

OCTOBER 18, 2019

Parashat V'Zot HaBerachah

Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12

Taught By:

Liam & Omri



SUMMARY

In this Torah portion--the last in the whole Torah--Moshe gives the tribes of Israel a final blessing and dies at the age of 120. The Israelites mourn and begin to follow Yehoshu'a, their new leader.

1) This Shabbat we read the *parasha* including the very final chapter of Torah, in which we read that Moshe died "עַל-פִּי ה' " or "at the mouth of G'd". What do you imagine this might have looked like?

LIAM: When I saw that Rashi described this as Moshe dying of a kiss from G'd, it made me think of the dementors' kiss in Harry Potter--interesting, but not what I think happened. In that same verse Moshe is described as an *Eved A-donai*--a servant of G'd. I imagine that G'd and Moshe were face to face. G'd was talking to Moshe and told him to die, so he did, because G'd told him to.



Death of Moses by Marc Chagall

2) If we believe that Moshe wrote the Torah--as the Torah told us he did in the *parasha* 2 weeks ago--and the Torah describes how Moshe died at the top of Mt. Nevo. Then how could Moshe have written the verses describing his own death and how sad it made the Israelites?

OMRI: Rashi taught that Moshe wrote it while crying, but I imagine it differently. I think that when Moshe was writing down the Torah he was probably paying so much attention to getting the words right that he may not have noticed the meaning of everything he was writing.

3) Right after Moshe dies, the next verse begins, “And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moav.” It never says who buried Moshe! So--who do you think it might have been?

LIAM: In the second part of this verse we learn that no one knows where Moshe is buried, so it was obviously important to G!d that no one knew where Moshe was buried. I think G!d must have buried Moshe.

OMRI: I don't like the explanation that G!d did it, because G!d doesn't have hands. Moshe burying himself makes more sense to me. The way I picture it, he must have dug his own grave. When he died he lay down in it, and the wind covered him over.



4) As I just mentioned, the Torah says that “nobody knows the exact place of Moshe’s burial to this very day.” Why do you think that G!d would not want people to know where Moshe is buried?

LIAM: I believe that the whole point of religion is that it is shrouded in mystery. It is meant to make us ask questions, so it ends with a kind of an impossible challenge to remind us to keep asking questions.