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DIVINE WEEPING: RABBI KALONYMOS SHAPIRO'S THEOLOGY OF CATASTROPHE IN THE WARSAW GHETTO*

I

The event known as the Holocaust has engendered a voluminous body of writings by philosophers and theologians, endeavoring to grapple with the challenge which the Holocaust, as an exemplar of radical evil, poses for religious belief, indeed for human values in general. This literature has been produced, for the most part, since the end of the Second World War; we possess few sustained theological reflections composed while the event was actually unfolding. One exception is *Esh Kodesh* [Fire of Holiness] by Rabbi Kalonymos Shapiro (1889-1943), a hasidic master known as the Piaseczner Rebbe. He was a prominent and influential religious leader in the Jewish community of interbellum Poland, especially well known as an innovator in the field of hasidic education.[1] At the onset of the war, he lost his son, daughter-in-law, and sister-in-law in the aerial bombardment of Warsaw (September, 1939); his elderly mother died soon after.[2] Bereft of most of his immediate family, he continued his educational and communal activities. In particular, he delivered Sabbath and Festival discourses during the years 1939-1942 and recorded them on paper. Early in 1943, he buried the manuscript of his discourses. While the author did not survive the war, his writings did, and they were eventually published in Israel under the title *Esh Kodesh*.[3] *Esh Kodesh*

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(hereafter: *EK*) represents an attempt to face such issues as faith and doubt, good and evil, and the meaning of the people Israel's suffering, from within the heart of darkness itself, while the catastrophe was taking place.

As we read the pages of *EK*, we see the author attempting to raise the spirits of his followers, to buttress their faith and religious commitment. The author reveals his own struggle with despair and depression, his efforts to continue to speak creatively in the hasidic manner. Because each discourse is dated, it is possible to trace the development of his thought over time and to coordinate changes in style and substance with the unfolding of events in Occupied Warsaw and the Ghetto. It has been pointed out that *EK* is the last hasidic document written on Polish soil;[4] standing at the tragic juncture between Hasidism and the Holocaust, it sheds light on both.

EK begins with a discourse for Rosh Hashanah, 5700 (September 14, 1939); the last entry is for *Shabbat Hazon*, 5702 (July 18, 1942). There are some eighty-five discourses in all. While, at the beginning of the three-year period covered by the work, the discourses appear with some degree of regularity, by the work's end, the writing is much more episodic: there are many weeks without any written notation.[5] The primary language is Hebrew, although the author occasionally inserts a Yiddish word or phrase for emphasis. While the discourses reflect the steadily worsening conditions of life in Occupied Warsaw and the Ghetto, there is hardly any direct mention of geo-political events as such. Following the tradition of hasidic theoretical literature, Rabbi Shapiro relates contemporary occurences to biblical themes and characters, projecting events of his own day onto the field of archetypes found in the classic texts.[6]

In approaching *EK*, we must be careful to avoid two kinds of pitfall. The first is a proleptic fallacy, imputing to the author a comprehensive perspective on events which, given his situation, he could not have had. We must recall that the catastrophe was unfolding as he preached and wrote, and that the discourses end in the summer of 1942, at the time of the mass deportations. We simply do not know what Rabbi Shapiro might have said about the Holocaust in its totality had he survived the war. On the other hand, it is possible to make another kind of error, reading *EK* purely for its human interest as a document of spiritual resistance emerging from the Holocaust, and dismissing its specific ideational content as fragmentary disconnected observations, a congeries of traditional motifs assembled almost reflexively from earlier sources dealing with national tragedy. In order to avoid both pitfalls, it is important to read the text with attention to its temporal markings, so as to notice the sequential development of ideas. That is to say, without attempting to impose a contrived homogeneity, we must yet be open to perceiving the trajectories of ideas over time, noticing emergent properties

of the work as a whole, as certain concepts crystallize with cohesive form, defining an ideational center of gravity.[7] We hope here to present one such constellation of concepts for consideration.

II

One of the most striking themes in Rabbinic literature is that of the suffering of God.[8] Building upon prophetic expressions of Divine involvement in, and concern for, Israel's destiny,[9] the Rabbis of the Talmud and Midrash depict God Himself as having been captive in Egypt, as "living in pain just as the Israelites [were] living in pain."[10] Similarly, God participated in Israel's subsequent exiles and tribulations. He mourns the destruction of the Temple as does Israel.[11] These Rabbinic teachings served to provide comfort and consolation to a grieving people: the burden of persecution and exile was made lighter with the knowledge that God shared their destiny. During the medieval period, however, a philosophical perspective spread which firmly emphasized divine transcendence. Writers such as Saadiah Gaon (882-942) and Maimonides (1135-1204) struggled to remove all vestiges of an anthropomorphic conception of the Deity.[12] Under their influence, aggadic passages of an anthropomorphic and anthropopathic nature were increasingly felt to be puzzling and in need of explanation.[13] Such passages were also cited by Christian, Moslem, and Karaite polemicists, who seized upon them as weapons to attack Rabbinic Judaism.[14] Over the course of the centuries, some of these passages were censored.[15] In particular, passages in which the theme of Divine pathos played a role underwent self-censorship because of the ridicule they provoked. But it is precisely these passages to which Rabbi Shapiro turns in *EK*,[16] and which loom especially large in discourses from the final months (February-July, 1942).

One example of this is the passage in *Berakhot* (3a) which tells of Rabbi Yose, a second-century Tanna, entering one of the ruins of Jerusalem in order to pray.[17] According to the original text, Rabbi Yose heard a Divine voice (*bat kol*) saying "Woe to Me for I have destroyed My house, burned My temple, and exiled My children."[18] Rabbi Shapiro, in a discourse given on February 14, 1942,[19] begins with a discussion of this talmudic passage,[20] asking why it was that Rabbi Yose heard the heavenly voice only in the ruin. He continues:

> Now the Israelite[21] who is tormented by his afflictions thinks that he alone suffers, as if all his personal afflictions and those of all Israel do not affect [God] above, God forbid. Scripture states, however, IN ALL THEIR TROUBLES HE WAS TROUBLED[22] (Isaiah 63:9); and the Talmud states: When a person suffers, what does the Shekhinah[23] say? 'My head is too heavy for me, My arm is too heavy for Me.'[24] Our sacred

> literature tells us that when an Israelite is afflicted, God, blessed be He, suffers as it were much more than the person does.[25] It may be[26] that since He, blessed be He, is not subject to any limitation—for which reason no conception of Him is possible in the world—therefore His suffering from Israel's troubles is also boundless. It is not merely that it would be impossible for a person to endure the experience of such great suffering, but that even to conceive of His suffering, blessed be He —to know that He, blessed be He, does suffer, to hear His voice, blessed be He: 'Woe[20] for I have destroyed My house and have exiled My children'—is impossible, because He is beyond the confines of the human. It is only when Rabbi Yose entered one of the ruins of Jerusalem, so that his selfhood was further annihilated, and the constricted, bounded aspect of his being was further destroyed, that he heard the voice of the Blessed Holy One.

The idea of Divine transcendence has been effectively turned on its head in this daring move. Precisely because God is infinite, His suffering is infinite and behond human conception. One also notes how Rabbi Shapiro employs a basic notion of hasidic mysticism in his exposition: Rabbi Yose, as a great spiritual master, is assumed to have achieved a certain degree of annihilation of the self, which is intensified by the ambience of the ruin.[27] What mystics have sought to achieve by means of mortification of the flesh is here brought about by the atmosphere of the ruin. Furthermore, as the boundaries of Rabbi Yose's ego receded, what he perceived with his expanded consciousness was the reality of Divine suffering. The "mysticism of catastrophe" which emerges from this reading of the rabbinic text involves a kind of communion-in-suffering, a notion which clearly reveals Rabbi Shapiro's own spiritual state at the time he wrote.

Having established the infinite magnitude of Divine suffering, Rabbi Shapiro invokes this notion to explain, in a rather paradoxical manner, the absence of a visible Divine response to Israel's catastrophe. He writes:

> This explains why the world remains standing on its foundation, and was not destroyed by God's cry of suffering over the afflictions of His people and the destruction of His house: because His great suffering never penetrated the world. This may be what underlies the passage found in the Proem [24][28] of *Midrash Lamentations Rabbah.* [In this passage,] the angel said, 'Sovereign of the Universe, let me weep, but don't you weep.' God replied to him, 'If you don't let me weep now, I will go to a place where you have no permission to enter, and weep there, [as Scripture says, BUT IF YOU WILL NOT HEAR IT,] MY SOUL SHALL WEEP IN SECRET . . . (Jer. 13:17)[29] . . .] Now since his suffering, as it were, is boundless and vaster than all the world—for which reason it has never penetrated the world and the world does not shudder from it—therefore the angel said, "Let me weep so that You won't need to weep." In other words . . . the angel wanted the Divine weeping[30] to be manifested in the world; the angel wanted to transmit the weeping into the world.

> For then God would no longer need to weep; once the sound of Divine weeping would be heard in the world, the world would hear it and explode.[31] A spark of His suffering, as it were, would penetrate the world and would consume all His enemies. At the [parting of the] Sea [of Reeds, Exodus 14-15], the Holy One, blessed be He, exclaimed [to the ministering angels who wished to chant their hymns], "My creatures are drowning in the Sea, and you chant hymns!"[32] Now that Israel is drowning in blood, shall the world continue to exist?! [So the angel said,] "Let me weep but don't You weep"—in other words, You will no longer need to weep. But since God wanted to atone for Israel's sins, and that time was not yet a time of salvation, He answered, "I will go to a place where you have no permission to enter and weep there."

Generally in *EK,* when Rabbi Shapiro puts his thoughts in the mouths of biblical or talmudic figures, the literary convention is maintained consistently. Here, however, the distinction is at the edge of collapse; in the intensity of emotion, the author has broken through willy-nilly, speaking in what is very evidently his own voice. He continues:

> Now the suffering is so great that the world cannot contain it; it is too sublime for the world. He causes His suffering and pain to expand, as it were, still more so that they would be too sublime even for the angel, so that even the angel would not see. In the talmudic tractate *Hagigah* (5b) we find that this place [where God weeps] is in the inner chambers [of heaven]. There weeping can as it were, be predicated of Him. . . .[33]

The notion of infinite Divine pain articulated here enables the author to place Israel's suffering in cosmic perspective; he suggests to his audience that they may lose their attachment to their own suffering in the contemplation of His. Furthermore, the seeming absence of a Divine response does not signify God's abandonment of His people. Quite the contrary: God's distress is so great that He is forced to escape even the domain of the angels, so as to weep in secret. Also striking is the notion that it is precisely from a catastrophe that a new revelation may emerge.[34] The historical destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem is internalized, so that the boundaries of Rabbi Yose's ego dissolve, and he hears a heavenly voice. Finally, we note the mood of apocalyptic tension, absent from earlier pages of *EK.* The world is poised at the brink of destruction; a spark of Divine pain would destroy the universe were it to pierce its boundaries.[35] There is little doubt that this mood reflects the intensifying horror of the Nazi torture of the Ghetto in 1942, and the Jewish community's growing awareness of their enemies' true intentions.[36]

A month later, on March 14, 1942, Rabbi Shapiro picks up these themes again, in the context of a (clearly autobiographical) discussion of the formidable obstacles which face the individual who attempts to achieve a state of prophetic communion, or any kind of religious creativity, while weighed down by massive pain and anguish. He writes:

> The Talmud states in *Hagigah* [5b] that we may apply the verse STRENGTH AND REJOICING ARE IN HIS PLACE (I Chronicles 16:27) to God's outer chambers, but in His inner chambers, he grieves and weeps for the sufferings of Israel. Therefore, there are occasions when, at a time of [Divine] concealment [*hester*]—meaning, when He, blessed be He, conceals Himself in His inner chambers—the Jewish person communes with Him there, each individual in accord with his situation, and [new aspects of] Torah and Divine service are revealed to him there. We have already mentioned how the Oral Torah was revealed in exile; [similarly], the Holy Zohar was revealed at a time of extraordinary calamity . . . It is hard to raise one's self up, time and again, from the tribulations, but when one is determined, stretching his mind to connect to the Torah and Divine service, then he enters the Inner Chambers where the Blessed Holy One is to be found; he weeps and wails together with Him, as it were, and even finds the strength to study Torah and serve Him.[37]

The concept of *hester panim*—Divine concealment—is here turned around completely. God is indeed not visible, but his occultation is due not to callousness, indifference, or absolute transcendence, but is a result of the depth and intensity of His involvement in Israel's destiny. God's pain and anguish are so great that He desires to weep in seclusion, but knowing this, one can—by means of the Torah—burst into the inner chamber, and commune with God in His sorrow.

At this point in *EK,* then, the emphasis has clearly shifted from human suffering to Divine suffering. The rabbinic sources describe God as suffering along with Israel, but here in *EK* the primary focus has shifted to the "inner chamber", and the weeping God Who is to be found there. The final move in this direction appears in the penultimate discourse of *EK,* delivered on July 11, 1942:

> How can we lift ourselves up at least a little bit in the face of the terrifying reports, both old and new, which tear us to bits and crush our hearts? With the knowledge that we are not alone in our sufferings but that He, blessed be He, endures with us [as Scripture states], I AM WITH HIM IN TROUBLE (Ps. 91:15). But more: there are some sufferings which we suffer on our own account—whether for our sins, or as sufferings of love in order to purge and purify us—in which case He, blessed be He, just suffers along with us. There are, however, some sufferings which we just suffer along with Him, as it were. These are the sufferings of *Kiddush ha-Shem.*[38] . . . Israel also bears His burden. The sufferings are basically for His sake, on His account; in sufferings such as these, we are made greater, raised higher. . . . How can we tell if the sufferings are only on account of our sins, or whether they are to sanctify His name? By [noticing] whether the enemies torment only us, or whether their hatred is basically for the Torah, and as a consequence they torment us as well . . . [In the latter case] it is not appropriate to ask, for what sin [did the calamity come], since while they do expiate sins, they are essentially sufferings of *Kiddush ha-Shem.* . . .[39]

It is God who is now the primary object of attack, who is the target of the enemy's hatred. Israel now suffers as a result of her identification with God and His faith; she suffers "on His account".

The term *'Kiddush ha-Shem'*—'Sanctification of the Divine Name' is typically invoked to focus on the consequences of martyrdom: The surrender of one's life in a trial of faith testifies to the firmness of one's convictions and serves as an inspiration to others. Rabbi Shapiro, by employing the term *'yissurin shel Kiddush ha-Shem'*—'the sufferings of *Kiddush ha-Shem*'—places the emphasis not so much on the consequences of martyrdom as on its origin: Israel's suffering and martyrdom are a result of its identification with the Divine cause, and its participation in His suffering.[40] It is because Israel bears His burden that it is stricken and smitten. This is the true nobility of Israel's suffering, and it gives Israel the strength to continue.[41]

This approach is striking precisely because Rabbi Shapiro explicitly continues to adhere to a traditional understanding of suffering: suffering, in general, comes to atone for sin, or, in the case of what the Talmud calls 'sufferings of love', to purify the individual.[42] In this instance, however, the traditional typology is simply inadequate. Rather, invoking imagery taken from the Suffering Servant passages of Isaiah ['cheeks . . . torn of hair . . . given to the floggers . . .'] Rabbi Shapiro suggests that Israel's suffering is rooted in its bearing the burden of God. No sin, great or small, precipitated the events of 1939 and on; rather, what was happening was a consequence of an attack against God. Israel's suffering is ancillary to His.

The suggestion that contemporary events might somehow be connected with sin or impropriety is not entirely absent from *EK*. In a discourse delivered on March 23, 1940, R. Shapiro discusses the false attractions of Western culture, stating that

> before Amalek [the archetypical enemy of Israel in the Bible] came to do battle with you, there were . . . individuals among you who were attracted to secular wisdom, in which Amalek prided himself. [It was because of this attraction] that you lost interest in the Torah and its wisdom. . . . God made it happen that Amalek would engage you with all his vaunted wisdom, and reveal all his wickedness . . .[43]

This theme is soon dropped, however. While there are occasional references to suffering as atonement for sin, they are generalized, conventional, and formulaic. By the time just before the Great Deportation, as we have seen, Rabbi Shapiro explicitly rejects the notion that contemporary events can be explained as punishment for sin. While he affirms in principle the traditional theodicy, his new emphasis on Divine suffering enables him to reject the standard categories as inapplicable to contemporary events.[44]

We have already noted that, along with the theme of Divine suffering, a new note of apocalyptic tension appears in discourses from the period

of February-July, 1942. Rabbi Shapiro's emotions, which had been in large measure channeled and sublimated through Torah, now burst through onto the page. This change is undoubtedly a result of the catastrophic deterioration of the situation in the Ghetto, which forced its way into Rabbi Shapiro's consciousness even as he attempted to enter the ideal, transtemporal realm of Torah. In a discourse delivered on June 27, 1942,[45] he develops what might be called a "theology of the child", explaining the human urge to bear children in terms of the sefirotic processes of emanation and generativity. Citing a passage in *Tikkunei Zohar* which speaks of schoolchildren as "the face of the Shekhinah", Rabbi Shapiro says that

> one should not think of children, the youth of Israel, as private individuals who 'belong to' their parents, but as [manifestations of the principles of] creativity, renewal, as Divine revelation. . . . There is nothing in the universe other than God; there is no reality other than He. . . .

Right in the middle of this poetic and mystical exposition, the focus suddenly shifts to the Ghetto, to a fearful scene of "the voices of young and old screaming under torture, crying out *'Ratevet! Ratevet!* [Save us! Save us!]' He continues:

> It is indeed incredible how the world exists after so many such screams. We are told that, regarding the Ten Martyrs,[46] the angels cried, "Is this the Torah, and this its reward?" Whereupon a voice answered from heaven, "If I hear another sound I will turn the world back to water." But now innocent children, pure angels, as well as adults, the saintly of Israel, are killed and slaughtered just because they are Jews, who are greater than angels. These screams fill the entire space of the universe, yet the world does not revert to water, but remains in place as if, God forbid, He remained untouched?![47]

Rabbi Shapiro goes on to reject the consolation (often advanced in times of calamity) that while individuals may suffer and die, the community of Israel as a whole will survive. Each individual is a world unto himself; the individual's suffering is in no way mitigated by the community's continued existence.

Here as elsewhere in *EK*, the tone moves between the poles of vigorous protest and quietistic surrender, bold advocacy and mute acceptance. The work as a whole is characterized by a dialectic stance of outraged protest to God against the fate of the Jews, together with an unconditional acceptance grounded in radical faith.[48] In this discourse, however, the tension between the stance of hasidic quietism—which strove to perceive evil as the illusory husk of God, contemplating all reality as the "aura of Divinity", and the activist faith which yearned for an apocalyptic destruction of evil, becomes nearly unbearable. Nevertheless, even

here Rabbi Shapiro returns to a more balanced posture, ending his discourse with a biblical image of the emergence of waters of salvation in flowing profusion.

At first Rabbi Shapiro saw no reason to view events as unprecedented in light of the long and often bitter historical experience of the Jewish people. As late as December 1941, he was able to write:

> While it is true that sufferings such as we are now enduring come but once in a period of several hundreds of years . . . those individuals who say that Israel has never experienced sufferings such as these are mistaken. At the time of the destruction of the Holy Temple, and at Betar, there were sufferings such as these.[49]

However, shortly before he buried the manuscript of *EK,* he wrote an addendum to this passage.[50] This addendum, written after the Great Deportation, on November 27, 1942, states:

> Only until the end of the year 5702 [summer of 1942] was it the case that such sufferings were experienced before. However, as for the monstrous torments, the terrible and freakish deaths . . . devised against us, the House of Israel, from the end of 5702 and on—according to my knowledge of rabbinic literature and Jewish history in general, there has never been anything like them. May God have mercy and deliver us from their hands in the twinkling of an eye.

III

Contemporary scholars explain that the rabbinic theme of *Shekhinta Ba-Galuta*—the Shekhina in exile with Israel—is essentially consolatory in nature. As Norman J. Cohen has put it, this notion was "a means of dispelling the people's despair and raising their hope and trust in God."[51] It was part of the midrashic "language of survival used by the Rabbis to buoy up a nation downtrodden and persecuted."[52] Similarly, the acute development in *EK* of the notion of Divine suffering is clearly prompted by contemporary circumstances and is consolatory in nature. Rabbi Shapiro says as much himself. Yet we would be remiss, I believe, to leave matters at that. It is important, while noting the functional significance of Rabbi Shapiro's ideas for the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, to also examine their origins and location in the framework of aggadic, kabbalistic, and hasidic thought.

We must recall that hasidic masters, in contrast to thinkers committed to the tradition of philosophical rationalism, were generally warmly disposed to the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic tendency within Judaism. In common with the kabbalistic tradition, they had an unreservedly positive attitude towards the rabbinic Aggadah. Unlike some of

the philosophers of Judaism, whose treatment of the Aggadah is often "embarrased and fumbling",[53] who "never felt at home in the world of Midrash",[54] the Kabbalists hailed the anthropomorphical and paradoxical Aggadahs as "one of the keys to the mystical realm."[55] The masters of Hasidism inherited this attitude from the Kabbalah. Particularly revealing is a remark attributed to our Rabbi Shapiro's great-great-grandfather, Rabbi Israel Hapstein, the famed Maggid of Kozienice (d. 1814). He is quoted as saying, "When Maimonides made this ruling [that it is heresy to believe that God has a body and form], a great darkness overtook the Upper World, because many souls who had followed that opinion were banished from the heavenly Paradise. When Rabad[56] saw that great darkness, he rejected the Maimonidean ruling, and all those souls returned to Paradise."[57] The Maggid of Kozienice did not entertain a physical conception of the Deity, but he was no doubt informed by the Kabbalistic tradition which understood biblical and rabbinic anthropomorphisms in terms of the theosophy of the Sefirot.[58] Abraham Joshua Heschel, who is well-known for his theology of Divine pathos,[59] was clearly influenced by his hasidic upbringing and background. Steven T. Katz has recently noted[60] that "there is certainly as much Divine passibility in classical Kabbalah as there is in Heschel; and at the same time what the Kabbalists try to protect through their postulation of the ineffable Ein Sof is precisely what Heschel wants to protect when he eschews talk of God's essence. . . ."[61] This is all to say that the theology of *EK* does not emerge from a vacuum; it is strongly rooted in a Kabbalistic-Hasidic worldview.

The theme of infinite Divine suffering cannot be viewed as an isolated and idiosyncratic utterance of a religious leader flung about wildly in a cruel maelstrom. It is one element of a pre-existing relational lattice, which was thrust into prominence and developed by an author who retained his ability to engage traditional materials with suppleness and freshness. It was not intended to "explain" what was happening, but to provide a language in which an unparalleled catastrophe might be expressed, placing it in a spiritual and affective framework. By positing infinite Divine suffering, Rabbi Shapiro was able to shift the focus of his listeners away from their personal tragedies, away from the collapse of their own individual worlds. He was also able to give a radical reinterpretation of *hester panim*: God's suffering is hidden from us precisely because it is infinite.[62] Finally, by placing matters within a mystical framework of hidden cosmic processes, he was able to reject the rationalized calculus of the "reward and punishment" model of suffering, in terms of its applicability to events of the day. Firmly maintaining his absolute faith in God and His goodness,[63] he desisted from the preacher's stock-in-trade of harping on his audience's sins and shortcomings. The events of 1942 were, at root, an attack on God Himself; their origin was not to be sought

in any putative sin of the starved and hounded ghetto inmates, but in rebellion against the Divine, the Torah, and their embodiment in this world: Israel.[64]

The sense of apocalyptic tension, of cosmic crisis,[65] which permeates the latter part of *Esh Kodesh,* nourished Rabbi Shapiro's hope that a new revelation might emerge from the catastrophe.[66] To the very end, he held to the hope of salvation, to the vision of a dazzling illumination which might yet emerge, in some unspecified way, from the heart of darkness. Rabbi Shapiro was aware that, from a critical perspective, his statements of faith stood unsupported, in complete defiance of what passed for "empirical reality" in Warsaw, 1942. They reveal an inner resistance, a commitment to hold on to a higher truth, come what may. His teaching and writing were acts of spiritual transcendence, affirmations of God and Israel as the "higher principle in a world not ready for them."[67]

ADDENDUM

Professor David Roskies has drawn my attention to the fact that Rabbi Shapiro was not the only writer in the Warsaw Ghetto to respond to events with the image of Divine weeping. Towards the end of Yitzhak Katzenelson's poem *"Dos Lied vegn Radziner"* [The Song about the Radziner Rebbe],[68] the Radziner encounters God weeping in an empty boxcar. This poem, whose factual core is based on underground reports of the activities of the real Rebbe of Radzin, as well as Katzenelson's knowledge of hasidim in the Warsaw Ghetto, depicts the Rebbe as struggling heroically to uphold the central values of God-Torah-Israel, longing for the martyr's death of Rabbi Akiva while selflessly serving the living and the dead.[69] Katzenelson, who, as Roskies points out, could be found but a few doors down from where Rabbi Shapiro lived and wrote,[70] began the poem on July 10, 1942 and wrote the concluding sections in 1943, after the Great Deportation. The Dror-Hechalutz underground circle in the Ghetto, with which Katzenelson was associated, argued with him for "preaching more *Kiddush ha-Shem* than rebellion."[71] Yechiel Szeintuch, who edited Katzenelson's Ghetto writings, portrays the dramatic "spiritual change" which took place in Katzenelson in April 1942, "with the beginning of the liquidation of the Jews in the *Generalgouvernement* (Lublin), and in the face of encroaching doom for Warsaw Jewry."[72] In contrast to an earlier period, when Katzenelson "still did not view events as substantially different from what had happened to the Jewish people in other . . . times",[23] his writing now had a new urgency, anger, and vision. Szeintuch's portrayal of the change in Katznelson's writing suggests some remarkable parallels to the changing character of *Esh Kodesh* in corresponding periods, as discussed above.[74]

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NOTES

1. For details, see N. Polen, "*Esh Kodesh*: The Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymos Shapiro in the Warsaw Ghetto" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1983), pp. 13-28. Hereafter cited as Polen, "Teachings."

2. See Polen, "Teachings," pp. 29-36.

3. Jerusalem, 1960. Hereafter cited as *EK*. In his cover letter, Rabbi Shapiro referred to his manuscript as "*'Hiddushei Torah' mi-Shnot ha-Za'am* 5700, 5701, 5702" [Torah Novellae from the Years of Wrath, 1939-42] (*EK*, p. vii). Cf. manuscript facsimile, *EK*, p. iv. The present title was provided by the publisher.

4. Mendel Piekarz, *Ha-Ta'udah ha-Hasidit ha-Sifrutit ha-Aharonah al Admat Polin* (Jerusalem, 1979). Selections from *EK* are presented in Pesach Schindler, *"Zidduk ha-Din mi-Tokh ha-Sho'ah," Petahim*, Vol. 55-56 (1981), pp. 42-52. See also idem, *"The Holocaust and the Kiddush Hashem in Hasidic Thought,"* in Frank E. Reynolds and Earle H. Waugh (eds.), *Religious Encounters with Death* (London, 1977), pp. 28-35.

5. For detailed analysis, see Polen, "Teachings," pp. 61-66.

6. Polen, "Teachings," pp. 80-82; 92-95.

7. Rabbi Shapiro's own characterization of the work (see above, n. 3) indicates that he viewed the material as a cohesive body of writing, forged in one crucible of experience.

8. A recent summary of this theme can be found in Jacob J. Petuchowski, *Theology and Poetry: Studies in the Medieval Piyyut* (London, 1978), Ch. 8: "The Suffering God." See also Henry Slonimsky, *Essays* (Cincinnati, 1978), pp. 41-48.

9. Heschel's term for this is "Divine pathos." Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (Philadelphia, 1962). According to Heschel, Divine pathos is "a central category of the prophetic understanding for God" (p. 223), which meant that man was "relevant to God," and that "God can actually suffer." (p. 259)

10. *Exodus Rabbah* 2:5. See Normal J. Cohen, "Shekhinta Ba-Galuta: A Midrashic Response to Destruction and Persecution," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, Vol. 13, No's. 1-2 (1982), pp. 147-159.

11. See Melvin Jay Glatt, "God the Mourner—Israel's Companion in Tragedy," *Judaism*, Vol. 28 (1979), pp. 72-79.

12. See Simon Rawidowicz, *"Be'ayat ha-Hagshamah le-Rav Saadiah Gaon ve-le-Rambam,"* in *Iyyunim be-Mahashevet Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1969), Vol. 1, pp. 171-233. Also *idem*, "Saadya's Purification of the Idea of God" in *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Philadelphia, 1974), pp. 246-268.

13. See Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbis: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadah* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 1-20.

14. See Moises Orfali, "Anthropomorphism in the Christian Reproach of the Jews of Spain (12th-15th Century)," *Immanuel*, Vol. 19 (1984/85), pp. 60-73.

15. See Harry Fox, "'As if with a Finger'—The Text History of an Expression Avoiding Anthropomorphism," *Tarbiz*, Vol. 49 (1980), pp. 278-291 (Hebrew).

16. The theme of God's suffering with Israel occurs eight times in *EK:* on p. 28 (discourse given March 16, 1940); p. 81 (Nov. 30, 1940); p. 83 (Dec. 14, 1940); p. 115 (Aug 23, 1941); p. 116 (Aug. 30, 1941); p. 159 (Feb. 14, 1942); p. 178 (March 14, 1942); p. 191 (July 11, 1942). For an earlier period, see Rabbi Shapiro's *Derekh ha-Melekh* (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 58-59; p. 67; p. 96.

17. This passage is also cited in *EK* on p. 20 (Jan. 20, 1940); p. 26 (March 9, 1940); p. 147 (Jan. 17, 1942). Compare also *Derekh ha-Melekh,* pp. 26-27.

18. See R. Rabbinowicz, *Dikdukei Soferim* (Munich, 1868), pp. 4-5, and Saul Lieberman, *Shki'in* (Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 69-70. Medieval self-censorship removed the words 'to Me,' so that the passage read, "Woe, for I have destroyed. . ." In the standard Vilna edition of the Talmud, the passage reads "Woe to the children, on account of whose sins I destroyed My house . . . ," replacing the anthropopathic tone with a moralistic one.

19. *EK,* pp. 159-164.

20. Rabbi Shapiro cites the passage as it appears in the *Ein Ya'akov* collection of talmudic Aggadot, which omits the words "to Me." A careful checking of the manuscript of *EK* discloses that the Hebrew word *"li,"* found in the printed edition (p. 159), actually does not appear here.

21. While, for the sake of fidelity to the original, we here translate *"ish ha-Yisra'el"* as "Israelite," on occasions when this seems too awkward, we render it as "Jewish person," or "Jew."

22. All scriptural citations are set in capitals for clarity. Our translation here follows the *keri* of the masorah. See the Jewish Publication Society translation of this passage (Philadelphia, 1978), and note thereon.

23. Divine Presence.

24. *B. Sanhedrin* 46a.

25. I have thus far been unable to locate this precise formulation in any source.

26. Heb. *Ve-efshar.* This signals Rabbi Shapiro's introduction of his own original material.

27. On "annihilation" in Hasidism, see Rivkah Schatz Uffenheimer, *Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought* (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 21-31 (Hebrew).

28. An English translation of the entire proem, by A. Cohen, is available in the *The Midrash Rabbah: Lamentations* (London, 1977), pp. 36-49.

29. Compare Rabbi Shapiro's discussion of this same passage in his *Derekh ha-Melekh,* p. 40 (discourse for Rosh Hashanah, 5690 [1929]).

30. Heb. *bekhiyat ha-ke-ve-yakhol:* "the weeping of the *ke-ve-yakhol.*" *Ke-ve-yakhol* ("so to speak"/"as it were") is here nominalized, to be understood as a pious substitute for the name of God. See the remark of A. Marmorstein, *Essays in Anthropomorphism* (reprint ed., New York, 1968), pp. 131-132: ". . . in later sources, under the influence of Kabbalistic teaching and speculation, *ke-ve-yakhol* became one of the names by which mystics and dreamers spoke of God."

31. While the mood here is conditional, the ambiguity of the Hebrew allows the text to be read an an entreaty. See further. (The boldface emphasis of the printed edition is absent in the manuscript.)

32. *B. Megillah* 10b; see J. Heinemann, "'The Work of My Hands is Being Drowned in the Sea . . .'", *Bar-Ilan Annual,* Vol. 7-8 (1970), pp. 80-84.

33. Many kabbalistic writers interpreted the *Hagigah* passage differently. Reversing Rashi's interpretation (which is followed by Rabbi Shapiro), they place the weeping in the outer chambers, and the joy in the inner chambers. See Reuven Margoliot, *Sha'arei Zohar* (Jerusalem, 1956), p. 61b. Compare also Rabbi Shapiro's citation of the *Hagigah* passage in *Derekh ha-Melekh,* p. 96 (discourse for

Shemini Azeret; no year given, but evidently from the late 1920s or early 1930s).

34. This theme, or closely related themes, can be found in *EK* on pp. 75-76 (Oct. 24, 1940); p. 100 (April 18, 1941); p. 127 (Sept. 27, 1941); pp. 129-130 (Oct. 7, 1941); p. 158 (Feb. 7, 1942); p. 178 (March 14, 1942). See also the passages cited in n. 17, above.

35. Daniel Sperber points out [in *Midrash Yerushalayem: A Metaphysical History of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 106] that already in midrashic literature there are indications that "on occasions God's grief almost, as it were, gives way to violence"; to his citations, one might add *B. Berakhot* 29a: "When God remembers his children who dwell in misery among the nations of the world, He causes two tears to descend to the ocean and the sound is heard from one end of the world to the other." An even closer adumbration of Rabbi Shapiro's motif can be found in *Heikhalot de-Rabbi Ishma'el,* known as *3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch.* In Chapter 48A, we find: "Then the right hand of the Omnipresent One wept, and five rivers of tears flowed from its five fingers, and, falling into the Great Sea, made the whole world quake . . ." Trans. P. Alexander, in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudipigrapha,* Vol. I (New York, 1983), p. 301.

36. See Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943; Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, 1982), p. 145: ". . . at the beginning of 1942 . . . news began to arrive of the deportations and mass-murder campaigns." Gutman notes that while "at the end of 1941 . . . there were, or appeared to be, indications that the situation in the ghetto was stabilizing" and that the Jews of the Ghetto might survive the war after all, yet by early 1942, the mood had shifted, with the Jewish underground moving its emphasis from mutual aid to the preparation for armed struggle. See pp. 164-5; also p. 201. See below, note 49.

37. *EK,* pp. 178-9.

38. Generally translated as "martyrdom." See discussion below.

39. *EK,* pp. 191-2.

40. Our passage here should be compared to an earlier one (*EK,* p. 83 [Dec. 14, 1940]), where very similar expressions are to be found, without, however, the crucial point that the catastrophe was, in essence, an attack against God. See also *Derekh ha-Melekh,* p. 58 (discourse for *Shabbat Shuvah,* 5690 [1929]).

41. Cf. Y. Liebes's remarks in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought,* Vol. 2 (1982/3), p. 72, n. 89; also Slonimsky, *Essays,* p. 56.

42. See the presentation of the talmudic sources in Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem, 1975), Vol. 1, pp. 442-8.

43. *EK,* p. 29. See also p. 33 (April 20, 1940).

44. There is no programmatic and sustained focusing in *EK* on any one specific "sin," for which the catastrophe might be seen as a punishment. By the start of the war's third year (discourse for Rosh Hashanah, Sept. 22, 1941; *EK,* p. 122), we find Rabbi Shapiro saying that ". . . it is not our doing that [study of] Torah and Divine service are now in ruins . . ."

There have been other works, grounded in traditional Jewish theology and formulated in its categories, which uphold the "sin and punishment" nexus in explaining the Holocaust. See Pinchas H. Peli, "In Search of Religious Language for the Holocaust," *Conservative Judaism,* Vol. 32, No. 2 (1979), pp. 9-16. For the views of the Satmar Rebbe, see Allan Nadler, "Piety and Politics: The Case of the Satmar Rebbe," *Judaism,* Vol. 31, No. 2 (1982), pp. 135-152. On Rabbi Issachar

Teichthal's *Em ha-Banim Semeiha* (Budapest, 1943; reprint ed., New York, 1969), see Pesach Schindler, "Rabbi Issachar Teichthal on Hurban and Redemption," *Tradition*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1984), pp. 63-79; *idem*, in *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1977), pp. 28-35.

45. *EK*, pp. 182-188.

46. The story of the Ten Martyrs of the Hadrianic persecution is the theme of the *Arzei ha-Levanon* lament recited on Tishah be-Av, as well as the *Eileh Ezkerah Piyyut* for Yom Kippur. See the discussion in Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 521-2, and the notes on p. 921; also Solomon Zeitlin in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 36 (1945-46), pp. 1-16. See below, n. 66.

47. *EK* p. 187. See Adolf Berman, "The Fate of the Children in the Warsaw Ghetto," in Yisrael Gutman and Livia Rothkirchen (ed.), *The Catastrophe of European Jewry: Antecedents-History-Reflections* (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 400-421. Note esp. p. 421.

48. See Polen, "Teachings," pp. 183-197.

49. *EK*, p. 139 (Discourse for Hanukkah, Dec. 15, 1941). We have already pointed out (note 36, above) that, at the end of 1941 "there were, or appeared to be, indications that the situation in the ghetto was stabilizing, and diary entries from that period expressed a burgeoning hope that, despite all, the inured population of Jewish Warsaw would survive the war." Very soon after, however, in January, 1942, the first reports of the Chelmno extermination camp reached Warsaw Jewry. These reports shook the ghetto and motivated the Jewish Underground to begin organizing a resistance force. Gutman, pp. 165-6.

50. The passage and addendum, in the author's hand, can be seen in the manuscript facsimile reproduced on p. v of the printed edition of *EK*. The addendum appears at the very bottom of the sheet, keyed to the main text with a Hebrew letter *'bet'*.

51. Cohen, "Shekhinta," p. 157. See also A. Marmorstein, *Essays in Anthropomorphism* (reprint ed., New York, 1968), pp. 68-73.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 159. Cohen's article contrasts "the notion of *Histalkut ha-Shekhinah*, the departure of God's indwelling presence as a result of the destruction of the Temple," with the "alternative thrust . . . which emphasizes God's sharing the experience of exile with Israel." [p. 150] Cohen points out the puzzling fact that in "the very passage from *Eikha Rabbati* . . . which underscores the notion of *Histalqut ha-Shekhina*, God nevertheless is pictured as weeping and mourning." [p. 148, n. 5] Rabbi Shapiro manages to reconcile these motifs, since as he explains it, God's apparent departure and hiding are precisely the result of his ongoing involvement and His desire to weep in secret.

53. Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1961), p. 31.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

55. *Ibid.*

56. R. Abraham b. David of Posquieres, author of the animadversions to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*.

57. *Eser Orot* Pietrekow, 1907), p. 82. Cf. I. J. Dienstag, *"Ha-Moreh Nevukhim ve-Sefer ha-Mada be-Sifrut ha-Hasidut," Abraham Weiss Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1964), pp. 317-318. On Rabad's view, see Isadore Twersky, *Rabad of Posquieres* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 282-6.

58. See Moshe Idel, "'We Have No Kabbalistic Tradition on This'", in Isadore Twersky (ed.), *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 72, and n. 74 there.

59. See above, n. 9.

60. In an analysis of Eliezer Berkovits's critique of Heschel's theology of pathos. See Eliezer Berkovits, *Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism* (New York, 1974), pp. 192-224.

61. Steven T. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought* (New York, 1983), p. 129. Compare Heschel's own discussion of "the wisdom and the folly of anthropomorphism" in *The Prophets,* pp. 272-5; also pp. 483-4. Rabbi Shapiro addresses the issue of anthropomorphism in *Hovat ha-Talmidim,* (Warsaw, 1932; reprint ed., Tel Aviv, n.d.), pp. 68a-72b. See also *Derekh ha-Melekh,* p. 59: ". . . [while] He has no analog or body, yet since everything comes from God, it follows that every sublime power which is present in us, must be found Above, even though we do not know how it is found Above. . . ."

62. Rabbi Shapiro's ideas are not to be confused with the concept of a "finite God" who completely and unconditionally relinquishes omnipotence in order to grant radical freedom to his creation. [See, e.g., Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," in *Out of the Whirlwind,* (ed.) Albert H. Friedlander (New York, 1976), pp. 465-476; first published in *Harvard Theological Review,* Vol. 55 (1962), pp. 1-20.] Rabbi Shapiro's concept of Divine pain and occultation is generated by emphasizing God's infinitude, not finitude. Furthermore, one cannot ask a finite God for salvation, yet Rabbi Shapiro continues to hope and pray for Divine salvation until the end. God is indeed linked to the realm of the finite, but this linkage is effected by the Torah, which is at once the will of the infinite God, and the template of creation for the bounded world of space and time. As God's revelation, the Torah is thus the vehicle for the penetration, or eruption, of the infinite into the finite. The hope for salvation lies precisely in communion with God by means of the Torah. See *EK,* pp. 161-3.

63. See Polen, "Teachings," pp. 143-182.

64. Compare Rabbi Shapiro's statement in *Hovat ha-Talmidim,* p. 80a, that when God will reveal the fact that the "Supernal Matron" [the Shekhina] is invested in and works in Israel, then those who have tormented Israel will say in shame and fear, "Woe to us for we have trampled on the Supernal Matron, and have despised and trampled upon parts of the Almighty's soul."

65. In his discourse for Rosh Hashanah, 5702 (Sept. 22, 1941; *EK,* p. 124) Rabbi Shapiro invokes the notion of *shevirat ha-kelim*—the cosmic "breaking of the vessels" (see Scholem, *Major Trends,* pp. 265-8); he cites the Lurianic tradition that at the time of the Ten Martyrs (see above, n. 46), the forces of darkness (*kelipot*) were in the ascendency, precipitating the danger of the universe's destruction in the manner of *shevirat ha-kelim,* which was only averted and "rectified" by the martyrdom of those ten great souls. He continues, ". . . when we see the troubles that have befallen us, with so many Israelite souls, scholars, righteous individuals, servants of God, having been taken from us . . . then we know that now too is a time under the aspect of *shevirat ha-kelim.*" If this cosmic crisis would be met with a human initiative of repentance and renewal, it might lead to a "new creation." See also *EK,* p. 109; p. 165. Compare also the theme of the "birth pangs of the Messiah" on pp. 106-8.

66. See the passages cited in n. 34, above. Rabbi Shapiro's linkage of persecution and new revelation follows a motif already found in early Jewish mysticism. See Ithamar Gruenwald's discussion of the ten-martyrs-apocalypse of *Hekhalot Rabbati,* in his *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980), especially his remark on p. 160 that "the impression one may gain from this . . . passage [describing an ascent to the Merkavah] is that the revelation of the secrets of the world was made public as a result of religious persecutions." See also Joseph Dan, *"Pirkei Heikhalot Rabbati u-Ma'aseh Aseret Harugei Malkhut," Eshel Beer-Sheva,* Vol. 2 (1980), pp. 63-80 [Hebrew]. See also Yitzhak Baer, "Israel, the Christian Church, and the Roman Empire," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 83, on "the ecstatic vision which was given to the martyrs in the days of their torments, and at the hour when they gave up their ghost." See n. 7 there.

67. Slonimsky, *Essays,* p. 42. Slonimsky's elegant and eloquent presentation of the midrashic sources on this and related themes is much to be admired, but his reading of the materials from the perspective of process theology must be viewed with caution. See above, n. 62.

68. In Yechiel Szeintuch (ed.), *Yiddish Ghetto Writings: Warsaw 1940-1943* (Yiddish) (Tel Aviv, 1984), pp. 663-706.

69. See Roskies' discussion in *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 217-220.

70. *Ibid.,* p. 52. Rabbi Shapiro's residence was on Dzielna 5; the Dror-Hechalutz center was at Dzielna 34. After the Great Deportation in the summer of 1942, Rabbi Shapiro and Katzenelson both worked at Schultz's *Schop.*

71. Quoted by Szeintuch in his introduction to *Yiddish Ghetto Writings,* p. viii.

72. *Ibid.,* p. vii.

73. *Ibid.,* p. v.

74. See above, nn. 36, 49. See also Szeintuch's "The Sources of 'The Song about the Rabbi of Radzyn', by Yitzhak Katzenelson," in *Studies on the Holocaust Period III* (Tel Aviv, 1984), pp. 61-96 (Hebrew).