**Rabbi Shagar's Mystical Space: Interplay of the Languages of Kabbalah, Hasidut, Rav Kook and Psychoanalysis**[[1]](#footnote-1)

Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (henceforth Shagar) (1949-2007) was not a Kabbalist, but he was a mystic. Rabbi Shagar moved like a pendulum between the search for the psychic intimacy of immediate and unmediated experience and encounter with the divine on the one hand, and his reflective and self-conscious stance that negated this effort towards unmediated experience on the other. I will seek to identify mysticism as the central religious space which he sought to create across this dualism. He melded together raw materials from the various languages of the Jewish tradition from which he developed (Talmud, Jewish Law, Kabbalah and Hasidut), the secondary literature about this tradition and philosophical literature in translation, and then deconstructively took it apart, so as to create an empty space for the encounter with Nothingness.[[2]](#footnote-2) In the interplay between the internal and external; between Torah and faith, and secular philosophical, academic and psychoanalytic theories – a third space opened up and was woven together. This space was neither internal nor external, but rather mystical. Rabbi Shagar sought to overcome the dualism of his existential experience through the interplay and bridging of the two antipodes, without fully or axiomatically subjecting himself to any one perspective or approach. In this article, I would like to suggest that it was specifically this interplay that, as far as he was concerned, enabled the longed-for mystical experience; and that it was specifically the intermediate space created by this interplay which turned into a space for creative mysticism. Even though it is possible to argue with the designation of Rabbi Shagar as a mystic or as a Kabbalist, this article will nevertheless seek to emphasize the centrality of mysticism as a fundamental goal of his spiritual approach. The constantly repeated use of the term, mysticism, in his teachings, the amount of time he devoted to teaching Hasidut and the amount of time he devoted to seclusion and meditation[[3]](#footnote-3) all testify to his attempt to recreate a living religious mystical experience. This notwithstanding – and despite Rabbi Shagar’s attempt (and even that of several scholars who write about him) to present himself as a direct theological descendant of the Kabbalistic tradition, by way of his use of terms such as the shattering of the vessels, Nothingness and silence – I will seek to show the gap and dissonance between his yearning for this language and his rejection of it. On the one hand, I will seek to emphasize the gap and unbridgeable dissonance that exists between his theological and linguistic stance and the Kabbalah and its original context. On the other hand, I will also claim that this is precisely where his innovation is to be found. The article will be based upon a variety of his articles that were published and edited by his various students, as well as upon his recorded but not yet released lectures on the Kabbalistic teachings of Rabbi Moshe Ḥaim Luzzato

Shagar moved like a pendulum between the search for the psychic intimacy of immediate and unmediated experience and encounter with the divine on the one hand, and his reflective and self-conscious stance – which sought to observe itself through languages foreign to it – that negated this effort towards unmediated experience on the other. The conflict between the internal and the external; between the language of internal religious faith and reflective analysis inspired by secular theories stands at the heart of Rabbi Shagar’s thought.[[4]](#footnote-4) Yet the interplay between these positions can create a third space of mystical experience, which in this article I will seek to claim is central for the understanding of his religious consciousness and Torah activism. I will seek to claim that the continuity and compatibility that he indicates in different places between Kabbalah and the languages of modern and postmodern philosophy[[5]](#footnote-5) actually reflect the uprooting of these different languages from their original contexts by way of distortion and creative hermeneutics, as well his own personal ambivalence about full identification with any one of them. However it was specifically this interplay – which failed to give itself over fully to any of the languages, translating them into each other, while incessantly crashing – that, for himself, enabled the longed-for mystical experience; and it was specifically the intermediate space created by this interplay which turned into a space for creative mysticism.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Methodological Remarks**

Most of the books that have come out under Rabbi Shagar’s name are made up of essays heavily edited by his students. More than independent essays, it is fitting to see these books as the work of their authors, which include the words of Rabbi Shagar as per the interpretation and insights of his students. In this sense, the works of Rabbi Shagar are similar to the works of various Hasidic rabbis and teachers, which were reworked by their circle of students. For the purposes of methodological clarity, I will note in this article which sources are based on his unmediated words, which I have transcribed, without editing, from recordings of his lectures or taken from his unedited notebooks; and which are from reworked sources taken from the books edited by his students. It should be understood that all of the sources can ultimately be viewed as oral transmission. As such, his audience of students was already included in the writing of his words when he set them down in his notebooks and certainly when they were delivered to, and heard by, his students in the talks and lectures. Hence it would be more correct to see this article as dealing with the thought of Rabbi Shagar’s circle and not just of Rabbi Shagar. My main analysis, at the center of the article, will be based on the not yet released recording of his introductory lecture on *Da’at Tevunot*. Only afterwards will I turn to other sources from his books in order to fill out the picture. The frequent printing of his books in recent years, mostly after his death, testifies to the public influence of Rabbi Shagar’s thought. That being the case, I will seek to understand its content, even if it includes his students’ reworking.

In the course of this analysis, I will seek to hone in on the inner logic of Rabbi Shagar’s language, its sources and purpose. It is beyond the limited purview of this article to discuss the broader context of the various religious groups that were active during his time. Rather I will focus on the question of how he used Kabblistic and Hasidic teachings from the Jewish tradition with which he was familiar. Additionally, I will not attempt to discern the correspondence between Rabbi Shagar’s use of psychoanalytic terminology and its meaning in its original context. Instead, I will draw attention to how the terms that Rabbi Shagar drew from the Hebrew translations of psychoanalytic and philosophical literature were used by him to transfer the sources – whether from within the Jewish tradition, or whether from without – from their original contexts in order to create a new religious language that could seek out the mystical in the postmodern period. Despite the calls of certain circles like that of Shagar and Drob to present Kabbalah as having theological potential to resolve the crises of the believer in the postmodern era[[7]](#footnote-7) – as a scholar of Kabbalah and Hasidut in their historical contexts, it is hard for me to accept their joint call as one that represents a credible understanding of these concepts in their original contexts. On the one hand, Shagar displayed a systematic interpretive effort to present the Kabbalistic conceptual system as one fitting postmodernist sensibilities – as Miriam Feldman Kaye has shown with the concepts of the empty space, the Infinite (*Ein-sof*), the shattering of the vessels and others.[[8]](#footnote-8) On the other hand – as shown by Biti Roi – the manner in which he read and used these concepts was by way of misreading and reassimilation.[[9]](#footnote-9)

What are the characteristics of mystical experience according to Rabbi Shagar’s writings? This question requires a separate and independent study that would determine those characteristics that he ascribed to the mystical experience phenomenologically.[[10]](#footnote-10) At the outset, it is important to emphasize that I follow Huss’ distinctions regarding the use of the concept, mysticism, in the context of Kabbalah and Hasidut.[[11]](#footnote-11) Hence I see Shagar’s use of the word, mysticism – similar to that found in the modern academic research of Kabbalah – as a modern structure that transfers the Kabbalistic and Hasidic languages to the realm of Religious Studies and subordinates them to Western agendas that tend towards universality. Shagar’s very use of the term, mystic, over and over again, to give meaning to religious experience, to the performance of the commandments, to faith, to Torah study and to the textual heritage of Kabbalah and Hasidut already indicate the chasm; as well as the longing to skip over it, to meld and to bridge between modern Western language and the internal Jewish heritage. Similar to the contemporary usage of the words, mystical and mysticism, these words were used by Rabbi Shagar to express a broad and undefined range of perspectives about the human condition – most of them religious or theological; but in practice, it was a generic name for something larger.[[12]](#footnote-12) Shagar used the word, mystical, to designate an object of the imagination, of desire, of longing for powerful experiences which grant daily life an aspect of otherness, emotion and fantasy. The mystical experience in his writings is characterized by a variety of different expressions: Silence, prayer with an awareness of the presence of otherness, observation of the magical effect of the commandments, play and delight in Torah study, the conscious psychological stance of negating the dualism between the object and the subject, the fantastic and imaginative dimensions, fantasy, emotion, ecstasy and delight. Though we will touch on some of the different expressions that were characteristic of mysticism for Shagar, the goal of this article is not to present a phenomenological portrait according to the research models of mysticism or religion. Rather the goal of this article is to establish the role of the mystical dimension for Shagar as an object of conflicting yearnings; and how Kabbalah – even though it prima facie represented the mystical for him – actually failed to deliver the desired goal of actualizing mystical yearnings, but rather only the path from it and to it.

**The Cultural Context and the Mystical Possibilities of the Modern and Postmodern Eras**

Gershom Shalom contemplated the possibility of Jewish mysticism in his day, and concluded that no autonomous or original Jewish mysticism had arisen in the last two hundred years.[[13]](#footnote-13) He was seeking for mysticism of a public nature, and not just one that would remain sealed and reserved for the individual and for individual experience. He saw the lack of confidence and the doubts about divine revelation of the Torah[[14]](#footnote-14) as that which weakened the continuation of Jewish mystical creativity, based on the assumption that this mysticism was built upon the foundational pillar of the word of God found hidden in the words and the existence of the Torah – this is what enabled the interpretive creativity of the Kabbalists which was built upon this foundational pillar. He contemplated whether new mystical interpretation was possible for a generation that did not accept divine revelation of the Torah as something certain. These doubts are relevant to the discussion of Rabbi Shagar’s mysticism. For Shagar consciously and deliberately attempted to deal with the weakening in the certainty of faith, in order to develop the possibility of a new contemporary public mysticism. This attempt was made while coping with the awareness of the loosening certainty of faith that has occurred, and being open to the languages of secularity. In fact, Shagar saw himself as the continuation of Rav Kook, and newly reinterpreted the latter’s mystical call for the sanctification of the secular, and even the external – not through fossilized dogmas, but through the rejuvenation of vital religious experiences, which are able to cope with the challenges of the times.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Shagar connected New Age phenomena with neo-Hasidut and popular religiosity as the second side of the coin of postmodernist culture. From his perspective, the nucleus that characterizes New Age phenomena, and the fiction typical of the postmodern period, is ‘mystical emotion.’[[16]](#footnote-16) He enthusiastically saw the latent possibility and potential in the state of doubt and postmodern nothingness as a basis for mystical experience and religious rejuvenation.[[17]](#footnote-17) In his time, he saw a new openness to mysticism, enabled by historical developments within Religious Zionism that consisted of two cultural transitions: 1) The transition from the ideological to the existential; and 2) The transition from the existential to the mystical. He claimed that the transition from the ideological to the mystical resulted from a loss of faith in the grand narrative[[18]](#footnote-18) and, in the way he put it, “the excessive ideological indoctrination that plagued Religious Zionism.”[[19]](#footnote-19) The transformation from the existential to the mystical, according to him, resulted from the dead end involved in the narcissistic involvement in one’s own personal existence, which pushes a person to seek true rejuvenation from outside himself. Hence, in what follows, he presented the external transcendental experience as essential to the mysticism of the New Age, as opposed to the immanent prophetic experience which was suggested by Rav Kook.[[20]](#footnote-20) In other words, he explained that the mystical experience of the postmodernist era was different from the one experienced by Rav Kook and his students: While Rav Kook saw the mystical experience as one that emerged from within the person, New Age mysticism sees the experience as a revelation of something external. The encounter with the external and with the other is vital[[21]](#footnote-21) for someone who found existential experience a dead end because of the lack of productivity that comes from exclusive involvement with the self.[[22]](#footnote-22) Rabbi Shagar offered additional explanations[[23]](#footnote-23) for the awakening of mysticism in postmodernist society. Among them are psychoanalytic-cultural explanations that explain the return of religion as a need for the ‘father figure,’ or as a consolation for feelings of guilt stemming from the murder of the father during the period of secularization and as a way of coping with the depression and fear that emerge in the aftermath of losing the home. An additional explanation that he offered actually brings his arguments back to the existentialist plain – one based on the insights of Sartre – that modern man’s freedom is a burdensome fate, sometimes more so than depression. The empty space thus created by loss brings one to mysticism and religion.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Beyond these cultural explanations, he pointed to an internal connection between the phenomena, in that he saw in the very experience of postmodernist deconstructivism – which included the shattering of identities, the shattering of the concepts of time, existence and truth – an opening to psychological mystical experience, given that it allowed for a new construction of reality.[[25]](#footnote-25) Rabbi Shagar connected these phenomena of shattering with the Kabbalistic concept of ‘shattering of the vessels.’ Though only by taking it out of its context was he able to infuse it with this new meaning.[[26]](#footnote-26) He saw this shattering – the shattering of the grand narrative and of faith in absolute truth – as a possibility for the actualization of vessels of consciousness that would permit new revelatory experiences of the divine, all enabled by the advent of Postmodernism.[[27]](#footnote-27) I will now seek to explore the complex function of Kabbalah – alongside Hasidic teachings and psychoanalytic theories – in the realization of Shagar’s mystical objectives.

**Between the Parable and the Explanation, Language, Kabbalah and Mysticism: Between the Unmediated and Reflective Awareness**

Rabbi Shagar presented a series of lectures on Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato’s *Da’at Tevunot* at Yeshivat Siach. According to his declaration in the first lecture, he chose this book as a way to camouflage his desire to teach Kabbalah and involve himself with mysticism. The very choice to teach Kabbalah through *Da’at Tevunot*, and the ways in which he justifies it in the introductory lecture to this series, reveal a structural tension in the teaching of Rabbi Shagar between language and mysticism, and even between Kabbalah and mysticism. This conflict between the reflective stance and the yearning for innocence and involvement with that which is real and untranslated is a foundation of many discussions found in Rabbi Shagar’s teachings. Rabbi Shagar dedicated the first lecture in the series to the discussion of the parable and the explanation in the teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria (Ari).[[28]](#footnote-28) There he describes the Sepharadi Kabbalistic yeshivas as an embodiment of unmediated Kabbalah. From this it appears that Rabbi Shagar is enchanted and enthused precisely about the the possibility created by Sepharadi Kabbalah that is immersed in unreflective Kabbalastic language, through which a true encounter with Kabbalah is built and established. Nevertheless, in spite of Rabbi Shagar’s enthusiasm about this possibility – in most of Rabbi Shagar’s lectures, he engaged in Kabbalah in the manner of Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato’s school; in the attempt to find dimensions of existential meaning. Hence there is a dissonance between Rabbi Shagar's need and penchant to search for the meaning in and elucidate the Torah, existence, Kabbalah and philosophy, as opposed to his yearning for simplicity and unmediated experience. On the one hand, Rabbi Shagar wanted to teach Kabbalah. On the other hand, he chose not to teach *Etz Haim*, but rather to teach it through an external language. Rabbi Shagar introduced the teaching with the following declaration:

As you can see from the program, the plan is to study Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato’s *Da’at Tevunot* over the course of the semester. In fact, *Da’at Tevunot* is just a platform or a camouflage – I want to teach ideas in Kabbalah, the inner Torah. We can call this an introduction to Kabbalah. But so that they don’t say that we are studying Kabbalah, then *Da’at Tevunot*. This already brings us to the introduction: It is actually a book of Kabbalah in which Rabbi Luzzato deals with the Kabbalah of Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed memory. However it is a book of Kabbalah that is not written in the language of the Kabbalah. In this regard, it is possible to add Rabbi Luzzato to Maharal on one side and to Rav Kook on the other, in that both of them were also Kabbalists without the language of the Kabbalah.[[29]](#footnote-29)

It is true that he justified the choice as a type of camouflage from the outside, “so that they will not say that we are studying Kabbalah.” Nevertheless it is difficult to imagine that he was concerned about criticism from the outside about the study of Kabbalah; for he taught many things which could have elicited polemics or opposition. I see these words as an apologetic that show hesitation from within, and not a concern from without. Since in spite of the fact that in his introductory lecture, he described the exciting possibility of study in the language of the Kabbalah without translation or explanation, these words remained a type of appetizer and a signal of his yearning for a world that he could only justify from the outside, but could not himself actually adopt. The actual lectures on *Da’at Tevunot* however remained reflexive, reflective and cerebral – on philosophical questions about the nature of existence and the creation of man. The course of the lectures and his choice of *Da’at Tevunot* undermined the personal testimony he gave at the beginning of the lectures about the personal development since his youth that he experienced about the language of the Kabbalah. In his opening, he cited the words of Rabbi Luzzato which stand as a reflection on Luzzato’s interpretive Kabbalistic project concerning the difference between the parable and the explanation in Lurianic Kabbalah:

It is all to remove the physicality from the statements of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai and Rabbi Isaac Luria, of blessed and sacred memory, and to remove the twisted thoughts of those who believe that lights can be found spinning in linear and round shapes, even if what they are is not understood in a spiritual fashion, and that the line of the *Ein-sof*, blessed be He, inserts its edge, according to its simple meaning. This is something that the ear cannot withstand – for how can it be said that there is an edge to something that is the essence of the Emanator, Blessed be He?... And it is understood about all these images of holy wisdom that they are qualitative and not quantitative, according to the descent of light through the cascade of the actions. So it comes out that the essential intention in all of these principles is to elucidate the explanation in the words of Rabbi Luria, of blessed and sacred memory, according to its parable.[[30]](#footnote-30)

In order to explain the words of Rabbi Luzzatto, he testifies to his identification with Luzzatto’s approach in his youth; this alongside his critique as expressed through the words of Rav Kook about the translation of mystical language into a different language:

As a youth, I completely identified with this statement – what difference does it make to me whether it is above or below or lacking? That does nothing for me! What is the point of knowing that there are several types of lights above the administration of the world, when we don’t know what this means? What guidance comes to the people that are administered through them? That is essentially also Rabbi Luzzatto’s concern, and also, to some extent, obviously that of the Hasidim [...].

I would like to try to explain and deepen this point. For that reason I would like to now read a letter from Rabbi Charlop, which also deals with terminology. In fact, this letter is connected to, or relates to, a letter from [Rav Kook] himself in the *Letters of Rabbi Avraham Yizhak HaKohen [Kook]*, Volume II, Letter 378. This letter [of Rabbi Charlop] is found in *Had Harim*, Letter 8, page 21.[[31]](#footnote-31) And essentially what he says here is something that [Rav Kook] himself wrote in *Orot Hakodesh*, Volume I. There he says “that secrets must be explained and understood specifically through secrets, and not through revealed things. And that is the natural approach towards the revelation of truthfulness, which is immeasurably superior to the approach of translation, something which is like hibernating *gematria*. Precisely the hidden must be explained by the hidden.” Essentially the Rav is, to a certain extent, writing here against himself. Indeed, *Orot Hakodesh* makes use of Kabbalistic terms, but it is not a book of Kabbalah. Yet the Rav is saying that this is not the ideal situation. He is saying that you actually must use the language of the Kabbalah itself, the language of Rabbi Luria, of blessed memory; and that the attempt to translate it into other terms and into another language and the like – such a translation is actually inferior to the study of the Kabbalah in the language of the Kabbalah. He is saying that precisely the hidden must be revealed by the hidden.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Here Rabbi Shagar was pointing out the contradiction between Rav Kook’s words in his letter and what he actually wrote in his books. In spite of the fact that Rav Kook asserts that “the hidden must be explained by the hidden” – meaning that one should explain mystical words in mystical language, and not in another language – Rav Kook’s writings show a systematic effort to translate mystical terms into a new Hebrew language.[[33]](#footnote-33) Hence Rabbi Shagar concluded concerning Rav Kook that he was writing against himself. In a similar fashion, I would like to claim that Rabbi Shagar was teaching here against himself as well. On the surface, he determined – or accepted – his own inferiority compared to the ‘true’ Kabbalists. In fact, however, I will claim that his discussion with relation to the unmediated language of Kabbalah is nothing more than a longing for a lost Garden of Eden that he does not attempt to rebuild or reveal once again. That is to say that, in spite of his speaking about his identification with Rabbi Luzzatto as something from the past and about his new stance, I will claim that this transition is not an abandonment of Luzzatto’s approach, but rather a path to look at it from the outside and critique it. His very ability to critique his dominant approach – which seeks to give meaning and to translate – and, in contrast to it, present unmediated language as an object of desire, created an interplay of longing between the reflective language and the mystical language. This longing is central for the interplay with the mystical past, and I will address it in the context of the function Rabbi Shagar found for the Breslover tradition. The lack of personal satisfaction with reflective language, without letting go of it, is itself that which enables the shattering of the vessel, silence and transition to the mystical. In that which, in his teachings, he translated the language of the Kabbalah into a new Hebrew language influenced by Jewish and non-Jewish traditions, he followed the path of Rav Kook. However in his emphasis on tension and conflict, and his bolting from the harmony characteristic of Rav Kook’s writings, he sought to differ and establish a new language of multiple languages and their encounter. This is as he says elsewhere, “The latest model – and to a certain extent, the most exciting model – is that of multiple identities [...] This is not the possibility for harmony of [Rav Kook], but its opposite: Each one of the worlds appears in its full strength; and the greater the distance between one world and another, the greater explosive religious power will be found in the encounter between these two differing foundations.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Rabbi Shagar described Sepharadi Kabbalah in romantic Orientalist terms.[[35]](#footnote-35) In one talk, he expressed yearning and pined for the sense of being at home with the Kabbalistic language through which the Sepharadi Kabbalists contemplated existence:

Here I want to ask myself whether it is only a question of technique. Someone who began to study with the Sepharadi Kabbalists asked me if this could accomplish something for him. Here I want to explain this stance from *Orot HaKodesh*, “that secrets must be explained precisely with secrets.” There is something deep here with which I strongly identify. When I was young, I identified with the Hasidic position and with the position of Rabbi Luzzatto. But in light of the Rav’s words [...] When someone studies Kabbalah in the language of the Kabbalah, he does not ask himself about the meaning of the matter. He does not define the things to himself. He is studying a language. He is learning to speak in a language. However, in fact, he is not just learning to speak in a language, but he rather begins to think in this fashion. He begins to see the world in this fashion. The best parable is actually in the similarity to modern theories about the learning of language. [...]

Now that is the reasoning. Of course, that is the reasoning. I don’t speak in the language of the Kabbalists. That is the excuse for why I am teaching this here.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Shagar presented the Sepharadi Kabbalists as relating to the teaching of Rabbi Luria as true reality and accordingly not asking any questions about its elucidation and meaning, as per the style of Luzzato’s school. In contrast to them, Luzzatto’s Kabbalah placed itself between the parable and the explanation, between the indicator and the indicated, in the teachings of Luria. That is to say that it displaced the real and mythical in the teachings of Luria and put them on the plain of the mystical and philosophical. It is true that in *Devarim, HaDevarim*, Shagar continues to critique himself as a “*lamdan* (Talmudic analyst),” who is not capable of approaching the thing without reflection. However immediately after these words expressing yearning for the unmediated language of Kabbalah, he moved on to explain and grant it meaning and force by way of Wittgenstein’s theories of language:

From this angle, I am very supportive – this is very difficult for us on a personal level; I don’t know if the thing is possible. I feel strongly that the Sepharadi Kabbalists are right. In other words, you learn to speak the language, to use it. Then you begin to see it in the world. You look at a person and you see a *parzuf* (a mystical face). You say his source is from the ox of the chariot, or something like it. Expertise in the language molds the world. You already see the world in the way that the Kabbalistic language molds it. And this is actually true with regard to all languages. This is in contrast with the classic understanding that there is a world, there is an object, and the language describes it. The modern understanding says just the opposite. It is the language that molds the world; it is the language that creates the world. Different languages also create different worlds. [...] It is impossible to translate, “like,” into Hebrew. To like is to like. Only an Anglo-Saxon can like. One who does not have this thing can love or cherish, but it is not the same thing. A language creates psychic possibilities that do not exist in another language. One who does not encounter the language will not have it. This is not only true with regard to the psychic world. The obsession of the *lamdan* is that he cannot accept things according to their simple understandings; so he does not have the ability to be in the thing itself. There is always a reflection, through which he touches the thing itself. And that is actually his weakness. The argument against *lamdanut* was correct. And it is also true of Kabbalistic explanation. [...] Once you give it some sort of analytical reduction structured by whatever field, it is already not reality. You have already missed the essence of the thing itself. And there is a deep point here. The specific condition for the language is innocence; an innocence like that of a child. Here is the crux of the disagreement. The Hasidim – and the Hasidim would certainly disagree with what I am saying – and Luzzatto are already not on the level of simplicity, but are rather taking a stance that seeks meaning. For them, circles and lines turn into something physical. But from the inside, it is not physical, it is reality. It is the language that gives reality its spiritual reality. It does not see it from the outside, but is rather inside the thing itself. It is a part of the thing itself, since it accepts things in their simplicity. And it is not on the level that turns them into objects, such that it already turns them into the physical.[[37]](#footnote-37)

These words reflect a frequently repeated move, through which Rabbi Shagar expresses the rift between his aspiration for the ‘mystical,’ and his reflective stance. Even though he presents himself as being opposed to the Hasidim and Luzzatto; in his actual teachings, he adopts their approach. His books and lectures testify to his identification and involvement specifically with Hasidut, with Rav Kook and – in the context of these lectures – Rabbi Luzzatto. In spite of his description of the home language as the ideal condition when he explains the problematic of translation, he is actually justifying his being drawn to learn different languages. He gives the example of the word, like, in English, which he feels shows that only an Anglo-Saxon can like – something which cannot be translated as love or cherish. This argument specifically justifies the pull to learn many ‘languages,’ in order to create diversity of experience. So the language of Kabbalah is another language that enriches psychic experience. However, as with other languages, one must also overcome it to reach the point of mysticism – which is an oceanic pre-linguistic experience that negates the dualism of subject and object, as per the universal designation of mysticism borrowed from Freud’s language of psychoanalysis.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Moreover there is a gap between Rabbi Shagar’s definition of mysticism and his definition of Kabbalah: Mysticism is a pre-linguistic condition, an oceanic experience of oneness, a negation of dualism between subject and object, whereas Kabbalah is a language. Granted, Kabbalah is meant to serve as a bridge to the mystical experience. However it is still also an ‘intermediary’ screen that screens one from that unmediated experience.

How did he suggest to deal with the tension between the reflective stance to which he was drawn and the search to negate language? He described the model of multiple identities as a model that enables multiple languages, multiple positions and that – through the interplay between various states – creates religious tension and creativity. It is neither a schizophrenic model, nor a harmonistic model, but rather one of movement. There is no binary choice here of choosing one as opposed to another. It is rather the very positioning of movement between the antipodes of the space, between the going and the returning (*ratzo vashov*), that enables a new religious language which then engenders new mystical experiences.

It appears that, for Rabbi Shagar, the mystical objective and experience – having an aspect of the ‘lost Garden of Eden’ – was the negation of the dualism between subject and object, and between inner and outer. However it is not clear whether this is possible within the framework of the existential reflective experience in which he established his teachings. Moreover, in spite of his positioning Postmodernism as having the potential to liberate one from rationalism and to arrive at mystical experience, it is possible that the deep awareness of the many types of conversations that can exist does not allow one to give oneself over to a specific conversation that will liberate one’s consciousness – as he presents in his articles on, “The Understanding of Language,” and “On that Day.” On the one hand, understanding language as a game or as performative speech does not require correspondence between religious language and a logical or external reality, and so liberates one towards the mystical. On the other hand, the very awareness of the game, of being involved in one conversation among many types of other conversations, dullens, weakens and alienates one towards the ‘home’ language. So even though Rabbi Shagar described mysticism as the longed-for goal of religious practice, it appears that this is based upon complexity, layering, translation and the interplay between the inner and the outer.

**Between the Linguistic and the Real**

In his article, “My Faith” (Shagar, 2003), Shagar makes use of a Lacanian theory – as developed by Slavoj Zizek – to describe the experiences or understanding of faith for him:[[39]](#footnote-39) In order to situate faith in the context of the real, it must be related to the pre-linguistic experience of the child, like a child who experiences himself in a way that is unseparated from his mother; whereas awareness, science, language and externality brings a context of the symbolic. The relation of faith, not to the reflective, but to the real is connected to an understanding of faith in terms of unio mystica. In returning to such an experience, there is a type of strong desire for the embryonic experience of the melding of man and God and of the negation of the dualism between them – a salient experience of mysticism.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Accordingly, Rabbi Shagar defines faith as something related to the encounter with the context of the real:

Language is connected to the existence of boundaries and distinctions, whereas reality precedes language. For in the real, there is not yet dualism, especially not between the subject and the object. These are the ‘raw materials of life in one’s dreams,’[[41]](#footnote-41) before any symbolization or interpretation… Human consciousness that lives in the dualism between the subject and the object digs a chasm between the world of faith and the outer world. Therefore I have said that faith is presence, it is being. I purposely did not use the expression, “experience,” here. Experience perpetuates the gap between the subject and the object. But faith can spring from the world that precedes dualities… In light of these concepts, the source of faith is in the real, the pre-linguistic – that which precedes the distinctions between the subject and the object – or, in other words, in the mystical. And, in truth, my faith is mystical; it is a faith without letters or words. I was destined to believe without saying to another or to myself[[42]](#footnote-42) (which, in this context, is also another) that I believe, similar to the Kabbalists who concentrate on the *Ein-sof* with the understanding of the heart.[[43]](#footnote-43)

In this excerpt, faith is understood as prior to any other experience, and particularly prior to the experience of language and reflective experience. However this faith will in the second stage also need to be expressed through language and to encounter dualities and dichotomies. The return to faith after the dualisms – even if it is no longer coming from acceptance of the self – is achieved by freedom and by leaping. The inclusion of the Kabbalistic term at the end of the quoted excerpt, “the *Ein-sof* with the understanding of the heart,” expresses the interplay with, and dialog towards, the ‘home’ language. In doing so, he leaves the impression that the postmodernist language, borrowed from the psychoanalytic literature translated into Hebrew, fits beautifully with the Jewish mystical tradition. This would place Shagar, as it were, as one more link in the chain of Kabbalists. In fact, however, there is a melding of axioms, values and objectives that are completely different. In the first part of the excerpt, he expresses the gap and rift that he experiences between the languages, and then uses an amalgam of modern concepts – that have have not the faintest connection to Kabbalah – in order to express his yearning for the real, even if it is already lost. At the end of the excerpt, he attempts to bridge the gap by means of a translation into the language of the Kabbalists. However it should be clear that this act of translation is one that takes the Kabbalistic expression out of its context by giving it a new theological interpretation. Yet it is precisely this distorted reading that enables a type of rapprochement – without a full fusion or complete synthesis – of the languages between which Shagar is torn.

In an other article, “At the Edge of Faith,”[[44]](#footnote-44) in which he interprets and newly reframes the teachings about language from the First Rebbe of Lubavitch, Rabbi Shagar describes this yearning as one for a second innocence, as a longing for childhood, which is characterized by lack of awareness and lack of reflectiveness and – through that – a lack of dualism between the object and the subject. He cites additional attributes for the ecstatic experience that comes from the Chabad technique of introspection which places man in front of the divine Nothingness and Infinitude.[[45]](#footnote-45) He describes this experience as likely to arouse dread, fear and shock at the loss of the reality of the world; but at the same time, or alternatively, as enabling freedom, delight and great longings.[[46]](#footnote-46) Delight and danger are found at the core of the mystical experience, as will be explained later. In the continuation, he distinguishes between an experience that arouses trembling and fear and one that brings delight – he explains that the difference is in the ability to relinquish one’s hold on what is, on one’s holding on to familiar reality, and in the need to justify it by means of external reasons. He accordingly describes the result of this introspection:

This introspection leads to the revelation that man is not trapped or imprisoned in the world, and it arouses a spectrum of emotions that are characterized by the will to divert oneself from Being to Nothingness: Fiery love, ecstasy, longings, strong desire and thirst. These emotions embody a deep desire to divert oneself from reality, to be removed from everything and to come to the divine Infinitude.

Few people are equipped to live in complete freedom all the time. Such a lifestyle requires shattering a regular lifestyle. It can be expressed, for example, by a hippie who dances and plays music all day. In the religious context, such people are likely to want, and completely give themselves over to, a different world of holiness and inspiration – to fill their day, to study and to want to live intensely in their experience of this fierce freedom. Most of us are not equipped for this, and we also do not want it.[[47]](#footnote-47)

From the brightness and fullness of this description of this ecstatic experience, it appears that Rabbi Shagar is making a call to have such an experience – albeit with the reservations of not being equipped and not wanting it. Hence he limits this type of experience, at least for himself, to only at certain times.[[48]](#footnote-48) In the continuation, he speaks about ‘islands of time,’ in which experiences of this type happen, such as during prayer or on Shabbat; and also described experiences similar to the ecstatic experience that come through the ability to free oneself, to experience full and living experiences of presence and of encounter with Nothingness – though they do not necessarily reach the fullness of ecstasy, as expressed by diverting oneself to be completely negated. Perhaps as a result of Rabbi Shagar’s reservations about negating oneself and diverting oneself from reality, he proceeds to deal with the concept of, ‘love through delights’ and the possibility of turning ‘the bitter into the sweet’ – meaning the ability to experience the delight of the divine through the delights of this world, and not through their negation.[[49]](#footnote-49) Even in this move, he expresses reservations about the possibility of experiencing love through delights in a full manner. It is possible that this springs from the processes of the going and the returning, which do not allow for the existence of either state of consciousness in a complete and full fashion.[[50]](#footnote-50)

In another place, Rabbi Shagar explicitly relates to this dualism, showing awareness of the tension that exists in his thought, and expresses his preference for – or at least, makes peace with – his stance of self-consciousness, and the reflection that is found throughout his teachings. So basing himself on the reversal already made by the Sages of the Talmud regarding the position of the penitent (*ba’al* *teshuva*), as well as on the reversal created by the first Rebbe of Lubavitch regarding the position of ‘the unclear lens,’ Rabbi Shagar relates to his reflective stance as a possibility to see God in a new space. Hence – with all of the longings and strong desires for the unmediated experience of God, and the negation of the dualism between the inner and the outer – Shagar expresses the importance of his stance of seeking elucidation and awareness. In this way, he acknowledges that the unmediated encounter, the flow and unity of the inner and the outer exist primarily with the ‘perfectly righteous’ (*zadik gamur*), with those whose religiosity is their only language, for whom reflection and awareness is not present, as they are with the penitent – meaning for the one who stands outside of the religious system and experiences dualism, alongside self-consciousness.[[51]](#footnote-51) However precisely because there is another language that exists with him, the penitent expresses a higher level of freedom in his choice of the system of the commandments, without any “external compulsion or justification.”[[52]](#footnote-52) From Shagar’s perspective, this freedom enables creativity and novelty with regard to this world itself, and therefore “receives the key to a true freedom to draw down lights beyond his level.”[[53]](#footnote-53) In other words, according to Rabbi Shagar, this drawing of sustenance from several types of conversations enables a person to leave the closed world of the perfectly righteous – who is imprisoned in the religious system – by opening a space within it for novel introspection towards new vistas. Hence the unity and the lack of dualism found in the righteous – with all of the romanticism that is tied to them – also, to some extent, represent sameness and univalence, as opposed to the multiplicity of meanings that are enabled thanks to the awareness and the questions about meaning though which one can perhaps experience mystical experiences of a different kind. In this way, Shagar opened the door to see mysticism as a possibility for the liberation of a person from a system of specific signification, towards openness to a space of infinite meanings. Mysticism of this type suffers in its development from alienation and a lack of spontaneity and awareness, which is not the case with the other type of mysticism; but it is more relevant for people like him, who are reflective and have an awareness of life between the inner and the outer and of the different types of conversations that exist – who live in a certain dualism. This is how Shagar infused the postmodernist approach with mystical meaning, seeing in the multiplicity of meanings, an expression of the emptying out of essential meaning in language; and seeing in the multiplicity of languages a tool for the encounter with the infinite light of the divine.

**Eros and Longing: Between Hasidut and Kabbalah**

In a lecture on the sixth teaching of the *Likutei Moharan*, Rabbi Shagar relates to an additional aspect found at the center of his mystical space, as I have suggested earlier, which exists in the tension between the inner and the outer. And that is the concept of yearning and longing, which we dealt with in the context of the first Rebbe of Lubavitch, but which acquires greater depth in the teachings of Rebbe Nahman.[[54]](#footnote-54) It is possible that he used these longings themselves to address the rift between the inner and the outer, a move which Rabbi Shagar calls a “mystical stance.”[[55]](#footnote-55) This mystical stance springs from the consciousness of the unity of the inner and the outer, of the conscious and the ontological; and the consciousness of this state brings about inner experiences of yearning for that oneness, for God. On the one hand, Rabbi Shagar recognizes the mystical experience as an experience of oneness, similar to how it is described in the general literature.[[56]](#footnote-56) On the other hand, he presents the longing felt by a person who has felt an experience like this, but is still in the outer world in the aspect of the “returning (*shov*),” after the “going (*razo*),” and is not able to actualize his strong continuous desire for this oneness. In relating to Rebbe Nahman and his story, “The Heart and the Spring,” he describes the experience of longing for oneness as the experiencing of a trap in which a person is not able to find himself in oneness, but also not able to find himself completely in either antipode – neither the external nor the internal. This stance of longing towards oneness – even though it is not actualizable – is itself likely to be that mystical experience, which according to Rabbi Shagar, is the fundamental experience which necessarily changes the experience of both of the antipodes and is the source of life energy, such that a person constantly works to attain a oneness that cannot be attained. There is a characteristic in the yearning for holiness that is higher than holiness itself, claims Rabbi Shagar, in the footsteps of Rebbe Nahman and Rav Kook. For the yearning maintains the characteristic of infinitude, whereas the attainment of holiness constrains it.[[57]](#footnote-57) Of course, in spite of his presenting himself as a part of this continuum, it is worth emphasizing the greatness of his own novelty with regards to these traditions upon which he is relying, such that he was able to create a new religious calling.[[58]](#footnote-58) These yearnings are that which give life, creativity, rejuvenation and inspiration, and are an expression of the mystical experience, even as they bring an experience of the loss and negation of reality. These mystical yearnings, according to Rabbi Shagar are expressed by the experience of Torah study as a dialog that creates an encounter for the student with the presence of the teaching that is taught as being another, which arouses trembling, movement and struggle on the part of the student. Shagar adopted the Kabbalistic concepts of the unification of the male and the female to implant the experience of Torah with a mystical meaning of a clearly erotic nature.[[59]](#footnote-59) This notwithstanding, even in his lectures on Rebbe Nahman, Rabbi Shagar did not leave the longing for Nothingness and for the negation of reality as the only calling. Hence in his lecture on the thirty-first teaching, he emphasizes the need for the endorsement of reality and the joy that is expressed in the consciousness of Being and of thanksgiving for that which is – a move which is the opposite of that towards yearning, and one which brings a person back to his existential presence right now.[[60]](#footnote-60) My claim is that it is not the yearnings alone that create the mystic, but rather the actual constant interplay created by Shagar in his contradictory demands for both ‘the going and the returning’ – for longing and for making peace with reality.

Rabbi Shagar’s use of the terms, “light,” and “delight,” to describe the mystical experience, alongside the terms of the unification of the male and the female, which present the mystical experience as an erotic one, dovetail the calling in academic Zohar study, as seen, for example, in Yehuda Liebes’ article, “Zohar and Eros.”[[61]](#footnote-61) Hence the Hasidic experience brings back a foundation to mystical experiences which was not lost on the Kabbalists and is readily found in the Zohar literature, particularly in *Sefer HaYihud* and the ecstatic Kabbalah.

These things can be summarized in an excerpt that Shagar wrote to himself in a notebook of his personal thought:

The question then is not about studying Kabbalah, but rather about living a mystical life – a life that does not only experience the outer husk of reality. Dreams, paying attention to the inner life, to happenings, to conceptions, etc. Realizations [...] the delight that is in the Torah. It can be said that the raw materials of the conceptualization of that which is hidden are the raw materials of delight – it is connected to the principle of delight, as opposed to Freud’s principle of reality. If so, the goal is returning from reality to delight, and that is the danger.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Integrated with concepts that he drew from psychoanalysis, he defined mysticism – in a way that deviates from the language of Kabbalah – as a psychic experience of connection and attention to primary and childhood layers of existence that are separated from the outer reality. This is a dangerous perspective that causes a person to withdraw internally to the mysteries of his soul, to a place of games, a place of the unmediated that knows no reflection. Such a state of consciousness allows a person to encounter God as a subject of love, eros and cleaving. As he puts it there in the same notebook, “Mysticism is eros on its highest level. The libido is focused on the divine ‘object’; and hence the connection they found between mysticism and eros.” Even in this line, we see the interplay of the mystical between the inner and God as an external object. The veering away from the language of the Kabbalah is in order to speak about mysticism and specifically to use a translation into ‘external’ concepts that draw from Freud so as to explain the experience for which Shagar longs. If so, Shagar’s mystical experience is not dependent upon the language of the Kabbalah, but rather tied to the interplay between the psychic experience of delight and withdrawal from reality and the awareness of its danger and the return to concrete reality. Shagar integrated the multiplicity of languages in his learning, in order to create an interplay which would enable an intermediate space for the occasional being and delight of Nothingness.

**Summary**

This article sought to present how Shagar shaped the mystical space as one created by the conflict between the intimate and the homelike and reflection and externality. The analysis of his articles brought up the manner in which he called out for and used the Torah literature and postmodernist literature to create new mystical thinking. In his introductory lecture on *Da’at Tevunot*, he apologized for this reflective stance. Yet in spite of his testifying that it was only in his youth that he did not see any value to the Sepharadi Kabbalah that does not explain itself and is not translated into a language of meaning, he still adopted the approach of Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzatto in the course of his lectures. In the interplay between reflectiveness and a language of translation and of meaning and between language that does not require justification, he created an interplay of longing towards the mystic. Of course, an internal contradiction was built into his various lectures throughout. It is likely, however, that he was seeking after the possibility created by the very transition between these psychic stances that would enable a space for mystical experience.

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Zizek, Slavoj 27, 39

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2. Regarding Nothingness, see Zakhariah, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Based on the oral testimony of his student, Rabbi Elhanan Nir. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See, for example, the lecture he delivered about the relationship between Torah and academia, which can be found in edited form as, “At the Door of Academia,” in the book, *To Shed Light upon the Doors*. There he enthusiastically presents the need for insights from the outside – meaning the academic world and general philosophy – in order to refresh religious language and bring life and fullness to it. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Shagar dealt with Postmodernism and its contribution to mysticism in several places; and we will deal with some of them in this article. Regarding the main principles of his understanding of the relationship and contribution of the postmodernist spirit towards the rejuvenation of mysticism, see Shagar, 2004 and Shagar 2003. The essence of his understanding can be found in the article, “On Mysticism, Postmodernism and the Modern Era” (Shagar, 2003). Regarding the thought of Rabbi Shagar and of Tamar Ross in light of the challenges of postmodernism, Miriam Feldmann Kaye dedicated her doctoral thesis to this and subsequently reworked it as *Jewish Theology for a Postmodern Age* (Feldmann Kaye, 2019). There one can also find the contemporary literature on the thought of Rabbi Shagar. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Regarding intermediary and transitional spaces as spaces for creativity, see Winnicott, 1995. Regarding the use of the Winnicottian terms of potential spaces and holding in order to understand spiritual phenomena, see Graetz Simmonds, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See, for example, Sanford L. Drob (Drob, 2009, 1) who, in his introduction, indicates that his book will show numerous points of contact between Kabbalah and the concerns of such 20th century thinkers as Derrida and Witgenstein. He however admits that the translation and encounter of the two languages changes both of them, but claims that the very dialog that he is able to create between the languages is an indication of their correspondence; and so blurs the great distance between them. However here is not the place for its analysis of at any length. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Feldmann Kaye, 2019, 65-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Biti Roi adopts Harold Bloom’s concept of misreading in order to understand Rabbi Shagar’s use of his Kabbalistic and Hasidic sources (Roi, 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ohad Zakhariah has discussed this partially. However these things require a deeper investigation. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Huss ? [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Garb, 2005; Huss, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Scholem, 1976, 71-83. Even though, in the continuation of his article, he does ascribe tremendous significance to the teachings of Rav Kook, together with those of Arele Roth. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Regarding the complexity of faith about the divine revelation of the Torah, together with a postmodernist sensibility, see Tamar Ross, ???, Kaye [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Rav Kook’s coping with the challenges of his day is a salient feature through all of his thought. Following upon Shahar Rahmani’s doctoral thesis, written under the supervision of Dov Scwartz, which demonstrates Rav Kook’s coping with the challenges of his day, he published a new annotated version of Kook’s, *For the Perplexed of the Generation* (Kook, 2014). Regarding this book and its context, see 263-309. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Regarding this, see Shagar, 54-63 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Regarding secularization theories and the options presented by the New Age, see Hanegraff, 1998. Regarding the context of contemporary Kabbalah, see Huss, 2007, 107-125; Wurtzberger ; and Kahana, 2008, 38-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Regarding this aspect of postmodernist thought, see . [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In other places, he elaborated on his explanation for the ideological abandonment of Zionism and the transition to post-Zionism. For example, in another chapter of the book, he explains that Contemporary Thought and Science already no longer believe in an overall narrative and universal laws, but rather prefer dissonance, esthetics, gaps and multiple positions. See Shagar, 2003, 152-158. For more about the use of New Age mysticism in the Isreali context, especially in the religious community, see Cherlow, Zur... [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Regarding the prophecy and mysticism of Rav Kook, see… [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Regarding otherness and its centrality in the distinction from idealism, see Franz Rosenzweig’s *Star of Redemption*.The one who deepens the concept of otherness as the cornerstone of existence is Levinas. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The transition to involvement with the encounter with the other is dovetailed by the trend in psychoanalysis to move on from involvement with the individual as a separate and closed entity, as with Freud, and towards intersubjective relationships. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Shagar, 2003, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Sartre, ... [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Shagar, 2003, 63-66. Regarding deconstructivism and its connection to the experience of holiness, see the Deconstructivism of Holiness.. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Regarding the Kabbalstic shattering of the vessels, see Jacobson... [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Regarding Postmodernism, the New Age and Rabbi Shagar, see Garb, 2005, 213-217. There he disagrees with the positions of Rabbi Shagar and Rabbi Kellner that primarily relate to postmodernism as thought, whereas he – following other circles – believes that it should be understood primarily as a habitus (Ostrov, 69-83). He also discusses the conceptual foundation of Zizek (Zizek, 2004, 45) as that which stands behind Rabbi Shagar’s assertion that Postmodernism represents fertile ground for the growth of New Age thinking. This is as opposed to Heelas (Heelas, 1996, 216). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Regarding the parable and the explanation in the teachings of Rabbi Luria….. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. My transcription from the recording of the first lecture on *Da’at Tevunot*. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Luzzatto… Add conceptual notes/Garb/Hirara [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Charlop, 1973, 22-23. (See also Charlop, 1997, where he refers to the *Letters of Rabbi Avraham Yizhak Hakohen [Kook]*, Volume II, Letter 378, in which Rav Kook writes about his strong desire to write an Epistle of Repentance and about what is preventing him from it.) Letter 8 was written in Jerusalem on the Tenth of Elul, 5671 (1911) [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. . My transcription from the recording of the first lecture on *Da’at Tevunot*. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Avivi, Schwartz? Cherlow? [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Shagar, ???, 201-202. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Regarding the critique of Orientalism, see Said. Regarding the relationship of Orientalism to Kabbalah, see Anidjar. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. My transcription from the recording of the first lecture on *Da’at Tevunot*. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. My transcription from the recording of the first lecture on *Da’at Tevunot*. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Regarding the oceanic mystical experience which represents the undivided connection between the child and the mother, see Freud, ???, 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Zizek, 2004 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. There is discussion about unio mystica in Judaism. Gershom Sholem’s opinion is that there is cleavage but not unity, whereas Moshe Idel emphasizes the places where unity can be found. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Zizek, 2004, 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. He is referring to the beginning of the article in which he cites an excerpt from Rebbe Nahman of Breslov in *Sihot HaRan* 1, “As the Creator, may He be blessed, is great. It is impossible to say it to one’s fellow, and even impossible to himself; and it is even impossible for him to tell himself from one day to the next.” [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Shagar, 2003, 418. The editors here refer one to an article of Y. Y. Lifschitz (Lifschitz, 2008, 27-50). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Shagar 2014, 19-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Elior, Levental... [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Shagar, 2014, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Source? [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. This type of description is reminiscent of the way in which the Hasidim describe the experiences of going and returning (*ratzo vashov*). As an ecstatic experience, the going is dangerous and removed from reality, such that it cannot be maintained; which is in contrast to the returning and the living within reality. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Regarding divine service through the physical, see Zippi Kaufman. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Regarding experiences of going and returning and how it is understand in different Hasidic traditions, see the work of Rabbi Shagar’s student, Elhanan Nir (Nir, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Shagar, ???, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Shagar, ???, 64-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Shagar, ???, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Regarding “The Heart and the Spring,” and longing in Rebbe Nahman….??? [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Shagar, 2012, 71-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Source [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Shagar, 2012, 419-411. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Regarding Rabbi Shagar’s subversive call in another story from Rebbe Nahman, see Kossman, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Shagar, 2008, 411-412. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Shagar, 2008, 411-412. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Liebes, ??? [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Access was provided by the generous permission of Miriam Rosenberg. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)