

I implored Hashem at that time... Let me now cross and see... But Hashem became angry with me because of you. (3:23,25,26)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* prayed and prayed. *Chazal* say that the word, *va'eschanan*, I implored, implies that Moshe prayed 515 times, which is its numerical equivalent. The word, *va'eschanan*, is derived from *chinam*, free, alluding to the nature of this prayer. Being one of the ten terms of prayer, it is used when one seeks an undeserved favor from Hashem. Why did Moshe use this term? Surely he was deserving. The righteous never feel that they have a claim on Hashem's favor. His mercy is reserved for those who feel "worthy" of it. The righteous and the humble feel that Hashem owes them nothing.

The *Midrash (Rabbah 87:10)* relates the following dialogue that ensued between Moshe and Hashem. Hashem said to Moshe, "You are grabbing the rope from both ends. (In other words, you cannot go forward, since you are pulling from both sides.) If you want to fulfill, 'Let me now cross and see,' then you cannot ask Me to forgive the nation. If you insist that I forgive them, then you cannot enter into the Land." This *Midrash* begs elucidation. How would the nation's forgiveness affect Moshe's entering the Land and vice versa?

Horav Moshe Bick, zl, explains that Moshe's request that the nation be absolved for the sin of the spies and their unwarranted, inappropriate reaction to the misinformation they received ran counter to his request that he be granted entry into the Land. There is a rule that *tzaddik gozeir v'HaKadosh Baruch Hu mekayeim*, the righteous decree and Hashem carries out their wish. Hashem would, therefore, have listened to Moshe's request concerning the nation. This rule applies, however, only under such circumstances that the *tzaddik* does not derive personal benefit from his plea. If he has a vested interest, either directly or even indirectly, the plea will not be effective. The reason for this is that the *tzaddik* serves as a *tzinor*, pipe, conduit, through which Hashem delivers His beneficence. For the *tzaddik* to be a conduit, no obstruction can prevent the smooth delivery of the Heavenly blessings. Thus, *Chazal (Berachos 17b)* say that the entire world is sustained through the merit of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, because he needed nothing. He was able to survive on a measure of carobs the entire week. Thus, once the *tzaddik* takes for himself, the conduit becomes obstructed, and his decree is less effective.

When Moshe prayed to Hashem to allow him to enter the Land, it was a personal plea, a personal prayer. This precluded his speaking on behalf of the nation. Thus, Hashem told him: If you go, they cannot, and, if they go, you cannot. In order for Me to grant them absolution, you must defer entering *Eretz Yisrael*. This is why Moshe asked for a *matnas chinam*, an undeserved favor, a "free" gift from Hashem. He knew that if he used his merit, it would hurt the nation's chances. Therefore, he told the nation, "Hashem became angry with me. I lost out because of you. The only reason that I did not enter the Land was that, had I gone, you would not." This is but one other case in which Moshe, our quintessential leader, sacrificed for the nation.