

## **“He (Hashem) buried him in the depression...and no one knows his burial place to this day.” (34:6)**

Hashem did not want Moshe’s burial place to become a shrine for those who deify national heroes. This idea begs understanding. Should not Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the quintessential teacher and leader of *Klal Yisrael*, have some form of *matzeivah*, monument, erected in his memory? A monument is a symbol, a place where people can assemble, to *daven*, recite *Tehillim*, supplicate the *neshamah*, soul, of the deceased to intercede on their behalf. Should our great Moshe *Rabbeinu* not have a *matzeivah* just because some people might use his burial place inappropriately?

I think the answer lies in the definition and purpose of a *matzeivah*. *Horav Yaakov Beifus, Shlita*, cites a poignant conversation between an elderly father and his daughter, shortly before he took leave of this world. The father began by explaining that life is temporary – only a passing thing. A human being, however, possesses a *neshamah*, which is eternal. The eternity of the soul depends greatly on how the person acts during his lifetime. A person is born into this world with great aspirations for achievement. From the very moment a person enters this world, he is drawing ever closer to his death. It is inevitable, a reality, that every person must confront. As the father was focusing on the subject of death, the daughter became perturbed and asked him to stop the conversation. It was morbid and unnecessary, but her father continued on. He had a message to convey, and he felt that time was of the essence.

“As you know, my dear child,” the father said, “I once had sons, fine and talented sons. I sacrificed myself to teach them Torah, so that they would grow into fine upstanding Torah scholars. Unfortunately, it was decreed from Heaven that I should outlive my sons, that I should depart from this world without even leaving someone to say *Kaddish* for me. Therefore, my dear daughter, I want you to be my *Kaddish*. I want you to be my *matzeivah*. This is my wish. This is all that I have left of the many hopes and ambitions that I once had.”

The daughter responded softly, “Of course, *Tatteh*, I will say *Kaddish* for you, since there are no sons, but what do you mean when you say I should be your *matzeivah*?”

Her father looked her in her eyes, and said, “My child, you do not understand. A *matzeivah* is not just a row of stones or a marble slab. That is just a marker for a grave. No – a man’s *matzeivah*, his monument, is the sum of all the good deeds that he performed from the moment of his birth till his passing. The good deeds that his children continue to perform after him, are also a crucial component of his eternal *matzeivah*.

“You should not think, my dear child, that I am referring to *mitzvos* such as *Shabbos* and *Kashrus*. For those, you do not need my will. Hashem has already instructed you in His Torah in the proper and correct manner to serve Him. No, I am thinking about the basics, your everyday demeanor in

dealing with people. I just want them to say, 'There goes *Reb Yehudah's* daughter.' Your every movement will be my *Kaddish*. Your every step will be my *matzeivah*. I will be gone, but my soul's placement is dependent upon your actions. You can either bring me to *Gan Eden* or to *Gehinom*. If you act appropriately, I will be rewarded. If you fall prey to your *yetzer hara*, evil inclination, then my labor of a lifetime will be for naught."

The father continued by relating a powerful analogy comparing the bridge of generations to a physical bridge. The government commissioned a large company to build a bridge over a river. Hundreds of people were involved in its construction until the bridge was finally completed. The contractor presented his bill to the government. Before the government authorizes payment, it first tests the bridge to confirm that it meets its rigid standards. It must be able to bear the weight of everyday traffic. They take a train of forty loaded freight cars and have it pass over the bridge. If it withstands the test, the contractor is paid.

The test begins, and one by one the freight cars traverse the bridge. The contractor and the employees who labored tirelessly to erect the span stand there, their hearts thumping, waiting for each car to pass over the bridge. It is not just about the money. If the bridge collapses – they are disgraced.

The freight cars cross one by one. As each car passes to the other side, the workers feel prouder and more confident. The suspense builds up. Thirty cars have passed, thirty-one and so on. The fortieth car approaches the bridge. Everyone is swallowing hard, their nerves taut. They hold their breath as the car reaches the middle of the span, when suddenly it collapses under the weight. The car plunges into the water, pulling all the other cars along with it. All the toil, all the years of painstaking labor are destroyed.

The same idea applies to the bridge of the generations of mankind. Our fathers and their fathers, ascending to Avraham *Avinu*, crossed the bridge called Life. They withstood the tests, trials and tribulations. They passed, affirming their belief and trust in Hashem. Now the test is up to us, our generation. If we succeed then the status quo achieved by our ancestors remains intact. If, *chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid, the last generation before *Moshiach* reneges its conviction, if they fail the test, all of the labor of the previous generations will have been overturned.

The father looked at his daughter and made his plea, "Please remember, my child, that the eyes of our fathers and mothers are upon you. Always ask yourself, 'Am I following the path that was tread by my ancestors? Will I put my forebears to shame, or will I bring them honor?' Remember that a momentary lapse on your part, however slight, might affect my rest in *Gan Eden*. As my living monument, I look to you for your continued support."

Thus, the father concluded his last will and testament to his daughter. The lesson to be derived is apparent. The answer to our question is equally clear. We are all monuments to Moshe *Rabbeinu*. He brought down and taught us the Torah. It is his legacy to future generations. It is up to us not to

bring shame to the heritage that he transmitted to us. A vibrant *Klal Yisrael*, resolute in its conviction and commitment to Torah, is Moshe's *Kaddish* and his *matzeivah*.