



Reencountering the Vastness

We inhabit many worlds simultaneously, spending much of our lives on the seams between them. In every moment we have the power to choose where we put our awareness. Inner and outer realities, material and spiritual realms, all vie for our attention. At some level we all long for integration, for the experience of unity among the many and disparate parts of ourselves and our lives. It seems to be a key to the vastness to which we are each heir. This book portrays the journey of Torah-connected Jewish women toward that vastness. It celebrates the value of committed inner work, supporting those who are doing it and encouraging those who have not yet begun.

Consciousness is a key feature of that work. Quite simply, we need to be aware of our inner worlds. They are the true determiners of our experiences. They are the backdrop against which the events of our lives unfold. They color all of our perceptions. Hashem has granted us this rich and fertile territory to cultivate, not to ignore. We need to be prepared to look at everything.

Nothing that lies within us is irrelevant or insignificant. It all affects us and shapes how we live in the world. Whatever we are willing to look at and name, we can develop or, if necessary, change. Our inner worlds are the domain where we can make the greatest difference, wield the most power, and find our greatest potential. In our inner worlds we forge our deepest connections with Hashem. Our job is to elevate, to bring ourselves more and more into alignment with the essential essence of who we are. We need to understand ourselves deeply to accomplish this, to know what to retain, what to discard, and what to transform. We need to be students of inner Torah.

The other key feature of that work is *kedushah*. We need to harness ourselves to holiness and truth. They are our real nature. Whatever we can learn about ourselves by virtue of our own inquiry is dwarfed by the dimension of our beings that is beyond our knowing. Our origins are Divine. There are aspects of who we are and who we have the potential to be that are known only to our Creator. Understanding this, He gives us Torah and mitzvot, our map to Him and to the Godly essence of ourselves. Torah provides the framework within which we need to live in order to stay on the path to truth and holiness. Securely anchored there, we are free to unfurl our exquisite capacities for exploration and understanding. Through Torah and mitzvot Hashem essentially holds our hands, making sure we know the direction in which He is asking us to go.

To realize the full potential of our existence and our relationship with Hashem requires both consciousness and *kedushah*. Torah, mitzvot, and our ability to be self-aware are all gifts from the Creator. Together they offer the best chance we have to integrate, unify, and become whole – to reach this place beyond time and space, this place within ourselves of Infinity....