

# Breslov Kabbalah: Part 6 – The Vacated Space

written by Chaim Kramer

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*In Part Six of Breslov Kabbalah, we explore the idea of the world being devoid of Godliness, since God contracted Himself from that space to “make room” for the Creation.*

Following the creation of the first Tzimtzum, God continued to withdraw His presence and expand the size of the Vacated Space. Within that Vacated Space He proceeded to create, form and make the various worlds, of which there are five: *Adam Kadmon* (Primordial Man), *Atzilut* (Nearness or Emanation), *Beriyah* (Creation), *Yetzirah* (Formation) and *Asiyah* (Action). In our world, which is part of *Asiyah*, God created the galaxies, the solar system, planet Earth and man. God also created the Ten *Sefirot* (Luminaries, Illuminations or Energies), with which He directs the world (see p. 49).

The Vacated Space represents an area devoid of Godliness, since God contracted Himself from that space to “make room” for the Creation. However, the truth is that no place can exist without Godliness to sustain it. Therefore, God must be in that void. But if He is there, then it is not a Vacated Space! So God cannot be there. Yet He must be ... . This is the paradox of the Vacated Space.

Rebbe Nachman teaches:

God created the world out of His deep compassion. He wished to reveal His compassion, but without a world, to whom could He show it? He therefore brought the entire Creation into existence, from the highest emanation down to the lowest point within the center of the physical world, all in order to demonstrate His compassion.

When God wished to create the worlds, however, there was no place in which to do so. This was because all that existed was His Infinite Essence, which precluded the existence of anything finite. He therefore constricted His Light. By virtue of this Tzimtzum, a Vacated Space was brought into existence. It was within this Vacated Space that everything was brought into being.

The Vacated Space was absolutely necessary for Creation. Without it, there would have been no place in which to create the universe. This Tzimtzum, which resulted in the Vacated Space, is at the moment incomprehensible to us. The only time we will be able to grasp its concept is in the Ultimate Future. This is because we can attribute to the Vacated Space only two mutually exclusive states—namely, existence and nonexistence.

The Vacated Space came into being as a result of the Tzimtzum, from which [to the extent that we can express it] God constricted (withdrew) His Essence. Therefore, God's Essence does not exist in this Space. If His Essence were there, this Space would not be vacated, and there would be nothing besides the Infinite Essence. If this were true, there would be no place whatsoever for the creation of the universe.

The actual truth, however, is that God's Essence must nevertheless be in this Space, for it is beyond any doubt that nothing can exist without His Life Force. Therefore, if God's Essence did not exist in the Vacated Space, nothing else could

exist there either. It is impossible for any human being to understand the concept of the Vacated Space; only in the Ultimate Future will it be understood ( *Likutey Moharan* I, 64).

The image of God withdrawing His Light (or Essence) should not be taken literally. God exists equally everywhere, at all times. “Withdrawing His Light” from the “Vacated Space” to “make room” for Creation in no way implies that He was, or is, no longer there. God was “there” equally, both before and after He created the Vacated Space, and before and after He introduced the Kav (the Ray or Line that descends from the outer rim of the Vacated Space down to the exact center of the Vacated Space). <sup>3</sup>

The difference between “before” and “after” exists only from our vantage point—because the whole world was created only for the sake of mankind. The ARI says that the reason God created the Vacated Space was in order for man to have independent existence and free will. God certainly exists within all of Creation, for without Godliness nothing can exist. Yet if God’s existence was clear and obvious in this world, man would not have free will. For this reason, God contracted His Light, as it were, to conceal Himself from man and make it *seem* as if there was a vacuum, a place devoid of Godliness.

With free will, a person can choose to serve God and perform good deeds, or to oppose God and transgress His directives. The existence of the Vacated Space within which God created worlds teaches us that our mission in life is also to be creative and build a better world—a better life for ourselves and for those with whom we come in contact. If we oppose God and refuse to accept our mission, we contradict the reason for Creation and essentially destroy that which others build, returning the world to a state of chaos and desolation, darkness and an abyss (cf. *Genesis* 1:2).

We might think there is a third option—to simply sit back and

do neither good nor evil. However, the choice of "doing nothing" is not a valid option (cf. Rashi on *Numbers* 15:41). Since the Vacated Space is just that, a "hollow void," one who chooses not to do good and build, nor to do evil and destroy, will simply live out an empty existence. In the Ultimate Future, when others will claim their reward for their positive efforts, he may not receive punishment for wrongdoing, but he will experience an eternal void as "reward" for his lack of effort.

Free will is a most incredible component of the entire Creation. Can anyone imagine a ruler who gives his subjects free rein to rise up in rebellion? Yet God created man with the intellect and the ability to turn against Him if he so desires! At the same time, the Vacated Space gives us the opportunity to emulate God by creating a life of good for ourselves, our neighbors and our environment. In simple terms, every person has his own "vacated space" within which he can exercise full control to build (or destroy) his own life.

## Faith

"If you believe you can damage, believe you can repair!" ( *Likutey Moharan* II, 112).

When it comes to building our lives, what works for one person doesn't necessarily work for another. Despite what was written in the Declaration of Independence, we are *not* created equal. We were all created by One God, yet each and every one of us is unique and has a different potential. Each of us has the ability to change his own life as well as the lives of those around him in a way no one else can.

So we try to develop *our* potential. We try our best, or second best, or third best, and put in effort to become someone, to advance and build a satisfactory life. How do we know we can succeed? What gives us the right to expect accomplishment? And what gives us the strength to keep trying? To answer these

questions, we turn to another idea that is rooted in the Vacated Space, the concept of faith.

In general, faith denotes religion. We say that people subscribe to this faith or that faith, or even to no faith at all. Judaism, the basis of the Kabbalah, is founded upon four types of faith that are crucial to its observance:

1: Faith in God

2: Faith in the Torah

3: Faith in the Tzaddikim (righteous people)

4: Faith in Yourself

Obviously, faith in God is paramount. Without faith in God, we lack the crucial awareness that we are connected to the Infinite and therefore have an Infinite Resource to draw upon at all times and in all circumstances. This faith is extremely invigorating and encouraging, no matter what situation we find ourselves in or what is happening around us at any given moment, because through it we can access the One who created and controls all.

Faith in Torah is essential for attaining faith in God. Our heritage teaches us that the Torah is a product of God's Wisdom and is the blueprint for creating the world. God gave His Torah to the Jewish People at Sinai, so they could use it to harness and transform the material world into a vehicle for recognizing God in all circumstances. If we lack faith in the Torah, our connection to God and our ability to tap into the Infinite Resource is greatly weakened, since the only way we know about God is through His Torah.

Faith in the Tzaddikim helps us understand the Torah and its message and ultimately reach out to God. Our Sages teach that the Oral Torah was given together with the Written Torah (see p. 14); the Tzaddikim, masters of the Oral Torah, help us

access the whole Torah. Their teachings open gateways to the deeper messages of the Torah and reveal to us the power that hovers beneath the surface of this world. This knowledge is essential for developing our potential, which also lies beneath the surface.

Without faith in yourself, however, the other types of faiths have little meaning. Why serve God? Why put in effort to study "old books" or the teachings of wise men of yore? What has this to do with me? Only if each of us believes, "I, as a person, was created by God, Who placed me on this planet with my unique strengths (and failings) and empowered me to accomplish whatever it is that I can while I am alive," then our lives take on real meaning. "Since He created me, He wants me! He loves me!" A person who believes he is important in God's eyes knows that he wasn't placed here randomly. He is alive for a reason; he has a purpose in life which he will learn about more and more as his life evolves. And along with his conviction that his life has purpose, he has faith in himself that he can accomplish and reach his goals.

Like the paradox of the Vacated Space, faith is also something that transcends reason: "I don't know if I can succeed, but I *believe* I can succeed." This idea is particularly important in light of the fact that Creation can only take place within a Vacated Space. This space represents a void, an unfamiliar territory in which we face life's challenges head-on. Being unsure of what to do next can be a frightening experience. But this is how we grow!

Generally speaking, people are creatures of habit. Facing a new challenge or confronting a new situation, a change in a relationship, a new job opportunity, etc., we almost always seek that which is familiar. It's natural to feel apprehensive about the unknown: "What does it mean to me?" "How will it affect my life?" So we seek the friendly or the usual. But we must not be afraid of the unknown. Apprehensive? Of course. But afraid? No! We must realize that it is only within

uncharted territory—our personal “vacated space” and “hollow void”—that creation can take place and our potential can develop.

The following story illustrates this point:

An automobile magnate once interviewed an engineer who sought employment with his company. The two went out to dinner and ordered steaks. While they were waiting to be served, they discussed the job arrangements. When the steaks arrived, the engineer proceeded to liberally salt his portion before he tasted it. The magnate told him that he would not be hired after all, saying, “If you will not try out something new without resorting to your lifetime habits, you are not creative enough for us!”

Life is full of challenges. Some we might relish; others we most certainly try to avoid. But we do not really have a choice about what we are about to face. Things have a way of being tossed into our lives at the most inopportune times and in the most unexpected ways. If we believe in ourselves, if we are positive about our ability to think clearly and reach responsible decisions using our available resources and knowledge, then we can face just about any situation and turn it into a new and beautiful creation.

### Creating Our Own “Vacated Space”

We have seen that one’s potential lies in developing the thoughts that enter one’s mind. We have also seen that the “vacated space” is that open field in which a person can form his own world. In a marvelous parallel to the original Act of Creation, the heart, when influenced by the thoughts of the mind, has the capacity to create its own “vacated space” within which new creation can occur.

Rebbe Nachman explains that this comes about through our ability to choose what to think. If we choose good thoughts of serving God and performing good deeds, we will develop

positive tendencies and desires and help build the world. If we choose to think evil and immoral thoughts, we fill the hollow of our hearts with spiritual and emotional pollution. Taking our potential in that direction will lead to the development of negative desires and the contamination of our world.

If we clearly saw the results of our choices, we would be hard-pressed not to choose good and serve God. If we clearly perceived God's Wisdom and greatness, we would be consumed with an irresistible desire to unite with His Infinite Light. Knowing that our very souls are rooted in God and that His breath connects us directly to Him, we would never want to be removed from His presence. Indeed, it is this unique relationship with God that gives us our potential to begin with.

In order to develop our potential, however, we must first experience a *tzimtzum*, a constriction of Godliness, and create a "vacated space" of our own in which to operate. Just as God's Light was everywhere, yet He carved out a Vacated Space to make "room" for Creation, we must "make room" for a "good creation" in our hearts, into which Godliness can enter and dwell. We do this by thinking good thoughts and eliciting higher and better levels of consciousness. Then we can merit an even greater revelation of Godliness.

In fact, when we turn our hearts into a "vacated space" to receive Godliness, we can form new creations simply by thinking good thoughts. Then we can rise to the level of performing miracles—in emulation of the original miracle of Creation (see *Likutey Moharan* I, 49:4,13).

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3 Furthermore, God continues to exist within creation in an unchanging form, although creation itself is constantly in flux. This is another paradox of the Vacated Space.



*This series is based on the book: ["Hidden Treasures"](#) by Rabbi Chaim Kramer.*