated the saddest event in Jewish history by fasting and mourning the loss of the Beis Hamikdash - our Holy Temple - the whole purpose of this week is to renew our hope and to be comforted that G-d's promise will be fulfilled and our Holy Temple will be rebuilt. Our sadness of Tisha B'Av should be replaced by the comfort of Shabbat Nachamu.

Our sadness is further alleviated by the upcoming date of Tu B'Av, the fifteenth day of Av. This is considered a joyous day for numerous reasons. One reason concerns the generation of Jews that was forced to wander in the desert for forty years before entering the Land of Israel, due to their acceptance of the spies' false report about the Holy Land. Every year, on Tisha B'Av, members of this generation would die. On the fifteenth of Av, in the fortieth year of their wandering, this decree was lifted. Also, during the era of the Roman Empire, the Romans attacked the Jews who resided in the city of Beitar and killed multitudes of men, women, and children. On Tu B'Av, the Romans finally allowed those Jews remaining in Beitar to give the murdered Jews a proper burial.

In the time of the Holy Temple, Tu B'Av was celebrated as a full festival. In our times, it is celebrated by making gatherings and increasing in Torah study, especially at night, as from this point on, the nights become longer. Let us ask G-d to send Moshiach, so that the next Tisha B'Av will be a day of rejoicing in our Holy Temple, in an era when the lessons that can be derived from everything in the world will be openly revealed and acted upon. (From: L'Chaim 5757, #481)

**Beginning on the 15th of Av,** the days become shorter and the nights longer. "The Talmud says that after the 15th of Av, when the nights are visibly longer, one should add more time for Torah study and as a result he will add years to his life. Similarly, there should be an increase in tzedaka within the framework of Jewish unity. It should be added that the attitude of joy should also permeate and encompass all of these good actions, and this will speed the transition of the day of mourning [Tisha B'Av] into a day of rejoicing." (ibid, The Rebbe, 20 Av, 5747)

...**Our sages tell us** that the 15th day of Av was a very joyous festival in the olden days, especially for the younger generation, with particular emphasis on the religious ideals and values of our Jewish way of life. Coming so soon after Tisha B'Av, the radical transition from a mood of sadness to that of joy is doubly significant. Firstly, it signifies that any sad interlude in Jewish life is only transitory, and is based on the principle of "descent for the purpose of ascent." In other words, any and all sad events in our history which are commemorated on the few sad days on our calendar, are backwards steps which are necessary for a greater forward leap. Secondly, that the very transition from sadness to gladness intensifies the joy, and adds real quality to it, which could not be appreciated otherwise...(ibid, The Rebbe, 15th of Menachem Av, 5735 [1975])

THE ALTER REBBE WENT TO MEZRITCH WITH HIS BROTHER, R. YEHUDA LEIB, IN 5524 (1764). R. YEHUDA LEIB WENT WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM HIS WIFE AND THEREFORE TURNED BACK. THE REBBE CAME TO MEZRITCH AND STAYED THERE, THAT FIRST TIME, UNTIL AFTER PESACH 5525 (1765). FOR TWO WEEKS HE WAS UNCERTAIN WHETHER TO REMAIN THERE. THE FIRST MAAMAR HE HEARD WAS NACHAMU NACHAMU. IT IS NOT CLEAR, THOUGH, WHETHER THIS WAS THE FIRST MAAMAR AFTER HIS ARRIVAL, OR THE FIRST AFTER THE TWO WEEKS WHEN HE HAD DECIDED TO REMAIN AND HAD BECOME BOUND (TO THE MAGGID). (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM AV 11)

***To fool the world is one thing, but to fool yourself is no big deal.  
You're a fool for wanting to fool yourself - and anyone can fool a fool.***

-Bringing heaven down to Earth