

**Dear Friends,**

This is an Erev Shabbos like none other.

As the sun will set this evening, for the first time in seven days, we will be in a zone where updates, figures, and new government and community initiatives will be gone. **All will be quiet. Shabbos Hamalkah will reign.**

How can we come into Shabbos with menuchah? How can we leave behind anxiety, stress, and fear?

On Shabbos there is a halacha of techum. A person may not walk more than 2000 amos out of an inhabited area. The Sefas Emes has an incredible understanding of this mitzvah of techum Shabbos.

“A man should not leave his place on the seventh day”. Hashem is called Makom, Place. What does this mean? Hashem is revealed to a person who is happy in his place. On Shabbos, every person should be “in his place”. In other words, **he must look inside and find the vitality that comes from his special connection with Hashem, within his individual circumstances...**

Let's try to understand this.

The first point of the Sefas Emes is that there is a correlation between Hashem, who is called HaMakom, the place, with the fact that every person has a “place.” On Shabbos, a person doesn't leave “his place.”

This “place” doesn't simply mean a specific address: a home or apartment number on a certain block in a particular town or city. Of course, it also means that. But it means that each person has individual circumstances: a family setup, economic status, character traits, family history, strengths and limitations. It also means a place in history. We live today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More specifically today, erev Shabbos Vayakheil Pekudai, we are living in an outbreak of plague the likes of which we have never been seen before - with

impacts that are leaving our brains spinning with shock, trepidation and a sense of awe bordering on wonder.

But even more specifically, the way it's affecting me, and my family, is different from the way it's impacting yours.

**So we have a place, a makom. That makom is unique to me. And Hashem is HaMakom.**

There's a deep connection.

Why?

Because it's when we plug into our place, our personal situations, our personalities and techunas hanefesh, that we can connect up with Hashem. **Plugging into our place means to turn inward, and to relate to Hashem from where we are now.** From a place of fear, confusion, and yes, unbelievably, also hope, because we can feel that awesome changes are taking place and we have been chosen to experience them. It's to take our makom, our circumstances, no matter how trite they may feel, and offer it up to Hamakom.

And what happens when we do that?

We enter into a zone of Shabbos. A person may not leave his place on Shabbos. There's an issur of techum Shabbos. We're being told: In order to live with the peace of Shabbos, in order to tap into the tranquility of this day, in order to allow Shabbos to wash over us and through us and become a source of uplift, then what do we have to do? **Simply be in our individual makom, knowing that this is where Hashem has placed us.**

Take a moment before you bentch licht this Erev Shabbos. Feel your feet on the ground. Become aware of where you are standing. Your place. It's here, right here, that we are supposed to be. **When we bentch licht, we can be present. We can feel whole and secure.** We are exactly where we are supposed to be. We don't have to be anywhere else. We don't have to run

anywhere, whether physically, or emotionally, or in our minds. We simply have to connect to Hashem, Hamakom, the Place of the World, from our human Place.

And in this way Shabbos will be different. Not only because the men are davening at home, **but because we'll feel calm and present and safe. Because we'll be in Hashem's loving arms. His Makom!**

This Shabbos let's feel His loving embrace. May Hashem keep us healthy and safe and we may be zocheh to the Yom Shekulo Shabbos b'karov.

Gut Shabbos!

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