

# The Journey

Probing the depths within

**M**y appointment with the King is in ten days. I have known about this particular meeting for a long time but for many reasons I'm behind schedule with my preparations. The last twelve months have been the toughest I've known — the difficulties came fast and unexpected, the pressure was immense. And the feelings of despair and hopelessness were numerous. The challenge of discussion and finally change has been awesome but tiring, which means that this year I have been overwhelmed, fragmented, exhausted most of the time — that explains my very unusual disorganization and lateness.

Looking at the diary this morning shocked me; the imminence of my impending appointment finally woke me out of a semi-stupor. There's much to do and not much time left. The day ran away with itself, but now it's night, my best time for thinking. I'm praying right now that I've got what it takes to prepare appropriately for my audience with the King. I've got a pad and pen; trusted friends that will help me note what's necessary. Let's hope that by the time dawn arrives I will have a plan.

What needs to be done? I leap up, pace the room. Oh, my, the task ahead is enormous — an A-to-Z marathon clean-up. Where should I

start? What's crucial, what's essential, what's relevant? Be realistic; do what's a priority. The King expects the very best from me; the rest will have to wait for another time.

The silence is a balm. My eyes close and images flash through my mind. Of course, I should look presentable — that goes without saying. I'll freshen up what I own: my Shabbos suit is all I have; the King knows that (I wore it last year too). It's what's inside that really matters to Him, even though aesthetics also matter to me. Introspection is what I have to do right now; I certainly don't want to be embarrassed when the King looks beyond the externalities.

I imagine my body is a closet; I open the doors — with apprehension. I know there's been neglect due to other priorities; I know there's been trauma; I know only I can tidy up the chaos. After each turn of events I was too tired, too upset, too busy trying to breathe, smile, take one step at a time forward, to deal with the residue that was pushed aside. With this appointment pending it's time for repairs, healing, re-order, the claiming of what is worthy.

Look: There's my heart, which used to be so sweet and loving but of late has become sulky and aloof — so much so that I avoid company where possible and praying with sincere longing, because to be disappointed and hurt again would

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be too much to endure. Oh, *Hashem Yisbarach*, return to me my love of life and trust in people and myself. Store away the heartrending memories; grant me an unsoiled area to start over with my relationships with a renewed spirit of forgiveness, eagerness, excitement, like a little sapling in a freshly cultivated garden awaiting the graciousness of Your benevolence.

I try to look at my soul, only recently vibrant and alert. How despondent it looks as I clasp it in my fingertips; its appearance is similar to a recently mined rough diamond. My tears drop one by one onto its surface and wash away the pain, the sorrow, the sadness. A gleam shines forth, then another, and another. Rejuvenate me, *Hashem Yisbarach*, return me to my true self, the pure beautiful soul I once was before the stormy weather, before the bolts of confusion, before the torrential downpour of loss, suffering, misunderstandings and anguish. I feel the impatience, resentment, anger still lingering — wash them away; use my tears to cleanse my inner chambers.

I examine my heart and my soul.

The hour is late. Silence wraps its accepting arms around me; I feel G-d's love, His grace, His compassion light up the dark corners of my being. There in the deepest recess I suddenly notice a brilliant spark of G-dliness: It's my *binah yeseirah*, untouched by the depleting effects of time, experience, and reality. As my eyes savor her magnitude I feel a rush of joy, of energy, of expectation, that spins a wondrous gold light through my open closet — clearing away cobwebs of memory, replacing the incomprehensible with wisdom, with brightness, with hope. I am in awe of G-d's loving-kindness. I put my heart and soul back in their places, marveling at what I behold; a restored space for glorious me to prepare to meet my glorious King.

Strands of dawn light up the sky. The new day has arrived. I have completed my prayers; I have beseeched *Hashem Yisbarach* to bestow His *chessed* on me, on my life, on my future, so that I can serve my husband, my children, *Klal Yisrael* — all in His name. Now I am once again a woman of faith ready for my journey to meet the King. **B**