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## Embodied Life – Wholeness and Holiness

**M**any clients tell me that every time they do anything that helps them inhabit their bodies and live from there, they are enlivened and encouraged. I feel the same way. Our holy souls descended into physical bodies to enable them to act in the physical world. Through the body we are able to express the soul's higher reality in this lower plane of existence.

It seems like one of the biggest maladies of our time is that we are living outside of our bodies, outside of this miraculous gift Hashem gave us to house our souls. Things can happen when we live disembodied lives that wouldn't happen if we were really inside ourselves – things that are hurtful to ourselves and other people, things that distance us from Hashem. From inside ourselves, we naturally seem to take more care.

Breath, movement, sound, speech, song, and touch can all

function to bring us inside ourselves. The deeper we can reach within, the further we can reach without. The more fully we can participate with ourselves, the more fully we can participate with others and Hashem. Everything starts with the power of our connection to ourselves.

To experience oneself as an embodied, flesh-and-blood human being who is a creation of G-d may be the most profound experience possible. Doing so brings us face to face with G-d's most magnificent and miraculous creation, the human body, and at the same time humbles us as we contemplate the reality that a spark of the Infinite – something so precious and holy – is contained in such a finite and, in many ways, vulnerable, vessel.

There is something both stunning and comforting about meeting life from inside one's body. What's stunning is how vital and alive every experience is, how real we are to ourselves and others are to us. There is actual sensation of a dimension beyond the physical that animates our existence. It is no longer a theoretical or theological construct. It's reality. The comfort comes from the simplicity of being with what is without embellishing or creating elaborate stories. It also becomes easier to take care of oneself, to do what is needed to sustain oneself, without the drama that comes from self-neglect and foisting off responsibility onto others.

What we're talking about really is the intersection of body, consciousness, and holiness – the capacity to hold all three, to hear and integrate the wisdom of these varied G-d-given mediums. Efforts to develop such capacity are geared toward bringing us into wholeness, into the entirety of our beings on all levels. In doing the work to reveal our essence, we are furthering G-d's ultimate will in Creation to reveal to the world His essence.

The explorations included in this book are not intended to

be a “practice” that is separate from life. Rather they are intended to be invitations to come into awareness in a way that informs and enhances life. The notion that our bodies, minds, and spirits are separate entities to be tended to distinct from one another is misguided. Our awareness needs to be expanded to encompass all three simultaneously so that we live from the entirety of ourselves, whatever we are doing or called upon to deal with.

From this comes an integration of inner and outer, a purity of being unmarred by hidden agendas and disguised needs. Our true essence begins to permeate everything we do, propelling us toward wholeness by uniting the hidden, inner part of us with our outer selves. That really is a mark of holiness – when the inside is the same as the outside, when our thoughts, words, and deeds are truly motivated by a desire to know and serve Hashem from the unique place He assigned each of us.

Perhaps the clearest indication Hashem gave us that He wants from us what is specifically ours is that He made every body different. “Just as each individual’s face is unlike another’s, so is each individual’s *da’at* unlike another’s,” teach Chazal (*Yerushalmi, Ketubot*, chap. 9).

The particular manifestation of Hashem that each person embodies is found nowhere else. That tiny piece of the universal puzzle belongs solely to that person. It is his or her responsibility to cull it from the dross of life and contribute it to the bigger picture asked for from the *klal*. Ironically, the more we are able to individuate in this way, the more we are able to know ourselves as, and to be part of the *klal*, part of the breath and body of the Jewish people.

Our mission as a people is to be a vessel for Hashem’s light in this world. That light is a light of understanding and awareness, of consciousness that G-d’s light is the essence of all things. Our days on this earth are meant to be dedicated to the joy of penetrating

within, of sensing purpose, of uncovering meaning, of finding connection to G-d and His light in every corner of ourselves and our lives. And it is that Light that is meant to shine out from each and every one of us into the world.

As Moshe Rabbeinu reminded us, the goal of knowing and fulfilling the Torah, of knowing and fulfilling G-d's word, is not hidden from us and is not distant. It is right here, inside our very own selves. "It is not in heaven, [for you] to say, 'Who can ascend to the heaven for us and take it for us so that we can listen to it and perform it?' Nor is it across the sea, [for you] to say, 'Who can cross to the other side of the sea for us and take it for us, so that we can listen to it and perform it?' Rather, the matter is very near to you – in your mouth and your heart – to perform it" (*Devarim* 30: 11-14).