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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dreaming Kingship: Meta-Parable and Divine Desire

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Abstract

This article examines the theological and philosophical implications of the phrase "*K'she'ala b'machshavah Ono Emloch*" *(When it rose in thought: I shall rule)* in the writings of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (the Alter Rebbe), founder of Chabad Hasidism. Building on recent scholarship in Hasidic thought and integrating insights from literary theory and phenomenology, this study proposes that the Alter Rebbe's understanding of divine kingship represents a radical ontology of divine desire expressed through what I term "meta-parable." Drawing primarily on *Likkutei Torah* on *Shir HaShirim*, and incorporating comparative analysis with Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin's *Tzidkat HaTzadik*, and the Degel Machaneh Ephraim, this essay argues that kingship itself constitutes the primordial divine parable (*mashal hakadmoni*)—a foundational narrative structure through which God experiences selfhood through sovereignty. This framework repositions creation not as divine emanation but as divine imagination, transforming the cosmos into a medium for divine self-discovery through narrative. The study contributes to contemporary scholarship on Hasidic theology, mystical hermeneutics, and the intersection of literary theory with Jewish mysticism.

Keywords: Alter Rebbe, Chabad, Divine Kingship, Mashal Hakadmoni, Tzimtzum, Hasidic Mysticism, Metaphorical Ontology, Narrative Theology.

1. Introduction

The intersection of mystical experience and scholarly analysis presents unique methodological challenges in the study of Hasidic thought. This article emerged from both rigorous textual study and what might be termed a moment of mystical insight—a recognition that the phrase "*K'she'ala b'machshavah Ono Emloch*" in the Alter Rebbe's *Likkutei Torah* disclosed not merely a theological concept but an existential and ontological revelation about the nature of divine desire and cosmic creation. Recent scholarship has increasingly recognized the sophistication of Hasidic theological discourse, moving beyond earlier characterizations of Hasidism as primarily emotional or anti-intellectual. (1) The work of scholars such as Elliot Wolfson, Rachel Elior, and Moshe Rosman has demonstrated the philosophical depth and innovative character of Hasidic thought.(2-4) This study contributes to this scholarly trajectory by examining how the Alter Rebbe's understanding of divine kingship represents

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a unique synthesis of Kabbalistic ontology, literary theory, and phenomenological insight.

The central thesis of this article is that the Alter Rebbe's theology constitutes a "meta-parable"—a narrative framework in which creation itself becomes God's method of self-discovery through the experience of sovereignty. This approach challenges conventional understandings of divine transcendence and immanence, proposing instead a model of divine becoming through imaginative projection and narrative unfolding.

1.1 Hermeneutical Framework

This study employs what might be termed "mystical hermeneutics"—an interpretive approach that takes seriously both the rational-philosophical content of Hasidic texts and their experiential-mystical dimensions.(5) Following Wolfson's model of "kabbalistic hermeneutics," this methodology recognizes that mystical texts often encode their deepest insights in symbolic and metaphorical language that requires both scholarly rigor and interpretive sensitivity.(6) It crosses the neat division between epistemology and ontology I discussed previously.(6)

The analysis draws on three primary methodological resources

A:Close textual reading of Hebrew sources, particularly *Likkutei Torah,* The Degel Machaneh Ephraim and *Tzidkat HaTzadik*;

B:Comparative analysis with broader Kabbalistic and Hasidic literature; and

C:Integration with contemporary theoretical frameworks from literary criticism, phenomenology, and religious studies.

1.2 Previous Scholarship

The academic study of the Alter Rebbe's thought has been significantly advanced by scholars such as Naftali Loewenthal, Roman Foxbrunner, and Eli Rubin.(8-10) Loewenthal's work on the contemplative dimension of Chabad practice provides crucial context for understanding the experiential aspects of the Alter Rebbe's theology.(11) Foxbrunner's analysis of the Tanya's philosophical structure offers important insights into the Alter Rebbe's systematic approach to mystical psychology.(12)

However, the specific question of divine kingship as meta-parable has received limited scholarly attention. Alan Brill's work on Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen provides valuable comparative material, while Sanford Drob's analysis of Kabbalistic metaphors offers theoretical frameworks relevant to this study.(13,14) This article builds on these foundations while introducing new interpretive perspectives drawn from narrative theory and phenomenological analysis.

1.3 Contextual Background

The phrase "*K'she'ala b'machshavah Ono Emloch*" originates in the Arizal's interpretation of the *Zohar*'s teaching about divine kingship.(15) The Ari understood this "rising in thought" as the primordial moment of divine desire that initiates the entire process of creation and emanation. For the Ari, "*Ono Emloch*" (I shall rule) represents not an arbitrary decision but a fundamental yearning that defines God's relationship to otherness.

The Alter Rebbe's treatment of this phrase in *Likkutei Torah* on *Shir HaShirim* reveals a distinctive interpretation that emphasizes the imaginative and narrative dimensions of divine kingship. Rather than viewing kingship as a pre-existing divine attribute that finds expression in creation, the Alter Rebbe suggests that kingship itself is constituted through the creative act—that God becomes king through the process of creating subjects.

2. The Alter Rebbe's Innovation

In *Likkutei Torah*, *Shir HaShirim* 12:3, the Alter Rebbe writes:

...ללכ וילא דורע ויא ה"ב חוס ויא הנה יכ הלעמל ובוי כ"מכו 'תי ותבשחמב הלעש תחא הבשחמ תניחבמ קר סתוהתה לכש תומלועה לכ תויח איה וז הבשחמש דולמא אנא

"It may be understood above that the Infinite, blessed be He, has no comparison at all... all [emanations] come only from the aspect of a single thought that arose in His mind: 'I shall rule'—and this thought is the vitality of all the worlds."(16)

This passage reveals several crucial innovations in the Alter Rebbe's thinking. First, he locates the origin of all existence in a single divine thought rather than in divine essence per se. Second, he characterizes this thought specifically as a desire for rulership. Third, and most significantly, he suggests that this thought continues to function as the "vitality" (*chiyut*) of all worlds—implying that creation is not merely the result of divine kingship but its ongoing medium.

The Alter Rebbe's formulation invites a reading that moves beyond traditional emanative models toward what might be termed a "narrative ontology." If all existence originates in the divine thought "I shall rule," and if this thought constitutes the continuing vitality of creation, then the cosmos becomes not simply the object of divine sovereignty but its very condition of possibility.

This interpretation aligns with the Alter Rebbe's broader theological project of emphasizing divine immanence without compromising transcendence. (17) By locating kingship in divine thought rather than divine essence, he maintains the absolute infinitude of God while providing a framework for understanding how that infinitude can relate to finite existence.

2.1 The Concept of Meta-Parable

The term "meta-parable" as employed in this study refers to a narrative structure that functions simultaneously as content and form—a story that contains within itself the principles of its own interpretation and application. In the context of the Alter Rebbe's thought, creation itself constitutes such a meta-parable: it is both the story of divine kingship and the medium through which that story is told and experienced. This concept builds on contemporary literary theory, particularly the work of scholars such as Patricia Waugh on metafiction and Linda Hutcheon on metafictional techniques.(18, 19) However, it also draws on specifically Jewish hermeneutical traditions, including the Zoharic concept of the Torah as a divine narrative and the Hasidic emphasis on the world as a "book" to be read and interpreted.


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2.2 The *Mashal Hakadmoni* Tradition

The notion of a primordial parable (*mashal hakadmoni*) has deep roots in Jewish mystical literature. The *Zohar* suggests that God consulted the Torah—characterized as a divine narrative—before creating the world.(20) This implies that reality itself is structured according to narrative principles, with creation representing the actualization of a divine story.

The Alter Rebbe's innovation lies in identifying divine kingship specifically as this primordial narrative structure. Rather than viewing the *mashal hakadmoni* as a separate textual entity (such as the Torah), he suggests that the very concept and experience of sovereignty constitutes the fundamental parable through which divine reality unfolds.

3. The Degel Machaneh Ephraim

Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Ephraim of Sudilkov, the Ba'al Shem Tov's grandson and author of *Degel Machaneh Ephraim*, provides a crucial interpretation of the *mashal hakadmoni* that bridges earlier mystical traditions and later Hasidic thought. Writing in the early period of Hasidic development, the Degel articulates a sophisticated understanding of how the Torah functions as the primordial parable that underlies all existence.

For the Degel, the Torah's designation as "*mashal hakadmoni*" (Samuel I, 24-25) reveals its fundamental nature as both concealment and revelation. He explains that a *mashal* serves to "dress up" (*halvish*) elevated wisdom in forms comprehensible to simple minds—just as a merchant uses commercial metaphors or a builder employs construction analogies to convey abstract concepts.(34,35) Significantly, the Degel notes that the letters of "*mashal*" (מ-ש-ל) can be rearranged to form "*shalem*" (ש-ל-ם), meaning "complete" or "integrated," suggesting that through parabolic instruction, initially distant wisdom becomes unified (*mitachadim*) with the students' understanding.

טעם למה נקראה התורה משל הקדמוני (שמואל - א כ"ד, י"ג). והוא כי יש להבין מהו בחינת המשל כי משל הוא על דרך חכם שרוצה לומר דבר חכמה לפני אנשים פשוטים צריך להלביש את הדברים בכדי להבינם במקום אחיזתם כמו לסוחרים דרך סחורה ולבנאים דרך הבנין בכדי להבינם דברי החכמה אשר רוצה להבינם בכדי לקרבם אל חכמת האמת ועל ידי זה מעלה אותם האנשים למקום החכמה אשר הוא משיג ולכן אותיות משל היא אותיות שלם כי בתחילה היה החכמה רחוקה מהם וחלוק מהם ואחר כך נעשה קרובה ואחדות בהם עם החכמה והוא אותיות שלם בחינת המחבר והבן, ולפעמים המשל הוא מעשה אשר לא היה בכדי להעלות אותם האחוזים בבחינת השפלות והשקרים לקרבן משם אל החכמה ונברר הטוב, והרע נופל ממילא:

For the Degel the Torah represents the supernal wisdom of the divine and, as such, predates the creation of the world. The Torah, however, might appear as a loosely organized history with stories and mundane events and mislead one into thinking it is banal. On the contrary the very stories represent mere meshalim which hide the deeper mystical truths buried in the mashal hakadmoni which is the hidden Torah. In this he follows the Zohar regarding the notion of a hidden supernal Torah that is hidden within or above the earthly Torah we currently possess.

The Degel's innovation lies in his distinction between fictional parables and the Torah's authentic narratives. While ordinary *meshalim* might employ "historical fiction" (*ma'aseh she-lo haya*) to elevate understanding, the Torah represents truth (*emet*) whose stories (*sipurim*) are themselves genuine historical events that simultaneously function as

mystical allegories. The Torah thus exists as the "*mashal hakadmoni*"—the primordial parable that contains within itself the entire structure of reality, serving as both the blueprint for creation and the means by which divine wisdom becomes accessible to finite minds.

This framework establishes the Torah as the source (*shoresh*) of all upper and lower worlds, echoing the Zoharic theme while emphasizing the dynamic relationship between the hidden supernal Torah and its earthly manifestation. The Degel's understanding suggests that the divine wisdom (*chochmah*) embedded in the Torah precedes creation itself, making the text not merely a record of divine instruction but the very medium through which God's creative intention finds expression in comprehensible form.

It also suggests that when God "looked into the Torah in order to create the world," rather than the rabbinic notion of the Torah as an architectural blueprint for creation, the Torah as a mashal a fictional narrative or even a mashal hakamoni, the primordial parabola, becomes an imaginative muse as if God's original thought was "let me look into the Torah to see what it's like to be a king and have a nation (Israel) as my people". The Torah becomes the dream book for God.

3.1 Implications for the Alter Rebbe's Innovation

The Alter Rebbe's innovation lies in extending the Degel's insights about Torah as *mashal hakadmoni* to the concept of divine kingship itself. Rather than viewing the *mashal hakadmoni* as limited to the textual Torah, he suggests that the very experience and concept of sovereignty constitutes the fundamental parable through which divine reality unfolds. This represents a shift from textual to experiential *mashal*—from understanding the Torah as God's primordial story to recognizing kingship as God's primordial experience.

4. Implications for Understanding Creation

If kingship is indeed the primordial parable, several significant implications follow. First, creation becomes not simply an act of divine will but an act of divine imagination—God imagining what it would be like to be a king and then creating the conditions necessary for that imagination to be realized. Second, the cosmos gains a fundamentally narrative character, with natural processes, historical events, and human actions all contributing to the unfolding of the divine story of sovereignty.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, human beings emerge not merely as creatures who worship a pre-existing divine king but as participants in the ongoing realization of divine kingship. Through study, prayer, and ethical action, humans contribute to the completion of the divine narrative—they become, in effect, co-authors of the cosmic story.

4.1 Reconceptualizing Tzimtzum

The Lurianic concept of *tzimtzum*—traditionally understood as divine contraction or withdrawal—takes on new meaning within the framework of meta parable. Rather than viewing *tzimtzum* as a spatial or ontological phenomenon, the Alter Rebbe's approach suggests understanding it as a narrative technique—a literary device that creates the space and structure necessary for story-telling. In *Likkutei Torah*, the Alter Rebbe frequently employs the metaphor of

tzimtzum to describe how infinite divine concepts can be compressed into finite human understanding through the use of parables and metaphors.(21) This pedagogical *tzimtzum* mirrors the cosmic process: just as a teacher must contract infinite wisdom into comprehensible lessons, so God must contract infinite being into finite existence.

4.2 Tzimtzum as Divine Curiosity

Building on this foundation, the present study proposes understanding *tzimtzum* as an expression of divine curiosity—God's desire to experience the unknown, to explore possibilities that cannot be actualized within pure infinitude. The divine thought "I shall rule" represents not a assertion of power but a question: "What would it be like to be a king?"

This interpretation transforms *tzimtzum* from a theological problem (how can the infinite become finite?) into a literary opportunity (how can infinite potential find expression in finite narrative?). The contraction creates not absence but possibility—the space for story, relationship, and discovery.

5. Implications for Divine Immanence

This narrative understanding of *tzimtzum* has significant implications for the question of divine immanence. Rather than viewing God as either present or absent in creation, the meta-parable framework suggests a more complex relationship in which God is simultaneously author, narrator, and character within the cosmic story.

As author, God initiates the narrative and establishes its fundamental parameters. As narrator, God continues to guide the story's development through providence and revelation. As character, God experiences the story from within, discovering through the medium of creation what it means to be sovereign.

5.1 Comparative Analysis

The comparison between the Alter Rebbe and Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen on the question of "*Ana Emloch*" illuminates crucial tensions within Hasidic theology regarding the relationship between divine desire and cosmic evil. While both thinkers inherited the same Kabbalistic sources, their interpretations reveal fundamentally different approaches to the problem of theodicy and the nature of divine involvement in creation. This comparative analysis employs what might be termed "contrastive hermeneutics"—a method that seeks to understand each thinker's distinctive contribution by examining how they differently interpret shared textual and conceptual materials.(22) Such an approach avoids reductive harmonization while highlighting the creative diversity within Hasidic thought.

6. Rabbi Tzadok's Perspective

In *Tzidkat HaTzadik* §206, Rabbi Tzadok presents a markedly different interpretation of "*Ana Emloch*":

אוה ערה שרושד עדונכ תואיגה אוה מישרשה שרושו דולמא אנא תבשחמ י"ע אבה מילכה תריבשו והותה מלועמ משד בלב רוהרהו הבשחמ רצי 'יפד ר"צי דלונ הזמו עודיכ בלב ערה תלחתה אוה

"The root of all roots is arrogance, as is known, for the root of evil is from the world of chaos and the breaking of the vessels that comes through the thought 'I shall rule,' as is known, and from this is born the evil inclination, which is explained as the formation of thought and contemplation in the heart, for there is the beginning of evil in the heart."(23)

For Rabbi Tzadok, "*Ana Emloch*" represents not divine creativity but cosmic catastrophe. The phrase points to the origins of the *shevirat hakelim* (breaking of the vessels) and the emergence of evil within creation. This interpretation emphasizes the dangerous potential of the desire for sovereignty—even when that desire originates in divinity itself.

Theme	Alter Rebbe (Likkutei Torah)	R. Zadok HaKohen (Tzidkat HaTzadik)	Degel Machaneh Ephraim
Origin of Ana Emloch / Mashal	Divine thought that initiates creation; source of vitality	Root of evil; arrogance leading to shattering of vessels	Torah as primordial parable; divine wisdom that predates creation
Function of Thought / Mashal	Generative, imaginative, loving longing for kingship	Distorted selfhood; egoic assertion of rule	Mashal conveys supernal wisdom in accessible form; parable reveals and conceals
Role in Creation	Positive origin of all worlds and beings	Beginning of cosmic brokenness and internal temptation	Torah is blueprint and vehicle of creation; structure of reality itself
Ontological Implication	Ana Emloch as divine generosity	Ana Emloch as spiritual danger and rupture	Torah as both mystical truth and historical narrative; emet and mashal simultaneously
Human Application	We are actors completing the divine story of kingship	We risk misappropriating divine desire for control	Study of Torah integrates divine chochmah into finite understanding; creates unity

6.1 Fundamental Theological Differences

The contrast between the Alter Rebbe and Rabbi Tzadok reveals two fundamentally different theological orientations. The Alter Rebbe emphasizes the generative and life-giving aspects of divine desire, viewing "*Ana Emloch*" as the source of cosmic vitality and the foundation for divine-human relationship. Rabbi Tzadok, by contrast, focuses on the disruptive and destructive potential of the same desire, seeing it as the root of cosmic and ethical evil.

These differences reflect broader tensions within Hasidic thought between optimistic and pessimistic anthropologies, between emphasis on divine immanence and concern for divine transcendence, and between confidence in human spiritual capacity and awareness of human spiritual danger.(24)

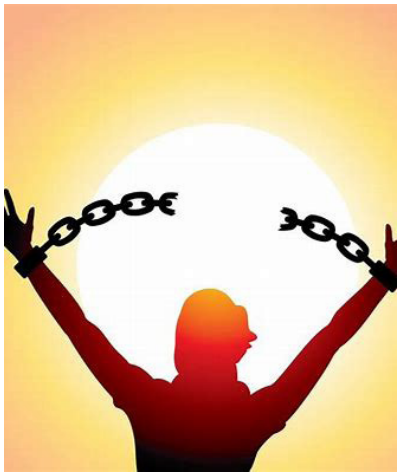
Rather than viewing these perspectives as contradictory, the meta-parable framework suggests they might be understood as complementary aspects of a more complex theological reality. If kingship is indeed a divine parable, then it necessarily includes within itself both creative and destructive potentials—both the generative power of narrative imagination and the dangerous allure of identification with ultimate authority.

The challenge, from this perspective, is not to choose between the Alter Rebbe's optimism and Rabbi Tzadok's caution but to hold both in productive tension. Divine kingship as meta-parable creates the possibility for both authentic spiritual realization and profound spiritual deception, depending on how humans position themselves in relation to the ongoing divine narrative.

7. The Paradox of Divine Kingship

The question "Who wishes to rule?" proves central to understanding the theological implications of

"*Ana Emloch*." On one level, the answer seems obvious: God desires to rule. However, the meta-parable framework complicates this simple response by suggesting that God's desire for kingship is not a desire to dominate pre-existing subjects but a desire to create the conditions in which sovereignty becomes meaningful. This paradox reflects a deeper tension in the concept of divine kingship itself. True kingship requires not merely power but recognition—subjects who freely acknowledge the legitimacy of royal authority. Yet such recognition cannot be coerced without undermining its authenticity. Divine kingship thus faces what might be termed the "sovereignty paradox": it can only be realized through beings capable of denying it.(25)



7.1 Human Freedom

The meta-parable framework suggests that human freedom emerges not as a limitation on divine sovereignty but as its essential condition. Humans serve as more than subjects of divine rule; they function as interpreters and co-creators of the divine narrative of kingship. Through their choices, actions, and interpretations, they contribute to determining what kind of king God becomes.

This perspective transforms the traditional theological question of divine sovereignty versus human freedom into a narrative question of collaborative authorship. God initiates the story of kingship, but humans help determine how that story unfolds, what kind of king emerges from the narrative, and what sovereignty ultimately means.

If humans function as interpreters and co-creators of divine kingship, significant ethical implications follow. The quality of human interpretation—whether it emphasizes justice or power, compassion or control, wisdom or dominance—influences not merely human understanding of God but the actual character of divine manifestation in the world.

This interpretive responsibility extends beyond intellectual analysis to include lived practice, communal organization, and engagement with broader society. How communities structure themselves, how they treat outsiders, how they balance authority and freedom—all these become forms of theological interpretation that influence the ongoing realization of divine kingship.

7.2 Worship as Interpretation

Traditional approaches to worship often emphasize human submission to divine authority. The meta-parable framework suggests a more complex understanding in which worship becomes a form of interpretive collaboration with ongoing divine self-revelation. Rather than simply acknowledging a pre-existing divine king, worshippers participate in the continuing creation of divine kingship through their prayers, study, and ritual practices.

This shift has profound implications for liturgical practice, meditation techniques, and communal worship.(26) Instead of viewing prayer as petition to a sovereign deity, practitioners might approach it as contribution to an unfolding divine narrative—helping to determine through their words and intentions what kind of sovereignty God exercises and experiences.

The Alter Rebbe's extensive use of parables and metaphors in *Likkutei Torah* and *Tanya* takes on new significance within the meta-parable framework. These textual strategies become not merely pedagogical tools but participations in the fundamental structure of reality itself. Just as God uses the parable of kingship to explore divine possibility, human teachers and students use parables to explore the implications of divine kingship for finite existence.

Jewish learning, from this perspective, becomes a form of sacred commentary on the cosmic narrative.

(27) Through interpretation, debate, and creative application of textual sources, students contribute to the ongoing elaboration of the divine story. Their insights, questions, and difficulties all become part of the larger process through which God comes to understand divine sovereignty through the medium of creation.

8. Ethical Action as Narrative Participation

Perhaps most significantly, the meta-parable framework transforms ethical action from obligation imposed by divine command into creative participation in divine becoming. Human choices regarding justice, compassion, truth, and community organization all contribute to determining what kind of king God reveals God's self to be.

This perspective provides a fresh foundation for Jewish ethics that avoids both heteronomous command-morality and autonomous self-legislation. Instead, ethical action becomes theonomous participation in divine creativity—humans exercising genuine freedom in collaboration with divine purpose rather than in submission to divine will or assertion of human independence.(28)

8.1 Post-Holocaust Theology

The meta-parable framework offers potentially significant resources for post-Holocaust Jewish theology. Rather than grappling with questions of divine omnipotence and theodicy within traditional frames of reference, this approach suggests understanding human suffering and divine hiddenness as dimensions of an incomplete narrative rather than challenges to established doctrine.

If God genuinely experiences sovereignty through creation rather than imposing it upon creation, then divine power becomes more complex and morally nuanced than traditional theodicy assumes. God's power would include the capacity for genuine surprise, limitation, and even suffering—not as defects in divinity but as necessary aspects of authentic kingship realized through relationship with free beings.(29)

The emphasis on divine becoming through narrative participation resonates with certain Christian theological themes, particularly incarnational theology and trinitarian understandings of divine relationality. However, the Jewish framework developed here maintains strict monotheism while accounting for divine complexity and dynamism.

This approach might provide fresh ground for Jewish-Christian theological dialogue that moves beyond traditional debates about divine transcendence versus immanence toward more nuanced discussions of divine temporality, relationality, and involvement in history.(30)

In understanding the divine absence during the Tremendum the paradoxical use of the meta-parable allows for God as both participant (as King) and in absentia (as absent king) in the fictional/real narrative that is His dream/our world. Auschwitz becomes His nightmare as much as our suffering.

8.2 Contemporary Spirituality

The meta-parable framework speaks to contemporary spiritual seekers who often struggle with traditional concepts of divine authority while yearning for transcendent meaning and purpose. By presenting divine kingship as an ongoing creative project requiring human participation rather than a static reality demanding submission, this approach offers a model of spirituality that honors both human agency and divine mystery.(31)

This study illustrates both the possibilities and limitations of academic engagement with mystical texts and experiences. While scholarly methods can illuminate the intellectual sophistication and cultural significance of mystical traditions, they inevitably fail to capture fully the experiential dimensions that give such traditions their vitality and meaning.

The integration of personal mystical insight with academic analysis represents an attempt to honor both the scholarly demand for rigor and objectivity and the mystical insistence on the primacy of lived experience. However, this integration remains experimental and its validity contested within academic institutions committed to purely objective methodologies.(32)

8.3 Textual Limitations

This study's reliance primarily on published texts limits its ability to provide comprehensive analysis of the Alter Rebbe's thought. Manuscript materials, oral traditions, and the broader context of early Hasidic practice all deserve more extensive investigation. Additionally, the comparative analysis with Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen, while illuminating, represents only one possible comparison among many that might yield additional insights.

The challenges of translating Hebrew mystical terminology into English academic discourse inevitably introduce interpretive distortions. Terms such as "*tzimtzum*," "*mashal*," and "*chiyut*" carry connotations and associations in Hebrew that resist full translation. The theoretical framework developed in this study should thus be understood as one possible interpretation rather than a definitive analysis of the Alter Rebbe's thought.(32)

9. Conclusion

This investigation of the phrase "*K'she'ala b'machshavah Ono Emloch*" in the Alter Rebbe's writings has revealed a sophisticated theological framework that challenges conventional understandings of divine kingship, creation, and human purpose. By proposing that divine sovereignty functions as a meta-parable—a foundational narrative structure through which God realizes selfhood through relationship with creation—this study offers fresh perspectives on perennial questions in Jewish thought.

The implications extend beyond academic theology to touch on fundamental questions of human meaning, purpose, and responsibility. If creation truly represents God's exploration of sovereignty through imaginative projection, then human existence gains significance not merely as the object of divine concern but as the medium through which divine self-understanding unfolds.

The comparative analysis with Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen illuminates the complexity and internal diversity of Hasidic thought while demonstrating that tensions between optimistic and pessimistic theological orientations need not be resolved through harmonization. Instead, they might be understood as reflecting different aspects of the fundamental ambiguity inherent in divine-human relationship.

Perhaps most significantly, this study suggests that Jewish theology might benefit from greater attention to narrative and imaginative dimensions of divine reality. Rather than viewing metaphor and parable as mere pedagogical conveniences, we might recognize them as fundamental modes through which both divine and human consciousness operate. The cosmos itself emerges not as a collection of objects governed by eternal laws but as an unfolding story in which divine and human characters participate in mutual discovery.

The phrase "I shall rule" thus reveals itself not as divine assertion but as divine question—an exploration of possibility that continues to unfold through every act of human interpretation, every moment of ethical choice, and every gesture of worship. We awaken to discover ourselves not merely as subjects in a divine kingdom but as characters in a divine dream—a dream in which the dreamer and the dreamed discover together what it means to be sovereign, to be subject, and to be real.

In this light, the mystical insight with which this investigation began finds its academic expression: we are indeed figures in a divine dream, but we are figures who dream in return, whose dreams contribute to the ongoing elaboration of the cosmic narrative, whose interpretations help determine what kind of king God becomes through the medium of creation. The parable continues to unfold, and we are both its readers and its authors, both its audience and its characters.

This suggests a final paradox worthy of the Alter Rebbe's own dialectical sensibility: we serve the divine king most faithfully not through passive submission but through active participation in the ongoing creation of divine kingship. We realize our deepest humanity not by transcending our role as creatures but by embracing fully our function as collaborative interpreters in the cosmic story. And we encounter the infinite God most directly not in mystical transcendence of finite existence but in wholehearted engagement with the narrative possibilities that finite existence provides.

The dream continues. The parable unfolds. The question "I shall rule" awaits our response.

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