

Preface

The Gemara teaches that *teshuvah* preceded the world (Pesachim 54a). The *Zohar Chadash* (Megillas Rus) explains: “When Hashem desired to create the world, He etched the world before Him. But it did not stand until He created *teshuvah*. . . . Once He created *teshuvah*, it emitted light . . . and with it the world was created.”

The enormity of the power and significance of *teshuvah* in our individual and collective lives is almost beyond our comprehension. The Torah is telling us that without *teshuvah*, the world could not exist. How are we to understand this?

Teshuvah is the Divinely designed force that, in one way or another, pulls everyone and everything back to its Source, back to G-d.

Hashem created us and our world in which His Presence is concealed. He gave us the ability to seek Him out in all circumstances and choose relationship with Him over all else. He also gave us the power to choose otherwise, to distance ourselves from Him and from the truth of who He created us to be. Yet deep within each of us and the world at large is the force of *teshuvah*,

which ultimately will bring us and the world to the union with G-d that was intended from the outset.

What this tells us is that the current of life in which we swim is flowing toward Hashem. Whether we swim with it or against it, does not change the direction of the current. It is a constant. We can align with it and move forward further and faster. We can also go against it and suffer the consequences of navigating in a direction that Hashem does not want us or the world to go. The choice is ours. Either way, the outcome is the same. Hashem set it up so that we will return to Him, one way or the other.

This book is focused on personal *teshuvah*, the opportunity Hashem gave us as individuals to partake of this miraculous vehicle to bring ourselves closer to Him, closer to who He created us to be, and closer to making our rightful contribution to the *tikkun* (rectification) of the world. It explores the inner dimension of the actual work that a person has to do in order to remedy and elevate the inevitable missteps that are an unavoidable part of embodied life in this world.

While there are many beautiful and moving *sefarim* and *shiurim* on *teshuvah*, at some point all of us need to sit down and do our own individual work, make our own accounting, experience our own feelings, and actually go through the steps laid out by Chazal to do our own *teshuvah*. As it says in Eicha 3:40: “Let us search our ways and investigate and return to Hashem.” Eloquent and uplifting words about *teshuvah* can inspire us; they’re not a substitute for the hard work of soul-searching and cleansing that Hashem is asking of us.

The approach to doing the work of *teshuvah* presented in this book is based on the Inner Torah process of healing and growth that is the subject of a series of books, including *Inner Torah: Where*

Consciousness and Kedushah Meet, Practical Inner Torah: A Guide to Going Within, The Breath and Body of Inner Torah, The Inner Torah Workbook, The Inner Light of Love, and Inside Marriage.

This approach is designed to help you build relationship with yourself and others as you work to build relationship with Hashem and become who He created you to be. Because *teshuvah* is unique in the opportunity it offers to become your truest self and come close to Hashem, it requires its own in-depth exploration of just how to do the inner work – the searching, investigating, and returning – that is demanded to reap its unprecedented benefits, with Hashem’s help.

In order to paint a more detailed picture of the process of *teshuvah*, I have included stories of real *teshuvah* journeys. Some of those stories are incorporated into relevant chapters, and there is one chapter devoted entirely to stories. As in all the Inner Torah books, the stories are based on actual situations, while names, certain identifying details, or other features have been changed to protect privacy, and some stories are composites.