

When his bewailing period passed. (50:4)

The *Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 100:4)* distinguishes between the mourning /weeping for Yaakov *Avinu* and the mourning for Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Concerning Yaakov, the Torah writes: “When his bewailing period passed,” while, regarding Moshe, it writes: *Vayitmu yemei bechi eival Moshe*, “Then the days of the tearful mourning or Moshe ended” (*Devarim 34:8*). The *Midrash* comments: Yaakov had those who mourned and bewailed him; therefore, it says that the bewailing period passed (not ended, simply passed). Moshe did not leave a grief-stricken following; therefore, it says that his mourning period came to an end. Clearly, this statement requires elucidation. Moshe was the quintessential *Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael*, the *Rebbe*, mentor, leader of all the Jewish People. How is it possible to suggest that he did not have a distraught, grief-stricken following?

The simple answer to this question is that Yaakov was mourned by his children; Moshe was mourned by his students. Mourning a parent is different than mourning a mentor, regardless of one’s closeness to his mentor. Only a very close student who had established a father –son relationship with his *rebbe* could possibly aspire to compare a *rebbe* to a father. Otherwise, a father is the same flesh and blood. When a father dies, a part of the son dies with him. Some of our greatest Torah leaders had such a relationship with their *rebbeim*, but, after all is said and done, it would be described as being “father-son like.” Furthermore, Yaakov *Avinu* was not only their father; he was also their *rebbe*.

Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita, explains that since Moshe designated (Hashem’s decision) Yehoshua to be his successor, he transmitted all of his Torah knowledge to his disciple. Hashem ratified Yehoshua’s position with His promised support, just as He supported Moshe *Rabbeinu*. The fact that the *Zekeinim*, Elders, of that generation commented that Yehoshua in comparison to Moshe was like the moon in relationship to the sun, does not necessarily indicate a negative comparison. Indeed, as the moon has no light of its own, receiving its illumination solely from the sun, likewise, Yehoshua absorbed all of Moshe’s Torah. While Yosef was, indeed, the successor to Yaakov *Avinu*, and Yaakov taught Yosef the Torah he had imbibed from his father, Yitzchak *Avinu*, and from the fourteen years he spent in the *yeshivah* of Shem and Eiver, the succession was not the same as when Yehoshua succeeded Moshe. Yehoshua was never on his own; thus, everything that he taught was his *Rebbe*, Moshe’s, Torah. Yosef had spent two decades away from his father, during which the inspiration he received certainly sustained him, but it was definitely not the same as being with him.

Death is the cessation of physical life. Each individual has a spiritual component whose abidance is based upon its endurance after death. This is the meaning of *sifsosas dovevos b’kever*, “his lips are moving in the grave,” as he continues to cause Torah to be learned in this world. “Gone, but not forgotten” has a different meaning and value in the Torah world.