

## PREFACE

I have been writing and revising this book for the past seven years, changing and transforming it many times, always for the same reason. After I had been able to express the abstract idea I had in mind I would reflect about it and discover that something deeper lay beyond. If professional demands had not obliged me to produce a final manuscript I would never have finished the writing. If I had been asked to enumerate all the obstacles I faced whilst turning this book into print another and perhaps no less intriguing book would have resulted. I am aware of my good fortune in having finally finished the task, and I would like to thank the many people whose help was invaluable.

First and foremost I would like to dedicate this book to my late merciful and most beloved mother, Nurit Leshem, and to my wonderful and wise father, Shlomo Leshem, who learned to accept me as I am. My mother's unexpected death and the many existential questions that it presented to me profoundly modified the way I used to think about intellectual matters. It brought me to the strong realization that beyond the scientific and intellectual realm a very simple spiritual truth exists that shapes the way we think. This truth was known to scholars of the seventeenth century, such as Newton and Leibniz, but today in the academic and professional world, to which I belong, it is considered by most as a categorical mistake and a non-sophisticated discourse. Even before my mother passed away I was exposed to this realm when exploring Leibniz's science (in my Ph.D. thesis), yet my reflections remained in the regular intellectual channels. In those years the late Prof. Amos Funkenstein planted the seeds in my mind for the many fruits that have ensued. Anyone who was as fortunate as I was to study with Amos can see throughout the pages of this book how much influence he had upon the way I think today.

Many thanks to Mary Terrall, Tom Ryckman, Ted Porter, Ken Alder, Tzion Asoulin, Arie Issar and Amalya Oliver, who believed in the value of my work when I was not sure of its validity. Thanks also to Steve Snobelen and Allison Coudert, who gave me selflessly their time and wisdom all along. I benefited also from the help of Michael Ben-Chaim, Matt Goldish, Avihu Zakai, Michael Heyd, Benny Shanon, Yemima Ben-Menahem, and Scott Mandelbrote. Special and warm thanks to Yakir Shoshani, Aviah Luz and Limor Hacklay, who listened attentively and made illuminating suggestions concerning ideas that kept on appearing as the work reached its final form.

I would also like to thank my many students whose affection and appreciation showed me that the content and the way I present the ideas appearing in this book are important to their generation. Invaluable were also the warm and wise hearted suggestions of my sister, Sharon Leshem-Zinger, and the far-sighted insights of my brother, Dotan Leshem. I value the computer expertise that Guy Gavron and Hanoeh Segal offered me. Their virtuosity with the computer and the stimulating discussions we had around it also inspired certain spiritual and intellectual realizations as presented in this book.

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