

## **And no man knows his burial place. (34:6)**

Much has been written by the commentators to explain the meaning of the above pasuk. The Talmud Sotah 14a states that the word ish, man, is a reference to Moshe Rabbeinu himself, who is referred to as ish haElokim, man of G-d. Thus, the pasuk is teaching us that even Moshe did not know where he was buried. The Ben Yehoyada explains this based upon the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos 5:6, which lists Moshe's grave as one of the ten things created during bein ha'shemashos, twilight of the sixth day of Creation. The grave is included among other preeminent miraculous creations, such as the manna and staff which Moshe used in the performance of the various miracles that accompanied Klal Yisrael's sojourn from the bondage of Egypt until his death. Ben Yehayada explains that, given the miraculous nature of Moshe's grave, it took up no space in this world,

similar to the Aron HaKodesh and its Keruvim. Thus, Moshe could not know its location.

The Meshech Chochmah approaches the phenomenon of Moshe's grave from a different standpoint. He cites the Talmud Shabbos 152b, which states that for the first year after a person's death, the soul of the deceased ascends and descends between the Heaven Above and mortal remains buried in the earth. The soul has a certain connection with the body and visits it as one would visit a friend. Moshe, however, was different. Even when he was alive, he was as spiritual as a human being could be. He had no connection with his physical dimension. This was evident in his ability to endure forty days on Har Sinai without physical nourishment. Hashem spoke to him "face to face," something outside of the realm of reality for a human being to experience. When Moshe's soul returned to Heaven, it found its place among the angels. "He" never visited his body, because he was totally spiritual; therefore, he did not know/was not acquainted with his burial place.

Chazal question why Moshe had to be buried outside of Eretz Yisrael. The decree was that he not enter the Land; nothing was mentioned concerning his burial. Why was he different than Yosef HaTzaddik, whose bones were interred in Eretz Yisrael? They explain that Moshe was buried close to the site where the Baal Peor idol was situated in order to atone for the tragic sin that had occurred there. This is a reference to the incident during which Moavite girls enticed Jewish men into immorality and idolatry.

Tosfos cites a Midrash which adds that every year, on the anniversary of the sin, the Peor location ascends to Heaven to condemn the Jewish People by recalling their sin. When it sees Moshe's grave, it sinks back into the ground.

The ideas cited above give us something to consider. Moshe died and was buried outside of Eretz Yisrael because Hashem saw that Klal Yisrael would need his soul to intercede on their behalf against the accusations of the Peor idol. We often wonder why some people “end up” in far-flung places off the beaten path. It is all part of a plan – Hashem’s Plan. Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, delivered the eulogy at the funeral of the Malbim. Horav Meir Leibish Malbim, zl, was one of Klal Yisrael’s greatest Torah leaders, whose exegesis on Tanach is a brilliant masterpiece which illuminates its most difficult passages. He was a staunch fighter against secular incursion, the wolf in the sheep’s clothing of the Haskalah/Enlightenment. He suffered greatly for his efforts, because the enemies of Torah were relentless in their battle to usurp the Jewish religion as it was transmitted from Har Sinai. Yet, despite his eminence, he died in Kiev – a city in the Ukraine not known for its strong Jewish character then. He “happened” to be there. Apparently, it was Hashem’s plan that a person of his spiritual stature be buried in this vicinity.

We have many questions. Indeed, life is replete with questions. Answers exist. We are just not “ready” for them. Perhaps, this is why our quintessential leader’s burial place is unknown. It serves as a lesson for others – for all of those who question, who do not understand why some things happen. The greatest Jew was buried opposite an idol. Why? Is there a greater question? The righteous do not cease working on behalf of the nation, even when their mortal remains are interred in the earth. They never stop their good work. Moshe is still serving as our intercessor until this very day. When Peor rears its ugly head, Moshe will be ready to push it back to the ground.