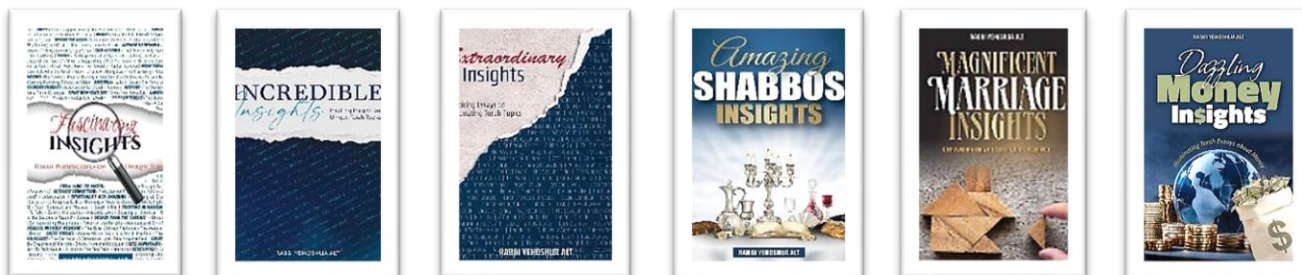


Fascinating INSIGHTS

טו' אלול תשפ"ג
September 1, 2023

פרשת כי תבוא
11th year, edition 497

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The Place of the Passing

Within the consoling phrase we offer to mourners, the term “Hamakom” is employed, which translates literally to “The Place.” This choice of terminology prompts a question: among all of Hashem's names, why do we specifically use this less common one? Why not opt for more frequently used names such as *Hakodosh Baruch Hu*, *Ribono Shel Olam* (Master of the Universe) or *Ha'rachaman* (the Merciful One)?

Although Hashem is everywhere, a person who has just experienced the loss of a loved one might grapple with feelings of abandonment by Hashem.¹ As a response, we say to the mourner that *Hamakom* should provide solace. By invoking this name, we wish for the mourner to find renewed awareness of Hashem's presence, even within the throes of grief and loss, as that place, too, is encompassed by *Hamakom*, the place of Hashem.

During a time of pain, reflecting upon the concept of *Hamakom* and drawing closer to Him can offer solace to the

mourner. This contemplation may lead them to the realization that the physical demise of their loved one is just a fragment of a broader scheme. Just as the departed individual's life was intricately woven into Hashem's design, their transition from this world to another, more profound existence, is equally part of this divine plan.

A deeply comforting thought for those mourning is the notion that their loved one has moved from this world of darkness to a world of everlasting expanse of luminance. The soul's existence remains eternal. As life reaches its conclusion, every soul ultimately reunites with its *makom*, to its “place” in the “world.”

Polygamy

The Yalkut Gershuni,² on the mishna מרבה נשים מרבה כשפים, the more wives the more witchcraft³ cites the Eizor Eliyahu:⁴ The intent of these words is that it may enter a person's mind to have many wives⁵ in order to have more children. His

¹ The first letters of the opening words of *kadish*, *yisgadel v'yiskadash shemai rabba*, May His Great Name grow exalted and sanctified, spell the word *v'yashar*. This refers to *tzadik v'yashar hu*, Hashem is righteous and fair (Devarim 32:4), as some may doubt this when they lose a loved one.

² Volume 2, *Avos*, Chapter 2. This was authored by authored by R' Gershon Stern (1861-1936). He was a student of the Maharam Shik and Chassan Sofer. He became Rav at 24 and had a yeshiva for about 30 years until the outbreak of World War One when they took many of his students to the army.

³ *Avos* 2:8.

⁴ This was authored by R' Eliyahu Hakohen Itamri (1659-1729), author of *close to 40 sefarim*.

⁵ We know that originally men were allowed to marry more than one wife (See Devarim 21:15), as long as he is able to support them (Yevamos 65a. See the Rambam in Hilchos Ishus, 14:3. The Yerushalmi in Yevamos 4:12 relates that in the years of hunger R' Tarfon, who was a kohen, married 300 women. As a result, they were able to eat Teruma and he was therefore able to have sufficient food for them.). We see this with Yaakov who married four wives and Shlomo Hamelech who had 700 wives and 300 *pilagshim*, concubines (Melachim 1, 11:3). In the time of the Mishna, the sages said that it is better not to marry more than four wives in order that he can be with each of his wives once weekly (See Yevamos 44a). The Shulchan Aruch (Even Ha'ezer, 1:9,10) writes that a person can marry many wives as long as he can support them. But better not to marry more than four wives in order that he can be with each of his wives once

intention would be to bring the redemption quicker since by doing this he is able to empty out the neshamos from the chamber called *guf* as *chazal*⁶ say Mashiach will not come until all the souls are vacated from *guf* (the name of a chamber in heaven that is reserved for the souls waiting to be born). It was due to this reasoning that a sage in Yerushalayim thought to permit marrying two women, countering the ban of Rabbeinu Gershom of marrying more than one wife.

While on this subject, let's conclude with the following. The sefer *Tevuos Ha'aretz*⁷ relates that the kabbalist R' Nosson Nota Shapiro⁸ was the first Ashkenazi to marry two wives, as was the custom of the sefardim. Likewise, the *Shu"t* *Ginas Vradim*⁹ writes that the great Rabbanim of Yerushalayim permitted the great kabbalist R' Nosson Nota Shapiro to marry another wife with the signature of 100 Rabbanim. "We saw that he married another wife with a ceremony with the Rabbanim of the city. R' Nosson Nota Shapiro lived in the *Chatzer Beis Haknesses* of the sefardim with his two wives, and this was known." The *Ginas*

weekly. R' Gershom instituted that not to marry more than one wife, but his injunction didn't spread to every community.

⁶ Nida 13b. In 1952, parents of a child who died young due to genetic disorders (the doctors estimated that a child with this disorder lives around two years) and had another child with that disorder, presented a question to R' Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe, Even Haezer, 1:62): The doctors had informed them that all their subsequent children would likely carry this genetic mutation, and they may never have healthy children. As a result, the parents asked for a ruling regarding the use of contraceptives. R' Moshe ruled that any contraceptive that would kill the sperm was forbidden because even a child who is born sick and dies in early childhood will merit eternal life, and it is for his benefit to come into the world. This is in addition to the **hastening of Mashiach with every child**. However, a contraceptive that prevents conception may be permitted for up to four years, when compounded with the horrible pain of watching a child pass away in infancy. Refusing contraceptives, though will be a great merit for them. After four years, R' Moshe instructed they try again to fulfill the pasuk, *בבקר זרע את זרעך ולערב אל תנח דך*, in the morning sow your seed and in the evening do not be idle (Kohel 11:6), in hope that time might heal them, or a cure would be discovered.



⁷ *Chelek Maaseh Ha'artz*, p. 458. This was authored by R' Yehosef Schwartz. Like his contemporary R' Shamson Rafael Hirsch (R' Hirsch quotes R' Schwartz in his commentary to Devarim 11:29) R' Yehosef Schwartz, who lived from 1804 until 1865, attended German universities. They each did this with the specific goal of attaining knowledge they felt was necessary for them to fulfill their mission. Nevertheless, neither one of them completed the requirements for the doctoral degree. After studying in yeshiva, R' Yehosef attended the University of Wurzburg for several years, studying the subjects he felt he needed to expand his Torah knowledge: astronomy, mathematics, natural sciences and classical languages. He had already become an exceptional Torah scholar with extensive knowledge of Bavli and Yerushalmi, poskim and Midrash. When he was in his late 20s, he had become convinced that his personal tikun was to move to Eretz Yisrael, which he proceeded to do despite strong family pressure. Because of various wars and other complications, the trip from Germany to the Holy Land took him two years to complete. He eventually arrived in Eretz Yisrael on the 13th of Nissan in 1833. His initial plan was to settle in Tzefas, but upon arriving in Eretz Yisrael, he was invited to visit Yerushalayim. Once he arrived there, he decided to take up residence there, where he remained for the rest of his life. As was not uncommon among Ashkenazim who lived in Eretz Yisrael at that time, he adopted the local sefardi dress and many of their customs. He never became a member of any of the various kehillos to the exclusion of the others, but rather he considered himself part of all communities. After arriving in Eretz Yisrael, he taught himself an additional two languages, Ladino and Arabic, both of which would help him in his future research. Shortly after moving to Yerushalayim, at the age of 29, he married a twelve-year-old orphan. They had eight children, four sons and four

Vradim¹⁰ also writes, "We remember that here in Yerushalayim the great R' Zerachya Guta¹¹ and his Beis Din permitted the sage R' Naftali Ashkenazi to marry another wife with 100 signatures of Rabbanim."



Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of six books including the recently released *Dazzling Money Insights*. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

daughters. However, six of their children passed away during R' Schwartz's lifetime from the rampant diseases that plagued the country. He merited taking only one daughter to the chupah; a younger daughter married the year after his passing. Although only two of his children survived him, a large number of his descendants are living today. For the remainder of his life, his livelihood was provided by his family, specifically by his older brother, R' Chaim Schwartz, a Rav in Europe. R' Yehosef kept an active and lengthy correspondence with this brother, who often published the letters he received from R' Yehosef in various periodicals in Europe. R' Chaim Schwartz encouraged R' Yehosef to write and publish his sefarim, and arranged that many of R' Yehosef's works were translated into German. R' Yehosef was known as a great provider of tzedakah, notwithstanding that he and his family always lived in dire poverty and that he, personally, followed a very ascetic lifestyle. He fasted frequently and slept little. R' Schwartz devoted much of his life to traveling extensively throughout Eretz Yisrael, although as is depicted from his correspondence that this travel involved a great deal of danger. He also traveled to England and the United States to attempt to raise funds for the yishuv in Yerushalayim. R' Schwartz is most famous for his extensive work methodically researching the borders of Eretz Yisrael and the areas inhabited by each of the shevatim. He studied extensively to accurately determine the halachos of halachic daybreak, sunrise, sunset and nightfall. He writes that both in Eretz Yisrael and in chutz la'aretz, he checked the physical features of sunrise over 4,000 times in order to understand the topic well. Some of R' Schwartz's published material was used during his lifetime to produce educational materials for religious schools in Europe. His sefarim include *Toldos Yosef* on astronomy and the halachos of zemanim, *Tevuos Ha'aretz* on the details of the land of Eretz Yisrael and *Ma'asei Ha'aretz* which is a history of the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael from the time of the churban until his time. He also wrote on linguistics, philology and phonemics, but always with a Torah perspective on how this research demonstrates the correctness of one halachic practice over another, or how we can thereby understand a piece of Gemara or Midrash. In addition, he published a volume of his own responsa, called *Rosh Hashoni*.



⁸ R' Shapiro was the nephew of the Megale Amukos and author of *Tuv Ha'aretz*, published in 1655. He made the grueling journey from Krakow to Eretz Yisrael and became the Chief Ashkenazic Rabbi of Yerushalayim, shortly after his arrival. He learned together with two other rabbis who themselves were deeply involved with disseminating the writings of the Arizal, namely, R' Yaakov Tzemach and R' Meir Paparush. Through them he had free access to a vast array of manuscripts of the Arizal that they had been safeguarding.

⁹ *Even Ha'ezer* 1:9.

¹⁰ *Even Ha'ezer* 1:9.

¹¹ He was a student of the Maharit who lived from 1568 until 1639.