

THE DARK SIDE OF THE SCHECHINA

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"...The act of tzimtzum itself, in which God limits Himself, requires the establishment of the power of Din (judgment), which is a force of limitation and restriction. Thus the root of evil ultimately lies in the very nature of Creation itself, in which the harmony of the Infinite cannot, by definition persist; because of its nature as Creation - i.e., as other than Godhead - an element of imbalance, defectiveness, and darkness must enter into every restricted existence, however sublime it may be."

Scholem, Gershom.

On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead. New York: Schocken Books, 1991. p. 83.

"Many things which awaken admiration and a sense of the sacred can be symbols of the mother,"

"That mother-symbols may occasionally take on negative meanings, fraught with terror"

C.G.Jung: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,

How could it be...that with all the Torah that was being studied and all the great luminaries of Europe, this tragic event could have occurred?

Perhaps the Torah being studied there (in pre-war Europe)
Was not good enough.

Perhaps we need a new Torah

“Sing to God a new song!” (Psalm 33:3, 96:1)

Shlomo Carlebach 1994



Halos are formed as the ray of light is bent 22 degrees as it passes through the edges of the ice crystal (a process called refraction). If you extend your arm and give a "thumbs-up" signal, the halo will be a distance away from the center of the moon/sun equal to the width of your fist and thumb. Sometimes only a portion of the full circular ring can be seen, depending upon the nature of the ice cloud.

When the ice crystals are aligned in all orientations or tumbling around, you see the ring-shaped halo. If the ice crystals are all laying flat like plates on a table, then you only see spots of light left and/or right of the sun. These are called parhelia or "sun dogs" (singular is parhelion). The refracted light is passing nearly horizontally through the ice plate. Henry Elliott of Alexandria, Louisiana sent the example below, visible near the center of the photo.

Greg Forbes: Weather Channel Blog

“The phrase "Dark Rays of the Moon" appears to have been coined during a conversation between Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Eric Neumann in Jerusalem. Discussing whether the moon gives off its own light or only reflects the sun's light, Eric Neumann said, the moon has its own rays, they are the dark rays of the moon.”

Susan Berrin:
Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology
Jason Aronson, Incorporated, May 1, 1998



Ophelia by John Everett Millais (1852) is part of the Tate Gallery collection. His painting influenced the image in Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*

This essay is the second of a trilogy on “Schechina Consciousness” in which I am attempting to recapture a kinder more compassionate notion of the divine to heal a broken soul, all the while taking into account the atrocity that has been the last hundred years of history.

In my ongoing struggle to understand the relationship between the divine and human, Knesset Yisrael and the *Ribbono shel Olam*, the individual and his God, in light of the catastrophe that has become the hallmark of our century; the ongoing genocides and killings, the inhumanity of man to man, the industrialized mechanized machines of killing, the recent drone killing of innocent wedding parties by 18 year old soldiers 6000 miles away playing “video games”, the chemical weapons targeted against civilians, the ongoing indifference of cultured western humanity, the seeming success of Hitler’s use of technology in the killing fields in recent wars, need I go on?

Worse, if really analyzed carefully it was the killing fields of WWI as well as the Allied indiscriminate bombing of innocent towns in Europe in WWII that made the Holocaust almost pale in significance (without detracting *chas veshalom* from the communal tragedy affecting my family and people), but the sheer numbers of killed, (14-20 million victims of the Nazi extermination project) not to mention Stalin’s mass murder of some 30 million in the 30’s, makes this century the worst in human history and has moved the technology of death to reveal the **total devaluation of human life. This must affect our god-image.**

How does our relationship with the divine change in this horrific landscape? How does our own particular community

deal with our particular “special relationship” (*segulah*) in light of technology of killing fields?

And how does this play out on the individual micro level, at the level of *hashgacha pratis*, where the holographic relationships at the macro level are translated into the personal dark side of the individual soul? Where does responsibility end and fate begin? I hope to address in the last essay.

In the face of this atrocity, where the Holocaust and Hiroshima recedes slowly with ever dwindling survivors, yet its import and haunting echoes reverberate within, where the screaming children who were murdered keeps one up at night and the soil screams out in pain from all the spilled blood.

In the face of all of this, the traditional religious tools to deal with the “angry divine” or the classical “taking responsibility for man’s actions” (*umipnei chataeinu*) pale in comparison to the indifferent nature of mass murder, and where the traditional theologies of classical medieval and modern philosophies of religion seem woefully inadequate...

I search in vain for cultural-religious paradigms that might do justice to all of this. All current paradigms fail to do justice to the enormity of the crime. Academics have a blind sport and persist in their vain attempt at ethics all the while ignoring the elephant in the room. The fact that western culture spawned the very killing fields questions the modern enlightenment project.¹

¹ See Theodore Adorno for more on this.

² I am reminded of Stanley Weintraub’s *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce*, Plume

My response was to return to the sources in an attempt to revision theology in this new minor key, examining whether the meaning of God or the god-image in postmodern man had significance, in the face of man's indifference to the will of God such as "Thou shalt not murder". Was God not being appropriated by both sides of the mass murder equation to support propaganda?²

In my thesis³ I attempted to begin to track a trajectory whereby rabbinic responses to catastrophe might point to a theology that would explain exile and destruction. In their commentary to the book of Lamentations I tried to show how they attempted to demonstrate the use of the *mashal le-melech*, the parable of the king, as a trope to express rabbinic protest at the disproportionate justice meted out by the divine in the exiling of the entire nation from its homeland. I was indebted to Professor Stern's groundbreaking work in this area⁴ although I felt the theological trajectory of protest embedded in these parables was not stretched sufficiently.

In finding the Hassidic masters, especially the Polish scholars of the 18 and 19th century (The Ger dynasty of Sfas Emes, the Pshyskhe dynasty ending with Reb Zadok HaKohen, and the Kotzk writers of Avnei Nezer and Sochatchow) I (eventually) found the continuation of this rabbinic trajectory in their use of midrashic tropes (unlike the

² I am reminded of Stanley Weintraub's *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce*, Plume (October 29, 2002)

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Ungar-Sargon, Julian, PhD Thesis, Brandeis U. 2000

Imaging / Imagining the Divine in Rabbinic Literature

⁴ *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* David Stern, Harvard University Press (January 31, 1994)

ma'amarim or treatises of say the Chabad masters) that triggered their sermonettes. Informed by the kabbalistic jargon of the Lurianic corpus these masters were able to redefine the human/divine interaction in favor of human initiative and participation in the divine pathos. Human initiative, ritual behavior, and suffering (in the tradition of the Ari) caused changes within the Divine. As reflected in human experience, these masters showed the development of the concept of Martyrology and "mesiras nefesh" to include the very suffering an individual endures on a daily basis. What happens to the individual is also happening to the Schechina so the work is to "suffer well" and for Her sake, not for one's own relief.⁵

This idea of the Schechina as a separate yet paradoxically intrinsic part of the divine, with feminine qualities of nurturing and compassion, already well articulated in rabbinic midrash, following her people into exile and suffering alongside them, for me, opened up a door to imagining a possible post-Holocaust image of the suffering divine alongside the victims.

Yet, more recently, the darker image of the divine feminine has emerged as I have outlined in the first essay, which, paradoxically allows for a more mythic deepening of the tolerance of human violence and torture, mirrored in the equally violent imaging of the Schechina.

In the treatise by Reb Nachman I hope to show that the Lurianic split within the divine requires the adept and devotees of kabbalah to perform theurgic rites and rituals including Torah and Mitzvot to reunite the divine. At times the martyrdom of saints or even common folk, such as in a

⁵ See for example the Degel Machaneh Efraim:

pogrom is explained by this need for divine rectification. This myth is dependent upon the notion of the split within the divine as well as the idea of the Schechina, which has varied and colorful history (as is well documented beginning with the pioneer work of Gershom Scholem).

I wish to suggest a few ideas in moving this theological trajectory further, so will need to situate myself within the current work on the notion of Schechina, mostly in a continuum between academic Israeli scholars and feminist scholars and “renewal” thinkers in the USA.

I will begin with Professor Biti Roi from the Hartman Institute and Bar Ilan University.⁶

The Kabbalistic literature has transformed the Schechina into an entity that expresses the connection between the divine and the human. Unlike the eternal and exalted God, the Schechina is close to man. His troubles are its troubles and his suffering is its suffering. Biti Roi discusses the shaping of an imperfect, dynamic and multi-faceted divinity, which stands alongside the believer in coping with the turbulence of life.

The term Schechina is first found in the literature of the Sages and used to describe the divine presence in the world. “If two sit together and speak of Torah – the Schechina is among them” (Mishne Avot 3:2) and similarly “When a man and a woman are worthy, the Schechina is among them” (Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 17a). The Schechina comes down, goes up, or depart, and always represents the manifestation of God in the world.

⁶http://hartman.org.il/Research_And_Comment_View.asp?Article_Id=517&Cat_Id=324&Cat_Type=Research_And_Comment

For the believer, the divinity is the ultimate other, the object of desire and perfection, in whose presence the religious individual performs his day-to-day acts. Against this background, one can understand the importance of the term Schechina, as it has developed since the Kabbalistic literature of the Middle Ages. The Schechina is a divine entity to be found between the worlds, and which reflects in its essence the connection between the divine and the human, a connection that can be defined as the deep core of religion.

From a grammatical viewpoint, the word Schechina is feminine; however this fact is not emphasized in the literature of the Sages, which does not delve into the female aspects of the Schechina. It is only in Kabbalistic literature the Schechina is identified as one of the divine spheres and where its feminine aspect is developed to a much greater extent.

In the literature of the Zohar, for example, the Schechina is described with respect to its physiological, functional, sociological, sexual and psychological characteristics. The texts discuss the structure of its body and attribute to it an ability to accept, to embrace and even to give birth, nurse and nurture. Its sexual connections are expressed in situations of lust and awakening which contrast with moments of distance such as menstruation or banishment. From a social and sociological point of view, its relations with the home and with the world of speech are described, as well as with the world of government and royalty. Its personality is connected to opposites and the diversity of reality. On the one hand, the Schechina is connected to the aspect of judgment, to fire and the destruction of the world. It is called Liana Dmuta (the Tree of Death) and is identified with judgment, night and with the forces of destruction. On the other hand, it is also described as a figure that is protective, supportive and beneficial, as well as being merciful and an advocate.

The Kabbalistic Schechina has diverse and contradictory faces, which reinforce the puzzling nature of its image. The encounter with the Schechina is multifaceted – the Schechina is the presence of the divinity in the world, and its having various faces illustrates the complex, multi-dimensional nature of reality.

Although the structures in the literature of the Sages, which describe the Schechina as a presence and as an expression of proximate divinity, also appear in the Kabbalistic writings, the multiple manifestations and characteristics that the Kabbalah attributes to the Schechina make it possible to distinguish between the Schechina and the more exalted divine presence. Thus, through this distinction, the presence of the Schechina in the believer's world is brought into clearer focus. In some of the Kabbalistic literature, the Schechina is described as the divine figure closest to earthly life, to history and to the soul. The terms "spirit", "soul" and "I" are applied to the Schechina and further reinforce the similarity between it and man and its proximity to the experience of existence and the internal structures of man's soul.

Later approaches used the place of the Schechina in real life and its identification with Jewish history in order to construct a whole ethos around "raising the Schechina," which is perceived as the core of the redemption. The raising of the Schechina from the dust became a central component in the lives of the Kabbalists in Tsefat and various customs were tied to it, such as tikkun hatzot (waking at midnight to mourn the destruction of the Temple), studying Torah, calling for a life of poverty (which imitates the present situation of the Schechina) and giving charity (which is meant to redeem the Schechina from its destruction).

From this developed a unique image of the divine in crisis. Alongside the exalted, perfect and unapproachable God, the Schechina is revealed to be an imperfect and downtrodden figure. This is an image of divinity not at its best but rather in a state of weakness.

In some Kabbalistic approaches, the structures of exile and redemption, of destruction and rescue, are wrapped around the drama within the imperfect divine figure. For the Kabbalistic approach, in which the acts of man play a major part in the design of the divine world, this picture of imperfection is an invitation to repentance. The downtrodden Schechina needs to be raised up. The ones to accomplish this are the people – its sons, who support and lift it up from its ailments. This is an approach that encourages religious activism and integrates well with the feminine image of this divine entity, which contrasts with the masculine image of the Kabbalists and strengthens erotic and activist structures. Thus, the image of the Schechina within the Kabbalistic philosophy strengthens Jewish religious ritual as a whole, which is harnessed for the redemption of the Schechina and its raising from the dust.⁷

In the above I see no reference to the darker image of Schechina as described by such writers as Scholem or Tishby who note that one of the consequences of eating from the Tree of Knowledge was the harm done to the Schechina. The disconnection of Her from Her upper Self causes anger and strict judgment down here, whereas when She is active in the mystery of union then love and bounty comes down.⁸

⁷ Biti Roi is a Research Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute and completed her doctorate at Bar Ilan University on the myth of the Schechina in the Tikunim of the Zohar. (Forthcoming book).

⁸ Tishby I. Wisdom of the Zohar Vol I, 374-5

“...The complete separation of the Schechina from the forces of holiness, and her union with the “other side” which by its very nature seeks to act as a force of death and destruction”

“The sins of Israel increase his power, and he seeks their help to put his plans into practice. The Schechina finds herself in great peril and a struggle begins between her and “the other side”. In this struggle the fire of strict judgment is kindled within the godhead and the Schechina is filled with sacred fury”.

For Tishby’s understanding of the Zohar’s representation of her fury he describes a torn world between the forces of the side of holiness and the “other side” whereby the Schechina is constantly pulled and struggles against those forces and sometimes is too feeble to withstand the struggle. Much depends on the sins of Israel which strengthen the other side and allows for her to let loose with fury and death.

If she has been defiled by the other side then any contact is likely to trigger such fury and death and “imbibes from her the poison of death”⁹

Tishby summarizes the 3 types of the power of judgment in Schechina that is manifest in the world:

1. Justice and the promotion of the rule of righteousness and virtue.
2. The forces of vengeance acting in order to protect Schechina and rescue her from her tormentors and
3. Judgment of fury, which is aroused by the sins of the world in reaction to the harm done to her. This produces the Tree of Death.

⁹ Zohar III 79a

Other students of Scholem¹⁰ have analyzed and dissected the motifs and mythology of this archetype so there is no need to rehearse this sizeable literature. However Scholem described the development of the idea from the Bahir to the Zohar stressing the notion of personality development as opposed to the pre-zoharic impersonal hypostasis within the divine. Most importantly he cites the maleness as well as femaleness of the Schechina.

“This is the angel who is sometimes male and sometimes female”

Zohar I, 232a

Here the female character of the Schechina is linked here with its restrictive and dangerous features. The restraint of the flow of life, a quality intrinsic to the activity of judgment (Din), frequently entails destructive consequences for the world. But when the Schechina functions as a medium for the downward flow of life-giving energies, it is understood in male symbols, the most prominent of which is the divine name Adonai.¹¹

Gender ambiguity does not seem to bother the Zohar and certainly there are elements of her behavior that are warrior like if not savage. For Scholem the association with the “other side” allows for disastrous consequences for Israel and the entire world. This is caused either by the lack of man’s good deeds or by a “preponderance within her of those forces that, because of their stern and punitive nature, have an affinity for the other side. Overwhelmed by these dark forces, the Schechina herself becomes dark and destructive.”

¹⁰ From his groundbreaking chapter on Schechina “The Feminine Element in Divinity” in *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, Schocken Books 1991.

¹¹ Scholem *ibid.* 186.

Elliot Wolfson has spent years articulating the poetics and artistry of kabbalistic texts. Specifically he has developed a more nuanced view of gender. In his Pathwings he describes the suffering divine, and how kabbalah has moved the idea of the Schechina accompanying Israel into exile to the notion of her suffering and rescue by the adept.¹² This wonderful chapter moves seamlessly from Talmud to New Testament to Piyutim to Kabbalah. Philosophically he articulates the paradoxical issue of the kabbalists refusal to acknowledge any kind of metaphysical dualism yet fully aware of the reality potency and demonic power. This results in the notion of the dark side of the sefirot, (sitra achra) a realm of impurity yet still ontologically rooted in the divine. The paradox of evil as part of the divine and evil as a force opposing God, allows for the monotheistic insistence that is wholly Judaic and rabbinic.

“The death of God or God’s self-contradiction is what I shall identify in kabbalistic cosmological myth as the primal suffering in the heart of God’s being. This suffering is not only the empathetic suffering of God occasioned by the trials and tribulations of the nation of Israel in history. Surely kabbalists affirm the latter as well, as is attested especially by the intensified use of the rabbinic theme of Schechina accompanying the Jewish people in exile.

In kabbalistic literature the exile of the Schechina together with the people of Israel signifies the separation of the holy king and queen, a fissure in God that results in the diminution and affliction of Schechina, the feminine potency.”¹³

¹² Pathwings, Barrytown/Station Hill 2004, “Divine Suffering and Hermeneutic of Reading” 139-184

¹³ ibid. 156-157

What is so critical for me is that Scholem had insisted this split occurred outside the divine “this fissure is not indeed in the substance of Divinity but in its life and action”.¹⁴ Wolfson correctly insists on an essentialist interpretation of the sefirot, although admits Scholem agreed that by the time of the Lurianic myth “the exile of the Schechina is no longer a metaphor but a genuine symbol of the broken state of things in the realm of divine potentialities”. This fissure occurs as much as by the subjugation of holiness by the demonic force.

“The exile of the Schechina in kabbalistic symbolism alludes, therefore, to an abysmal suffering a suffering at the core of the divine being that ensues from a rupture within God that results in a severing of left and right, male and female”¹⁵

In developing this idea for a real theological response/relationship I need to articulate a projected persona that avoids the feminist essentialist gender trap outlined by Wolfson below. The mis-appropriation of the myth of the Schechina as a uniquely nurturing feminine quality as has been expressed by other scholars too. Or N. Rose has expressed this eloquently.

“Historically, Kabbalah is a tradition written by men for men and is deeply misogynistic. While the mystics have great concern for the physical well being of women and believe that women play a vital role in the Jewish family, they largely ignore the spiritual lives of their mothers, wives, and daughters. And when they do speak of women in relation to spiritual matters, much of their attention is focused on staving off the sexual temptations they feel women present. Women are often objectified and viewed as distractions from the “real” work of mystical growth, which is ideally carried out in the company of men exclusively. Again,

¹⁴ Scholem Major Trends, “On the Exile of the Schechina” p232. And Zohar I:181a

¹⁵ Wolfson, Pathwings ibid 157

these attitudes are not uniquely kabbalistic, but represent an unfortunate stage in human development (one that we have not yet fully outgrown).

*Today, some adherents praise Kabbalah as a woman-friendly spiritual path precisely because the kabbalists introduced into the Jewish theological lexicon such potent female symbols as Binah ("Understanding, Upper Divine Mother, and Womb) and **Schechina** ("The Indwelling Presence," Lower Divine Mother, and Vagina). However, when we examine the ways in which traditional kabbalists use these female theological symbols, we find that they are riddled with male biases. Take, for example, the symbol of **Schechina**: while She is accorded a place of great honor in the sefirotic system, regularly described as "Bride," "Queen," and "Mother of the lower worlds" in relation to the other sefirot, She is often portrayed as a damsel in distress, as the moon "who has no light of her own," or as an empty vessel into which flow all the waters (or seminal fluid) of the upper (male) Divine channels. Rarely are these qualities of passivity and receptivity balanced by more active or autonomous images. There is even some debate by scholars today as to what extent the symbol of **Schechina** was introduced into this highly erotic system as a safe buffer between the impassioned male mystic and his male God. As learned and law-abiding Jews, the kabbalists were well aware of the taboo against homosexuality in the tradition (despite the obvious homoeroticism in books like the Zohar).*

As in the case of the non-Jew, we have an obligation to challenge the assumptions of the kabbalists on these gender issues. And here too, the continued abuse of women and the disregard for their spiritual lives in many Jewish communities makes this challenge an urgent one. While we do not want to abandon the language and symbols of Kabbalah ("throwing out the baby with the bathwater"), we need to be more imaginative

*in our efforts at kabbalistic renewal than we have been in the past. Can we envision a more fluid and balanced sefirotic system in which **Schechina** is a full and active player in the celestial realms? What would the sefirot look like as a whole if women and other marginalized Jews were initiated into the world of kabbalistic myth-making (as is, thankfully, beginning to happen)? While we must live with the pain of our history--facing the legacy of Jewish patriarchy and misogyny directly--we need not be paralyzed by it. To use Luria's imagery, there are "holy sparks" that are waiting to be uncovered, and in some cases, it was our mystical predecessors themselves who obscured them.¹⁶*

Elliot Wolfson has been just such a voice in describing Schechina as alternating between female and male potencies depending on its relationship. Gender symbolism has Schechina changing genders so that "in one passage the Zoharic author describes the transformation of daughter into mother in terms of the image of Binah bestowing her garments to Malchut such that the latter is vested in the form of Israelite males"¹⁷ The lower female is masculinized and adopts the persona of the mother who bestows blessings of sustenance upon her offspring. Gender is thus constructed and socially determined as opposed to essential.

In a scathing attack on Wolfson's nuanced gender readings, Arthur Green suggests that he misses the list of images that characterize the Schechina: "The Zohar is at least as fixed with celebration of the female as it is with male...Wolfson's dismissal of this entire world of symbols...produces a significantly distorted picture of kabbalistic eros"¹⁸

¹⁶ Or N. Rose, *Madonna's Challenge: Understanding Kabbalah Today*. By: Rose, Or N., Tikkun, 08879982, Nov/Dec2004, Vol. 19, Issue 6.

¹⁷ Pathwings p122

¹⁸ Arthur Green, "Kabbalistic Re-vision: A review Article of Elliot Wolfson's *Through a Speculum hat Shines*", *History of Religions* 36 (1997) 270

Wolfson bases his gender readings on the consistent androcentric bias for kabbalistic understandings based on rabbinic sources. The masculine appropriation of such female traits as childbirth and breastfeeding forces the woman to assume the gender value of the male. Rather than a simplistic male/female split **Wolfson has contextualized the feminine characteristics of Schechina in a nuanced gender analysis based on the distinction between gender as a cultural construct and biological sex.**

As if to reinforce Green's notion of appropriation Chava Weissler's feminist approach (or rather her chronicling of the American Jewish renewal movement's feminist approach) seems to have documented the myth, image, and psyche of a bright supportive soft Schechina in support of the feminist doctrine. She tries unsuccessfully to stay out of the fray. Her rendition below sets out the reference map I must avoid in carving out some ideas.

The topic of Schechina in classical Kabbalah is vast and varied, and only a brief summary can be offered here.¹⁹ According to kabbalistic teachings, Divinity is truly infinite and unknowable. This aspect of the Godhead, called Ein Sof (Infinity), manifests and reveals Itself in the ten sefirot, or attributes, known by such names as Wisdom and Understanding, Loving-kindness and

¹⁹ There are numerous treatments of this topic in the scholarly literature. For discussions readily available in English, see, for example, Gershom Scholem, "She-khinah: The Feminine Element in Divinity," in *On the Mystical Shape of the God-head* (New York: Schocken, 1991), pp. 140–196; Isaiah Tishby, "Shekinah," in *The Wisdom of the Zohar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), I, pp. 371–422; Peter Schäffer, *Mirror of His Beauty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Arthur Green, "Shekinah, the Virgin Mary, and the Song of Songs," *AJS Review*, 26 (2002), pp. 1–52; Sharon Koren, "Mystical Rationales for the Laws of *Niddah*," in Rahel S. Wasserfall (ed.), *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law* (Hanover–London: University Press of New England, 1999), pp. 101–121. Elliot Wolfson argues that Shekinah is best understood as covertly male. See, for example, his *Circle in the Square* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

Stern Judgment. Two of these are seen in particular as having feminine qualities. The tenth and last sefirah, and the one most consistently imaged as feminine, is Schechina, the divine presence and immanence in the world. Like the moon, but unlike the other sefirot, Schechina has no light of her own but receives divine light and abundance from the sefirot about her. She reflects and channels these to the lower worlds.

A central myth of the Kabbalah is that the brokenness of this world, the fact that we live with exile, evil, pain, and death, is an expression of the exile or eclipse of Schechina, her separation from the rest of the sefirot, and especially from her divine spouse, Tiferet (Beauty), often referred to as Hakadosh Barukh Hu (the Holy One, blessed be He) and identified with the sun. This exile began with the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden and will end in the messianic era. Another image used by the Kabbalah for the state of Schechina is the waxing and waning of the moon, and the very fact that the moon's light is less than and reflected from that of the sun. A midrash teaches that at creation, the moon's light was as bright as the sun's, and in the messianic era, her light will be restored to its primordial brilliance.

In classical Kabbalah, Schechina is an ambivalent figure: While in exile, she is in the power of the forces of evil and can be turned to their ends. This speaks to our experience of life as painful and unpredictable. But it also reflects the ambivalence male kabbalists felt about women. Schechina in Kabbalah encodes well-known gender stereotypes: The feminine is passive and receptive, receiving and transmitting the power of the masculine. Schechina can be seen as a beckoning princess or a comforting mother, but also as a stern and punitive disciplinarian.

For kabbalists, the myth of Shechinah's exile is in part about the fate of the people of Israel; for Hasidim, it is about the life of the soul; for both, it is about the redemption and healing of the cosmos. Renewal Jews have adapted this myth as a way to frame gender issues. The exile or eclipse of Schechina refers to the absence of women's voices and feminine spirituality from Judaism while Shekinah herself symbolizes women's presence and power. While Renewal's Schechina differs from the kabbalistic Schechina in certain ways, it, too, is founded on gender difference. More than that, as we shall see, Renewal's version of the Schechina valorizes certain "feminine" qualities.

"Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan," intoned Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, speaking at the conference of Jewish Renewal rabbis held in January 2004. He was quoting the ending of Goethe's Faust: "The Eternal Feminine draws us upward." Moreover, he warned, "Don't try to shlep the Schechina into the cognitive realm. The word Schechina has the same gematria [numerical value] as ha'arafel [the fog]. We must be comfortable in 'endarkenment' as well as in enlightenment."

Clearly, for Schachter-Shalomi, there is an "eternal feminine"; he understands Schechina as a mythical figure, expressing a feminine essence that is non-cognitive and mysterious. While not all Renewal Jews share this view, we shall see that some of them understand women as possessing intuitive knowledge and a connection to the natural cycles that are also bound up with their connection to Schechina.

Reb Zalman met with Eric Neumann in Israel 1959 where Neumann insisted that the archetype of the moon had dark rays of its own. Archetypal psychology has transformed the history of religious symbols and gnostic mythology mining them for psychodynamic “complexes” that might inform the unconscious motivations and forces in modern man. In doing so, Jung articulated the archetypal Mother Figure, which Neumann researched in his book “the Mother Goddess”. (Translated by Ralph Manheim into English in 1955). The Great Mother archetype appears in many cultures including the Hindu Kali, the Virgin Mary and, of course, Sophia or Schechina. These cross-cultural manifestations of the same deep psychological image reflect both the light as well as the dark side of this archetype. The Great Mother can be nurturing but also savage, loving yet also ruthless and bloodthirsty. Modern feminism seems to have focused solely on the nurturing side, notable exceptions include Neumann’s student Camille Paglia who has critiqued her feminist co-scholars.²⁰ I see the conversation between Neumann and Shalomi as one between the Gnostic Jungian school and the Chabad Hassidic School of positivism. The moon reflecting ONLY the light of the sun is the light side of Malchut according to the Zohar, whereas the darker side of the sefirot according to the Lurianic myth reflects the negative imagery of Neumann.

Inasmuch as my spiritual development has been constellated by my own complexes (see my essay The Divine Feminine p11 and the last of the trilogy forthwith)²¹ I need to both own and be conscious of the way I have been

²⁰ “Erich Neumann: Theorist of the Great Mother” Camille Paglia, <http://www.bu.edu/arion/files/2010/03/Paglia-Great-Mother1.pdf>

²¹ <http://jyungar.com/essays-on-healing/>

so attracted to the balancing of the male sky god image with the nurturing yet fierce mother archetype.

Between these two poles of biology and social construction of gender, lies a description that resists appropriation and objectification, psychodynamic analysis and subjective interpretation, where, in the scholarly writings of such writers as Scholem, Wolfson and Magid one can tease out the complexity of the myth and its evolution in Jewish and kabbalistic thought over centuries without appropriating the feminine quality of the divine for other purposes.

Schechina consciousness has meaning for me at two levels. The first at the theological level, it may have provided me for the first time in a lifetime's search, a theology, albeit dark, where the Holocaust and modernity might make sense. I say this with trepidation having trashed the usual polemical arguments and orthodox theodicies hitherto. Fully opening myself to examination and criticism now that I am on the other side of the bench, I accept the possibility of returning to a pre-modern almost pagan mythology of the Great Mother, all the while resisting modern sensibilities and feminist wishes for a nurturing Schechina.

Depth psychology answered my deepest theological questions: if evil in the world merely due to human instigation then I cannot account for its "numinous" grip on humanity. If it is demonic in origin then the demonic equals the divine in a dualistic cosmos and God is powerless to prevent bad things happening and is not worth worshipping (if at the least He chooses not to intervene). It was with depth psychology that the notion of archetypal images of the divine are what operate deep in psyche that might be both human and divine, the way the kabbalists describe the deepest layers of the soul as purely divine. The complexes, constellated by the

archetypes such as the Great Mother, are an admixture of the local psychic biography of the adept as well as its intersection with transpersonal collective unconscious that arise in human experience. This notion caused Jung much anguish with the theological community (see for example his letters to Victor White and Marin Buber²² who misunderstood his insights (with some justification) as “psychologizing” the god image away, removing any concept of I-Thou or an independent power beyond human perception. For me the kabbalistic notion of divine transcendence as the light beyond (Or Makif) comprehension or apprehension, and the immanent light (or Pn’imi) as the light within, holds this very paradox and that we can only possibly experience the immanent divine. Jung himself called the theologian’s god the “unspeakable” inasmuch as when we try to speak theology we are really speaking about our god=image of it not the Reality itself.

For Jung the god-image immanent within us and experienced, (unlike the divine within itself its exclusive transcendent unknowable Self), must contain both the light and the dark shadow of itself. He believed that the power of evil is more than simply human based on scientifically quantifiable measures. He felt that the Holocaust and Hiroshima were too terrible to be explained away simply using psychological or sociological or political theory.

Our experience of the god image is more important than the doctrine of god in theology. Without attention to this shadow image without and within we cannot address the profundity of the evil dimension.²³ And we cannot hope for a fixing of the modern desire for mass destruction.

²² For more on this subject see my essay at <http://jyungar.com/essays-on-healing/2011/4/20/answering-answer-to-job-jung-job-and-buber.html>

²³ See also Jim Garrison, *The Darkness of God*, London, Canterbury Press 1982, as a theologian he does accept the notion that “God was involved in the nuclear blast”

In the trajectory my finding of the Hassidic texts was like finding gold. The Lurianic dark myth was appropriated in the articulation of new relationship to divine pathos and Schechina. No more than in the texts of the Degel Machaneh Efraim the BESHT's grandson.²⁴ This trajectory had now moved from the midrashic to the mystical through the Lurianic myth to the Hassidic masters and disciples of the Baal Shem Tov (BESHT), in a trajectory that has landed us in this nightmarish post-Holocaust vacuum. We have awoken like ships out to sea in a storm with no spiritual map.

Having found such texts as Likutei Mehoran 206 and the Degel Machaneh Efraim²⁵ that speak of the Lurianic myth of the union of Schechina and the Divine, albeit in a minor key, I was finally able to move the issue of culpability and responsibility philosophically away from the merely human dimension to a mythic plane. I had always considered there to be a gap between the sum total of the psychological, sociological and political theories combined to produce the perfect storm we call Hiroshima and Holocaust. Sitting in on Goldhagen's seminar at Harvard left me unconvinced as to the rational approach. There seemed to be some demonic hand at play. Rather than the "banality of evil" I had always felt deep down a demonic quality to the Nazi attraction and pursuit of the occult. Thus the archetypal explanation of humans being gripped by a demonic power had much attraction. (This also applied to the inner psyche.)

I present Reb Nachman's Torah below.

²⁴ The place of Schechina consciousness in the writings of the Degel deserve further study there being over 20 references in his book.

²⁵ See my essay "The Divine Feminine" 11.29.11, at www.jyungar.com/essays-on-healing/

TORAH I:260 Likutei Mehoran

A name (reputation) is the soul of a person. And there is a concept of “mesiras nefesh” (martyrdom) as there occurred in the history of the Ten Martyrs²⁶ gave themselves over for martyrdom “al Kidush Hashem” for the sake of the unification of Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the Schechina as is known²⁷.

(And according to the Ari the main function of “mesiras nefesh”).

And they realized in those generations that any other kind of supernal unifications (Yichudim) was impossible without (the martyrdom of) their souls, so they martyred their souls “al Kidush Hashem”. For when souls are martyred and return heavenward “al Kidush Hashem” they return to the Schechina, since they originated there, for Israel is a portion of the divine literally, i.e. a part of the Schechina, literally. And when they do return to the Schechina then the Schechina is beautified

²⁶ The Ten Martyrs (Aseret Harugei Malchut מלכות הרוגי עשרת) refers to a group of ten rabbis living during the era of the Mishnah who were martyred by the Romans in the period after the destruction of the second Temple. They are listed together, in the piyut Eleh Ezkera. For more see Shelah HaKadosh on the Sale of Joseph and vicarious suffering of the Ten martyrs. Ari Hakadosh Eitz Chayim, 2:132b.

²⁷ See Eitz Chayim of the Ari Gate 39:1

(mitpaeres). This in turn evokes desire in the supernal world and causes a Yichud, as is known.²⁸

זהר ח"ב ע' רנה, א: וכד הוה אלין עשרה דאקרונ הרוגי מלכות, הרוגים הוו מסטרא אחרא, ואשלימו אתר אחרא דקדושה, ובגין כך, כלא גלי קמי קדשא בריך הוא, ואתעביד כדקא יאות

ספר חסד לאברהם מעין ה נהר מז ראשי ראשים אל ההיכל הזה הם עשרה הרוגי מלכות, שיש להם כמה תוספת מעלה שהיו קדושים ולא נתחייבו מצדם המיתה ומתו על קדושת השם, לזה הם פנימיים בהיכל פנימה מאד, ואלו עומדים נהגים מסוד המלכות המאירה מאור הת"ת המאיר אור חכמה ובינה בסוד כך עלה במחשבה, נהגים מזיו המחשבה המאירה על ידי הבינה שעל סוד הזה נאמר עליהם חלקם בחיים וצפונך תמלא בטנם, דהיינו עין לא ראתה אלהים זולתך, מעלת אור שאין מי שישגהו אלא הבינה דהיינו סוד החכמה, דהיינו החיים העליונים ומאור זה מאיר עליהם. חמ"ש"ל:

שער הגלגולים הקדמה לו: גם טעם עשרה הרוגי מלכות, ר' עקיבא וחביריו, שמעתי ממורי זלה"ה, כי ע"י שנהרגו על קדוש ה', זכו הם ללקט ולברור כל הנצוצות של הנשמות, אשר למטה ממדרגתם, הנתונים בעמקי הקליפות, ועל ידם מוצאים ומובררים, והם מעלים אותם אל הקדושה להשתלם ולהתקן: עוד יש טעם אחר והוא, כי עד הזמן ההוא, היה כח אל הנשמות שמתוך הקליפות לצאת, ולהעלות בסוד מ"ן אל המלכות, ומאז ואילך אין עוד כח ויכולת אל המעשה הזה, ולכן הוכרחו הם ליהרג, כדי לעלות למעלה בסוד מ"ן, וישמשו שם במקומם בבחי' מ"ן אל המלכות. ועוד יש בזה תועלת אחד, כי על ידי עמידתם אצלה למעלה בסוד מ"ן, יקנו הנצוצות שתחתיהם מציאות תקוה להתקן. והענין הוא במה שנתבאר אצלינו, כי עשרה אלו, הם כללות כל ישראל, כי הנה הם בחי' עשר שבטים, ועשרה טפות זרע שיצאו מיוסף הצדיק, כמבואר בדרושים שקדמו:

שער הכוונות דרושי נפילת אפים דרוש ה: ודע שעד זמן הי' הרוגי מלוכה היו מאירים ת"ת ומל' והיה די באורם להעלות מ"ן לבינ' ממטה למעלה עם קצת סיוע מהצדיקים אשר מוסרים עצמם עק"ה בכח בעת ק"ש אבל בזמן העשרה הרוגי מלוכה שמש וירח קדרו בעון הדור ונא היה בהם כח להעלות מ"ן לקבל מ"ד מחכמה הנקר' מחשב' עד אשר נהרגו הרוגי מלכות בפועל ואז האירו בנשמותיהם לת"ת ומל' ועצרו כח להעלות מ"ן לקבל מ"ד הבאים מחכמה הנק' מחשבה ועז"א כך עלה במחשב' וחש"ה ממתים ידך ה' ממתים מחלד והוכיר שני מיני מיתות אם למסור עצמו למיתה וזהו לצורך יד ה' והיא המלכו' הנקר' יד ה' ואם למסור עצמו עק"ה וזהו ממתים מחלד והחלד היא אימא עלאה שהיא נעלמת ונחלדת כעין דרסה וחלדה שאינה נגלית חלקם בחיים שהם עולים בחיים העליונים כי חיי המלך היא בינ' וצפונך בסוד נתיב לא ידעו עיט ההוא שביל דקיק טמיר גניז ואז ישבעו בני ת"ת ומלכות והניחו יתנם לעולליהם נה"י או נשמו' הצדיקים דאתיין מת"ת ומלכות ואינן עוללין דילהון:

ספר עמק המלך שער ה פרק סד והענין הזה זכור אזכרנו בענין קריאת שמע של לילה, עם השמות והצירופים השייכים למיין נוקבין זה, באר היטב, על כן אקצר בו, רק נשאר עלינו חובה לבאר די צרכו ענין עליית מיין נוקבין של עשרת הרוגי מלכות, ובצירוף שאר קדושים אשר הערו למות נפשם, והם הצדיקים המהפכים מדת הדין למדת הרחמים.. וראה שם בארוכה

ספר עמק המלך שער ה פרק סו אמרנו למעלה שבזמן שבית המקדש קיים, וקודם עשרה הרוגי מלכות, לא היה צריך העולם הריגת נפשותיהם של הצדיקים, ומעשה מעט מהצדיקים, היה מעלה מיין נוקבין. ואם לא היו הדורות הראשונים עובדים עבודה זרה לא היו נהרגים, ולא הוה אלא מזבח כפרה על עצמם, ולא בעון הדור, כשהעולם מתמוטט ומחיצה של ברזל, מפסקת בין ישראל לאביהם שבשמים. אבל בזמן הרוגי מלוכה, 'שמש וירח קדרו' [יואל ד' ט"ו] בעון הדור, ולא היה בהם כח להעלות מיין נוקבין, עד שנהרגו עשרה הרוגי מלוכה בפועל. ואז האירו ברוחם ונפשם לזעיר ונוקביה, ועצרו [זו"ו] כח להעלות מיין

And on occasion this requires a pogrom, God forbid, in which some Jewish souls must be killed, God forbid, in order that the Yichud is accomplished by the souls returning above.

And on occasion this Yichud requires many souls, God forbid, so a pogrom arises, God forbid.

The textual sources of Rebbe Nachman's daring ideas are found in note 5 especially the Ari's writings on both vicarious suffering and atonement by the Ten Martyrs²⁹ who were willing to "stand in" for the Sale of Joseph.³⁰

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 85) states as follows:

Rabbi Yishmael said: "The day the instructions came to torture Jewish sages to death was on a Thursday. Originally, four sages were to be arrested, Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha the High Priest, Rabbi Yehuda ben Bava and Rabbi Yehuda ben Damah. Eight thousand scholars in Jerusalem were prepared to offer themselves in lieu of these four leaders. When Rabbi

²⁹ Nachman Levene, "Eleh Ezkerah": Re-reading the Asarah Harugei Malkhut , Hakira, Flatbush Journal of Jewish Law and Thought. Vol. 13.

³⁰ The textual editions describing the martyrdom can be found as follows:

J. D. Eisenstein, ed., "Midrash Ele Ezkera," in *Ozar Midrashim*, 2 vols. (New York: J. D. Eisenstein, 1915–1918), 2:440–43.

Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., *Mahazor la-yamim ha-nora'im: lefi minhagei benei Ashkenaz* , 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Koren, 1970), 2:568–73.

Adolf Jellinek, ed., *Midrasch Ele Eskerá: Nach einer Handschrift der Hamburger Stadt-Bibliothek (Cod. hebr. CXXXVI)* (Leipzig: Fridrikh Nies, 1853).

"Midrash Ele Ezkera," in *Beit ha-Midrash*, 6 vols. (Leipzig: Fridrikh Nies, 1853–1877; repr., Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1967), 2:64–72.

Gottfried Reeg, ed., *Die Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyrern*, TSAJ 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985).

[Definitive edition of all extant manuscripts organized into ten recensions presented synoptically.]

David Stern, trans., "Midrash Eleh Ezkerah; or, *The Legend of the Ten Martyrs*," in *Rabbinic Fantasies*, ed. D. Stern and M. J. Mirsky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 143–65. [Follows the text of Jellinek.]

Nechunya ben Hakana realized that the decree would not be revoked, he 'lowered me' to the *Merkava* [Divine Chariot], and I interceded with the [angel] *Sar HaPnim* -'Minister of the Interior'- he told me that the Supreme Court in Heaven had decreed that ten eminent scholars were to be handed over to Samael, the Celestial representative of Rome. The reason for the decree was to carry out on the bodies of leaders of Israel the penalty imposed on kidnappers as per: "*If someone kidnaps a person, sells him and is found out, he shall be executed.*"(Ex. 21:16)"

The Piyut "*Eleh Ezkerah*" read on Yom Kippur, describes the deaths of the ten martyrs and opens with a midrashic conversation between the rabbis and the Roman ruler.

"He [the ruler] studied a book and understood the laws. He opened to 'These are the laws' and devised a plot around 'If someone kidnaps a person and sells him if he is guilty he shall be put to death' (Shemot 21:16).

He ordered that the palace be filled with shoes and called to ten great sages.

'Judge this case authentically and do not pervert justice, what is the law of one who 'Kidnaps a man from his fellow Jews and sold him' (Devarim 24:7)?'

They replied that he should be put to death.

'Then where are your forefathers who sold their brother to a band of Yishmaelites for shoes they gave him away?
You accept on yourselves to judgment of heaven, since the times of your forefathers there have been none like you.

If they were alive I would judge them before you, but you will bear the sins of your fathers.’”

The poet clearly states here that the ten sages were killed due the Yosef's brothers selling him to slavery. This is also written in the Midrash that the ten martyrs died because the brothers sold Yosef. (See Midrash Mishlei 1:13)³¹

Martyrology and betrayal of the brothers neatly ties up the sin and punishment albeit the Roman procurator demanding the justice in the piyut.

Reb Nachman inherits the Lurianic myth of the Exile of the Schechina fully however, unlike his predecessors, openly articulates Her needs even at the expense of Israel her protectees. Where Rabbinic texts and the Zohar had portrayed her as protector and accompaniment to her children in exile, here, following the Lurianic corpus, her needs for Yichud or unification with the estranged divine takes precedence.

The sin and expiation of the betrayal of Joseph has reverberations in the archetypal sefirah that Joseph represents, *yesod*. The relationship between *yesod* and *malchut* is fleshed out as positive and negative in the Ari.³² The proper relationship between Yesod and Malchut allows for the divine bounty (*shefa*) to flow through the appropriate channels to this world, however a catastrophe built into the very fabric of creation caused a rupture:

³¹ For a critical appraisal of the Martyrology texts see Raanan Boustan 'The Contested reception of the Story of the 10 Martyrs" in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in honor of 70th Birthday of Peter Schafer*, Vol 1

³² See Moshe Wisnefsky, *Apples from the Orchard, Gleanings from Mystical Teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (the Arizal) on the Weekly Torah Portion*. Translation and commentary by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky. Thirty-seven Books, Malibu, California.
Parsha Ki Tavo, and http://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380096/jewish/Emanations-of-Evil.htm

When the light reached Yesod, it received the light for two activities, one for itself and one for Malchut...

When the vessel of Yesod was broken the light was revealed and it came forcibly to Malkhut and she too was broken...

Had the light come to Malkhut by way of the channel, she would not have been broken..

This is the secret of “thus it arose in thought” ..³³

Malchut reveals its light after the catastrophe flowing from Yesod. Prior to creation when “it arose in the thought of the infinite light” the very hollowing out of a metaphorical space within the divine is the feminine *chalal hapanui* the “vacated space” a space where light is withdrawn. There must be some residue (*reshimu*) for even here the infinite light by definition is everywhere. This residue is the light of the power of harsh judgments and evil. The withdrawal of infinite light is called the “Land of Edom” which represents the demonic force that parallels the divine. The light penetrating the vacated space is the letter *yod*, which alone can purify the feminine judgment of its demonic nature. Note this precedes creation and reflects the desire within the divine to rid itself of impurity (whatever this might mean!).³⁴

“The ultimate purpose of the divine catharsis is to purify the feminine aspect of the divine...

“In ..exile...there is a rupture of the male..which is manifest in the positioning of two seemingly distinct personifications of the divine, male and female.

³³ Ibn Tabul commentary on Idra Rabba cited in Pathwings ibid.p163

³⁴ Wolfson speaks of the “ontic source of the Edomite kings” whereby the purpose of the withdrawal of light was to crystallize the latent forces of judgment within the Infinite. Pathways p173.

“The theurgic task...is to unite male and female.”

“The primary act of tzimtzum therefore, is not only an expression of divine judgment, but is an act that results in the crystallization of the demonic potency as a quasi autonomous force...the idea of catharsis of evil from the godhead..

“..Tzimtzum is an act of judgment by means of which the concealed becomes manifest and the unlimited delimited, in the aspect of the feminine that separate from the masculine.”³⁵

Wolfson admits that there is no mention of divine suffering in this act of self-contraction but “it seems that the myth of tzimtzum involves precisely such a notion. The goal of divine withdrawal is to create the space wherein the forces of judgment coalesce to form the amorphous mass, the demonic potency. Suffering then has less to do with Israel’s suffering, more to do with an intrinsic flaw in God’s being. For me this is a healing text for it allows for responsibility for the demonic forces that overwhelms humanity on the macro level as well as on the individual holographic image (such as in addiction) to be shared.

‘Perhaps the deepest psychological insight of Lurianic theosophy is that the autogenesis, the process of individuation within the divine, unfolds through suffering’

³⁵ Pathwings p 179

Malchut and the Schechina represent the divine desire to purge itself of harsh judgment and those adepts who wish to worship must be willing to carry this suffering as well.

The dark side of Malchut/Schechina receives her impetus from *yesod* via the wrong channels. This seems to be the cosmogenic cause for her discomfort.

Now we can approach Reb Nachman's Torah with the tools to understand the need of Schechina to be reunited with the divine at times when the usual ritual and theurgic rites of Israel are insufficient. Built into the very fabric of creation, one might say the very act of creation, is the need for the divine to self-purge, which replicates itself in a holographic way through the suffering of mankind vicariously. By suffering on Her behalf, even dying for Her, man restores the inappropriate channels by which She was nourished inappropriately.

I believe that Reb Nachman (the BESHT's grandson) has taken the Lurianic myth and stretched it to unbearable limits in prophetic insight. In claiming the Shechinah's "divine need for a pogrom" we were now charting new territory whereby the shift of the center of spiritual gravity was now clearly, like the Piacetzna Rebbe, Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Schapira had claimed in the middle of the inferno,³⁶ between Hitler and God, the Jews were mere representations of the Schechina down here on earth, carrying the brunt of Hitler's fury which was really pointing at the divine....suffering for her presence in the manifest hell.

³⁶ Nehemia Polen, *The Holy Fire: The Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto*. Northvale, N.J., and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 1994, 1998.

Nehemia Polen's book carefully analyzes the spiritual response articulated in a collection of drashot (homilies or commentaries on the weekly Torah portion and holidays).

The collection is not merely a series of drashot, Polen argues. In these homilies, Shapira develops themes and wrestles with theodicy. Their central feature, he writes, is "the diachronic unfolding of key ideas, which gradually crystallize to form a cohesive and characteristic theological response".

In the early stages of the Warsaw Ghetto, there is little direct reference to events in Shapira's homilies, which Polen explains as a conscious decision: "... the very avoidance of the theme of persecution and suffering is a deliberate choice, a movement to transcendence" (54). Gradually, there is an increasing presence of a transformation of his basic theology. "The move away from a systematic religious calculus of reward and chastisement is associated with a new emphasis on mythic, eschatological and apocalyptic themes" (111). While Shapira initially stresses one of the most common traditional interpretations of suffering, he moves toward an emphasis on the responsive nature of one's relationship with God in time of extreme anguish.

The most important theological transformation is his increasing reliance on an anthropopathic God.

Shapira teaches in several pieces that God's emotions are a divine response to human emotion; thus, the emotional experience of a person affects God. "Precisely because God is infinite, His suffering is infinite and beyond human conception" (117). His central theological argument is that the Jew has a dynamic relationship with God, in which God is held responsible. Yet, one must also remember God's

deep empathy for the suffering of the individual, which itself should be eased with the knowledge of divine compassion (21ff).³⁷

The Piacetzna was critical in his daring new theology and for me, he moved the trajectory of divine suffering to new heights in holding the divine to task all the while maintaining his reverence in the face of unspeakable horrors. But it wasn't until Reb Nachman's Torah 206 that I realized how the Lurianic text was radicalized in a new key that exposed the darker side of the divine.

In reconstructing a theology for a new age, this darker image of the divine allows me to relate in ways hitherto unaffordable for the weight of exile sin and punishment were too great to bear. As we travel with the Schechina into this new age we both share in God's pain and in humanity's darkest hours in a mutuality of mirroring. This is a healing notion of the divine, a god image I can deal with, a call for Tikkun on both sides of the aisle.

³⁷ Human Suffering, Divine Sorrow. By: Sabath, Rachel T., Cross Currents, 00111953, Spring99, Vol. 49, Issue 1

