



# Preface

I had to think long, hard, and repeatedly about whether to move forward with this book given that there are already so many good Torah-based books on marriage. Each time a new one came out, I questioned myself again. Did I really have something to add to the conversation? Sometimes I wasn't sure. Other times, I felt that there was something about the Inner Torah perspective that added a dimension that hadn't yet been sufficiently illuminated. In the end, as you can see, I decided to persevere and bring *Inside Marriage* to publication.

It is the natural sequel to the Inner Torah series of books that were written to help people value their own life stories and learn how to use them to become who they were created to be. The emphasis in those books is on the individual and what is needed to develop meaningful, growing relationships with oneself, others, and Hashem. Obviously, much of that work takes place in the context of marriage. And many of the stories contained in those books reflect the work of both husbands and wives to bring their best selves to the relationship.

Still it seems that there is so much more to the union asked for in a Torah marriage that it deserves to be the focus of its

own book. The highest, holiest *avodah* that men and women can do together happens in marriage. All the work that one does to develop individually finds increased expression in marriage, where the assignment of the individual expands to include one's spouse's reality and the Torah's demand that two people unite into one in service of Hashem.

All the skills that one develops to grow on an individual level are essential to growing a marriage. Self-awareness; willingness to take responsibility for one's own reality; accessing one's adult self; openness to getting to know and make space for "another"; compassion; empathy; the ability to listen and, when needed, to take action; maintaining perspective; remembering that everything is from Hashem and for the good; and so many other aspects of what is learned through Inner Torah work, are invaluable in marriage where each can be taken to a new level and produce even greater results in both the inner and outer realms.

There is also something about marriage that is unique. It is an entity unto itself, more than just the sum of the parts. And that opens the door to new dimensions that go beyond what one can access on one's own.

Just to remind you, the central premise of Inner Torah is that everything in our lives is from Hashem, part of His personal communication with us to help us grow and become the people He created us to be. It's our job to work with what He gives us and use it to come closer to Him and to our true selves.

Marriage is no exception. In fact, it is perhaps the most powerful and potentially transformative life circumstance we are given. In that sense, there is no end to the opportunities it offers, if we're willing to recognize it as an essential component of our *avodas Hashem* – something that we need to pay attention to, nurture, develop, deepen, learn about and from, give thanks for, and embrace as part of our very selves.

Recognizing how busy everyone is, I thought that it would be most helpful to write short pieces for couples to read and contemplate together. There is no better *chavrusa* than your spouse when it comes to working on your marriage! Some pieces look at the deeper, spiritual dimensions and some focus on practicalities. As always, the goal is to connect heaven and earth, to infuse the day-to-day reality of married life with the infinite, G-dly dimension that Hashem so lovingly made available for us.