



Kalonymus Kalman Shapira

Ariel Evan Mayse, Daniel Reiser, Don Seeman

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Introduction

Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira (b. 1889–d. 1943), otherwise known as the Piaseczner Rebbe, was a creative mystical thinker and an important Hasidic leader. The scion of a minor Hasidic dynasty, he went on to found one of the most important Hasidic educational institutions in interwar Poland. He is best known for his sermons in the Warsaw Ghetto, but his many writings, most of which were published posthumously, offer rich depictions of the inner life, the nature of spiritual fellowship, and the revitalization of religion in the wake of secularism. Study of Shapira's writings mediate against any claim that later Polish Hasidism as a whole had stagnated, was uninterested in the project of spiritual self-renewal, or had essentially given up on the potential for ecstasy and mystical experience. Shapira's works have engendered a significant and growing body of scholarly research on 20th-century Hasidism, and of course, the history of the Holocaust and religious responses thereto. Though few scholars have analyzed his writings and communal leadership from broader social or cultural perspectives, Shapira's innovative teachings on pedagogy, spiritual instruction, and the master-disciple relationship are of interest to educational philosophers and practitioners.

Biographies and Overviews

Kalonymus Shapira was born on 13 July 1889, to Rabbi Elimelekh Shapira (known as the Grodzisker Rebbe, b. 1824–d. 1892) and Hannah Berakhah, the daughter of Rabbi Hayyim Shemuel Horowicz of Chęciny. He married the daughter of Kozhenitser Rebbe, and Shapira was appointed rabbi of the city of Piaseczno in 1913, at the age of twenty-four. He moved to Warsaw after World War I, though he continued to visit Piaseczno frequently, and there he founded a yeshivah and was the leader of a Hasidic community. Shapira was an active member of the rabbinic community as well as the Orthodox Jewish political alliance Agudath Israel. It should be noted that Shapira favored a section of the movement that was more positively disposed toward settlement in the land of Israel than most and even purchased property there. His brother Rabbi Yeshayahu Shapira, popularly known as “the Pioneer Rabbi,” joined the religious Zionist movement Mizrahi and moved to an agricultural settlement in the Land of Israel before the war. Most of Shapira's family, including his wife, son, mother, and daughter-in-law and sister-in law, died before the Germans conquered Warsaw and the ghetto was established. It is believed that Shapira was among a group that was marched into the forest and shot in early November 1943. Polen 1994, based on the author's dissertation written with Elie Wiesel, ushered in a wave of English-language scholarship and is a foundational text. The testimony in Bein 1967 represents the reflections of someone who knew Shapira for many decades and was sensitive to his unique qualities. Frankel and Zilbershlag 1994 is an important collection of documents. Polen 2010 is an excellent overview and accessible resource on Shapira's life and intellectual project, and Wacks 2010 is a good introduction for the Hebrew reader. The interdisciplinary volume Seeman, et al. 2021, seeks to move the study of Shapira's corpus in new directions branching forth from the new critical edition of one of his books.

Bein, Leib. *From the Notebook of a Hasidic Reporter*. Jerusalem, 1967.

Firsthand description of Shapira by an individual who knew him for over three decades, noting that, in the eyes of the young author, he surpassed his rabbinical colleagues in grace, presence, and personal kindness. See pp. 27–35. In Hebrew.

Frankel, Hayim, and David Hayim Zilbershlag, ed. *Zikhron Kodesh le-Ba'al Esh Kodesh: Yovel le-Aliyato al mokad shel Morrenu ha-rav Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira*. Jerusalem: Va'ad Hasidei Piaseczno, 1994.

An important resource with four sections: (1) a biography, following that of Sorasky with some additions and photographs; (2) a collection of articles about Shapira; (3) a reprinting of *Kerem* 1 (1931), a Torah journal published by Shapira's yeshivah Da'at Moshe; (4) seventeen letters, with both copies of the manuscript and transcription though with unfortunate errata. In Hebrew.

Polen, Nehemia. *The Holy Fire: The Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymos Shapira, the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994.

Pathbreaking spiritual biography that introduced Shapira to the English world and ushered in the field of scholarship on Shapira. Pays close attention to his Holocaust theology and Shapira's reflections on the life of the spirit in times of trauma.

Polen, Nehemia. "Shapiro, Kalonymus Kalmish ben Elimelekh of Piaseczno." In *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Edited by Gershon D. Hundert. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

Excellent and accessible overview of Shapira's life and literary works, as well as his place in the world of Polish Hasidism.

Seeman, Don, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse, eds. *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Interdisciplinary reassessing of Shapira's entire written corpus examining his literary and educational goals, the link between his prewar mysticism and his Holocaust era sermons, and the question of faith—or its collapse—in the Warsaw Ghetto. Special attention is paid to the importance of Reiser's 2017 critical edition (Reiser 2017, cited under Printed Books) of Shapira's wartime homilies.

Sorosky, Aharon. "The Life and Times of the Holy Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira of Piaseczno." In *Esh Kodesh*. By Aharon Sorosky, i–xxvii. Jerusalem: Va'ad Hasidei Piasetzna, 1960.

An in-depth biography informed by the author's interviews with the Shapira family in Israel and with the students that survived the Holocaust. In Hebrew.

Wacks, Ron. *The Flame of the Holy Fire: Perspectives on the Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymous Kalmish Shapiro of Piaczena*. Alon Shvut, Israel: Tvunot, 2010.

Explores many dimensions of Shapira's thought and philosophy, including his approach to prayer and worship, emotional development, contemplative education, and the cultivation of prophecy. Includes biographical sketches and analysis of Shapira's writings and appendices on his contemplative techniques. In Hebrew.

Historical and Cultural Background

Understanding the broad and variegated Jewish world of prewar and wartime Warsaw, and the trends of Polish culture more broadly, is critical for understanding Shapira's intellectual project and religious teachings. Although much of the scholarship has focused on the ideational component of Shapira's life, proper attention to the social and political landscape gives further texture to his efforts at spiritual and communal renewal, and further study is needed to demonstrate the extent to which his educational and philosophical innovations may indeed reflect broader cultural trends.

Bacon, Gershon. *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916–1939*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996.

Explores the increasing politicization of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox—including Hasidic—Jews in Poland. Important for understanding Shapira's involvement in the world of rabbinic political involvement, this fractious and balkanized political landscape is also critical to his attempt to form spiritual fellowships transcending such temporal concerns.

Biale, David, David Assaf, Benjamin Brown, et al. *Hasidism: A New History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Sweeping historical overview of the emergence, development, and spread of Hasidism. The third part is devoted entirely to Hasidism in the 20th century.

Dynner, Glenn. “Replenishing the “Fountain of Judaism”: Traditionalist Jewish Education in Interwar Poland.” *Jewish History* 31.3–4 (2018): 229–261.

Study of the educational, religious, and spiritual renaissance that took place among the fiercely Hasidic communities in Poland between the two World Wars, distinguishing them from the ultra-Orthodox rabbinic block as being more flexible and open to innovation—albeit when garbed in the mantle of tradition.

Dynner, Glenn, and François Guesnet. *Warsaw: The Jewish Metropolis—Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of Professor Antony Polonsky*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2015.

Collection of studies detailing many aspects of this capital of Jewish cultural, religious, and political activity across several centuries. Several key chapters are devoted to issues that touch upon Hasidism and the interwar period.

Stampfer, Shaul. “Hasidic Yeshivot in Inter-War Poland.” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 11 (1998): 3–24.

Details the emergence of Hasidic yeshivot as autonomous educational institutions dedicated to the promotion of a certain set of religious-cultural and communal values.

Wodziński, Marcin. *Historical Atlas of Hasidism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

Remarkable cartographical study of Hasidism, detailing its emergence and spread over three centuries across the ever-shifting political territory of eastern Europe. Visually demonstrates the ways in which Hasidism was impacted by processes such as urbanization, and offers demographic reflections upon the concentration of Hasidic leaders and their followers.

Wodzinski, Marcin. “The Place of Piety: Piaseczno in the Landscape of Polish Hasidism.” In *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Examines Shapira’s place in the landscape of urban Polish Hasidism between the two world wars. Argues that, although Shapira was figure of minor importance upon that historical scene, Shapira was a remarkably creative and innovative mystical thinker whose impact has continued to grow beyond his death.

Primary Sources

During his life Shapira had already published one innovative and well-regarded tract on Hasidic pedagogy, *Hovat ha-Talmidim* (*The Students’ Obligation*), and had distributed a handbook on mystical fraternities (*Benei Mahshavah Tovah*, or *Children of Illuminated Consciousness*) among his close disciples. A volume of sermons from the 1920s and 1930s was published posthumously under the title *Derekh ha-Melekh* (*The Royal Way*). His students also separately published his sermon for the Sabbath before Yom Kippur in Piaseczno in 1936, printing the homily in the original Yiddish. The buried Warsaw archive brought several additional manuscripts to light. These included mystical and pedagogical tracts devoted to students and devotees at different developmental levels: *Hakhsharat ha-Avrehim* (*The Young Men’s Preparation*), *Mevo ha-she’arim* (*The Entrance to the Gates*), and his personal journal, *Tsav ve-Zeiruz* (*Command and Urging*). Finally, the sermons delivered in the Warsaw Ghetto were published as *Esh Kodesh* (*Holy Fire*). Each of these reveals something about Shapira’s intellectual project, and though they are largely of a cloth, scholars continue to explore the ways in which Shapira’s various written works complement and occasionally challenge one another.

Manuscripts

The manuscripts upon which most of Shapira's printed books are based still exist, a fact that is extremely rare in Hasidic texts, and most are accessible. In addition to being different from printed editions, often significantly, the manuscripts demonstrate the degree to which Shapira actively edited and developed his written works. The handwriting, especially that of the wartime sermons, also demonstrates the peregrinations of his emotional situation.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *Benei Mahashavah Tovah*. Private archive of Rabbi Avraham Hamar, Benei Berak.

Copy of the book written on a typewriter, including a few editorial changes in Shapira's hand. The copy bears a dedication to Rabbi Eliyahu Hamar. On its title page Shapira wrote, with his signature, that the book should not be copied without his permission. This copy serves as the basis for printings of the book that began in 1973, edited by Avraham Hamar and Elazar Bein. It was produced no later than 1927.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *MS Benei Mahashavah Tovah*. Chabad Library, New York, Catalog Number 1192.27.

Previously of the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny), catalog number 407. Includes twenty-seven pages, twenty-three composed on a typewriter and the remainder handwritten in several different hands. This copy was part of the collection of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, the Sixth Rebbe of Lubavitch, who moved to Warsaw in 1933 and from there to Otwock. Schneersohn and Shapira knew one another and worked together on the rabbinical council of Warsaw. Schneersohn was saved and taken out of conquered Warsaw, but his collection of books and manuscripts moved to New York only in 1977.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *MS Derashat Pesah ve-Yamim Aharonim shel Pesah 5687*. Catalog number 695a. Library of the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny), Warsaw, 1–4.

Also: *MS Derashat Shabbat Devarim-Hazon 5696* and *MS Derashat Shabbat Va-Ethanan-Nahamu 5696*. Catalog number 695b. Three sermons not included in the Ringelblum archive. It is unknown how these manuscripts ended up at the Library of the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny). These homilies were published in *Derekh ha-Melekh*.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *MS Derekh ha-Melekh*. Private archive of Rabbi Avraham Hamar, Benei Berak.

Includes most of the sermons that appear in the printed version of *Derekh ha-Melekh*, according to copies made by Rabbi Eliyahu Hamar. The homilies were edited by Shapira, who occasionally added notes or corrections in the margins.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *MS Divrei Torah she-Amarti ba-Shabbatot ve-Yom Tovim be-Shenot 5740, 5741, and 5742*. ARG II 15. Ringelblum Archive, the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny), Warsaw.

Includes ninety-eight pages of homilies delivered during the Holocaust. The first eleven pages were prepared by a copyist, including marginal notes by Shapira, and the remaining eighty-seven pages are the work of Shapira's own hand. The letter attached to all these pages, under the title "Aufmerkzam!!!" (Attention!) refers to the manuscript as "Torah Interpretations from the Years of Rage, 5740, 5741, and 5742." Available online

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *MS Hakhsharat ha-Avrekhim u-Mevo ha-She'arim*. ARG II 16. Ringelblum Archive, Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny), Warsaw.

Two books bound together. *Hakhsharat ha-Avrekhim*, a manuscript of eighty-one pages by a copyist with notes in Shapira's handwriting, which includes a memorial inscription written by Shapira in honor of his mother (d. 7 Heshvan 5740) that he requested be attached to the book. *Mevo ha-Shearim* numbers sixty-two manuscript pages in two different hands, the first of which is similar to that of *Hakhsharat ha-Avrekhim* but the last five pages, as well as the fourth chapter of the book, are written in a different hand. Available online.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *MS Tsav ve-Zeiruz*. ARG II 14. Ringelblum Archive, the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny), Warsaw.

The title page is in Shapira's handwriting and bears his signature, and it includes twenty-one pages on a typewriter. The manuscript includes marginal notes by Shapira, and the date of 1927 (5687) appears on the title page. Available online.

Printed Books

Shapira's five books have been frequently printed and reprinted over the past decades, becoming staples of the Hasidic library and signaling an increased interest in his work. Of special note is Reiser 2017, a critical edition of Shapira's most famous collection of homilies.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *Hovat ha-Talmidim*. Warsaw, Poland: Feder Press, 1932.

The only major book published during Shapira's life, it describes the ethical development and the cultivation of the inner life according to the principles of Hasidism. It includes a lengthy preface dedicated to educational philosophy, as well as three excurses on how to read Hasidic books, how to develop illuminated prayer through ecstasy and song, and how to experience a spiritually infused Sabbath. Reprinted in 1944 and many times subsequently. Translated into many languages, including English, Russian, and Yiddish.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *Dereshah*. Warsaw, Poland, 1935.

Short pamphlet of forty-six pages, including a sermon in Yiddish delivered on the Sabbath between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in Piaseczno in 1935. Translated into Hebrew and published in the end of *Derekh ha-Melekh*.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *Esh Kodesh*. Jerusalem: Va'ad Hasidei Piasezna, 1960.

Includes sermons delivered in the Warsaw Ghetto between September 1939 and July 1942, a few days before the Great Deportation to Treblinka. Explores religious experience, individual as well as communal, in the throes of trauma and suffering. Though Shapira only mentions the Germans once, he often refers to all the trials and tribulations and unspeakable tragedy. One of the few rabbinic works of theology written during the Shoah, and perhaps the most famous. Republished in a critical edition.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *Hakhsharat ha-Avrekhim; Mevo ha-She'arim; Tsav ve-Zeiruz*. Jerusalem: Va'ad Hasidei Piasezna, 1962.

Three books published together, written by Shapira and hidden in the Ringelblum Archive. *Hakhsharat ha-Avrekhim* prepares advanced students for a life of Hasidic devotion, and offers contemplative techniques to cultivate the mind and heart. Republished in 2001 by Feldheim. *Mevo ha-She'arim*, a direct continuation, explores the development of prophecy from the Hebrew Bible to Hasidism. *Tsav ve-Zeiruz* is Shapira's mystical diary reflecting on issues of the inner life, with entries from 1927 to around the time of his son's death in 1939.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *Benei Mahashvah Tovah*. Tel Aviv, Va'ad Hasidei Piaseczno, 1973.

Based on manuscript sent to Shapira's brother in Palestine, Rabbi Yeshayahu Shapira, so that he could make copies and send them back. Shapira underscores that the book is meant for an elite fellowship rather than for the masses and was not intended for wide circulation. It was printed, however, in 1973. The work gives instructions for establishing a spiritual fellowship as part of the attempt to renew Hasidism.

Shapira, Kalonymous Kalman. *Derekh ha-Melekh*. Jerusalem: Va'ad Hasidei Piasezna, 1995.

Collection of sermons by Shapira on the weekly Torah portions from 1925 to 1938. The printed text is based on versions written down by Rabbi Eliyahu Hamar, who brought copies of the teachings to Israel in 1935. These were the heart of the book, and added to them

were sermons from the end of the 1930s written by Elazar Bein, who left Europe at the beginning of World War II. It was first published in 1991 in two volumes, and then subsequently in one volume. The expanded 2011 edition numbers 674 pages.

Reiser, Daniel, ed. *R. Kalonymus Kalman Shapira: Sermons from the Years of Rage*. 2 vols. Jerusalem: Herzog College, World Union of Jewish Studies and Yad Vashem, 2017.

Critical edition of Shapira's wartime sermons. The first volume presents the fully annotated and complete homilies, and the second is a facsimile of the manuscript alongside a transcription highlighting the many textual layers and emendations. This edition, which reveals the ways in which Shapira continued to edit and rework his sermons as Ghetto conditions deteriorated, has sparked a wave of new scholarship. In Hebrew.

English Translations

The number of translations of Shapira's work reflects his growing reputation in the English-speaking world, both in the academy and among circles of spiritual seekers. Some of these, such as *Conscious Community: A Guide to Inner Work*, are rather loose and interpretive. Many others are clearly intended for a readership of Orthodox Jews, reflecting the manner in which Shapira's writings have been rediscovered by people seeking to join the traditional religious community.

***Chovas HaTalmidim: The Student's Obligation*. Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim, 2011.**

Translation of *Hovat ha-Talmidim*.

***Conscious Community: A Guide to Inner Work*. Translated by Andrea Cohen-Kiener. Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1996.**

Loose translation of *Benei Mahashvah Tovah* with an excellent introduction and an appendix with an additional contemplative exercise by Shapira.

***Experiencing the Divine: A Guide to Jewish Spiritual Practice and Community*. Translated by Yaacov David Shulman. CreateSpace, 2017.**

Literal translation of *Benei Mahashvah Tovah*.

***Jewish Spiritual Growth. A Step-By-Step Guide by a Hasidic Master*. Translated by Yaacov David Shulman. np: Yaacov David Shulman, 2016.**

Literal translation of *Hakhsharat ha-Avrekhim*.

Kelsen, Jon. "Entrance to the Gates: R. Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro's Mevo Hashearim and Educational Philosophy." PhD thesis, New York University, 2019.

Dissertation including an excellent annotated translation of *Mevo ha-She'arim*.

Starrett, Yehoshua. *To Heal the Soul: The Spiritual Journal of a Chasidic Rebbe: Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1991.

Accessible translation of *Tsav ve-Zeiruz*.

***A Student's Obligation: Advice from The Rebbe of The Warsaw Ghetto*. Translated by Micha Odenheimer. Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1991.**

Thoughtful and accessible translation of *Hovat ha-Talmidim*.

Worch, Hershy J. *Sacred Fire: Torah from the Years of Fury, 1939–1942*. Northvale, NJ, and Jerusalem: J. Aronson, 2000.

Translation of *Esh Kodesh*, based on the occasionally erroneous printed text.

Other Translations

Translations of Shapira's ideas into languages other than English show that his works have now reached into other communities.

Comprehending with the Heart (Khovat ha-talmidim): The Way of Jewish Education is meant for Russian-speaking Israelis, but Dudzik-Rudkowska 2017 is meant for Polish scholars and a broader readership interested in works of Jewish spirituality composed on Polish soil.

***Comprehending with the Heart (Khovat ha-talmidim): The Way of Jewish Education*. Translated by Arie Kutukov. Jerusalem: Shvut Ami, 2008.**

Translation of *Hovat ha-Talmidim* into Russian for an Israeli audience of immigrants from the former USSR. In Russian.

Chalier, Catherine. *Kalonymus Shapiro: rabbin au Ghetto de Varsovie 1889–1943*. Paris: Arfuyen, 2011.

Includes sections of *Derekeh ha-Melekh*. See pp. 97–115. In French.

Chalier, Catherine. *Kalonymus Shapiro Rabbino nel ghetto di Varsavia*. Translated by Vanna Lucattini-Vogelmann. Florence: Giuntina, 2013.

Translation into Italian of Chalier 2011.

Dudzik-Rudkowska, Marta. *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Pisma Rabina – Kalonimusa Kalmana Szapiry*. Warsaw, Poland: Żydowsky Instytut Historyczny, 2017.

An excellent critical work presenting a translation of *Hakhsharat ha-Avrekhim*, *Mevo ha-She'arim*, and *Tsav ve-Zeiruz* into Polish, based on manuscripts and including many references and annotations, and explanations. This publication is part of the complete edition of the Ringelblum Archive. In Polish.

***Kuntres Hovat ha-Talmidim: Ibergizets auf Yiddish*. Translated by Asher Anshil Grod. London, 1976.**

Translation of *Hovat ha-Talmidim* into Yiddish.

Reiser, Daniel, ed. *Archiwum Ringelbluma: Pisma Rabina – Kalonimusa Kalmana Szapiry: Kazania z Getta Warszawskiego*. Translated by Regina Gromacka. Warsaw, Poland: Żydowsky Instytut Historyczny, 2020.

A Polish translation of Reiser's edition of *Sermons from the Years of Rage* with a Polish introduction by Reiser. This publication is part of the complete edition of the Ringelblum Archive. In Polish.

Secondary Sources

Scholarship on Shapira has flourished across the past four decades, and has now come to constitute a small but remarkable subfield unto itself. Those who examine his writings draw upon a wide variety of methods and disciplines, including literature, anthropology, modern Jewish thought and theology, phenomenology of religion, and the history of ideas. Although scholarship has focused upon his

corpus of teachings, scholars now seek to analyze Shapira's teachings against the broader historical and cultural backgrounds of Polish Hasidism and Jewish Warsaw. And while much of the early work emphasized Shapira's Holocaust sermons, researchers have recently begun to demonstrate the essential place in his prewar writings for a full appraisal of Shapira's intellectual and spiritual project.

Study, Worship, and Prayer

Shapira's attempt to renew Hasidism was also an attempt to rethink and revitalize all dimensions of religious life. Harel 2020, Shalom 2019, and Mayse 2021 examine Shapira's attempts to revitalize Torah study in the wake of secularism and the internal crisis gripping Hasidism. Shapira saw belief in the immanent presence of God in the physical world as a bedrock teaching of Hasidism, as is the aspiration to sanctify ordinary deeds and the corporeal realm as a whole. That one's service of God must be engaged with the physical world, and not cut off from it, is explored in Leshem 2017 and Jacobson-Maisels 2016.

Grussman, Moshe. "The Reason for Blowing the Shofar in the Teachings of Maimonides and the Rebbe of Piaseczno." *Ha-Otsar* 20 (2019): 31–52.

Explores the notion of sleep as a metaphor for lower states of human consciousness in the writings of a medieval philosopher and Shapira. In Hebrew.

Harel, Zevik. "To Come unto the Hidden God, Torah Study in the Teachings of the *Piaseczno* Rebbe." In *Hayim She-Tehe banu Ahavat Torah*. Edited by Harel Devir, 120–141. Yad Binyanim, 2020.

Examines Shapira's theory of Torah study in the time of secularization, arguing that Shapira felt that Torah works only when approached as a sacred encounter with the hidden God. Such an experience requires careful intellectual and emotional preparation, coming to the text with an open mind and heart and only thus finding it meaningful. In Hebrew.

Hershkowitz, Isaac. "The Destruction of the Temple and Its Building: Thoughts on Mourning for the Temple in Light of the Thought of the Rebbe of Piaseczna." *Petihta* 4 (2004): 37–43.

Demonstrates that Shapira's thinking on the destruction of the Temple was primarily focused not on lamenting past events, but rather on future opportunity and the true yearning to return to an intimate relationship with God in the rebuilt Temple. In Hebrew.

Jacobson-Maisels, James. "Embodied Epistemology: Knowing through the Body in Late Hasidism." *The Journal of Religion* 96.2 (2016): 185–211.

Examines Shapira's theory of knowledge as part of the landscape of modern epistemologies, showing the ways in which Shapira saw the inner life and the world of the spirit as intimately intertwined with the physical body.

Leshem, Zvi. "Flipping into Ecstasy: Towards a Syncopal Understanding of Mystical Hasidic Somersaults." *Studia Judaica* 17.1 (2014): 157–183.

Explores an undated entry in Shapira's personal spiritual diary (*Tsav ve-Zeiruz*), in which he describes performing somersaults at a Torah scroll dedication ceremony. Offers a unique insight into Shapira's mystical practices and aspirations.

Leshem, Zvi. "Pouring out your Heart: Rabbi Nachman's *Hitbodedut* and Its *Piaseczner* Reverberations." *Tradition* 47.3 (2014): 57–65.

Demonstrates Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav's underappreciated influence upon Shapira regarding *hitbodedut* or technique of solitary meditation, demonstrating a thread of early Hasidic thinking that was picked up by Shapira.

Leshem, Zvi. "The Light in the Walls of the Vessels: The Approach to Service through Corporeality in the Thinking of Rabbi Kalonymous Kalmish Shapira of Piaseczno." *Assif* 4 (2017): 148–170.

Explores the idea of serving God through physicality (*avodah be-gashmiyut*) in Shapira's writings. Leshem argues that this approach was central to early Hasidism but was later marginalized in most of the Hasidic courts, whereas Shapira revived the practice and emphasized its relevance to all Jews beyond the spiritual elite. In Hebrew.

Magid, Saul. "Beginning, False Beginning and the Desire for Innovation (A Hasidic Master's Reflection on Beginnings: Translation and Commentary)." In *Beginning/Again: Toward a Hermeneutics of Jewish Texts*. Edited by Aryeh Cohen and Shaul Magid, xvii–xxxvi. New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002.

Includes annotated translation teachings from *Derekh ha-Melekh* on devotion, new beginnings, innovation *hiddush*, and renewal.

Mayse, Ariel Evan. "The Devotional Talmud: Study as a Sacred Quest." In *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Examines Shapira's attempts to renew the act of Talmud study as an encounter with God, seeing it as entirely consonant with the spiritual goals of Hasidism and contributing to their fulfillment.

Polen, Nehemiah. "Niggun as Spiritual Practice, with Special Focus on the Writings of Rabbi Kalonymos Shapiro, the Rebbe of Piaseczno." In *The Contemporary Uses of Hasidism*. Edited by Shlomo Zuckier, 261–282. New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2020.

Explores the teachings of Shapira on the power of song as a contemplative aid, as part of religious path, as a unique form of spiritual practice.

Shalom, Shalom (Matan). "Torah Study in the Teachings of the Piaseczner Rebbe: Aims and Tools." *Ve-Ha'er Eineinu* (2019): 103–134.

Explores Shapira's descriptions of what should be studied, as well as the goals of such study and how one should go about it. Shapira's innovation, he argues, is that he applied ideas of ecstasy and soul-awakening to Torah study. Surveying attitudes toward study in early Hasidism as well as the rabbinic opponents (the *mithnaggedim*), Shalom emphasizes the uniqueness of Shapira's vis-à-vis them both. In Hebrew.

Contemplative Techniques, Messianism, and Prophecy

Shapira developed a remarkably broad range of mystical techniques for various goals: empowerment and intensification of religious life, including both nomian commandments and anomian rituals, the cultivation of higher states of consciousness, and more. Perhaps the most important, however, were the contemplative techniques for attaining prophecy. Leshem 2007, Persico 2016 and Reiser 2018 analyze these teachings and explore their sources of inspiration, and many are translated in Buxbaum 1990. One of the most widely known is the technique of "quieting the mind" (*inyan ha-hashkatak*), discussed in Ophir 2014 and translated by Cohen-Kiener as *Conscious Community: A Guide to Inner Work* (cited under English Translations).

Buxbaum, Yitzchak. *Jewish Spiritual Practices*. Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1990.

See index, under "Kalonymus Kalmish of Peasetzna" and "Peasetzna Rebbe." Includes many lucid and approachable translations of Shapira's key spiritual practices and teachings of various lengths. Primarily intended for a non-academic audience.

Idel, Moshe. "The Rebbe of Piaseczno: Between Two Lines in Hasidism." In *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Identifies close parallels between certain passages in Shapira's pedagogic tracts and those in Abulafia's 13th-century ecstatic Kabbalah, though he notes that Shapira also wrote under the influence of more proximate Hasidic writers as well as modern psychological and therapeutic discourse related to mesmerism, hypnosis, and nervous disorder.

Leshem, Zvi. "Between Messianism and Prophecy: Hasidism According to the Piaseczner Rebbe." PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2007.

Investigates the idea of "Hasidism" in Shapira's thought and its implications. The author devotes much careful attention to Shapira's efforts and techniques developed in his writings before the war, including the establishment of sacred community and fellowship, intellectual worship and contemplative techniques, melodies, dance, quieting in the mind, and solitary contemplation. In Hebrew.

Ophir, Natan. *Quieting the Mind: The Admor of Piaseczno*. Jerusalem: Meorot, 2014.

Deals and explains Shapira's "Quieting Technique" using neuropsychological concepts and descriptions of phenomena such as "near-dream state" and the "hypnagogic state."

Persico, Tomer. *The Jewish Meditative Tradition*. Tel Aviv: TAU Press, 2016.

Explores Shapira's contemplative exercises that were meant to develop emotional sensitivity, ecstasy, heightened consciousness, imagination, visions and prophesy, and the idea of quieting the mind. Discusses the distinctly modern qualities of Shapira's vision and attempts to discern and understand his various sources of inspiration. See pp. 161–200. In Hebrew.

Reiser, Daniel. *Imagery Techniques in Modern Jewish Mysticism*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018.

Analysis of imagery techniques in 20th-century Jewish mysticism, with special attention to Shapira's writings. These fully developed techniques differ from the language-based exercises of medieval Kabbalah, and the author compares them to similar developments in philosophy and psychology and is fruitfully contextualized within broader trends of Western and Eastern mysticism. Translated and expanded from the Hebrew.

Wacks, Ron. "The Technique of Guided Imagination in the Thought of R. Kalonymos Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno." *Kabbalah* 17 (2008): 233–249.

Targeted study of contemplative imagination, focusing on this skill as a way of developing prophecy as well as an educational tool. In Hebrew.

Educational Philosophy and Conception of the Self

In 1923 Shapira founded a yeshiva in Warsaw named *Da'at Moshe* in memory of his father-in-law, which became one of the largest Hasidic academies in the Polish capitol. His Hasidim and students described Shapira as a person of elegant countenance, projecting an air of gravitas and nobility and evincing remarkable concern for the education of children. In his yeshivah he actualized the educational philosophy developed in his written works, focusing on developing the unique soul of each individual child and strengthening the connection between master and disciple. Shapira understood that education needed to change dramatically (Wiskind 2021) in the wake of secularism, shifting from the attempt to impart information and toward cultivating the spiritual and ethical potential of the student. The teacher's job is thus to help children develop the tools for such individuation (see Wacks 2003–2004 and Herman 2014) and self-creation through encountering both texts and practices (Jacobson-Maisels 2014 and Maayan 2021).

Friedman, Asher. "As Gardeners in the Garden of God: Hasidic Thought and Its Implications for Teacher-Student Relationships." In *Wisdom from All My Teachers: Challenges and Initiatives in Contemporary Torah Education*. Edited by Jeffrey Saks and Susan Handelman, 112–136. Jerusalem and New York: Urim, 2003.

Explores Shapira's writings and his innovations regarding the attempt to cultivate the unique self of student, his spiritually infused understanding of the teacher-student relationships, and his optimistic view of each person. Author has an eye to presenting Shapira's teachings for contemporary educators and teachers from within the modern Orthodox world.

Herman, Moria. "Attitude and Policies in Relation to the Youth in the Hasidic Movement During the Interwar Period in Poland 1914–1939: Responses to the Abandonment of Religion." PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2014.

Examines different Hasidic responses to secularization of youth between the two wars. Devotes an extensive chapter (pp. 130–170) to Shapira and his analysis of why young people were abandoning the tradition in droves and his spiritual and educational attempts to deal with this phenomenon. Investigates his teachings on the student-teacher relationship, the establishment of Shapira's yeshivah and its ethos, and the small devotional fellowships as answers to these profound social changes. In Hebrew.

Jacobson-Maisels, James. "The Self and Self-Transformation in the Thought and Practice of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira." PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2014.

Argues that Shapira presents a new non-dualistic understanding of the body, self-transformation, and the world, and that his spiritual practices were intended to develop sense and sensation, emotional life, a holistic move beyond duality through presence and a kind of attentive softness. Also suggests that historians and scholars of spiritual practices must draw upon the performance of these practices as a research tool.

Kelsen, Jon. "Entrance to the Gates: R. Kalonymous Kalman Shapiro's *Mevo Hashearim* and Educational Philosophy." PhD diss., New York University, 2019.

Examines Shapira's educational teachings with particular attention to one of his most interesting yet relatively understudied books. Pays close attention to context and development of Hasidism, and presents an annotated translation of the work, but the author is also interested in putting forward a constructive new vision for contemporary educators and educational philosophers.

Leshem, Zvi. "Emotional Hasidic Education as a Response to Secularization in the Writings of R. Kalonymus Kalmish Shapira of Piaseczno." *Michlol-Pardes* 2 (2018): 37–61.

Investigates Shapira's educational program and theories in connection with the historical context of secularization among the youth in interwar Poland. In Hebrew.

Maayan, David. "Self-Creation Through Texts: Kalonymus Kalman Shapira's Incarnational Hermeneutics." In *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Building on his 2017 MA thesis, author examines text study and the process of education as cultivation of the unique self. Against readings of Shapira as emphasizing self-negation, the author emphasizes his teachings on the actualization of the self, the development of a creative voice as one's singular personhood encounters and engages with the tradition. Examines this against background of modern philosophical theories of the self.

Shif, Ofer. "Model of Hasidic Leadership During the Holocaust." *Mahanayim: A Quarterly Journal for the Study of Jewish Thought Culture* 8 (1995): 122–131.

Presents Shapira's educational response to secularization before the war, seeing physical crises as reflecting a spiritual crisis. But during the Holocaust, the approach changes and Shapira rejected notions of the Holocaust and its sufferings as a mode of bringing people closer to God or strengthening faith. Shapira and the elites accepted the role of the *tsaddik* whose cries break down the barrier between the community and God, and, beginning in 1941, he shifted this vision to the community. In Hebrew.

Wacks, Ron. “Emotion and Enthusiasm in the Educational Theory of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira of Piacezna.” *Hagut: Studies in Jewish Educational Thought* 5–6 (2003–2004): 71–88.

This article is concerned with one of the fundamental principles of his methodology: emotion (*hitragshut*) and enthusiasm (*hitlahavut*) in one’s divine service. Shapira saw the contemporary religious crisis as rooted in lived spiritual service that is incapable of giving expression to man’s emotion powers. In Hebrew.

Wiskind, Ora. “Hasidism in Dialogue with Modernity: R. Kalonymus Shapira’s *Derekh ha-Melekh*.” In *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Calls a holistic literary analysis of the prewar and wartime sermons, attuned to the ways in which they consistently explore self-awareness, empowerment, striving for authentic communication and construction for the self together with yearning for God.

Zeitlin, Hillel. “Rebbe—Faithful Educator.” *Sifran shel Yehidim, Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem* (1970): 241–244.

Review of Shapira’s *Hovat ha-Talmidim*, which, as Zeitlin understood, is a sophisticated work on the art and craft of spiritual education meant for parents, teachers, and students. Zeitlin astutely notes that the work is far more than an exploration of pedagogy: *Hovat ha-talmidim* serves as a gateway into the conceptual and devotional universe of Hasidism. Translated by Ariel Evan Mayse as “Hasidic Renewal on the Brink of Destruction,” *Jewish Review of Books* (1 November 2019). Available online. In Hebrew.

Shapira’s Family

Shapira was raised in the home of R. Yerahmiel Moshe Hopstein, the Kozhnitser Rebbe (b. 1860–d. 1909), his father’s grandson through a prior marriage. Hopstein later became Shapira’s father-in-law when, at the age of sixteen, Shapira married the rebbe’s daughter, Rahel Hayya Miriam, after an engagement that began when he was just thirteen. Rahel Hayya Miriam was renowned for her erudition and took an active role in Kalonymus’s writing before her untimely death in 1937. It is likely that she was memorialized in her husband’s later sermons on the prophetess Miriam (Polen 1992 and Fuchs 2005), but there is as yet no sustained study of her own possible stylistic or conceptual influence on her husband’s teaching. Shapira’s son, Elimelekh Ben-Zion, died a lingering death from shrapnel wounds during the festival of Sukkot on 29 September 1939. Shapira’s daughter-in-law and sister in law—the latter a religious Zionist pioneer who had helped to build the Kfar Hasidim settlement—were also killed on 26 September, when the hospital at which they were visiting Elimelekh came under German artillery fire. Shapira’s daughter Rekhel Yehudis was taken from the Warsaw Ghetto during the Great Deportation to Treblinka and was murdered there along with her husband.

Fuchs, Uziel. “Miriam the Prophetess and the Rebbetzin: The Eulogy of Rebbe Kalonymos of Piacezna in Memory of Two Great Women.” *Masekhet* 3 (2005): 65–76.

Illuminating interpretation of Shapira’s sermon for Hukat 5702 [1942], in which Shapira explores the figures of Miriam. Compares this sermon to the short memorial note written in 1937 after his wife’s death, demonstrating that, in the later sermon, he is clearly referring to the merits and spiritual power of his own wife through the biblical Miriam. In Hebrew.

Polen, Nehemia. “Miriam’s Dance: Radical Egalitarianism in Hasidic Thought.” *Modern Judaism* 12 (1992): 1–21.

Examines a bold text from one of Shapira’s ancestors about the transcending of binary categories, including those of male and female. Developed further in Polen 2021.

Polen, Nehemia. “Miriam, Moses, and the Divinity of Children: Human Individuation at the Cusp of Persistence and Perishability.” In *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Reexamines his own methodology in light of Reiser’s critical edition. By analyzing a complete June 1942 sermon, available for the first time in its original layering and paragraphing, Polen demonstrates the emergent quality of themes like gender and mortality, the

desperate human “thirst” for God, and “the divinity of children” as bearers of human continuity in the face of death.

Shapiro, Malka. *The Rebbe’s Daughter: Memoir of a Hasidic Childhood*. Translated by Nehemia Polen. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002.

Remarkable spiritual autobiography written by Shapira’s sister-in-law, raised by the Rebbe of Kozhenits and who then moved to Israel in 1926. Offers a unique window into the inner world of a female scion of an illustrious Hasidic dynasty throughout the travails of the early 20th century.

Yael, Levine. “The Day that the Rebbe’s Wife Did Not Study Torah Was a Dark Day for Her.” *Attar Kippah* (29 June 2017).

A spiritual biography of Shapira’s wife Rahel Hayah Miriam, exploring her remarkable wisdom and breadth of knowledge. She was deeply steeped in Torah, including Hasidic thought and Kabbalah. Based on the testimonies of Aharon Sorosky and Leib Bein. Available online. In Hebrew.

Shapira’s Holocaust Writings and Historiography of the Ghetto

The last book of Hasidic thought composed on Polish soil is the collection of Shapira’s sermons delivered in the Warsaw Ghetto, published after his death when discovered among the Ringelblum Archive. These homilies were delivered from the early days of the War (September 1939) until the Great Deportation in July 1942. Because these teachings were offered to a living community within the Ghetto, the historical context is a critical part of understanding their texture and message. Tydor-Baumel 1980 reads Shapira’s homilies as shedding light on the spiritual life in the Ghetto, and Abramson 2017 attempts to correlate the sermons to the happenings at that time. Reiser 2016 demonstrates that parts of the sermons were not written according to the given date of the weekly Torah portion but were rather emendations and changes made much later, allowing scholars to discern the development of Shapira’s thinking.

Abramson, Henry. *Torah from the Years of Wrath 1939–1943: The Historical Context of the Aish Kodesh*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2017.

Reading the *Esh Kodesh* in its immediate historical context, this work demonstrates the connection between the specific events in the Warsaw ghetto and Rabbi Shapiro’s Hasidic responses.

Reiser, Daniel. “*Esh Kodesh: A New Evaluation in Light of a Philological Examination of the Manuscript*.” *Yad Vashem Studies* 44.1 (2016): 65–97.

First close philological study of Shapira’s Holocaust sermons based on the handwritten manuscript. Demonstrates that the published editions are unreliable in many respects: deciphering the handwriting; determining the beginning, end, and order of the sermons; inserting and deleting sentences. The most complex finding in this examination is that *Esh Kodesh* was built layer by layer and developed over time, indicating that the printed dating of the sermons cannot be trusted. This article preceded the author’s new edition of *Esh Kodesh*.

Tydor-Baumel, Judith. “*Esh Kodesh by the Rebbe of Piaseczno and Its Place in Understanding Religious Life in the Warsaw Ghetto*.” *Yalkut Moreshet* 29 (1980): 173–187.

Shapira rarely mentions the Germans or important ghetto personalities by name and does not relate directly to specific events, but the author seeks to trace indirect references to historical events that shed new light on several sermons and on religious life in the Warsaw Ghetto more broadly. In Hebrew.

Holocaust Theology and Jewish Thought

The Holocaust presented a terrible and essentially unprecedented crisis for the Jewish people, and it also represented a crisis for Jewish theology. Shapira wrote about affliction and suffering not as an impartial bystander but as someone immersed in the pain and

trauma of unspeakable cruelty. Diamond 2010 and Seeman 2008 discuss the notion of meaning of such suffering. Shapira's own faith and the question of whether or not it faltered has been the subject of some disagreement. Piekarz 1990, Schweid 1994, and Magid 2019 suggest that Shapira underwent a profound crisis and perhaps even a collapse of faith. Farbstein 2007 argues just the opposite. A sensitive response to Maggid appears in Seeman 2021.

Diamond, James. "The Warsaw Ghetto Rebbe: Diverting God's Gaze from a Utopian End to an Anguished Now." *Modern Judaism* 30.3 (2010): 299–330.

The article probes R. Shapira's exegetical reevaluations of traditionally held notions of divine providence. R. Shapira assumes Moses' role as the *tsaddik* who must reorient God's gaze from some meta-historical end of history to the now of history, to a nowness that induces divine intervention to divert the original course of history with an immediate halt to unbearable and undeserved suffering.

Diamond, James A. "Maimonides and Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira: Abandoning Reason in the Warsaw Ghetto." In *Reinventing Maimonides in Contemporary Jewish Thought*. Edited by James A. Diamond and Menachem Kellner, 87–105. London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2019.

Drawing on R. Shapira's prewar writings and Kabbalistic notions of the human being mirroring the divine anthropos, he asserts that the usual means of acquiring knowledge, by reason or experience, must be surrendered since they are actually obstacles to the ultimate truths of divine knowledge. In support R. Shapira paradoxically enlists Maimonides' Aristotelian conception of God as thought thinking itself.

Farbstein, Esther. "The Teachings of the Piaseczner Rebbe in the Warsaw Ghetto." In *Hidden in Thunder: Perspectives on Faith, Halachah and Leadership during the Holocaust*. Translated by Deborah Stern, 479–509. Vol. 2. Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2007.

Expanded version of a Hebrew article examining Hasidic teachings in the Warsaw Ghetto on divine immanence, revelation of divinity through suffering, suffering of *shekhinah*, and so forth. Compares Shapira to others in the ghetto, and, writing from a traditional perspective, Farbstein argues against Schweid and Piekarz, who brought teachings from Shapira, as proof of crises of faith, claiming that these scholars present selective, incomplete readings of the homilies, and that they were actually reflecting their own beliefs.

Krawcowicz, Barbara. "Covenantal Theodicy Among Haredi and Modern Jewish Thinkers during and after the Holocaust." PhD diss., Indiana University in Bloomington, 2013.

Looking at ultra-Orthodox theological responses to Holocaust that remain within notion of a still-enduring covenant, arguing that the end of covenantal theology is rooted in crises of modernity and not the Holocaust. Looks at Yissakhar Teichtal, Shlomo Zalman Unsderfer, Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich. Shapira appears as a point of comparison and contrast with these ultra-Orthodox thinkers.

Leib, Erin Dana. "God in the Years of Fury: Theodicy and Anti-Theodicy in the Holocaust Writing of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira." PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2014.

Explores Shapira's struggled with ascription of meaning to suffering, concealment of divine, use of Talmudic legends and Midrash in Shapira's wartime sermons, and the development of his thinking on the Talmudic concept of "chastenings of love." Argues that Shapira came to see theodicy rendered impossible by magnitude of suffering, changing from seeing sin and punishment in favor of underscoring communal pain and God's responsibility for salvation, thus breaking with earlier Jewish paradigms and with his own thinking.

Magid, Saul. "Covenantal Rupture and Broken Faith in R. Kalonymus Kalman Shapira's *Eish Kodesh*." In *Piety and Rebellion: Essays in Hasidism*. By Saul Magid, 237–262. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019.

Using the new edition by Reiser, he draws upon, among other things, the marginal notes and changes to argue that Shapira had a rupture of faith by the end of his life. Explores a perceived difference of public persona of preaching faith and maintaining faith, and what he wrote for posterity, now visible in the manuscript.

Piekarz, Mendel. *Ideological Trends of Hasidism in Poland during the Interwar Period and the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1990.

Updated version of an earlier work, a pioneering book that examines the thinking and sermons of Shapira written during the Holocaust and examines the phenomenon of faith amid suffering. Piekarz examines four central themes that emerge from Shapira's writings: the breakdown of systems and crises of faith; justification of God's judgment (theodicy); love of the Jewish people; and attempts to strengthen and support his flock. See pp. 373–412. In Hebrew.

Schweid, Eliezer. *From Ruin to Salvation*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1994.

Devotes a chapter to Shapira and his *Mevo ha-She'arim* (pp. 105–154), including the unfolding divine revelation from one generation to another on one hand, and the decline of the generations on the other. This dialectic is the background for the Warsaw Ghetto sermons, in which Shapira refused to portray the Shoah as a punishment for secularism or emphasize divine hiddenness against the background of immanence and revelation. Claims that Shapira rejects theology altogether and seeks to affirm faith amid crisis. In Hebrew.

Seeman, Don. "Ritual Efficacy, Hasidic Mysticism and 'Useless Suffering' in the Warsaw Ghetto." *Harvard Theological Review* 101 (2008): 465–505.

Argues that Shapira held back from looking for theological meaning for the sufferings, since they have no meaning in and of themselves. Rather than reading simple ideology from his works, he looks at the ritual, cosmological, and theurgic dimensions of Shapira's project in the Warsaw Ghetto. Links them to prewar writings, arguing that his hermeneutical strategies and his attempts to write reveal the author's own struggles in the text and the acts of writing and preaching.

Seeman, Don. "Pain and Words: On Suffering, Hasidic Modernism, and the Phenomenological Turn." In *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Brings an expansive, anthropologically informed understanding of textual practice to bear on Shapira's writings. Seeman focuses on the relationship between what he calls literary and ritual efficacy—the ways in which these texts are both written and read in attunement with urgent projects like renewal, healing, and the defense of human subjectivity against collapse.

Zur, Avichai. "'The Lord Hides in Inner Chambers': The Doctrine of Suffering in the Theosophy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno." *Dapim: Studies on the Shoah* 25 (2011): 183–237.

Looks at Shapira's paradoxical faith and his teachings on suffering and affliction. On one hand, the afflictions articulate the lack of meaning in existence, but on the other hand, thinking that tries to ascribe meaning to them is cut off from existence and its pain. Kabbalistic ideas of divine withdrawal (*tsimtsum*) and the empty void (*hallal ha-panui*), especially as interpreted in Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav's teachings, allow this paradox to hold together.

Comparative Responses to the Holocaust

Jewish thinkers during—and after—the Holocaust have had to contend with the unspeakable trauma and the profound religio-theological crisis it has engendered. Shapira's writings may also be fruitfully analyzed as part of this landscape. Polen 1999, Garner 2008, and Greenberg 2013, explore Shapira's wartime sermons through contrasting them with a wide variety of approaches found in other ultra-Orthodox responses, thus also revealing that traditional Jews offered sophisticated theological responses to the spiritual crisis. Seeman 2004, Diamond 2018, and Reiser 2021 place Shapira's Holocaust writings into dialogue with other 20th-century Jewish thinkers, showing points of similarity as well as profound differences.

Diamond, James A. *Jewish Theology Unbound*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Places Emil Fackenheim and Shapira, the two most profound thinkers confronting the challenges of the Shoah, in dialogue. Fackenheim is the philosopher most known for his view of the Holocaust as a rupture in civilization and thought. Yet Shapira, a Hasidic

rebbe, confesses a similar theological rupture in rabbinic theology. See pp. 211–246.

Garner, Dan. “The Nature of Ultra-Orthodox Responses to The Holocaust.” *Melilah: Manchester Journal of Jewish Studies* 5 (2008): 42–55.

The responses of the ultra-Orthodox to the Holocaust were often associated with the idea of “punishment for sin” in relation to theological justification of the Holocaust. Yet Shapira’s response contains surprising elements that relinquish the effort to justify and explain the suffering. These tendencies show Shapira’s response is complex and sensitive in ways not often ascribed to traditional Jewish responses to the Shoah.

Goldberg, Amos. “The Rabbi of *Piaseczno*: Hero and Anti-Hero.” *Bishvil ha-Zikaron* 20 (1997): 18–23.

Examines the publication of memory books among the Haredi and Hasidic communities, investigating how Shapira’s words were cited and how such books changed his formulations, muted their radicalism through selective quotation, omission, and so forth, in order to reduce the anger against God and theological radicalism. In Hebrew.

Greenberg, Gershon. “Hasidic Thought and the Holocaust (1933–1947). Optimism and Activism.” *Jewish History* 27 (2013): 353–375.

Polish Hasidic thought during the Holocaust, including Shapira’s, exhibited optimism about the outcome. Immediately after the war, other leaders from these streams continued with their optimism and faith-activism, even though they viewed the Holocaust through the lens of its non-redemptive aftermath. There was also a pessimistic and passive strain in apparent response to the failure of inner faith to affect the catastrophic historical reality.

Polen, Nehemia. “Theological Responses to the Hurban from within the Hurban.” In *Jewish Responses to Suffering*. Edited by Shalom Carmy, 277–295. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1999.

Compares three different responses to the Holocaust: that of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Undsorfer (*Siftei Shlomo*), Rabbi Yissakhar Teichtal (*Em ha-Banim Semehah*), and Shapira (*Esh Kodesh*).

Reiser, Daniel. “Creative Writing in the Shadow of Death: Psychological and Phenomenological Aspects of Rabbi Shapira’s Manuscript Sermons from the Years of Rage.” In *Hasidism, Suffering, and Renewal: The Prewar and Holocaust Legacy of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira*. Edited by Don Seeman, Daniel Reiser, and Ariel Evan Mayse. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021.

Draws Shapira’s wartime sermons into conversation with recognized figures of Western thought, such as Franz Rosenzweig, Ernst Becker, even Socrates. Nonetheless signals his own view that scholars should go beyond the philosophical “content” of the sermons by attending to the phenomenological contradictions that defined their composition in the face of genocide.

Schindler, Pesach. “Hasidic Responses to the Sho’ah.” In *Emunah ba-Sho’ah: Iyyun ha-Mashma’ut ha-Yehudit-Dati shel ha-Sho’ah*. By Pesach Schindler, 69–78. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1980.

Comparison of the teachings of Shapira and Rabbi Yissakhar Shlomo Teichtal. For Shapira, the four themes of suffering, meaning, anger toward God, and spiritual uplift during times of crises are all linked to Kabbalistic ideas of cosmic healing and repair (*tikkun*) that must be preceded by brokenness. For Teichtal, *tikkun* is also a line that runs through the core themes of messianic travails and suffering, redemption, land of Israel, the people of Israel. In Hebrew.

Schindler, Pesach. *Hasidic Responses to the Holocaust in the Light of Hasidic Thought*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1990.

Classic and pathbreaking study of Hasidic thinking on and during the Holocaust. Examines subjects such as suffering, evil, exile and redemption, sanctifying life and sanctifying God’s name, leadership, and resistance, investigating them against the background of early Hasidic thought with an eye to continuity and rupture. Shapira’s teachings feature prominently in Schindler’s analysis.

Seeman, Don. "Otherwise than Meaning: On the Generosity of Ritual." *Social Analysis* 48.2 (2004): 55–71.

Juxtaposes the accounts of Weber and Geertz—both of whom associate ritual with the quest for meaning in suffering—with the phenomenological account of Emmanuel Levinas, who argues that suffering is inherently “useless” and therefore resistant to meaning’s claim. All three theorists are then compared to Shapira, whose work exemplifies the tension between meaningful and useless suffering in a real social setting.

Contemporary Theology

Shapira’s influence among a wide variety of readers has only continued to grow across a wide range of religious communities, from ultra-Orthodox to New Age and Neo-Hasidic, and have contributed to a public renaissance in appreciation for Hasidic ideas and texts. Along with his unprecedented depiction of suffering, which pushes theological expression to its very limits, Shapira’s emphasis on socio-spiritual renewal, mystical technique, and literary outreach to a mobile and diversifying urban community all underline his potential relevance to contemporary spiritual life. Abramson 2000 examines the possible use of Shapira’s wartime teachings for pastoral counselors and educators. Jacobson-Maisels 2019 considers how modern individuals may learn from Shapira’s teachings and contemplative techniques, combining them with Buddhist mindfulness meditation. Rosenberg 2004 examines Shapira’s teachings on faith and trauma as a possible model for postmodern Orthodox theology.

Abramson, Henry. “The Esh Kodesh of Rabbi Kalonimus Kalmish Shapiro: A Hasidic Treatise on Communal Trauma from the Holocaust.” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 37.3 (2000): 321–335.

An analysis of the unique pastoral function of the Esh Kodesh as representing community trauma, in light of trauma coping models in the psychological literature.

Jacobson-Maisels, James. “Neo-Hasidic Meditation: Mindfulness as a Neo-Hasidic Practice.” In *A New Hasidism: Branches*. Edited by Arthur Green and Ariel Evan Mayse, 251–270. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2019.

A searching personal essay regarding the importance of Shapira for contemporary seekers, especially those interested in the how to combine mindfulness practice.

Rosenberg, Shim’on Gershon. *Broken Vessels: Torah and Religious Zionism in Postmodernity*. Efrat, Israel: Yeshivat Siah Yitshak, 2004. 125–140.

The author, better known as Rav Shagar, examines the responses of Orthodox thought to the Shoah. Focusing on the controversy between the Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch and Rabbi Elazar Menacham Man Shakh, he highlights the unique approach of Shapira as one that tried neither to diminish the suffering nor to give it religious meaning. Shagar sees this model as presenting the seeds for a new mode of thinking through collective and personal trauma for religious Israeli Jews. In Hebrew.

Multimedia Resources

A very small number of Piaseczno Hasidim survived the war, but a few of those who did were able to pass on traditions. Some of these, like Leshem 2007, were passed down in private hands. Others like Kener n.d., were recorded as part of the ethnographic project of the National Library of Israel. Amitai 2008 represents a constructive attempt to combine the Shapira teachings with artistic photography to aid in contemplation. Harel 2008 introduced Shapira and his teachings to a broader audience.

Amitai, Elazar. *Pashut Li-Hiyot: Pisut Hayim*. Jerusalem: Ketev ve-Sefer, 2008.

A rich collection of spectacular nature pictures, present in color across eighty pages and juxtaposed with brief teaching or saying by Shapira.

Douvdevani, Baroukh. Testimony at the Trial of Adolf Eichmann.

Describes the discovery of Shapira's writings and reads passages from *Esh Kodesh* regarding the suffering of the Jews. Represents, in some sense, the use of *Esh Kodesh* as a legal document to condemn Eichman and to shed light on the Nazi atrocity. Available online, especially minutes 8:13–23.45.

Harel, Zevik, dir. "In the Warmth of the Holy Fire." YouTube video. Yad Binyamin, Israel: School for Jewish Film, 2008.

Rabbi Hayim Kenner speaks about Shapira, sings one of his melodies, and more. Won best Israeli documentary film at the Jerusalem film festival in 2008.

Kener, Hayim Yehoshua. "Niggunei Piaseczno by Hayim Yehoshua Kener." National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, catalog number Y 1044, n.d.

A collection of melodies and tunes from the Piaseczno Hasidic community, gathered and preserved in Jerusalem after the Holocaust. Available online.

Leshem, Zvi. "Melody of Quieting Niggun ha-Hashkatah." Bat Ayin, c. 2007.

A recording of a melody attributed to Shapira, recreated on the basis of the recording by Rabbi Elazar Bein. Made in Israel by Zvi Leshem and the students of Bat Ayin yeshivah, a neo-Hasidic academy of learning deeply influenced by Shapira. Available online.

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