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## Inner Travelers

**W**ho are these inveterate explorers of the inner landscape? More often than not they are women. For whatever reason, women today are motivated and equipped to scrutinize themselves and their lives in ways that many men seem not to be. Perhaps this is as it should be or needs to be. I don't know. I only know what is, and that is that many women feel a real and very genuine pull to encounter themselves at their core, to know and experience their most essential self, that spark of Godliness that they intuitively sense within them. They are willing to work tirelessly toward this end, to make enormous sacrifices of time and sometimes money, to endure pain and other difficult feelings if necessary.

The drive is so strong in some that it feels that Hashem is literally pulling them in this direction, that they have no choice. To live other than in connection with this deeper well of truth they feel inside themselves is untenable and unsustainable. This inner call to relationship with the Divine simply cannot be ignored. Whatever else they are doing, with their families, in the

workplace, for their communities, a part of their attention and focus is on this personal quest that they somehow sense is part of a bigger whole.

I see many such women in my energy practice. The difficulty is that they don't see each other. Entrenched in the hard labor of their own unearthing, they often feel isolated, even lonely. They don't realize that hundreds, thousands of other women are, at that very moment, doing the same work. Unlike Torah study that takes place in a lively *beit midrash* (study hall), with a stimulating *chavruta* (study partner) and a knowledgeable teacher, the study of inner Torah tends to be a more solitary pursuit. Each woman is working with a different text about which she, more than anyone else, is the authority. Though there is some room for work in pairs or groups and some opportunity for intervention of teachers or guides, the bulk of the effort is individual. And that is hard.

It is even harder for Torah-observant women, who tend to be busy with large families and other obligations and who live in an environment where personal information tends to be more closely held. These are the women with whom I primarily work. When I tell them that many other Torah-observant women are engaged in quests similar to their own, they are visibly relieved. Their sense of isolation is momentarily assuaged. I see how much they are missing the camaraderie that comes from being part of a shared experience, and I long to provide it for them. Each woman faces the particular circumstances of her life, her history, the very personalized tests that Hashem has directed to her. While she is alone in that specific constellation, she is still very much part of the collective effort that is underway to cultivate a new and deeper understanding of ourselves and our places in Hashem's plan.

## Encountering the Vastness

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Women of all ages are involved. Every life has its own rhythm of unfolding. Questions that one woman asks herself at twenty, another may come to at thirty or fifty or eighty. There is also an evolutionary component. Each generation benefits from the greater awareness of the generations before it. Young women today may have mothers, aunts, and teachers who model a commitment to inner understanding and encourage them to get to know themselves early in their lives. Older women who were raised with a different message are more likely to shift their focus inward later.

Whatever the timing, the goals are the same. Each woman wants to manifest her soul's potential. She wants to use the gifts and talents that Hashem gave her and to feel a sense of alignment with Hashem's will. She wants to take her rightful place in the community of *klal Yisrael*. She is not content with surface answers, with roles and stereotypes that may or may not fit her. She's ready, with Hashem's help, to find her particular niche. Still, the age at which such inquiry is undertaken can make a difference in the questions asked, the work done, and the outcome reached. For this reason, age is a variable that I consider in developing the bigger picture. Beyond that, I have not identified other categories of differentiation as significant, though the women I work with are a diverse population. They come from different countries and backgrounds; are married, single, divorced, and widowed; live in different types of communities; have families of varying sizes; and are different one from the other in a host of other ways. Their diversity actually demonstrates the existence of a phenomenon bigger than any individual as each follows her call to travel the inner road.