

ABSTRACT

R. ZVI HIRSH OF ZIDITCHOV ON THE BEGINNINGS OF
CREATION: A HASIDIC THEOLOGY?

Dov Schwartz

R. Zvi Hirsh Eichenstein of Ziditchov (*Żydaczów*) composed *Ateret Zvi*, a commentary on the Zohar. In this commentary, which explains the ideas of the Zohar according to the kabbalah of R. Isaac Luria (Ari), there are no revealed discussions on Hasidic motives such as doctrine of the Zadik. R. Zvi Hirsh claimed that only R. Hayyim Vital had the authority to present the Ari's ideas.

This paper explores R. Zvi Hirsh's reflections on the primordial events within the Deity. He quoted at length R. Meir Poppers, and added comments, mostly polemical, to his commentaries. I claim, that the content and terminology of *Ateret Zvi* reflect typical approaches of Hasidic leaders who dealt with Kabbalah. However, this reflection was concealed. Thus I propose these thesis on R. Zvi Hirsh's theology and hermeneutics:

1. Inclination towards discussing primordial dimensions of creation;
2. Using analogy sometimes based on Aristotelian physics in order to understand primordial events;
3. Presenting Zimzum (contraction) in its literal sense. Although R. Zvi Hirsh criticized Habad he adopted partly their concept of Zimzum. Habad divided between first Zimzum, which is real, to other Zimzumim (contractions) that should be understood as metaphorical;
4. Adopting terminology as "Parsa", "Hut" (string) and "kingship of Ein sof".

R. Zvi Hirsh was not an innovator or revolutionary. His reading of the Zohar rejected the commentaries of a disciple like R. Yosef Ibn Tabul and commentator like R. Israel Saruk. However he was courageous enough to expose the primordial secrets of creation while others preferred dealing with inferior levels.