

**"Get up on top of Pisgah ... and behold with your eyes for you shall not go over this Yarden... (3:27) Then Moshe separated three cities beyond the Yarden. (4:41) And this is the Torah which Moshe set before Bnei Yisrael." (4:44)**

The *parsha* begins with Moshe's supplication to Hashem, entreating Him to be allowed entry into *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe realized that his hopes would not be fulfilled, and he stood making his farewell speech to *Bnei Yisrael*. He reminded them of their past iniquities and exhorted them to remember their obligations to both Hashem and man. It seemed that Moshe's task in this world had come to an end.

Suddenly, Moshe undertook a new *mitzvah*, one that would not apply until *Eretz Yisrael* had been conquered and divided. He separated three cities of refuge for the *Ever Ha'Yarden*. Why did Moshe do this before his death? Was his spiritual merit lacking such that he found it necessary to do one more *mitzvah*? The spiritual heritage bequeathed by Moshe to future generations is invaluable. Moshe gave us the *Torah*. Consequently, every *mitzvah* performed by *Klal Yisrael* is in his merit.

*Chazal* explain that Moshe desired to perpetuate a "permanent" *mitzvah* to be continued after his demise. Does this mean that establishing the cities of refuge, is Moshe's permanent spiritual memorial for posterity? Does a single *mitzvah* compare to the entire *Torah*, Moshe's greatest spiritual legacy? Furthermore, this *mitzvah* had no practical application during Moshe's lifetime.

*Horav Malkiel Tanenbaum z.l.* explains that the criteria for a permanent *mitzvah* are not contingent upon the size of that *mitzvah*, but rather upon the overall benefit which succeeding generations derive from it. Thus, a *mitzvah* which is neglected is far more valuable than one which is in constant vogue. If someone does not embrace and publicize this overlooked *mitzvah*, it might be forgotten.

Indeed, studying a "neglected" *mitzvah* can have more significant results than studying the "popular" *mitzvos*. Such a *mitzvah*, specifically due to its lack of public acclaim, creates a greater impression upon people, so that it becomes more deeply engraved upon their minds. Thus, adopting the less prominent *mitzvos* causes a greater degree of *kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of Hashem's Name.

This is the meaning of Moshe's act. True, he transmitted the *Torah* to us, but that was one aspect of his prophetic mission. He lacked fulfillment of his own personal obligation to bring others to learning and to serve as a vehicle for enhanced *mitzvah* observance. He still needed to do his "own thing". The *mitzvah* of *arai miklat*, cities of refuge, was not given to him, since it was not yet applicable. It was this "neglected" *mitzvah* that he aspired to embrace. It was this *mitzvah* which

would have his personal imprimatur. How important it is for all of us to seek to improve in a specific area of *mitzvah* observance -- or to embrace a specific *mitzvah* or good deed, in order to make it our own. This would serve as our legacy for the future and personal source of merit.

*Horav Moshe Swift z.l.* derives a profound lesson from Moshe's final endeavor. Although this *mitzvah* would not attain practical application until much later, its present insignificance did not deter Moshe's action. His duty was to do what he could and to leave the rest to history. The *Mishnah* in *Avos 2:21* states, "*It is not your duty to complete the work, neither are you free to desist from it.*" To refrain from performing a *mitzvah* because we can not bring it to fruition is not a *Torah* orientation. We must do that which we can and rely upon Hashem to complete the *mitzvah*. To paraphrase the *Chofetz Chaim*, "*it is not for you to achieve but to act. Achievement is the province of the Almighty.*"