



An Overview of Inner Torah and the Inner Torah Process

The underlying premise of inner Torah is that our lives are holy text through which Hashem communicates with each of us individually. Each of us is given the precise life circumstances we need for our souls to grow and develop in the way Hashem intended in this lifetime. We are essentially on a mission of rectification intended to reveal Hashem's glory. That our circumstances may have been, or continue to be, difficult and trying does not detract in any way from this premise. It is our job to embrace whatever we are given, to realize that it all comes from Hashem, to be with it in a way that enables the experience to yield its wisdom, and to contribute that wisdom to *klal Yisrael* however we can.

In that sense, we all have different assignments. Every person has different life circumstances and brings to them a differ-

ent mix of character traits. We can't try to second-guess each other or superimpose our own take on someone else's life. Only the person whose life it is can make contact with his or her true essence. Only he or she can really align with his or her inner reality. Others can approximate but can never feel exactly what the person feels or respond to that feeling in the precise way that is needed in the moment. Hashem designed it so that we could best do this for ourselves in partnership with Him.

The key is to take responsibility. This is the most essential prerequisite to doing inner Torah work. One has to be willing to stop blaming everyone and everything for the state of one's inner world. We have to accept that our inner response to everything that happens or has happened to us is our responsibility. If there is a charge, an intensity, a surge of sensation, a feeling that goes well beyond what is called for in the moment, we can be sure that some vulnerable part of us is triggered. It is then up to us to take the time to come into relationship with that particular vulnerability, to get to know it, and to integrate it into the whole of who we are.

That doesn't mean that everything is solely a function of our inner world and can be completely handled in that realm. Many things necessitate an external response. But it all begins within. If we can come into right relationship with ourselves and Hashem, we can come into right relationship with the people, events, and circumstances of our lives and take our rightful places in the world as individuals and as part of *klal Yisrael*.

The Inner Torah Process

Judaism teaches that every person is an *olam katan* – a small world – and that every person has a unique purpose in the Creation. To get to know and understand a world, even a small one, is a monumental task. There are so many dimensions and aspects, both hidden and revealed, to each of us. Without devoting time and energy to the task, how can anyone claim true self-knowledge of his or her own small world? Yet time and energy alone are not enough. One also needs skill to conduct such an exploration.

The goal of inner Torah work is to help people develop the skill:

- to enter deeply into their own inner world;
- to get to know all facets of themselves;
- to heal old wounds and change habitual reactions;
- to reeducate themselves, if necessary, in accordance with the values and goals that are meaningful to them;
- to exercise their power of free choice wisely in the present; and
- to come closer to Hashem.

In a nutshell, the inner Torah process is one that enables you to engage yourself at earlier times in your life in a way that frees your nervous system from old energetic patterns that are limiting you in your present life. By releasing yourself energetically from restrictive patterns established in the past, you enable yourself to live more fully in the present, to realize your

present potential, and to connect more fully with Hashem. These old energetic patterns make themselves known through reactions to present events that are too charged, too intense, too prolonged, or otherwise too extreme for the circumstances.

In that way, the events and circumstances of everyday life become the gates through which access is obtained. Any experience, no matter how seemingly trivial, can serve as a door to go within. One of the greatest side benefits of this work is that things that once were a source of irritation, frustration, and other negative feelings are transformed into opportunities to reach parts of the self that otherwise would be inaccessible. I wouldn't go so far as to say that this makes these difficult moments welcome, but at least it gives them a context that is redeeming and makes them less discouraging.

Authenticity and *truth* are two important words in this process. At every step along the way it is essential to be straight with yourself. Pretending to be somewhere or something you're not won't accomplish anything. Just the opposite. It will get in the way of making real progress. In contrast, being honest with yourself, even if where that puts you in the moment is not appealing, will enable you to genuinely move forward. This has been a very eye-opening realization for some of the people I work with. They are so accustomed to pushing themselves to achieve, to be perfect, to impress those around them, that the notion that in this process none of that works is disturbing at first. Only in time do they realize that allowing themselves simply to be where they are and move forward from there is both freeing and, in the end, more productive than all their pushing.

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This is one benefit of inner Torah work. It invites you into respectful and caring relationship with yourself which, in time, translates into more respectful and caring relationships with others as well. It also deepens your understanding of yourself which in turn helps you to realize more of your potential. And it allows you to reap the enormous benefits of truly being an adult, able to affect the course of events. In short, inner Torah is one way to help ourselves embrace the incredible gift of life that Hashem has given us – and live it to the fullest.



How to Use This Book

This book is set up to allow you to move at your own pace. It describes each step in the inner Torah process and includes examples that will make the material easier to understand. Fifteen steps are delineated, though, they will quickly fold into far fewer after a short time of practice. I use the word *practice* intentionally because what we are talking about here is skill development – the skill to know and change oneself. Once you have it, it's yours to use throughout life.

This is important because we are not talking about a one-time fix here, but rather a way of being in relationship with yourself that enables you to continue to grow and develop as long as you are alive. *Baruch Hashem*, issues do get resolved through this work, as my clients can attest, but there is always further to go in the process of getting to know oneself and getting closer to Hashem. The image is one of a spiral, moving

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deeper within, encountering aspects of ourselves at increasingly deeper levels.

Even for those who are only interested in problem solving, the notion of learning this work as a skill is important. Life presents us with endless challenges. One may do some inner work, clear up an immediate problem, and then sail smoothly for a time. But inevitably there will be something else at some point that threatens to overwhelm or otherwise creates problems. Anyone who has mastered the skill of inner Torah will always have that safety net to fall back on in times of crises or difficulties. That in itself is a comforting notion.

Any time one sets out to learn a new skill, it is important to be patient. It takes time to master anything new. It is also important to understand that few skills are learned wholesale; rather, they must be broken down into their component parts and each part learned before the skill as a whole can be acquired. Once acquired, the parts meld back into the whole and the skill is executed without attention to all of the details that went into developing it. Inner Torah is no different. While in time the process becomes second nature and is easily incorporated into a busy life, initially each step must be learned and practiced.

With this in mind, I set out to identify the individual steps involved in inner Torah work. I purposely limited the amount of material in each step so people could proceed at a pace that felt right for them. As with the development of any skill, people differ in aptitude. Some people catch on right away, and others need more time to find their way in. It doesn't matter. The very work of learning the inner Torah process is itself an exercise in

coming to know one's self. What matters is interest in how one is navigating the territory and acceptance of whatever happens along the way. In this work, one who gets it quickly is not necessarily better off than one who takes longer. In fact, often the opposite is the case. One who struggles to find a way in often forms a more solid connection once he or she gets there. There is no right or best way to learn this material. There is only the way that is authentic and true for you.

So consider the time you spend with this volume as an investment in both your present and your future. Applaud yourself for taking responsibility for your own well-being. Understand that by learning these skills you will be better equipped to relate to your children and will also be able to teach them these valuable tools to use in their own lives. Realize that much of halachah, especially the laws between man and man, require a fairly sophisticated level of self-awareness. Halachah asks us to know our hearts, to scrutinize our motives, and not to deceive ourselves in our relations with others (see *To Live Among Friends: Laws and Ethics of Everyday Interactions*, by Rabbi Dovid Castle, Feldheim, 2006). Developing inner Torah skills helps you obtain the level of self-knowledge necessary to meet these halachic obligations. The more we can align ourselves on the inside with what the Torah asks of us on the outside, the more we will be able to live Torah in a way that can truly bring Hashem's light into this world and fulfill our mission as Jews individually and as a nation.

That is the deeper purpose of this work. The self that you are laboring to know is the true inner self that is a spark of G-d and yearns to be close to and serve G-d. Your efforts are not

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self-centered, but rather G-d-centered. You are striving to relate to yourself in truth, which is Hashem's seal. You are willing to strip away pretense and illusion and confront what is real. You are doing this in service of becoming the person Hashem created you to be and thereby exalting Him – the ultimate purpose for which all of us were created.