

## "So Moshe, servant of Hashem, died there... He buried him in the depression in the land of Moav.... Opposite Baal P'eor and no one knows his burial place to this day." (34:5,6)

*Rashi* comments on the seeming paradox that Moshe reported his own death - during his lifetime. One explanation suggests that the last eight *pesukim* of the *Torah* were actually written by Yehoshua, Moshe's faithful student, who succeeded Moshe as *Klal Yisrael's* leader. In the *Talmud Bava Basra 15a*, however, Rabbi Meier states that Moshe, indeed, wrote the last eight *pesukim* himself. He wrote them with tears. This may be interpreted in one of two ways: His eyes may have been filled with tears as his emotions regarding his imminent demise poured over. Alternatively, his writing fluid might have consisted of his own tears rather than of ordinary ink. The *Maharsha* explains that writing with tears has an advantage over writing with ink, in that writing with tears is not considered ordinary writing. Thus, it would not be considered paradoxical for Moshe to write about his own death.

Let us examine *Chazal's* words. Moshe wrote the entire *Torah* with ink. For the last eight *pesukim* he filled his "pen" with another -- very unique -- solution - tears. **Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl**, understands this *Chazal* homiletically. In truth, Moshe *Rabbeinu* did not really die. No one knows Moshe's burial place, because there is no burial place. He is still alive! The *Torah* asserts that every Jew who studies *Torah* represents Moshe's living legacy. Where did Moshe die? He died "there" in the land of Moav, opposite the idol Pe'or. Moshe dies in any place in which decadence reigns, where Jewish people sin in the most reprehensible manner. His legacy, the *Torah*, does not "live" in such a place. The *Torah* requires a specific prescription for living. When we do not follow the prescription, then we have no life. If, however, we study *Torah* and observe *mitzvos*, Moshe lives on. Thus, metaphorically, no one is aware of his burial place.

*Shvilei Shmuel* supplements the expression of this idea. He cites the *Shaar Bas Rabim* who relates an anecdote which underscores this concept. A small community in Europe sought to attract a prominent scholar to serve as *Rav* for their community. In an effort to persuade the distinguished *Rav* to join their community, the president of the *shul* erected memorial stones in the local cemetery with the names of great *tzaddikim* of the past. He hoped that when the *Rav* noticed the great personages buried in the community, he would be inclined to respond in the affirmative. The *Rav* was very impressed to see that the *Taz* and *Magen Avraham* were buried in the local cemetery. He, therefore, accepted the position.

Some time later, the new *Rav* found out to his consternation that the *Taz* was actually buried in Lemberg, while the *Magen Avraham* was interred in *Kalish*. He became extremely upset upon hearing that he was duped into accepting the position. He called the president and angrily asked him why he had fooled him. The president responded, "In Lemberg, they study the *Taz*. In *Kalish*, they pour over the *halachic* decisions of the *Magen Avraham*. Consequently, these *Torah* giants speak beyond the grave. Their words, their thoughts, are interpreted into a living *Torah*. No, they

are much very much alive - in Lemberg and Kalish. Since no one studies *Torah* in our city, the decisions of the *Taz* and *Magen Avraham* may as well never have been rendered. In our city nobody really cares. In our community, the *Taz* and *Magen Avraham* are really buried.

Similarly, when *Klal Yisrael* studies *Torah*, Moshe *Rabbeinu's* grave remains unknown, since he is very much alive. Moshe *Rabbeinu* is synonymous with the *Torah*. His devotion to it earned him the title of "*Mechokek*," lawgiver. Until this day, whenever *Torah* is studied, Moshe's grave remains unknown - for he is alive in the hearts, minds and actions of those who study *Torah*.

We may suggest that this is the underlying reason we celebrate *Simchas Torah* with dancing and great joy, despite the fact that we read of Moshe *Rabbeinu's* death in the culmination of the *Torah*. It would seem that the retelling of the demise of our quintessential spiritual leader should not coincide with celebration and festivities. The answer lies in the concept stated above. The greater joy we express in the *Torah*, the more heightened our *simchah* that we once again have completed a cycle of *Torah* reading, the further Moshe is distanced from death. We celebrate his life, for his life was "virtual" *Torah* -something for which we should all aspire.