

B.H.

Two aspects of the 'Reshimu'

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Introduction: There is a Kabbalistic teaching that was transmitted in various versions. According to one version, before the Creation, G-d's Infinite Light filled all of existence. In order to make space for the worlds, G-d carried out a Tzimtzum (צמצום). While the term Tzimtzum (צמצום) has no simple definition, it seems that G-d withdrew the revelation of His Infinite Light, leaving a vacuum in which the world was created. However, this vacuum was not absolute: even after the withdrawal, something remained. This remainder is termed 'Reshimu' רשימו (residue). But – what remained?

I. Some lowly, base, dark elements remained, just enough to create a finite universe. (However, this lowliness opens the door to man's falling away from G-d.) Our job is to transform this darkness – 'I have seen that there is an advantage to wisdom from [usual translation: over] foolishness as the advantage of light from [usual translation: over] darkness' (Ecclesiastes 2:13) – by returning to G-d so intensely – 'Return to G-d is so great that it transforms wilful sins to become similar to merits' (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma, 86b) – that we push beyond those elements that G-d left in the vacuum in order to create the finite word, and we attain the Infinite Light; and we draw this Infinite Light down into the dark world, thereby reaching an advantage, the Infinite Light, through the darkness, viz. the darkness of sin, which is thereby dispersed and destroyed.

II. G-d's Essence remained. This Essence is beyond all of our categories, hierarchies, and beyond revelation. Its purpose is not as a tool to be used for the Creation or for anything. Rather, it is G-d's intimate, inner, private darkness. When a person [1] reaches this private, inner darkness in himself, which can allow for sin, in which the person is not being beholden to anything else, including G-d, and then [2] realizes that this selfhood is actually the presence of G-d's Inner, Private, Free Self within the person, then [3] the person finds the essential greatness, viz. the greater light, in the darkness itself. In this transformation, his wilfulness, and even his sinfulness, themselves are transformed into merits, and they are not merely 'similar' to merits. On a deep level, G-d's hidden Essence, Core Self, is enabling this within the core, essential person; yet the person's bottom-up efforts, the person's self and freedom, are required to bring this out.