



The Inner Torah Scroll

The Torah is God's communication to the Jewish people. Its content provides the guidance the Jewish nation needs to fulfill its mission. Stories are its primary medium. The scroll on which it is written is stored in a protective cabinet. We read it regularly, lovingly, and without end. We study it diligently, knowing that its stories are to be understood at increasingly deeper levels from surface to secret. We work to deepen our understanding. We review the same material repeatedly and often look to others to help us interpret correctly. This is the Torah with which we are all familiar, Torah from Sinai.

There is also an inner Torah. In my mind's eye, I see the scroll on which it is written in the body of every woman with whom I work. It contains the particular stories of her life, the particular guidance she needs to fulfill her mission, the communication that God is sending particularly to her. It sits protected in her torso. Regularly and lovingly she looks inside to read another portion. She reviews the same stories time and again, each time probing deeper into their meaning and glean-

ing yet another level of insight. Often she asks others for help.

The work of unearthing the secrets of her life circumstances is challenging. Like learning Torah, it requires meticulous attention to nuance and subtlety, willingness to review the same material repeatedly, openness to new interpretations. And, like learning Torah, it has no end, no limit to the depth that can be reached. The commitment required to persevere is significant. No life event falls outside the purview of scrutiny. For just as there is no extra letter or word in the Torah, nothing extraneous to God's message, so there is nothing extraneous in our lives. Everything that happens, no matter how seemingly insignificant, has a place in the bigger picture.

This is holy work. The women who have undertaken it are to be acknowledged and appreciated. Without reams of commentary they are tackling the raw material of their lives, trusting that through it God is communicating with them. To see this work as studying the inner Torah is important. It provides a context greater than the self for an effort that at times may feel overly self-focused. It avoids the discouragement and frustration that can easily arise when the same material is reviewed year after year, when the message is hard to comprehend or the lesson hard to implement. To be engaged in the process with total heart and might is itself worthy. For mastery of one's inner world is a necessary prerequisite to taking one's rightful place in creation. In time, as Hashem deems appropriate, understanding will come, the woman will move a step closer to her essence, and another aspect of Hashem's presence will be manifest in the world.