



Nationalism: The Story of Zionism in 19th and 20th Centuries

Aims:

1. To understand what 'nationalism' is and how it works.
2. To understand the role that nationalism has had in shaping history in the past 200 years, in general and in Jewish history.
3. To understand the 'political spectrum' and its connection to nationalism.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Context
3. Key Thinkers
4. Spectrum
5. Zionism
6. Next Kvutzah
7. Appendix





Introduction:

It might be safe to say that if you've heard of nationalism recently it was probably in a negative context. Nowadays we can read all about how nationalism has returned to Europe and we should be very afraid! However, you can also hear about how it's a wonderful thing and a return to safety and security! The world has had an on-and-off relationship with nationalism and hasn't quite decided what it thinks about it yet.

The last 200 years can be summed up as follows:

- 1800s – “nationalism = Good”
- 1900s – “nationalism = Bad and let's try globalism instead”
- 2000s – “globalism = Bad, let's go back to try nationalism again”

Whatever you think about nationalism today, in the 1800s and 1900s it had a huge influence on Zionism and the eventual establishment of the State of Israel. In fact Zionism is often just called 'Jewish Nationalism'.

So what exactly is nationalism? In this Kvutzah you're going to explore some answers and see how it's all connected to Zionism, in three easy steps.

Step 1 - Context:

One way of telling the story of nationalism is as follows¹:

For a long period of world² history people saw themselves as part of their families, communities, towns and provinces. They did not have a sense of being a 'part of' anything bigger than that. The groups that people identified with were largely dictated by which people they could interact with, the people that they knew. If you were living in England during this period in a town called, for example, Tea&Crumpet-town you would only maybe meet and know a few hundred people in your whole lifetime, you might never travel further than to the next town over. Your primary identification and way of thinking about yourself would have been through this experience, inherently on a local level. Your town might have had its own dialect, own currency, own culture and own way of doing things. You would have been very different to the people living on the other side of England.

From around the 15th and 16th Century this started to change and provinces started to form (through a complicated and lengthy process, usually involving wars) into 'states'. In order to make things easier to run and manage, these states started to develop a unified language, culture, currency across all the different provinces or groups within it. Because of this people started to identify not

¹ There are different theories of nationalism. In this Kvutzah we're using the 'modernist' model which claims that nationalism was a recent (last few hundred years) development. There is also the 'primordialist' model which claims that national groupings based on ethnicity have always existed even in the earliest humans. For a variety of reasons outside the scope of this Kvutzah we're not using that – but it's good to know that other models exist!

² Really this means 'Western' history.

just with their local groups or area but with the larger national group – there is more now that unites them than ever before. But this process is slow and doesn't happen to everyone.

In the 18th century things began to accelerate due to the Industrial Revolution as more and more people had to work together in order for the economy and public sphere to function properly. If we take Britain as an example there was an emergence of an integrated, nation-encompassing economy and a national public sphere, where the British people began to identify with the country at large,



rather than the smaller units of their province, town or family. This was specifically and actively promoted by the British government and by the writers and intellectuals of the time. National symbols, anthems, myths, flags and narratives were diligently constructed by nationalists and widely adopted. The Union Jack was adopted in 1801 as the national flag. A composer called Thomas Arne wrote the patriotic song "Rule, Britannia!" in 1740, and the cartoonist John Arbuthnot invented the character of John Bull as the personification of the English national spirit in 1712 (this depicted the spirit of 'all British people' as expressed through a stout, middle-aged, country dwelling, jolly, matter-of-fact white man!).

This whole process of 'developing a sense of national identity' is nationalism in a nutshell. It was happening all over the world, specifically in Europe.

In Europe during this period nationalism was either a unifying force or a dividing force:

1. In **countries** with a relatively uniform culture or a mostly shared language (a majority ethnic group) it served as a unifying force e.g. in Britain
2. In **empires** made up of many countries with diverse cultures and languages (many different ethnic groups) it served as a dividing force. It was very difficult to create a sense of identity that would include so many different people e.g. the Austrian Empire – made up of Austrians, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Czech, and Bosnians etc.

So that's the 'story' of nationalism. What makes things interesting is that it mostly played out with a specific group of people already living in specific geographical area, focusing on how that specific geographic area should function. For Jewish Nationalism (aka Zionism) it was different because it was a **specific group of people** living in a **variety of different areas** focusing on a **different geographic area to where they were living**. This makes things delightfully complicated – but more on that later!

Step 2 – Key Thinkers:

This section will look at two key thinkers about nationalism.

- Q: Why do we need to look at thinkers and theoreticians when talking about history?
- A1: Key thinkers throughout history have shaped how people perceive and act on the world and people around them. Ideas have been one of the driving forces of human history³ – we

³ A limitation with this Kvutzah is that whilst ideas have been one of the driving forces of history, other things have been just as important. Later on you'll read about the French Revolution and how ideas caused it. A big



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need to understand these ideas so that we can understand what happened and what is happening now.

- A2: Key Jewish thinkers did not come up with their ideas in a vacuum. They are often responding to or writing in a context created by these 'non-Jewish' thinkers, even if not explicitly acknowledging them.

Johann Gottfried Herder

Herder was a German philosopher and poet and lived from 1744-1803. His main theory was that each and every nation possessed something called a '**Volkgeist**'. This is roughly translated as a 'national spirit' and Herder believed that things like language, culture (art, literature etc.) and even food were all expressions of this national spirit. A good way to make sense of this is to parallel it with how we think about a single human being. According to thinkers in this period of history:



- Each person has a body and a spirit.
 - o The **body** is the physical **space** housing the spirit.
 - o The **spirit** is the '**creative impulse**' that directs and creates everything the body 'does'. (Somewhat equivalent to how modern biology talks about the brain/mind).
- Each nation has a body and a spirit.
 - o The **body** is the physical **land** that shapes and influences the spirit (the natural geography – rivers, mountains, plains etc.)
 - o The **spirit** is the **culture** and language of the nation - it is the 'creative impulse'.

Importantly for Herder the *Volkgeist* (or sometimes *Nationalgeist*) was something greater than the sum of all the people living in the country. It wasn't just a matter of adding up all the things that people living there thought and did, but something more, something a little bit intangible that shaped the people rather than the people shaping it.

Question for Madrichim: Does this approach to the land speak to you? Do you think that culture and physical land are connected? (Another way to think about this: do you think 'British culture' is intrinsically connected or influenced by the climate and environment of Britain?)

- Keep this theory in mind for when you learn about Rav Kook (Religious Zionism) and Eliezer ben Yehuda (Cultural Zionism) in later Chovrot. We can see the influence of this idea in their writings.

Benedict Anderson

part that we won't talk about is how the economy also is one of the driving forces of history. In France (1800s) the people were starving and there wasn't enough food for everyone! The King and Aristocracy had food and the people were really angry about the economic disparity – this also led to revolution just as much as ideas did! For Zionism it was just as much about poverty and anti-Semitism as it was about national revival and homelands.



Benedict Richard O’Gorman Anderson (what a name!) is quite a modern thinker, he lived from 1936 to 2015, but his key theory was all about how to understand nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries. Unlike Herder he thought that ‘nationalism’ or national identity was something **created or constructed** – something that didn’t exist naturally or intrinsically. He came up with a famous term to describe nationalism as ‘**imagined communities**’.



Now it’s important to say that this wasn’t a negative perspective on nationalism, he just simply thought that it was something relatively new.

Anderson described these ‘imagined communities’ as being centred on a key narrative (a story of who the group were) that he called a ‘national myth’⁴. There are three elements to this:

1. A sense of similarity – we all are the same and do the same things (in broad terms).
2. A feeling of (horizontal) community – all people connected together.⁵
3. A desire to be politically separate – separate from other people who don’t have the same 1 and 2 as me. The feeling of ‘we are unique’.

Crucially number 3 is what makes it nationalism and not just a ‘community’. Nationalism for Anderson was about using this national myth/story as a way to encourage people to feel distinct to others and to want to be politically separate from them – to want to govern themselves.

Questions for Madrichim: Can you think of examples of ‘national myths’? Think about the idea of ‘British values’ or how we talk about ‘what it means to be British’? Think about Zionism – did it have a central story? (Hint: for Religious Zionists our central story might be all about Galut to Geulah – returning to our homeland and all Jews living together).

We’re almost on to talking about the connection to Zionism but before that there is one more important thing to look at: the **national political spectrum**. This is going to be a very useful tool for thinking about how different Zionist thinkers and theories relate to each other.

Step 3 – National Political Spectrum:

Q: Have you ever heard the terms ‘right-wing’ and ‘left-wing’? Do you know where they come from? Any ideas as to why they might be relevant to this Kvutzah?

Well interestingly enough they originated in one of the cradles of nationalism: France during the French Revolution (1789)! The French Revolution is a fascinating period of history and the ideas created as part of it continue to have a huge impact on our societies today. However, it’s also a very complicated period of history so in a nutshell:

⁴ Myth here doesn’t mean untrue rather it’s more like how the Greeks used it: a constructed narrative vision for explaining things about reality. It’s something neither true or false, it doesn’t require verification from outside itself, it just is. Its truth is of less importance than its usefulness as a tool for defining the collective e.g. who’s in and who’s out – who’s ‘American’ and who isn’t.

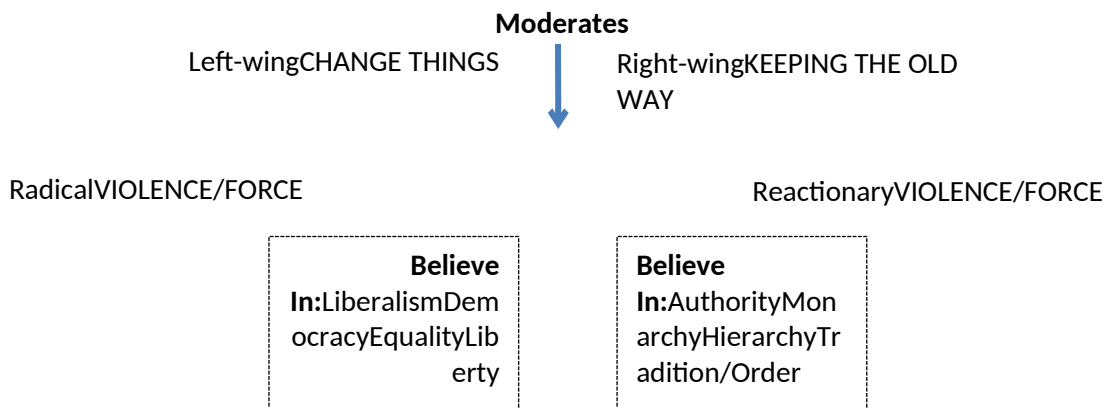
⁵ This is specifically ‘horizontal community’ not ‘vertical community’. Vertical community is about hierarchy i.e. King above Subjects. Horizontal community is about equality i.e. all people subject to each other.



If you remember from the previous section a key part of nationalism was the idea of 'horizontal community' - the idea that people should be ruled **by the people** and **not** by Kings or Aristocracy. This idea (fuelled by thinkers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant, and really just the Enlightenment in general) didn't go down very well with the Kings and Aristocracy that were ruling the people at the time, so they argued about it and fought about it (quite violently).

In 1789 French people from both sides of the debate joined a National Assembly (big group of people in a room). On the left of the room sat all the people who favoured a national revolution, in the middle sat the moderates and on the right sat all the people who wanted things to stay the same and were supporters of the king. This is where we get the terms 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' from - where people chose to sit!

The people on the opposite sides of the spectrum believed in ideas that were in direct contrast to each other and the spectrum can be pictured like this:



This spectrum is important because almost all of the types of Zionism and especially Zionist thinkers can be put somewhere on it. If we understand where they sit on this spectrum we can see how other thinkers disagreed and we can also locate our own ideas on this spectrum too!

Question for Madrichim: Where do you think Bnei Akiva is on this spectrum? Are we more interested in CHANGE or are we more interested in the OLD WAY?
Question for Madrichim: Where you do feel that your own beliefs and values are on this spectrum?

No More Steps - Zionism!

If you remember back in Step 1 (Context) we said that Jewish Nationalism (aka Zionism) was different to other types of nationalism because it was about a **specific group of people** living in a **variety of different areas** focusing on a **different geographic area to where they were living**.

Q: So what did Zionists believe?

A: Lots and lots of different and conflicting things! There is no one type of Zionism and over the next 9 Kvutzot you're going to learn about some of the key types:

1. **Cultural Zionism** – Ahad haAm and Eliezer ben Yehuda
2. **Political Zionism** – Leon Pinsker and Theodore Herzl
3. **Labour or Socialist Zionism** – A.D. Gordon, Joseph Trumpledor and David Ben-Gurion
4. **Revisionist Zionism** – Ze'ev Jabotinsky
5. **Religious Zionism** (that's us!) – Rav Kook, Rav Soloveitchik, Rav Yehuda Amital and loads of 'early Religious Zionists'

By learning about other types of Zionism we are more able to understand our own beliefs and Bnei Akiva's values. It is only in conversation and comparison to other viewpoints that we can refine our own.

Zionism: A Basic Introduction

Zionism is the national movement of the Jewish people that supported the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel (roughly corresponding to Canaan, the Holy Land, or the region of Palestine – lots of different names! It can get confusing!) Modern Zionism emerged in the late 19th century in (for the most part) Central and Eastern Europe as a national revival movement, both in reaction to newer waves of anti-Semitism and, like we've seen, as a response to other nationalist movements sweeping through Europe.

Until 1948, the primary goals of Zionism were the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel (this is the 'typical' nationalism bit), ingathering of the exiles (unique to Zionism), and liberation of Jews from the anti-Semitic discrimination and persecution that they experienced during their diaspora.

Zionism was first coined as a term by Nathan Birnbaum (who was talking like Herzl before Herzl was!). Birnbaum was born in Vienna into an Eastern European Jewish family with roots in Austrian Galicia and Hungary. He had a fascinating life and went from a Political Zionist to a Cultural Zionist to becoming an Orthodox Jew (he was born secular) and then became an anti-Zionist! You know the joke about 2 Jews and 3 opinions? Well this guy had them all himself!



In 1883, at the age of 19, he founded Kadimah, the first Jewish (Zionist) student association in Vienna, many years before Theodor Herzl became the leading spokesman of the Zionist movement. While still a student, he founded and published the periodical Selbstemanzipation (self-emancipation) often written in large part by Birnbaum himself. In it he coined the terms "Zionistic", "Zionist", "Zionism" (1890), and "political Zionism" (1892).



Next Kvutzah

The next Kvutzah will look at Cultural Zionism. Key things to remember from this Kvutzah for the next one are:

- A. How language can be used to unify different people (a key part of nationalism to remember) – we're going to learn about attempts to revive Hebrew.
- B. The idea of 'Volksgeist' – a national spirit and creative impulse. We're going to see how Achad ha'Am tried to revitalize the Jewish religious/cultural spirit.

Appendix 1 - Extra Things

Definitions

There are a couple of key terms you'll need to know for this Kvutzah. You can read through them now or just refer back to this table if you come across a term you want clarified:

Nationalism (basic)	Loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially : a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its own culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations.
Nation	A nation is a stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, ethnicity and a common culture. A nation is more overtly political than an ethnic group. It is therefore about how people in the nation rule and relate to each other, how do they organise and make decisions.
Ethnic group	An ethnic group, or an ethnicity, is a category of people who identify with each other based on similarities such as common ancestry, language, history, society, culture. Ethnicity is usually an inherited status based on the society in which one lives. Membership of an ethnic group tends to be defined by a shared cultural heritage, ancestry, origin myth, history, homeland, language or dialect, symbolic systems such as religion, mythology and ritual, cuisine, dressing style, art, and physical appearance.
State	A government which controls a specific territory, which may or may not be associated with any particular ethnic group.
Country	A geographic territory, which may or may not have an affiliation with a government or ethnic group.
Sovereignty	Sovereignty is the full right and power of a national government over itself, without any interference from outside sources or bodies i.e. can they make the decisions they want to without outside people or rules interfering.
Nation-State	A nation-state, in the most specific sense, is a country where a distinct cultural or ethnic group (a "nation" or "people") inhabits a territory and have formed a state (often a sovereign state) that they predominantly govern. It is a more precise term than "country" but of the same general meaning, being that it is an ethnic nation with its own land (thus "homeland") and government.

Cultural Zionism: A Spiritual Revolution?

Aims:

1. To understand what 'Cultural Zionism' was and who the key figures were.
2. To understand the key debate that shaped Cultural Zionism: a State for the Jews vs. a Jewish State.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Key Thinkers
3. Context
4. State for Jews vs. Jewish State
5. Next Kvutzah
6. Appendix



"It's so sweet that he wrote me a letter, and I think here in paragraph eight he's asking me out."



Introduction:

It is a little bit strange to start the Kvutzot that look at specific strands of Zionism with one of the lesser known types. A quick Wikipedia search can find lengthy articles on Political Zionism, Revisionist Zionism or Socialist Zionism. Likewise the key figures in those movements are huge characters and have famous names: Herzl, Jabotinsky and Ben Gurion! But when it comes to Cultural Zionism there isn't the same amount written about it and the key figure – Asher Ginsburg – literally wrote under the pen-name of Achad Ha'Am – “one of the people”. Hardly someone looking for the political limelight.

So why are we starting with it?

There are three reasons really:

1. Cultural Zionism has some **very similar aspects** to Rav Kook's version of religious Zionism (which you'll learn more about in K7) . And I think that might surprise us – a 'secular' Zionism talking the same way (almost) as Rav Kook? How can that be? **These Kvutzot are designed so that we can understand ourselves and our values, by seeing the differences and similarities to other ideas.**
2. Achad Ha'Am is considered one of the **most influential Jewish and Zionist writers and thinkers** of his era. He might not have had a particularly large impact politically (he wasn't a great politician – quite shy, easily offended and he avoided public speaking – preferring writing instead) but figures such as Chaim Weizmann (Israel's first president), Hayim Bialik (pre-eminent Israeli poet) and Martin Buber (famous Jewish theologian) all credited him as a prime inspiration on their lives.
3. A key aim of this Machane on the whole is to show that there are (or were) **different ways to be a Zionist**. In the 1800s (and maybe even today too!) there was a trend by each group to portray themselves as the only legitimate form of Zionism. This was especially true at the First Zionist Congress in 1897 (we'll learn about this shortly). Achad Ha'Am was one of the key people railing against this and **arguing for multi-vocality** (lots of different voices being given space).

Key Thinkers:

There are two key thinkers we're going to look at: Achad Ha'Am and Eliezer ben Yehuda.

Note to Madrichim: Important to remember from K1: Johann Herder, the idea of 'Volksgeist' and how language can be used to unify different people and express 'national spirit/culture'.

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda:

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda was born Eliezer Perelman in Luzhky, Lithuania, in 1858. The son of a Chabad Hasid, Ben-Yehuda attended a cheder where he studied Hebrew and Bible from the age of three, as was customary among the Jews of Eastern Europe. By the age of twelve, he had learnt large portions of the Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud. His mother and uncle hoped he would become a rabbi, and sent him to a yeshiva, where he was given a traditional education. The Rosh Yeshiva, however, was secretly a maskil, or enlightened/secular thinker (it's almost like being a superhero!). He introduced



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Ben-Yehuda to secular literature and piqued young Eliezer's interest in non-religious study. Eventually Ben-Yehuda transferred to a Russian school, but he remained obsessed with modern Hebrew literature, eagerly consuming Hebrew periodicals, especially those concerned with Jewish nationalism. For Ben-Yehuda, nationalism became a way to embrace Hebrew without religion. He saw countries such as Italy and Greece — both countries with ties to ancient lands and languages — become independent nations. Envisioning the Jews as a nation akin to the Greeks, and Italians, Ben-Yehuda became determined to help create a nation where the Jews could adopt Hebrew as their national language. **He believed that:**

- a. This was vital to ensure that Jews from all over the world would have some way to communicate with each other – a common language.
- b. This was a key part of 'national revival' – bringing an Ancient language only used in study and reading into the modern world as a spoken, developing language. A key expression of 'Volksgeist'.

The Mission in Jerusalem – Undercover Chassid:

Arriving in Jerusalem in 1881, Ben-Yehuda immediately put his plan of Hebrew revival into action. He left behind his birth name and with his wife, Deborah Jonas, he created the first Modern Hebrew-speaking household. He also raised the first modern Hebrew-speaking child, Ben-Zion Ben-Yehuda.

In Jerusalem, the secular Ben-Yehuda tried to use Hebrew to attract religious Jews to the nationalist cause. He and his wife wore religious garb — he grew out his beard and payot, and his wife wore a sheitel — trying to pass as observant. But the ultra-Orthodox Jews living in Jerusalem, for whom Hebrew was used only for holy purposes such as studying Torah, saw through Ben-Yehuda's guise. Sensing his secular-nationalist intentions, they rejected him and his language. They went so far as to declare a cherem, excommunicating Ben-Yehuda.

Note to Madrichim: Think back to his Rosh Yeshiva – a Chassid wearing the dress, not believing but staying in the community – now Ben-Yehuda wears the dress, doesn't believe and tries to 'infiltrate' the community. Is this just ironic or do you think there might be something broader going on or to learn?



This setback did little to deter Ben-Yehuda from concentrating on his project. He continued to speak Hebrew at home and convinced other families — who were part of the growing community of secular Jewish nationalists in Palestine — to do the same.

At home, Ben-Yehuda used his son to test the viability of the Hebrew language project; if a child can be brought up speaking entirely Hebrew, then an entire nation should be able to adopt the language as well. This required extreme measures on the part of Ben-Yehuda, who tried to prevent his son from playing with other children and from hearing other languages spoken — so afraid was the father of failing in his endeavour.

Ben-Yehuda's life was exemplary because, despite the small successes and failures of his various projects, his dedication to speaking Hebrew and cultivating the language inspired others to do the same. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda never saw the creation of the State of Israel. He passed away only one month after the British authorities declared Hebrew to be the official language of the Jews of Palestine. Yet his dream of '*Yisrael be'artzo uvilshono*', the rebirth of the nation of Israel in its own



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land, speaking its own language, came to fruition. His efforts are counted among the great language revivals of human history.

Questions for Madrichim: What impact do you think that Ben-Yehuda has had on the Jewish world today? Do you think it was important for Hebrew to become one of Israel's official languages? Imagine if it had been English or Yiddish – what effect might that have had?

Questions for Madrichim: Do you agree with the methods that Ben-Yehuda used? Why do you think he went to such lengths? If you were his child, how might you have felt about your father's rules? Do you think that 'leaders' who have the potential for huge/national impact can be excused small negative actions?

Questions for Madrichim: As a Religious Zionist movement how do you think we do incorporate Ben Yehuda's mission into our lives and how do you think we can do it more? (*Hint: where did you eat breakfast today?*)

Asher Ginsburg or Achad Ha'Am:

Ahad Ha-Am was raised on a rural estate belonging to his wealthy Hasidic family. **A child prodigy**, he was self-taught in secular subjects and was able to read Russian, English, French, and German as a young adult. He **broke with Hasidism** in his adolescence, albeit discreetly at first. (*See any similarities to Ben-Yehuda?*) Gravitating toward the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), by the mid-1880s he had embraced the early Zionism of a movement called Chovevei Tziyon. He married at the age of 17 (his wife, Rivke, was descended from a distinguished Hasidic family), and in 1886 he, his wife, their children, and his parents settled in Odessa, where he remained in the family business with his father.¹

Ahad Ha-Am immediately assumed a leading position in Jewish nationalist affairs. He was elected to the executive committee of the Odessa Committee (who doesn't love a good committee) of Chovevei Tziyon —and emerged as the intellectual mentor of a small but ambitious group of young maskilim (enlightened/semi-secular) intent on gaining control of the organization and redirecting it towards cultural rather than philanthropic concerns in Palestine². To promote this agenda, Ahad Ha-Am wrote his first significant essay, "Lo zeh ha-derekh" (This Is Not the Way) in 1889. Immediately he was recognized as an original, even commanding, voice in Hebrew writing. It was in this essay that he first used his pen name.

This first essay was soon followed by other widely circulated pieces—deceptively spare, often quite brief writings that spoke with authority and reflected a mesmerizing clarity of thought. These included "Avdut be-toch ch'erut" (Slavery in Freedom; 1891) and "Emet me-eretz Yisra'el" (Truth from the Land of Israel);).



¹ Did you know that in 1908, following a trip to Palestine, Achad Ha'Am moved to London to manage the office of the Wissotzky Tea Company! Where else to run a tea company but in England!

² He actually founded a group called Bnei Moshe (sound familiar?) that was a semi-secret society of young people that worked to improve Hebrew education, build up a wider audience for Hebrew literature, and assist the Jewish settlements in Palestine. (Cool eh? Why aren't there any Jewish secret societies of young people today? Or maybe there are and we just don't know!)



So what were the key ideas in all these essays?

On the next page is a selection of some quotes from his 1897 essay written directly after the First Zionist Congress called "The Jewish State and Jewish Problem". The text can be quite dense (and fiery!) so you don't need to read them all now. Maybe pick one to read and then focus on the summary points after the texts. When reading them remember that Achad Ha'am was influenced by the idea of 'Volksgeist'.

1: Love of Zion and Zionism

There **has been a revolution in their world**, and to emphasise it they give a new name to the cause: it is no longer "Love of Zion" (Chibbath Zion), but "Zionism" (Zioniyuth). Nay, the more careful among them, determined to leave no loop-hole for error, even keep the European form of the name ("Zionismus") -- thus announcing to all and sundry that they are not talking about anything so antiquated as Chibbath Zion, but about a new, up-to-date movement, which comes, like its name, from the West, where people do not use Hebrew.

2: Judaism Leaving the Ghetto

It is **not only Jews who have come out of the Ghetto: Judaism has come out, too**. For Jews the exodus is confined to certain countries, and is due to toleration; but Judaism has come out (or is coming out) of its own accord wherever it has come into contact with modern culture. **This contact with modern culture overturns the defences of Judaism from within, so that Judaism can no longer remain isolated and live a life apart**. The spirit of our people strives for development: it wants to absorb those elements of general culture which reach it from outside, to digest them and to make them a part of itself, as it has done before at different periods of its history.

But the conditions of its life in exile are not suitable. In our time culture wears in each country the garb of the national spirit, and the stranger who would woo her must sink his individuality and become absorbed in the dominant spirit. **For this reason Judaism in exile cannot develop its individuality in its own way**. When it **leaves the Ghetto walls it is in danger of losing its essential being or -- at best -- its national unity**: it is in danger of being split up into as many kinds of Judaism, each with a different character and life, as there are countries of the Jewish dispersion.

3: More than one type of Zionism?

The whole Congress, too, was designed as a demonstration to the world rather than as a means of making it clear to ourselves what we want and what we can do. **The founders of the movement wanted to show the outside world that they had behind them a united and unanimous Jewish people...**

...The Order of Proceedings, which was sent out with the invitation to the Congress, said merely in general terms that anybody could be a delegate "who expresses his agreement with the general programme of Zionism," without explaining what the general programme was or where it could be found. **Thus there met at Basle men utterly disagreeing with one another in their views and aspirations**. They thought in their simplicity that everybody whose gaze was turned Zion-wards, though he³ did not see eye to eye, with Herzl, had a right to be a member of the Congress and to express his views³ before it. **But the heads of the Congress tried with all their might to prevent any difference of opinion on fundamental questions from coming to the surface**, and used every "parliamentary" device to avoid giving opportunity for discussion and elucidation of such questions.



Key Points and Summary from these 3 quotes:

1. **Love of Zion vs. Zionism:** Achad Ha'am was critical of a form of Zionism that saw itself as removed from the cultural and spiritual tradition and language of Judaism. (This wasn't specifically about belief but religious identity in broad terms).
2. **Judaism Leaving the Ghetto:** Achad Ha'am makes the argument that because Judaism hadn't developed a unifying national spirit when Jews encountered other strong national spirits/identities (when leaving the Ghetto) they were overwhelmed by them. He argued that the primary aim of Zionism had to be to develop this spirit in a way that could unify Jews all around the world and only then begin the project of building a political national state. He was concerned that the idea of Judaism as a single religion would splinter even further into smaller and smaller groups. (In Bet Chalutzi you'll actually learn about how this is basically what happened!)
 - If we were to put this in modern terms (like Anderson does in K1): Achad Ha'am believed that Zionists should concern themselves with first building unity through a national story (myth) across Jews around the world and only then build the state.
3. **More than one type of Zionism:** This is where Achad Ha'am rails against the uniformity of Zionist opinion being presented by Herzl and the First Zionist Congress. He really disagreed with this push to unity when clearly people disagreed with each other and weren't unified. However, remember how he wasn't a great politician? Politicians know that sometimes you need to present a unified front to the outside world and just get on with things. Achad Ha'am is like the university professor who just wants to keep debating things.

See the Appendix for some more fascinating quotes from Achad Ha'am

Questions for Madrichim: What do you think of Achad Ha'am's arguments – both the content and the writing style? Do you recognise any of his commentary on Jewish society as being relevant to how we live our lives today? He describes a 'splintering of Judaism' and Jewish identity into French Jews, British Jews, Germans Jews – do you think this is a bad thing? How does he propose to fix it?

Questions for Madrichim: What story or idea would you use to unify Jewish people around the world? If you're struggling to come up with one – do you think Achad Ha'am's mission was a realistic one or a 'fool's hope'?

Questions for Madrichim: Do you agree with Achad Ha'am's argument against uniformity of opinions? Can you think of examples of this debate in our communities today?

Task for Madrichim: Think back to K1 and the 'Political Spectrum' – where would you put Achad Ha'am on it? (*There isn't an easy answer to this one so try and convince each other where he should go*).

Context:

³ Important to note that at the First Zionist Congress women were allowed to be delegates either under their own capacity or by accompanying other representatives. However they were not allowed to vote on any of the things being discussed. Seen but not heard anyone? This changed by the following year and the Second Zionist Congress (1898). Suffrage for women in the UK was only in 1918 so the Congress was ahead of the curve!



When Theodor Herzl captured centre stage in the Zionist movement in 1897 during the First Zionist Congress, Ahad Ha-Am was responsible for much of the dissent directed at Herzl. The Democratic Faction, which represented the central piece of opposition against him within the Zionist movement, was deeply influenced by Ahad Ha-Am.

So what were they arguing about and what was the First Zionist Congress?

First Zionist Congress

The first Zionist Congress was called by Theodor Herzl as a symbolic Parliament for those sympathetic with the implementation of Zionist goals. Herzl had planned to hold the gathering in Munich, but due to local Jewish opposition he transferred the gathering to Basel, Switzerland. The Congress took place in the concert hall of the Basel Municipal Casino on 29th August 1897. Following a festive opening in which the representatives were expected to arrive in formal dress, tails and white tie⁴, the Congress got down to the business at hand. The main items on the agenda were the presentation of Herzl's plans, the establishment of the World Zionist Organization and the declaration of Zionism's goals-the Basel program.



We're not going to go into too much detail about the Basel program and Herzl's ideology because that's the whole next Kvutzah. But in short summary their aims were:

"Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Eretz Israel secured under public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion by appropriate means of the settlement in Eretz Israel of Jewish farmers, artisans, and manufacturers.
2. The organization and uniting of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, both local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and national consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps toward obtaining the consent of governments, where necessary, in order to reach the goals of Zionism"

Sounds pretty straight-forward right? So what did Achad Ha'am disagree with?

Well two things really:

- A. The first was that he thought Herzl was just pretending to focus on point number 3 (national sentiment/consciousness). To quote: *"But these nice-sounding words are so much at variance with his deeds that we are forced to the unpleasant conclusion that they are nothing but a well-turned phrase."*
- B. He believed that Herzl and Political Zionism was only interested in a 'National State' for Jewish people with disparate cultures and spirits rather than a State that was Jewish and unified in language, spirit and cultural life.

⁴ New required dress-code for Bnei Akiva Veidah anyone?



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Kvutzah 02: Cultural Zionism: A Spiritual Revolution?

This means that we've reached the quintessential Bnei Akiva debate: should Israel be a **State for Jews or a Jewish State**? It is important to note that this debate isn't specific to Cultural Zionism but Cultural Zionism has a stance on it.

State for Jews vs. Jewish State

The problem was that, as we've briefly seen, there was no consensus as to **a.** what being Jewish actually meant and **b.** what a Jewish State should look like.

Key questions:

How should Jews be defined as a collective? Should they be seen as a religion, like Christianity or Islam? There were those, especially in the West, that said yes. Others saw them as a nation like Italy or Germany. Others within and outside of the movement were appalled at this sort of comparison: How was it possible to compare the Jewish nation to secular national movements of any kind? The Jews were a nation of a totally different kind; a religious nation, a holy nation whose whole culture and way of life was religious by definition.

These differences of opinion were anything but theoretical. It was clear to all that they would have very important practical consequences for the forthcoming Jewish state; that was the aim of the Zionist movement. The issue was no less than the way of life that would be followed within any future society or state that Zionism might attain.



What would the law of the state be? What would its constitution be? What would the character of its education system be? Would it be a state where all would keep kashrut? For those (the majority of the Zionists) who saw the Jewish state as ultimately constituting the almost exclusive framework for the Jewish people, the question was deeper still: What would be the future of the Jewish people? What kind of a people would the Jews be? Would there be any future for Judaism and Jewish practice?

The three key opinions within the different Zionist camps were:

1. **A Jewish state is a neutral framework** whose task is to provide a general background in which all Jews can decide for themselves how to lead a Jewish life. The state must provide the means for different groups to live their life. The state must be democratic. Groups that wish to do so are free to conduct their lives according to Jewish law without affecting the lives of others who want something else.
2. **A Jewish state is a religious framework.** The law of the land must be guided by Halacha. Individuals can do what they want within their own private spheres but all aspects of public life must be run in accordance with Halachic norms. It is unthinkable, in a Jewish state, that people will be able to break Halacha publicly.
3. **A Jewish state is a secular framework.** It will be run according to democratic lines. However, certain spheres of public life which are of particular importance to religious groups will, by agreements, be given over to their supervision. In these spheres of life, life and law will be determined by Halacha rather than by democratic choices that may vary according to the makeup of the population. These spheres will be above the normal democratic process, according to prior agreement of all the groups involved.

Question for Madrichim: If you had to pick one of the 3 above which do you think Achad Ha'am would side with?. His emphasis on a spiritual and cultural revolution meant that he was less interested in the exact nature of how the state would function, because he didn't think the state should be started yet! At the very least he probably would've disagreed with 1 and 3 and changed 2 to focus not on religion but on culture.

Thought Experiment for Madrichim: Imagine you're living in this time period – you can come up with whatever solution you think will work. How would you answer these questions?

Next Kvutzah

Summary of K2:

1. Eliezer ben Yehuda: Revived Hebrew as a living language.
2. Asher Ginsburg (Achad Ha'am): argued for spiritual and cultural renewal of Judaism for Jews all around the world, before working to establish a political state.

The next Kvutzah will look at Political Zionism, Herzl and Ben Gurion. Some key things to remember from this Kvutzah are:

- A. The critique of Political Zionism by Achad Ha'am. As we look at the ideology in more detail we might see whether or not it was a fair critique or if Achad Ha'am was misunderstanding Herzl.

Appendix



Further quotes from Achad Ha'am's writings:

In Eastern countries their (Jews) trouble is material: they have a constant struggle to satisfy the most elementary physical needs, to win a crust of bread and a breath of air -- things which are denied them because they are Jews. **In the West**, in lands of emancipation, their material condition is not particularly bad, but the moral trouble is serious: They want to take full advantage of their rights, and cannot; they long to become attached to the people of the country, and to take part in its social life, and they are kept at arm's length; they strive after love and brotherhood, and are met by looks of hatred and contempt on all sides; conscious that they are not inferior to their neighbours in any kind of ability or virtue, they have it continually thrown in their teeth that they are an inferior type...**in order to escape from all these troubles [they believe] it is necessary to establish a Jewish State.**

Achad Ha'am sets up a dichotomy between two 'types' of Jews. In this short paragraph he has succinctly summed up the challenge of this era - Jews were given more and more freedom and wanted to join in to the societies around them. But this wasn't always possible. This is also where he begins to criticise Herzl and Political Zionism - he saw it as a response to them not being welcomed after having 'abandoned' Judaism rather than an internal-spiritual expression of Judaism (which he wanted Zionism to be).

The secret of our people's persistence is -- as I have tried to show elsewhere--that at a very early period the Prophets taught it to respect only spiritual power, and not to worship material power. For this reason the clash with enemies stronger than itself never brought the Jewish nation, as it did the other nations of antiquity, to the point of self-effacement. So long as we are faithful to this principle, our existence has a secure basis: for in spiritual power we are not inferior to other nations, and we have no reason to efface ourselves. **But a political ideal which does not rest on the national culture is apt to seduce us from our loyalty to spiritual greatness, and to beget in us a tendency to find the path of glory in the attainment of material power and political dominion, thus breaking the thread that unites us with the past, and undermining our historical basis.** Needless to say, if the political ideal is not attained, it will have disastrous consequences, because we shall have lost the old basis without finding a new one. But even if it is attained under present conditions, when we are a scattered people not only in the physical but also in the spiritual sense -- even then Judaism will be in great danger. **Almost all our great men, those, that is, whose education and social position fit them to be at the head of a Jewish State, are spiritually far removed from Judaism, and have no true conception of its nature and its value.** Such men, however loyal to their State and devoted to its interests, will necessarily regard those interests as bound up with the foreign culture which they themselves have imbibed and they will endeavour, by moral persuasion or even by force, to implant that culture in the Jewish State, **so that in the end the Jewish State will be a State of Germans or Frenchmen of the Jewish race.**

In a word: Chibbath Zion, no less than "Zionism," wants a Jewish State and believes in the possibility of the establishment of a Jewish State in the future. But while "Zionism" looks to the Jewish State to provide a remedy for poverty, complete tranquillity and national glory, Chibbath Zion knows that our State will not give us all these things until "universal Righteousness is enthroned and holds sway over nations and States": and it looks to a Jewish State to provide only a "secure refuge" for Judaism and a cultural bond of unity for our nation. "Zionism, therefore, begins its work with political propaganda; Chibbath Zion begins with national culture, because only through the national culture and for its sake can a Jewish State be established in such a way as to correspond with the will and the needs of the Jewish people.



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החיים בגולה: ציונות ולאומיות – Life in Exile: Zionism and Nationalism

Kvutzah 03: Early Zionism, Political Zionism and “I Dreamed a Dream, but it Died”

Early Zionism, Political Zionism and “I Dreamed a Dream, but it Died”

Aims:

1. To understand what ‘Early Zionism’ and ‘Political Zionism’ were and the difference between the two.
2. To understand the two ‘dreams’ or visions that have shaped Israel, why they failed and what we can do about it.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Pinsker vs. Herzl
3. Key Thinker: Theodore Herzl
4. Herzl vs. Ben Gurion
5. 1948 vs. 1967 vs. 1989
6. Next Kvutzah
7. Appendix





Introduction

For centuries we Jews have had a story, a story that we've retold and retold, passing it down from generation to generation (mostly in the Middle Ages). No this isn't the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim or Har Sinai, rather this is the story called 'the Legend of the Khazars'¹.

The story goes that somewhere at the end of the world there is a people and a country that admire and love the Jews. They love the Jews so much that the whole country with all its people, from young to old, converted to Judaism. In some versions of the story it stops there and in others, depending on who's doing the telling, it continues with “and we only need to reach this country to be safe”.

This story is a fascinating insight into the psyche of a Jew in the Middle Ages and depicts a collective 'imaginary friend' for the oppressed Jewish consciousness. 'They may hate us here, but somewhere we are loved'. For centuries Jews were feeling lonely, isolated and persecuted² – it was an ancient Jewish dream to be accepted and to be loved.

For many years we had the problem of antisemitism or Jew-hatred, but no solution and no way to be accepted. In the 19th and 20th Centuries (and the Haskala) we still had this problem but now we had two solutions on the table, two different ways to accomplish that 'Ancient Jewish dream'.

1. Assimilation
2. Jewish National homeland

The assimilationists claimed that the key way that Jews would no longer be persecuted was if they were no longer defined as a collective, if they were completely and totally a citizen of their 'host' country. They argued that surely if there was no difference between them and their neighbours, then their neighbours wouldn't hate them. The key thing they campaigned for was equal rights e.g. access to education, representation, jobs.

The Zionists claimed that the only way Jews would no longer be persecuted was if they collectively had a national homeland to call their own. The exact way they thought this would work to stop persecution is complicated and we'll go into more detail in the next section.

Pinsker vs. Herzl

Leon (Judah Leib) Pinsker is the father of what is often called 'Early Zionism' and was the founder of

¹ One version of this story is found in the Kuzari.

² It wasn't all doom and gloom though! In Aleph Chalutzi you will have learnt about the 'Golden Eras' – times and places where Jews really didn't have it that bad. Don't forget the modern era too – life is pretty sweet in the Western World for Jews #LovingGalutLife?

a movement called ‘Chovevei Zion’ or ‘Chibat Zion’. (You may recognise this name from K2 – Achad Ha’am was a key member and supporter of Chibat Zion).

Pinsker inherited a strong sense of Jewish identity from his father, Simchah Pinsker, a Hebrew language writer, scholar and teacher. Leon attended his father's private school in Odessa and was one of the first Jews to attend Odessa University, where he studied law. Later he realized that, being a Jew, he had no chance of becoming a lawyer due to strict quotas on Jewish professionals and chose the career of a physician.

Pinsker actually started out as a supporter of assimilation and campaigned for Jews to take on the values of their surrounding society and become a part of it. In his early years he was one of the founders of a Russian language Jewish weekly – encouraging Jews to assimilate into Russian Christian society.

However, in 1871 and later in 1881 the Odessa pogroms convinced Pinsker that even the values of humanism and enlightenment sweeping through Russia wouldn’t defeat anti-Semitism³. He became convinced that the root of the hatred of Jews was that they were foreigners everywhere except their original homeland. He published a pamphlet called ‘Auto-Emancipation’ in which he urged the Jewish people to strive for independence and a unified national consciousness, to move back to their homeland. His method to achieve this? Chovevei Zion/Chibat Zion.

“The great ideas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have not passed by our people without leaving a mark. We feel not only as Jews; we feel as men. As men, we, too, wish to live like other men and be a nation like the others....”, *from the pamphlet Auto-Emancipation.*

In 1884 the organisation was founded with the sole aim of promoting Jewish immigration to Palestine, to advance settlement there and build up agriculture. Crucially though they stayed away from politics – they didn’t try to get any sort of international political recognition for a Jewish homeland. They were playing the long-game – building up settlements and moving Jews away from the countries and people that hated them.

Question for Madrichim: What do you think might have happened if Jews of this era were able to assimilate entirely? Do you think we would still have had Zionism? Was it only a reaction to oppression?

Question for Madrichim: Can you draw any parallels to the lives we live today in the UK?

Thinker	Problem	Solution
Pinsker	Antisemitism and can’t assimilate i.e. Galut	National homeland – through settlements, not politics. (“Move away from those that hate us”)

³ Pinsker, a physician, actually preferred the term ‘Judeophobia’ to antisemitism. “... to the living the Jew is a corpse, to the native a foreigner, to the homesteader a vagrant, to the proprietary a beggar, to the poor an exploiter and a millionaire, to the patriot a man without a country, for all a hated rival.”



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Today they are considered the forerunners of modern Zionism. And if they are the forerunners then our next thinker is the leader and founder of modern Zionism. Enter: Theodore Herzl

Key Thinker: Theodore Herzl

Just like Pinsker and Chovevei Zion, Herzl agreed with the problem but his solution was different. He thought that international political approval and recognition of a Jewish national state was the only solution.



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Theodore Herzl was born in 1860, in Hungary and went through a similar trajectory to his thought as Pinsker. In his early years he was a ‘Germanophile’ (loved German culture) and believed that Hungarian Jews could shake off ‘their shameful characteristics’ caused by long centuries of impoverishment and oppression, and become civilised Central Europeans. He saw the problem of antisemitism but thought the solution was assimilation.

However in 1894 his views changed radically when encountering a particularly vicious incident of antisemitism (the Dreyfus Affair in Paris). This event, according to Herzl, turned him into a Zionist. Specifically with no option to assimilate currently (too much hatred) Herzl now believed that “the Jewish Question...is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political-world question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council” (The Jewish State, pg 75-76). Herzl believed that Jews were hated because they were isolated and dependent on their host countries without being fully a part of that country (either due to being of a different religion to the majority or having different practices to the majority). He thought that it was key that the Jews, as a collective, join something he called ‘the brotherhood of nations’. He felt that creating a state, through approval from all other nations, would return the Jewish people to equality with all the other nations. His depiction of Galut was a collective exile from the world stage, from being full members of humanity. The nationalism sweeping through Europe convinced Herzl that Jews as a collective, as a nation needed to return to being a full part of humanity – the way to do that was Zionism and a Jewish state. We can restate the formulation as:

Thinker	Problem	Solution
Herzl	Antisemitism because Jews, as a collective, were dependent on their host nations.	National state as a way to join the ‘brotherhood of nations’, no longer dependent. Full members of national community.

Important Note 1: Herzl thought that one of the side effects of creating a Jewish state was that it could be a really great way for Jews to prove their loyalty to the countries they were living in. If they had the option to leave and be a part of the new Jewish nation (because what person who saw themselves as a part of the Jewish collective wouldn’t) but didn’t leave to Israel – they had proven their loyalty! Obviously they didn’t see themselves as part of the Jewish collective and could assimilate into the host country without problem. Herzl wasn’t advocating this for all Jews, he expected and wanted most to move to Israel but this was a welcome side-effect for those that didn’t.

Question for Madrichim: Do you think that Herzl’s vision for the outcomes of the state were realistic?

Note to Madrichim: Keep this idea of ‘returning to a world stage’ in mind for when we discuss Rav Soloveitchik in K8.



Important Note 2: Herzl was incredibly focused on creating a national state for the Jewish people, so much so that the establishment of a state mattered more than the location of that state. From the outset he always focused on Palestine as the dream place to do it, but if it proved completely impossible or impractical he was willing to establish it elsewhere. This is why, at the Sixth Zionist congress in 1903, Herzl proposed Uganda (under British control) as a potential and temporary location. This caused huge arguments in the Zionist movement and nearly led to its split. Finally, in 1905, at the Seventh Zionist congress, it was rejected by all parts of the movement.

➔ Do you remember the Basel program proposed in the First Zionist Congress that we discussed in K2? This was the practical outcome of Herzl’s political Zionism:

The Basel Program: “Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Eretz Israel secured under public law. The Congress contemplates the following means to the attainment of this end:

1. The promotion by appropriate means of the settlement in Eretz-Israel of Jewish farmers, artisans, and manufacturers.
2. The organization and uniting of the whole of Jewry by means of appropriate institutions, both local and international, in accordance with the laws of each country.
3. The strengthening and fostering of Jewish national sentiment and national consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps toward obtaining the consent of governments, where necessary, in order to reach the goals of Zionism”

Mosaic Theory:

➔ Do you remember the critique of Achad Ha’am of Herzl? Achad Ha’am believed that Zionism needed to create and revive a new Jewish culture and spirit, something that will be unique to the new Jewish state. Any people moving to the new state would take up this new culture and spirit. He thought Herzl wasn’t doing that or even interested in it.

Well he was right! Herzl had a very different view of how the new immigrants would relate to the new state in terms of culture. He primarily thought that transporting the best of the ‘old world’ into the new state was the aim, that it was a great thing to conserve the unique aspects of the culture that the immigrants were coming from.

“Every man [read: person] can preserve the language in which his thoughts are home...We will give a home to our people - not by dragging them ruthlessly out of their sustaining soil, but rather by transplanting them carefully to the better ground. Just as we wish to create new political and economic relations, so we shall preserve as sacred all of the past that is dear to our people’s hearts.”
(The Jewish State, pg. 123).

This can be described as the ‘Mosaic’ theory/model. Every person arriving in the state, and their unique culture, would be a stone in the new mosaic of Israeli culture. City parks constructed in the English style, the Health Ministry headquarters built in the German manner, and the streets like those found in Belgium.

It’s important to note that this wasn’t to say that he thought there shouldn’t be anything of specifically Jewish culture. He wrote about the need for theatrical and operatic performances on



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Jewish themes⁴ and a special nationwide atmosphere on Shabbat. In his diary he wrote that rabbis would be a ‘supporting pillar’ of the future state, and insisted that in every neighbourhood the synagogue ‘be visible from long distances, for it is only our ancient faith that has kept us together’.

Herzl wasn’t interested in the creation of a new Judaism or a ‘new Jew’, or in the erasure of that which had sustained the Jewish people during thousands of years of exile.

Question for Madrichim: How does what you’ve just read fit with Achad Ha’am’s critique of Herzl? Which vision for the Jewish state appeals to you more – Achad Ha’am’s new culture or Herzl’s mosaic model?

Question for Madrichim: Picture the scene: thousands of people, all with diverse backgrounds, languages and culture, all coming to the new state. If there is no special effort to unify them (like Herzl thought wasn’t needed) do you think that them building the new state and coordinating with each other would be possible?

Herzl vs. Ben Gurion

We’ve looked at one key debate over the solution to the problem of the ‘Jewish Question’ (antisemitism): Herzl disagreeing with Pinsker. Another key debate was to what the Jews moving to the new state would be like. We’ve just seen Herzl’s model:

Thinker	Identity of Immigrants	Model of Integration
Herzl	No ‘new Jew’ – each to their own	Mosaic model

One of the other key figures in Zionism disagreed with Herzl’s model. This figure was none other than David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s primary national founder and its first Prime Minister. He thought that the best model was something that we’re going to call the ‘melting pot’. He believed that there was a need for every Jew to become a new type of Jew, that the new state would be a fundamentally new stage of Jewish existence:

“There has been a profound and fundamental change in the lives of hundreds and thousands of Jews here...a wholesale revolution in a Jew’s image and his way of life...with their arrival in their homeland, this Jewish dust (avak adam), living among strangers, dependent on vagrancy and serfdom, coalesces into an independent, national brigade, attached to and rooted in its great history...on the trunk of ancient Hebrew culture the prospect of a new Hebrew culture is sprouting, permeated with human and Jewish values, and it makes no division between man and Jew.

Ben-Gurion wanted to create something new: an Israeli nation – a distinct sense of what it means to be Israeli, rather than just a Jewish nation. He thought that all the new institutions of the state and especially the army, would take all the new immigrants – their identities and cultures – and melt them down and re-forged them as an ‘Israeli’.

⁴ New Bnei Akiva social media campaign – Nessun Dorma in Ivrit?



Thinker	Identity of Immigrants	Model of Integration
Herzl	No 'new Jew' – each to their own	Mosaic model
Ben-Gurion	A 'new Jew' – an Israeli!	Melting pot model

Question for Madrichim: Which model do you think offered the best chance for the new state? Which model do you think is the most 'ethical'? Which model do you think actually got put into practice in the state? Do you recognise any elements from either of them in the modern State of Israel?

1948 vs. 1967 vs. 1989 - The Death of Dreams

These three dates are key points in Israel's history in general and with respect to the ideas we've just been looking at. You may recognise the first two as the establishment of the state and the Six-day war, and if you know the third one your Rosh owes you a cookie! (Keep reading for the answer).

In 1948 Herzl's dream was both realised and died. The state was established through international coordination and political means however as soon as this happened war broke out and conflict ensued. Some claim that this conclusively proved Herzl's 'Brotherhood of nations' theory as nonsense – we had the state but still did not have international approval and peace. The idea that they hate us because we don't have a state seems to have been proven wrong ever since the state was established – in fact today it's quite possible to say that they hate us because we have a state!

In 1967 Herzl's dream was reborn through the 'land for peace' initiative. Leaders in Israel argued that the new land won during the Six-day war was a way for Israel to bargain back its way into the community of nations. A way to say 'look we'll give back land, look we want to have peace – accept us'. Shimon Peres in 1993, in his book 'A New Middle East' explicitly argued that withdrawing from the West Bank would help create a liberal, peaceful Middle East and lead to greater acceptance of Israel's position in the world.

Thinker	Model (Dream)	Death and Rebirth
Herzl	"Brotherhood of Nations"	1948=Conflict, 1967=Land for Peace

In 1989 Ben-Gurion's dream died. Ben-Gurion dreamed of a 'melting pot' of Israeli culture and for a long time it seemed to be working⁵, however from 1989 Mikhail Gorbachev (head of the USSR) opened the borders of the Soviet Union and some 1.6 million Soviet Jews began to emigrate to Israel. It quickly proved practically impossible to turn this group of Jews into 'Israelis' – it would take decades and decades. It also proved to be ideologically impossible too. The leaders of these immigrants tried to, in the words of Natan Sharansky: "revive Herzl's more conservative vision...We did not believe in the melting-pot model for absorbing immigrants. We did not believe in expunging everything old but rather in preserving everything worth preserving."

⁵ Important to note here that the Israeli culture being created was predominantly 'Ashkenazi and European', Jews coming from Mizrahi lands were frequently denigrated and put down as their host culture was very different to what was 'expected from them'. This led to lots of social and economic problems within the Mizrahi community that are still being felt today.



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In the months and years during the collapse of the Soviet Union the Jews living there wanted to return to their roots but knew nothing about them. “They found themselves lacking any clear identity, and began searching for one. They yearned to find out about the Jewish calendar, Jewish history, Jewish heritage and culture. But when they came to Israel, they discovered that they did not have to assume a *Jewish* identity in order to be Israeli.” As one immigrant of the time described to Sharansky about moving to Israel:

“I thought I would be giving my children three thousand years of history. After all I was taking them from a country where history began in 1917 (the Russian Revolution) to one with a tradition spanning thousands of years. But I soon discovered that instead of giving them an extra thousand years, I had taken away thirty: history here began in 1948!”⁶

Thinker	Model (Dream)	Death and Rebirth
Ben-Gurion	Melting pot beats Mosaic	1989 – Mosaic beats Melting Pot

Question for Madrichim: What is your first reaction to reading the quote directly above from the new Soviet immigrant to Israel? What role do you think Religious Zionist Jews in Israel might have in emphasising or teaching about this three-thousand year history?

Question for Madrichim: Do you agree that these models have died? Would you try and revive them if you could? Do you think that Shimon Peres’s new application of Herzl’s dream is a good idea?

Next Kvutzah

Summary of K3:

1. Pinsker – Settlements and Chovevei Zion
2. Herzl – Political solution, international recognition, brotherhood of nations and mosaic model
3. Ben Gurion – melting-pot model

The next Kvutzah will look at Socialist and Labour Zionism, A.D Gordon and the inverted pyramid, and Moshe Hess. Some key things to remember from this Kvutzah are:

- A. Ben-Gurion’s model of the melting pot and the ‘new Jew’. We’re going to see how it clashes with how he deals with ultra-Orthodox groups in Israel.
- B. The debate you read about in K2 about the nature of the Jewish state. We’ll read about David Ben Gurion and something called the ‘Status quo letter’.

⁶ Important to remember that this is just the perspective of this oleh, ‘secular’ Zionism did relate all of Jewish history and did create narratives about returning to our ancient homeland etc.

Labour Zionism: "Arise, ye workers from your slumber"

Aims:

1. To understand one of the key theories of socialism and how it was understood by Labour Zionists.
2. To think about one of the key debates that shaped Labour Zionism through the life of Joseph Trumpeldor.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Socialism: Crash Course
3. Labour Zionism - Socialist?
4. Impact on the State of Israel
5. Joseph Trumpeldor - Nation vs. Individual



"So, how should we play this
— capitalism or socialism?"

Socialism: Crash Course




Socialism and socialist theory is a huge and varied body of ideas, practices and key thinkers. We're

not going to explore a vast majority of it, but rather will only look at the aspects that help us understand the particular flavour of socialism that Labour Zionism believed in.

In order to do that we’re going to look at two key thinkers: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx (and technically Friedrich Engels too but they’re sort of a pair).

Hegel (born August 27, 1770, died November 14, 1831) was an important German philosopher who achieved wide renown during his day and remains very influential in many areas of philosophy. (He actually developed the idea of ‘Geist’ – spirit which we came across in K2. Other variations included Weltgeist "world-spirit" and Zeitgeist "spirit of the age").

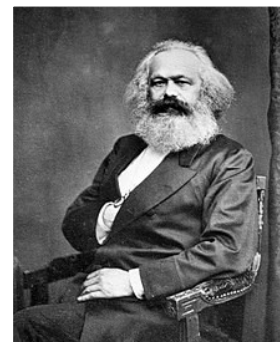
One of his key ideas was something called a ‘dialectic’. Hegel wasn’t the first to use the phrase dialectic but he popularised it. Hegel believed that the course of history wasn’t something incomprehensible but rather “could be understood through the interaction of competing ideas that ‘fight each other’. His model argued that the development of history was a cycle of ‘ideas’ competing and arguing with each other. He used the terms ‘thesis’, ‘antithesis’ and ‘synthesis’.

	Thesis	The idea or concept is presented
	Antithesis	A contradicting idea or concept develops
	The thesis and antithesis “fight”	
	Synthesis	A new idea emerges from the two that resolves the contradictions
	new Thesis	The cycle/process starts again.

(A simpler version would be “Problem→Reaction→Solution)

For Hegel, the whole of history is one tremendous dialectic with a continued process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis.¹

Karl Marx² (and Engels) took Hegel’s idea of the dialectic and whilst accepting the major point (history can be viewed as an evolutionary process i.e. it develops) rejected the specifics of Hegel’s theory. Marx viewed history not as a battle of ideas but as a battle over ‘the means of production’ and economics. He felt that Hegel was too focused on the abstract and that rather than the ideals of people that drove history it was the material interests (the physical needs) of the people that did. He wrote that Hegelianism stood the movement of history on its head, and that one needed to set it upon its feet i.e. on the things that matter most to people: the economy and physical needs.



¹ He thought the major stages were a progression from self-alienation as slavery to self-unification and realization as the rational constitutional state of free and equal citizens. Google it – it’s pretty cool!

² Karl Marx (5 May 1818 – 14 March 1883) was a German philosopher, economist, historian, political theorist, sociologist, journalist and revolutionary socialist. Born in Trier to a middle-class family, Marx studied law and Hegelian philosophy. Due to his political publications, Marx became stateless and lived in exile in London, where he continued to develop his thought in collaboration with German thinker Friedrich Engels and publish his writings, researching in the British Museum. His best-known titles are the 1848 pamphlet, The Communist Manifesto, and the three-volume Das Kapital. His political and philosophical thought had enormous influence on subsequent intellectual, economic and political history and his name has been used as an adjective, a noun and a school of social theory.



Marx viewed the stages of history as being driven by economic needs of the people, and specifically control over the 'means of production'. This phrase is something you hear a lot in certain socialist circles today and essentially refers to 'how we make things' e.g. a factory. In some societies the means of production are not owned by the people who work there e.g. there might be a factory owner and factory workers. The workers meet their economic needs by trading their physical labour with the factory owner for wages. (This was Marx's model of capitalism).

Marx believed that society had moved through a number of types or modes of production, and that each one had led to different relationships between the people involved. The main modes of production Marx identified generally include primitive communism or tribal society (a prehistoric stage), ancient society, feudalism, and capitalism. Ancient society was based on a ruling class of slave owners and a class of slaves; feudalism was based on landowners and serfs; and capitalism based on the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class privately owns the means of production, distribution and exchange (e.g., factories, mines, shops and banks) while the working class live by exchanging their labour with the capitalist class for wages.

Marx believed this system to not be in the best interests of the working class and therefore they would eventually/should uproot that system. The next stage, Marx believed, was a socialist system whereby the workers collectively own the means of production i.e. no more factory owners or everyone is a factory owner.

	Owns the Means of Production	Works in the Means of Production
Ancient Society	Ruling class of slave owners	Slaves
Feudalism	Landowners	Serfs (pseudo-slaves)
Capitalism	Capitalist class (owners) (Bourgeoisie)	Working Class (Proletariat)
Socialism	Workers own means of production	

Question for Madrichim: What are your thoughts on Marx and Hegel's understanding of history? It might all seem a bit irrelevant - what aspects of these theories do you think might apply to Zionism? Can you think of examples of Zionist history where there has been 'collective ownership over the means of production'? Hint: "K-----Z"

Marx believed that the flow of history was inevitable and sometimes described it as a river:

In the Marxian view, human history is like a river. From any given vantage point, a river looks much the same day after day. But actually it is constantly flowing and changing, crumbling its banks, widening and deepening its channel. The water seen one day is never the same as that seen the next. Some of it is constantly being evaporated and drawn up, to return as rain. From year to year these changes may be scarcely perceptible. But one day, when the banks are thoroughly weakened and the rains long and heavy, the river floods, bursts its banks, and may take a new course. This represents the dialectical part of Marx's famous theory of dialectical (or historical) materialism. (Hubert Kay, *Life*, 1948)

Question for Madrichim: Do you agree with this description of historical change? Can you think of examples of Zionist history where there has been change that seems sudden but perhaps was due to



a steady build-up of events?

Labour Zionism - Socialist?

Labour Zionism is the left-wing of the Zionist movement. For many years, it was the most significant faction among Zionists and Zionist organizations. It saw itself as the Zionist sector of the historic Jewish labour movements of Eastern and Central Europe, eventually developing local units in most countries with sizable Jewish populations. Unlike the "political Zionist" tendency founded by Theodor Herzl, Labour Zionists did not believe that a Jewish state would be created simply by appealing to the international community or to a powerful nation such as Britain, Germany or the Ottoman Empire. Rather, Labour Zionists believed that a Jewish state could only be created through the efforts of the Jewish working class settling in Palestine and constructing a state through the creation of a socialist Jewish society with rural kibbutzim and moshavim and an urban Jewish proletariat (working class).

Its key thinkers were Ber Bochorov, Aaron David Gordon and Moshe Hess, and their philosophy can be split into 3 key areas:

1. The 'inverted pyramid'
2. Agrarianism
3. National struggle not class struggle

The inverted pyramid:

Ber Borochov (July 3, 1881 - December 17, 1917) proposed the creation of a socialist society that would correct the "inverted pyramid" of Jewish society. Borochov believed that Jews were forced out of normal occupations by Gentile hostility and competition. He used this dynamic to explain the relative predominance of Jewish professionals, rather than workers. Jewish society, he argued, would not be healthy until the inverted pyramid was righted, and a substantial number of Jews became workers and peasants again. This, he held, could only be accomplished by Jews in their own country. He felt that it was imperative to build a new society in Palestine. His theories were one of the key ideas that led to what we know as the Chalutzim - Pioneers, referring to the first generation that moved to and created the State of Israel. The first generation of settlers in Palestine were pioneering not just in the sense of working on the frontiers in tough conditions but literally trying to pioneer and create a new Jewish society.



Question for Madrichim: What impact do you think that Bochorov's theories might have had on young people of the time? Remember: general socialist theories (like we looked at in the first section) were increasingly popular, especially with young people at the time.

Question for Madrichim: What do you think this new society might look like? Hint: think about not just economics but also religion, how might 'creating a new society' affect how people think of religion/tradition?

Agrarianism:



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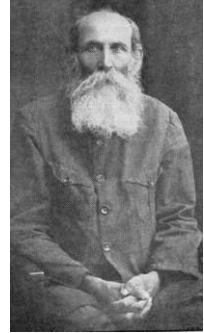
Machane Chomer - Bet Base

החיים בגולה: ציונות ולאומיות – Life in Exile: Zionism and Nationalism

Kvutzah 04: Labour Zionism – “Arise, ye workers from your slumber”

Aaron David Gordon (9 June 1856 – 22 February 1922) (mostly known as A.D. Gordon) was an important thinker and figure in the Socialist Zionist movement. However, more than he was an influential Zionist philosopher, he also personified the approach and actively lived out his ideals. (A real Dugma Ishit!) After working as a book keeper in Russia, he moved to Palestine in 1902 at age forty-seven and redefined himself as a farmer at the first Zionist kibbutz Degania, on the banks of the Sea of Galilee. He perceived agricultural labour as not only restoring the ‘abandoned’ land, but also the damaged Jewish spirit. In his 1918 essay, Our Tasks Ahead, he wrote:

“We Jews have developed an attitude of looking down on physical labour...but labour is the only force which binds man to the soil...it is the basic energy for the creation of national culture. This is what we do not have, but we are not aware of missing it...In my dream I come to the land. And it is barren and desolate and given over to strangers; destruction darkens its face and foreigners rule in corruption. And the land of my forefathers is distant and foreign to me and I too am distant and foreign to it. And the only link that ties my soul to her, the only reminder that I am her son and she is my mother, is that my soul is as desolate as hers.”



Question for Madrichim: What do you think about A.D. Gordon’s approach to the value of physical labour? Do you agree with it/do you think it is something missing from our lives today? How might you apply this approach in your life today?

Question for Madrichim: On Machane are there opportunities to think about ‘conquering the wilderness’ or a ‘back-to-earth’ ethos? The Chalutzim ‘jumped off a cliff’ in moving to British Mandate Palestine without any sort of agricultural training. How might you think your chanichim can apply a similar mentality to their lives?

A.D. Gordon’s approach is an example of something called ‘Agrarianism’. (See the Appendix for a list of the ‘Principles of Agrarianism’). It’s a way of living that heavily influenced the early settlers in Palestine and it, together with socialism, led to the kibbutz movement and a really heavy emphasis on the collective i.e. the group/nation came before the individual. (Individual suffering/hardship or even sacrifice was ok as long as the collective was thriving as a result. More on this in the next section)

Question for Madrichim: Have you ever ‘worked the land’? Do you feel a connection to physical labour and working the land that these thinkers expressed? What role (if any!) do you think that agrarianism could have in your lives and in the modern State of Israel?

Question for Madrichim: Principle D above describes how farming can give you a connection to a specific piece of land and its history/tradition. How do you think this applied to Israel for the Chalutzim?



National struggle not class struggle:

Moshe Hess (January or June 21, 1812 - April 6, 1875) was a French-Jewish philosopher and is considered the founder of Labour Zionism. Hess was born in Bonn, which was under French rule at the time. In his French-language birth certificate, his name is given as "Moïse"; he was named after his maternal grandfather. His father was an ordained rabbi, but never practiced this profession. Hess received a Jewish religious education from his grandfather, and later studied philosophy at the University of Bonn, but never graduated.



He was a contemporary of Marx (and Engels) and he argued vehemently against them but also praised them for their work. He wrote that his own theories "resembles a neat sketch drawn on paper, whereas Marx's [theories/views on history] are as if it were engraved with iron force in the rock of time" (*paraphrased by Litcheim, A Short History of Socialism, 1971 p. 80*). He eventually split from the main Socialist movement over their competing views of history³.

Hess felt that the 'dialectic' of history should not be based on economic or class struggles (like Marx/Engels) and should rather be based on the struggle of races, or nationalities, as the prime driver of history. He believed that competing nationalisms were the driving force of history and, importantly, that Jews needed somewhere to express their own nationalism before their hosts started to treat them badly (or even worse) as they developed their own nationalisms.

Picture it like this:

	Dialectical View of History - What is the Driving Force?
Friedrich Hegel	Ideas (intellect, expression of the spirit/Geist)
Karl Marx	Economics and the means of production (competing relationships between worker/proletariat and owner/bourgeoisie)
Moshe Hess	Nationalisms (different 'races'/peoples have different national identities that contradict one another)

His key work was an expression of socialism and nationalism called Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question (German: Rom und Jerusalem, die Letzte Nationalitätsfrage). The book was published by Hess in 1862 in Leipzig and argued for the Jews to return to Palestine, and proposed a socialist country in which the Jews would become agrarianised through a process of "redemption of the soil". (*Recognise some themes from A.D. Gordon?*). It was largely written against the background of German Jewish assimilationists, German antisemitism and German antipathy to nationalism arising in other countries.

³ There may have been another reason why he split from Marx and Engels. Hess married a poor Catholic seamstress, Sibylle Pesch, "in order to redress the injustice perpetrated by society" (What a romantic!). Although they remained happily married until Hess' death, Sibylle may have had an affair with Engels while he was smuggling her from Belgium to France to be reunited with her husband, or at least this is what Engels claimed to annoy and attack Hess! Funny how sometimes men use women and relationships to attack each other #Patriarchy. The incident may have precipitated Hess' split from the Socialist movement.



Hess's work was really the first piece of writing to put Zionism in the context of European nationalism. It was largely ignored at the time as most German Jews were fixed on cultural assimilation. Indeed Herzl, when writing *Der Judenstaat* some 35 years after Hess, wrote that "since Baruch Spinoza Jewry had no bigger thinker than this forgotten Moses Hess." And that he might not have written *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) if he had known Rome and Jerusalem beforehand.

The book, written in the form of twelve letters addressed to a woman in her grief at the loss of a relative, made the following three key arguments:

1. The Jews will always remain strangers among the European peoples, who may emancipate them for reasons of humanity and justice, but will never respect them so long as the Jews place their own great national memories still in the background and also hold to the principle, "Ubi bene, ibi patria." (Latin language: "where [it is] well, there [is] the fatherland")
2. The Jewish type is indestructible, and Jewish national feeling cannot be uprooted, although the German Jews, for the sake of a wider and more general emancipation, persuade themselves and others to the contrary.
3. If the emancipation of the Jews is not compatible with Jewish nationality, the Jews must sacrifice emancipation to nationality. Hess considers that the only solution of the Jewish question lies in the returning to Palestine.

Question for Madrichim: Do you agree with Hess's idea that competing nationalisms are what drive history? Think about recent big events in history e.g. the World Wars, independence movements (e.g. India/Pakistan) and the establishment of the State of Israel and the ensuing Israel/Palestine conflict. Are these examples of competing nationalisms or something else?

Question for Madrichim: Think about your Chanichim's experience of history - do they view it as something outside their control or something that they can shape? The dialectical theory of history, whether it is Hegel's, Marx's or Hess's, claims that people can impact on history through ideas, through the economy or through nationalist expression. How might you teach this message to your Chanichim?

Labour Zionism - Impact on the State of Israel

Labour Zionism grew in size and influence and eclipsed "political Zionism" by the 1930s both internationally and within the British Mandate of Palestine (where Labour Zionists predominated among many of the institutions of the pre-independence Jewish community Yishuv, particularly the trade union federation known as the Histadrut). The Haganah - the largest Zionist paramilitary defence force (a precursor to the IDF) - was a Labour Zionist institution and was used on occasion against right-wing political opponents or to assist the British Administration in capturing rival Jewish militants. David Ben Gurion and Chaim Weizmann were both members of the Labour Zionist group.

Labour Zionists played a leading role in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and Labour Zionists were predominant among the leadership of the Israeli military for decades after the formation of the state of Israel in 1948.

Initially there was one main 'Labour Zionist' group: Poalei Zion - the workers of Zion. Upon arrival to Israel between the years 1904-1914 they split and eventually became two of the key 'left-wing' parties that we know today.



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Machane Chomer – Bet Base

החיים בגולה: ציונות ולאומיות – Life in Exile: Zionism and Nationalism

Kvutzah 04: Labour Zionism – “Arise, ye workers from your slumber”

The Poale Zion Party had a left wing and a right wing. In 1919 the right wing, including David Ben-Gurion and anti-Marxist non-party people, founded Ahdut HaAvoda. In 1930 Ahdut HaAvoda and Hapoel Hatzair fused into the Mapai party, which included all of mainstream Labour Zionism. Until the 1960s these parties were dominated by members of the Second Aliyah (an important/influential Aliyah that took place between 1904 and 1914, during which approximately 35,000 Jews immigrated to Ottoman-ruled Palestine). It was the dominant force in Israeli politics until its merger into the modern-day Israeli Labor Party in 1968. In the 1970s Israel saw the rise of right-wing parties to power.

Joseph Trumpeldor – Nation vs. Individual

Joseph Trumpeldor is also considered to be one of the early icons of the Labour Zionist movement in Palestine (full biography in the Appendix). When discussing what it is to be a Jewish pioneer, Trumpeldor stated:

What is a pioneer? Is he a worker only? No! The definition includes much more. The pioneers should be workers but that is not all. We shall need people who will be "everything" – everything that the land of Israel needs. A worker has his labour interests, a soldier his esprit de corps, a doctor and an engineer, their special inclinations. A generation of iron-men; iron from which you can forge everything the national machinery needs. You need a wheel? Here I am. A nail, a screw, a block? – here take me. You need a man to till the soil? – I'm ready. A soldier? I am here. Policeman, doctor, lawyer, artist, teacher, water carrier? Here I am. I have no form. I have no psychology. I have no personal feeling, no name. I am a servant of Zion. Ready to do everything, not bound to do anything. I have only one aim – creation.



Trumpeldor, a Socialist Zionist, gave his life in 1920 defending the community of Tel Hai in the Upper Galilee. He became a symbol of Jewish self-defence and his reputed last words, "**Never mind, it is good to die for our country**" (אין דבר, טוב למות בעד ארצנו En davar, tov lamut be'ad artzenu), became famous in the pre-state Zionist movement and in Israel during the 1950s and 1960s. Trumpeldor's heroic death made him not only a martyr for the Zionist Left but also for the Revisionist Zionist movement who named its youth movement Betar (an acronym for "Covenant of Joseph Trumpeldor") after the fallen hero. (We'll learn more about Revisionist Zionism in the next Kvutzah).

The quote above by Trumpeldor voices one side of an important debate that you can facilitate with your chanichim:

➔ Does the state exist to serve the individual and their needs? Or does the individual exist to serve the state?

Trumpeldor presents an extreme version of the idea that the only role and importance of the individual was to serve the state. Consider with your chanichim whether you agree or disagree with his approach.



Additional Questions:

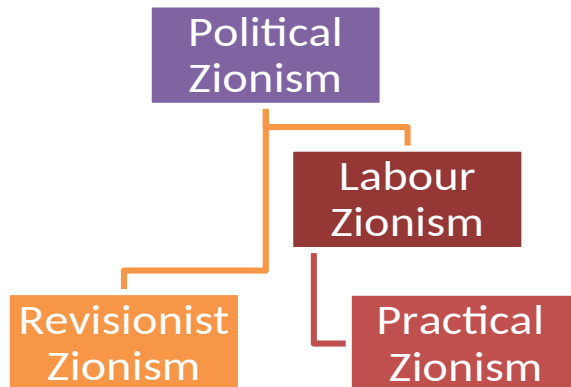
- Q: Are there different times when either approach should be emphasized?
- Q: What is the middle ground between the two approaches?
- Q: When should you give your life for the state i.e. whenever it asks or in self-defence?
- Q: What elements of either side can your Chanichim incorporate into their own lives?
- Q: Are there causes or people in their lives that your Chanichim would sacrifice themselves for? Does it change depending on the sacrifice i.e. life, comfort, money, health, happiness?

Next Kvutzah

Summary of K4:

1. Hegel, Marx, Hess: Dialectic History (history develops through conflicting things i.e. ideas, economics or nationalisms).
2. Ber Bochorov – inverted pyramid i.e. we need more farmers/workers!
3. A.D. Gordon – agrarianism i.e. don't you just love farming/working the land!

The next Kvutzah will look at Revisionist Zionism and Ze'ev Jabotinsky, and Practical Zionism and David Ben Gurion. Revisionist Zionism was the main ideological competitor to Practical Zionism. Both Labour Zionism and Revisionist Zionism claimed at different points to be the ideological successors of Herzl and Political Zionism:



Appendix

Biography of Trumpeldor:

Joseph Trumpeldor was born in Pyatigorsk in the North Caucasus of the Russian Empire. His father, Wulf Trumpeldor, served as a cantonist in the Caucasian War, and as a "useful Jew", was allowed to live outside the Pale of Settlement. Though proudly Jewish, Trumpeldor's upbringing was more Russian than traditionally Jewish. Originally in training as a dentist, Joseph Trumpeldor volunteered for the Russian army in 1902. During the Russo-Japanese War, he participated in the siege of Port Arthur, where he lost his left arm to shrapnel. He spent a hundred days in the hospital recovering, but elected to complete his service. When he was questioned about his decisions and told that he was heavily advised not to continue fighting given his handicap, he responded "but I still have another arm to give to the motherland." When Port Arthur surrendered, Trumpeldor went into Japanese captivity. He spent his time printing a newspaper on Jewish affairs and organized history,



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Kvutzah 04: Labour Zionism – “Arise, ye workers from your slumber”

geography and literature classes. He also befriended several prisoners who shared his desire to found a communal farm in Palestine. On return from captivity, he moved to St. Petersburg. Trumpeldor subsequently received four decorations for bravery including the Cross of St. George, which made him the most decorated Jewish soldier in Russia. In 1906 he became the first Jew in the army to receive an officer's commission.

Due to his handicap he began to study law. He gathered a group of young Zionists around him and in 1911 they emigrated to Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire. At first he joined a farm on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and then worked for a time at Kibbutz Degania.

World War I

When World War I broke out, being an enemy national, he went to Egypt, where together with Ze'ev Jabotinsky he developed the idea of the Jewish Legion to fight with the British against common enemies and the Zion Mule Corps was formed in 1915, considered to be the first all-Jewish military unit organized in close to two thousand years, and the ideological beginning of the Israel Defense Forces. He saw action in the Battle of Gallipoli with the Zion Mule Corps, where he was wounded in the shoulder. The Zion Mule Corps remained in Gallipoli through the entire campaign and was disbanded shortly after being transferred to Britain.

Political activist

Upon his return to Petrograd, Russia in 1918, he organised Jews to defend themselves and established the HeHalutz, a youth organization that prepared immigrants for aliyah, and returned to the British Mandate of Palestine himself.

Principles of Agrarianism:

- A. Farming is the sole occupation that offers total independence and self-sufficiency.
- B. Urban life, capitalism, and technology destroy independence and dignity and foster vice and weakness.
- C. The agricultural community, with its fellowship of labour and co-operation, is the model society.
- D. The farmer has a solid, stable position in the world order. He "has a sense of identity, a sense of historical and religious tradition, a feeling of belonging to a concrete family, place, and region, which are psychologically and culturally beneficial." The harmony of his life checks the encroachments of a fragmented, alienated modern society.
- E. Cultivation of the soil "has within it a positive spiritual good" and from it the cultivator acquires the virtues of "honour, manliness, self-reliance, courage, moral integrity, and hospitality." They result from a direct contact with nature and, through nature, a closer relationship to God. The agrarian is blessed in that he follows the example of God in creating order out of chaos.

(M. Thomas Inge, ed. *Agrarianism in American Literature*, (1969)

Revisionist Zionism vs. Practical Zionism: “Whole loaf, half-a-loaf, no loaf”

Aims:

1. To understand what Revisionist Zionism was and how it differed to Practical Zionism
2. To look at the two key figures of both movements: Ze'ev Jabotinsky and David Ben-Gurion.
3. To think about one of the key debates between the Revisionist and Practical movements: the Partition Plan
4. To think about one of the key debates that defined Practical Zionism – the Status Quo letter.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Practical Zionism and David Ben-Gurion
3. Revisionist Zionism and Ze'ev Jabontinsky
4. Ben-Gurion – The Status Quo Letter





Practical Zionism and David Ben-Gurion

David Ben-Gurion (born David Grün; 16 October 1886 – 1 December 1973) was the primary national founder of the State of Israel and the first Prime Minister of Israel. Ben-Gurion was born in Płońsk in Congress Poland – then part of the Russian Empire. His father, Avigdor Grün, was a lawyer and a leader in the Chovevei Zion movement (remember them from K2/K3). His mother, Scheindel (Broitman), died when he was 11 years old. At the age of 14 he and two friends formed a youth club promoting Hebrew studies and emigration to the Holy Land.

Ben-Gurion's passion for Zionism led him to become a major Zionist leader and Executive Head of the Zionist Organization¹ in 1946. As head of the Jewish Agency from 1935, and later president of the Jewish Agency Executive, he was the de facto leader of the Jewish community in Palestine, and largely led its struggle for an independent Jewish state in Mandatory Palestine. On 14 May 1948, he formally proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, and was the first to sign the Israeli Declaration of Independence, which he had helped to write. Ben-Gurion led Israel during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, and united the various Jewish militias into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Subsequently, he became known as “Israel's founding father”.



He stepped down from office in 1963, and retired from political life in 1970. He then moved to Sde Boker, a kibbutz in the Negev desert, where he lived until his death. Posthumously, Ben-Gurion was named one of Time magazine's 100 Most Important People of the 20th century.

In 1905, as a student at the University of Warsaw, he joined the Social-Democratic Jewish Workers' Party – Poalei Zion. He was arrested twice during the Russian Revolution of 1905. Ben-Gurion discussed his hometown in his memoirs, saying:

“For many of us, anti-Semitic feeling had little to do with our dedication [to Zionism]. I personally never suffered anti-Semitic persecution. Płońsk was remarkably free of it ... Nevertheless, and I think this very significant, it was Płońsk that sent the highest proportion of Jews to Eretz Israel from any town in Poland of comparable size. We emigrated not for negative reasons of escape but for the positive purpose of rebuilding a homeland ... Life in Płońsk was peaceful enough. There were three main communities: Russians, Jews and Poles. ... In general, however, relations were amicable, though distant” (*Memoirs: David Ben-Gurion (1970), p. 36*)

Question for Madrichim: Does anything about this account surprise you? Think back to other expressions of Zionism and how they talked about their ‘host’ countries? Hint: focused on threat of antisemitism. How do you think this early experience of Ben-Gurion might have affected him?

Ben-Gurion arrived in Palestine in 1906, inspired by the “positive purpose of rebuilding a homeland”.

¹ The Zionist Organization (ZO; 1897–1960) was founded at the initiative of Theodor Herzl at the First World Zionist Congress. In 1960 it changed its name to the World Zionist Organisation and still exists today. It served, and continues to serve, as an umbrella organization for the Zionist movement.



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מחנות בגולה: החיים – Life in Exile: Zionism and Nationalism

Kvutzah 05: Revisionist Zionism vs. Practical Zionism – “Whole loaf, half-a-loaf, no loaf”

He farmed and fought in Petach Tikva and the Galilee. He wandered and studied in Thessaloniki, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Cairo and New York, then served in the Jewish Legion during World War I. By 1919 he returned to now-British-controlled Palestine and head the centrist Labour Zionist group Achdut HaAvodah (remember them from K4?) which formed the nucleus of his Mapai party in 1930. He occupied a wide range of leadership positions and throughout each one had a policy of making tough and practical decisions to ensure either the survival of the state or some form of victory. This is why people often refer to Ben-Gurion’s Zionism as Practical Zionism. Although he was a core part of Labour Zionism, he didn’t let idealism or ideology lead him to impractical positions.

Some examples of this were:

Practical Approach to Arab Population:

Ben-Gurion published two volumes setting out his views on relations between Zionists and the Arab world: *We and Our Neighbours*, published in 1931, and *My Talks with Arab Leaders* published in 1967. Ben-Gurion believed in the equal rights of Arabs who remained in and would become citizens of Israel. He was quoted as saying, “We must start working in Jaffa. Jaffa must employ Arab workers. And there is a question of their wages. I believe that they should receive the same wage as a Jewish worker. An Arab has also the right to be elected president of the state, should he be elected by all.”

Ben-Gurion recognized the strong attachment of Palestinian Arabs to the land and in an address to the United Nations on 2 October 1947, he doubted the likelihood of peace:

“This is our native land; it is not as birds of passage that we return to it. But it is situated in an area engulfed by Arabic-speaking people, mainly followers of Islam. Now, if ever, we must do more than make peace with them; we must achieve collaboration and alliance on equal terms. Remember what Arab delegations from Palestine and its neighbours say in the General Assembly and in other places: talk of Arab-Jewish amity sound fantastic, for the Arabs do not wish it, they will not sit at the same table with us, they want to treat us as they do the Jews of Bagdad, Cairo, and Damascus.”

Question for Madrichim: What are your thoughts on this extract? How do you think Ben-Gurion’s approach could be used today? Do you agree or disagree with it?

Practical Approach to War:

Ben-Gurion, whilst being a strong ideologue, realised that sometimes your ideals and broader aims come after survival. Read the extract below from his speech just a few months before the War of Independence.

“There is nothing more important that war needs, and equal to war needs. And just as I don’t understand the language of ‘state’ right now, I don’t understand the language of Aliyah and language of settlement and the language of culture. There is only one criterion: are those things needed for the war effort or not? If they are needed – let them be done. If they are unnecessary – let them wait until the crisis is past. There are no exceptions, that is the great terror and the great misfortune embedded in every war, that is a cruel and jealous Molech [ancient god that demands child sacrifice] who knows neither compassion nor compromise...” *Speech to Mapai Central Committee (Jan 16, 1948)*



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חיים בגולה: ציונות ולאומיות – Life in Exile: Zionism and Nationalism

Kvutzah 05: Revisionist Zionism vs. Practical Zionism – “Whole loaf, half-a-loaf, no loaf”



Question for Madrichim: Do you agree with Ben-Gurion’s emphasis on ‘only the war effort’ being important? What impact do you think this might have had on the young state?

Question for Madrichim: Do you agree with his description of war as place/situation that knows “neither compassion nor compromise”?

Practical Approach to Creating the State:

In Ben-Gurion: A Political Life by Shimon Peres and David Landau, Peres recalls his first meeting with Ben-Gurion as a young activist in the No'ar Ha'Oved youth movement. Ben-Gurion gave him a lift, and out of the blue told him why he preferred Lenin to Trotsky: "Lenin was Trotsky's inferior in terms of intellect", but Lenin, unlike Trotsky, "was decisive". When confronted with a dilemma, Trotsky would do what Ben-Gurion despised about the old-style diaspora Jews: he manoeuvred; as opposed to Lenin, who would cut the Gordian knot, accepting losses while focusing on the essentials.

In Peres' opinion, the essence of Ben-Gurion's life work were "the decisions he made at critical junctures in Israel's history", and none was as important as the acceptance of the 1947 UN partition plan, a painful compromise which gave the emerging Jewish state little more than a fighting chance, but which, according to Peres, enabled the establishment of the State of Israel.

The Zionist Organisation and movement, after vigorous and often bitter ideological debate, agreed in 1947 to compromise and build a Jewish state in only a small part of the historic land of Israel. For the sake of sovereignty and international recognition, the Zionists were prepared to settle for “half a loaf” i.e. a state only in a small area. Ben-Gurion famously said that better ‘half-a-loaf’ than ‘no loaf’ at all.



Most Jews in Palestine and around the world reacted to the UN resolution with satisfaction, but some did not. Jews gathered in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to celebrate the U.N. resolution during the whole night after the vote. Great bonfires blazed at Jewish collective farms in the north. Many big cafes in Tel Aviv served free champagne. Mainstream Zionist leaders emphasized the "heavy responsibility" of building a modern Jewish State, and committed to working towards a peaceful coexistence with the region's other inhabitants. Jewish units in the United States hailed the action by the United Nations.

Most welcomed the Palestine Plan but some felt it did not settle the problem. The Revisionist Zionists were the main group that were vehemently opposed to the plan and rejected it. We're going to learn more about them and their objections next.

Question for Madrichim: Would you have accepted the partition plan? Remember Zionists talked a lot about their connection to their ancient homeland - the partition plan didn't include a lot of those areas. Also think about the actual breakdown - was it a practical situation/split?



Revisionist Zionism and Ze'ev Jabotinsky

Ze'ev Jabotinsky (born Vladimir Yevgenyevich Zhabotinsky, born 5 October 1880 in Odessa – died 4 August 1940 in New York), was a Russian Jewish Revisionist Zionist leader, author, poet, orator, soldier and founder of the Jewish Self-Defense Organization in Odessa. With Joseph Trumpeldor, he co-founded the Jewish Legion of the British army in World War I. Later he established several Jewish organizations in Palestine, including Beitar, HaTzohar and the Irgun.



The name 'Revisionist' comes from the fact that Jabotinsky advocated a 'revision' of the 'practical Zionism' of David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann, which was focused on independent individuals' settling of Palestine and pragmatic compromise. Jabotinsky argued for a much more radical and political approach to creating the state, and not waiting for permission as much as the Practical Zionists were.

However, treating Revisionist Zionism simply as a reaction to the moderation of Practical Zionism and the leftism of Labour Zionism is like considering the winter merely the absence of the heat of summer and the colours of the autumn. Shaped by the fertile, far-seeing, flamboyant mind of Jabotinsky Revisionist Zionism was a cohesive ideology in and of itself.

Jabotinsky was a very controversial figure. While no person in Zionism's history except Herzl was as adored by their disciples, few Zionists were hated as intensely as Jabotinsky. His followers rallied to him as a heroic leader of the Jewish revolution; his enemies reviled him as its would-be Mussolini. He was an extraordinary man, a great orator and writer.

One of the movement's key positions was 'territorial maximalism'. This meant that their foremost political objective was to establish and maintain the territorial integrity of the historical land of Israel; its representatives wanted to establish a Jewish state with a Jewish majority on both sides of the River Jordan. Today this is often referred to 'Greater Israel' and looks to the borders that are referred to in the Tanach.

Jewish statehood was always a major ideological goal for Revisionism, but it was not to be gained at the price of partitioning Eretz Yisrael. In 1935 his movement left the Zionist Organisation to found the 'New Zionist Organisation' (inventive name right?) as the ZO wouldn't accept his plans or ideas and in 1947, Menachem Begin (who led the movement after Jabotinsky's death in 1940) opposed both the 1947 UN partition plan and the 1949 Armistice Agreements, viewing them as illegitimate.

Question for Madrichim: Would you give up a chance for statehood if it meant giving up on one of your core ideals? Why do you think the Revisionist Zionists were willing to? Do you think they had other plans to gain statehood – what might they have been?

Initially Revisionist Zionism, despite its strong representation in the Zionist Organization, had a small presence in the Yishuv (early institutions of pre-state Israel), in contrast to Labour Zionism, which was dominant among kibbutzim and workers, and hence the settlement enterprise. In the Jewish Diaspora, Revisionism was most established in Poland, where its base of operations was organized in various political parties and Zionist Youth groups, such as Beitar (a Revisionist Zionist youth movement founded in 1923 in Riga, Latvia, by Jabotinsky).



Due to this split between Palestine and the Diaspora Jabotinsky later argued for a need to establish a base in the Yishuv, and developed a vision to guide the Revisionist movement centred on the ideal of the Jewish middle class in Europe. Jabotinsky believed that basing the movement on a philosophy contrasting with the socialist-oriented Labour Zionists would attract the support of all the Zionists who hadn't yet picked a particular branch of Zionism.

In line with this thinking, the Revisionists transplanted into the Yishuv their own youth movement, Beitar. They also set up a paramilitary group, Irgun, a labour union, the National Labour Federation in Eretz-Israel, and their own health services. (The latter were intended to counteract the increasing hegemony of Labour Zionism over community services via the Histadrut (social labour union of workers – very big with lots of power) and address the refusal of the Histadrut to make its services available to Revisionist Party members²).

Read some of the following quotes to get an appreciation for Jabotinsky's thought and writing:

Task for Madrichim: As you are reading through these texts (doesn't have to be all of them), think about:

- How they may have been received by young people at the time?
- Are there any elements that you think are applicable today?
- How might you teach your chanichim the idea/s expressed in them?

A: Our habit of constantly and zealously answering to any rabble has already done us a lot of harm and will do much more. ... We do not have to apologize for anything. We are a people as all other peoples; we do not have any intentions to be better than the rest. As one of the first conditions for equality we demand the right to have our own villains, exactly as other people have them. ... We do not have to account to anybody, we are not to sit for anybody's examination and nobody is old enough to call on us to answer. We came before them and will leave after them. We are what we are, we are good for ourselves, we will not change, nor do we want to.

Essay, Instead of Excessive Apology, 1911

B: Eliminate the Diaspora, or the Diaspora will surely eliminate you. *Tisha B'av address (1937)*

C: We were not created in order to teach morals and manners to our enemies. Let them learn these things for themselves before they establish relations with us. We want to hit back at anybody who harms us. Whoever does not repay a blow by a blow is also incapable of repaying a good deed in kind. Only something who can hate his enemies can be a faithful friend to those who love him.

D: Men are free and equal. It is not true that man is citizen first; on the contrary, man is first of all something above a citizen - he is a king in his own right, and should not be bound by an outward duty to obligation unless absolutely necessary for his own and his neighbours' protection...
...I am prepared to take an oath binding ourselves and our descendants that we shall never do anything contrary to the principle of equal rights and that we shall never try to eject anyone. This seems to me a fairly peaceful credo.

E: All of us, all Jews and Zionists of all schools of thought, want the best for the Arabs of Eretz Israel. We do not want to eject even one Arab from either the left or the right bank of the Jordan River. We want them to prosper both economically and culturally. We envision the regime of Jewish Palestine as follows: most of the population will be Jewish, but equal rights for all Arab citizens will not only be guaranteed, they will also be fulfilled

Summary:

² Think people in our communities don't get along with each other? It was much worse then!



- A. Don't apologize – we don't owe anyone anything, certainly if they hold us to a higher standard i.e. Israel too will have its own share of bad people and do bad things. That's not something to celebrate but is something to be expected.
- B. Jabotinsky believed in the idea of the 'New Jew' that had left behind Diaspora values/living.
- C. Need for balance and ability to both hate and love. Jabotinsky didn't believe in Israel or Jewish people being 'saints'.
- D. The individual is paramount. This is opposed to Labour Zionism that emphasized the collective as being most important. This quote also emphasizes the need for equal rights for all citizens of the new state.
- E. This is Jabotinsky's perspective on Arab people living in Palestine: they can stay but Jews need to make sure that they are the majority. Compare this to Ben-Gurion's approach earlier. Can you see any difference?

Ben Gurion - The Status Quo Letter

You may remember from K2 that we discussed the three key opinions within the different Zionist camps as to what the nature of the new Jewish state would be. If not here's a reminder:

1. **A Jewish state is a neutral framework** whose task is to provide a general background in which all Jews can decide for themselves how to lead a Jewish life. The state must provide the means for different groups to live their life, without them or the state interfering with each other. The state must be democratic.
2. **A Jewish state is a religious framework.** The law of the land must be guided by Halacha. Individuals can do what they want within their own private spheres but all aspects of public life must be run in accordance with Halachic norms.
3. **A Jewish state is a secular framework.** It will be run according to democratic lines. However, certain spheres of public life which are of particular importance to religious groups will, by agreements, be given over to their supervision. In these spheres of life, life and law will be determined by Halacha rather than by democratic choices.

Very early on it became clear to most Zionists, including the religious faction, that the second suggestion was a non-starter since the clear majority within the Zionist movement from its earliest years belonged to the secular faction. Thus the third option was basically the best that could be hoped for, from the standpoint of the religious Zionists. Most of the non-religious Zionist majority had no wish to force a split within the movement. Ultimately, in order to avoid such an occurrence, the last option was chosen.

The question now was: which aspects of life should be given over to religious control or be brought under the principles of Halacha? Here many years of struggle within the different groups resulted in a de facto agreement that was acceptable to all the main players. It selected a number of spheres of activity and public life where Orthodox religious norms would govern the way of life of the state-in-the-making and the state-to-be. This 'agreement' between the Orthodox groups and the non-Orthodox groups became known as the 'Status Quo' and remains in effect today, in various forms.

For Ben Gurion (a member of the Labour Zionist party) this situation represented a key challenge between his practical emphasis on the importance of the collective and, like we saw in K3, the idea of creating a new Jew: the Israeli (which we saw in K4 was a big part of Labour Zionism) and the pragmatic needs of trying to build the state and keeping everyone together. The 'threat' from the Orthodox parties needed to be met with a clear response.



Bnei Akiva

Machane Chomer - Bet Base

מחנה חומר – בית בסיס: החיים בגולה: ציונות ולאומיות – Life in Exile: Zionism and Nationalism

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This response was crystallised in a meeting and subsequent letter between David Ben Gurion and Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levine (one of the 37 people to sign the declaration of Independence) representing Agudas Yisroel (a non-Zionist and Chareidi group). In 1947 the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine had begun a fact-finding tour and was concerned that a secular State of Israel might hurt the religious population. Ben Gurion was also worried that Agudas Yisroel might damage the Zionist's position in the eyes of the outside world if they were to split from the main movement.

Question for Madrichim: Before reading further, what areas of religious life do you think Ben Gurion would 'compromise' on and allow the religious parties control over? Remember they were building a new state so had to think in national terms – what are the things that might affect the national identity or make-up of the state?

Question for Madrichim: Before reading further, what areas of religious life do you think the religious parties would want to control? What aspects of our lives are most important on a national level?

So shortly before the fact-finding tour began Moshe Prager (1909-1985, a Holocaust historian and writer who saved the Imrei Emes of Ger from Europe during World War II) arranged a meeting between Ben Gurion and Rav Yitzchak Meir Levine of Agudas Yisroel, which led to the penning of the famed “Status Quo Letter” of 1947. This is generally regarded as one of Status Quo's most important documents, although currently considered not as its only source, but as a culmination of an ongoing process of compromise. (See the Appendix for the full text – it's worth reading).

The letter made promises regarding four aspects of public life that were vital to the Orthodox groups:

1. **Shabbat** would be the national day of rest. However, the state would recognize the Christians' and Muslims' respective days of rest.
2. **Kashrut** would be observed in all kitchens under state auspices.
3. **Religious courts** would maintain exclusive jurisdiction over **all aspects of personal status**. The principal aspects of this would relate to birth, marriage and divorce.
4. **Existing autonomous religious educational systems** would be recognized by the future state. This applied to the two religious systems operative at the time: the national religious system of the religious Zionists and the independent Charedi system.

A few other agreements would subsequently be made in the spirit of the status quo agreement. Some, like Ben Gurion's acquiescence for the few hundred full-time yeshiva students to be granted exemption from army service, would become extremely controversial when the numbers of such students swelled to the tens of thousands. Other aspects of the agreements, such as the implications of the Shabbat agreement, would become problematic as the state developed and pressures among the non-religious public developed for entertainment and commercial activities on that day. A lot of the most controversial bills in Israel today centre around the Status Quo agreement.

Task for Madrichim: Debate amongst yourselves (or with your chanichim) the various aspects of this agreement. Do you agree with the compromise reached? What would you have added/removed? Would you have compromised in the first place?



Next Kvutzah

Summary of K5:

1. Ben-Gurion represents Practical Zionism, Jabotinsky represents Revisionist Zionism – they didn't get along!
2. The partition plan wasn't accepted by everyone!

Next Kvutzah we're going to be going in a very different direction and will be exploring Religious Zionism. Keep in mind everything you've learned so far as Religious Zionism is a really interesting combination of key ideas from all the different types of Zionism.

Appendix

Full Text of Ben Gurion's Status Quo Letter:

From: The Jewish Agency for Palestine, etc.

“To: The World Organization of Agudath Israel, etc., Jerusalem

“Dear Sirs,

“The Agency's Executive has learned from its chairman of your requests concerning guarantees on matters of matrimony, Shabbat, education, and kashrut in the Jewish state, once it is established in our days.

“As you were informed by the Chairman of the Executive, neither the Agency's Executive nor any other body in the country is authorized to determine the law of the Jewish state in advance. The establishment of the state requires the approval of the United Nations, and this is impossible unless freedom of conscience in the state is guaranteed to all its citizens, and unless it is clear that there is no intention of establishing a theocratic state. The Jewish state will also have non-Jewish citizens, Christians and Moslems, and, evidently, it will be necessary to ensure in advance full equal rights to all citizens and the absence of coercion or discrimination in matters of religion or in any other matter.

“We were satisfied to hear that you understand that there is no body authorized to determine in advance the constitution of the state, and that the state will be, in some spheres, free to determine its constitution and regime according to its citizens' wishes.

“Still, the Executive appreciates your demands, and is aware that these are matters that worry not only the members of Agudath Israel, but also many of the religious faithful in all Zionist parties or in no party, and it is sympathetic to your demands that the Agency's Executive inform you of its position regarding the issues you have brought up, and what it is willing to do, as far as its influence and directives reach, in order to fulfill your wishes regarding the said issues.

“The Agency's Executive has authorized the undersigned to formulate its position regarding the issues you have mentioned at the meeting. The position of the Agency's Executive is as follows:

“A. Shabbat. It is clear that Shabbat will be the legal day of rest in the Jewish state. Permission will naturally be given to Christians and to those practicing other religions to rest on their weekly day of rest.

“B. Kashrut. All means should be pursued to ensure that every state-run kitchen for the use of Jews serve kosher food.

“C. Marital Law. All the members of the Executive appreciate the seriousness of the problem and the grave difficulties pertaining to it, and all the bodies represented in the Agency's Executive will do whatever possible to satisfy the deep need of the religiously observant in this matter, lest the House of Israel be divided in two.

“D. Education. Full autonomy will be guaranteed to every education network (incidentally, this policy already exists in the Zionist Federation and Knesset Yisroel) and the state will not infringe on the



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religious philosophy or the religious conscience of any part of the Jewish people. The state will naturally determine the minimum requirement of compulsory studies in Hebrew language, history, science, and so forth, and will supervise this minimum, but will allow full independence to each network to educate according to its outlook and will avoid any injury to the religious conscience.

“Sincerely,

“On behalf of the Jewish Agency Executive, D. Ben-Gurion, Rabbi Y.L. Fishman, Y. Grinboim.”

Jabotinsky on the role of writers and journalism: Today, the test of democracy is freedom of the press: the most liberal constitution is a lie if the press is muzzled, but where the press is free there is a hope even despite defects of the constitution...A newspaper is a grand thing. There is no labour of higher worth than that of the journalist, whether he writes instructional articles or reports on a robbery that took place yesterday in the slums. Like the function of the blood circulating through the body, or like the function of commerce in the international market, so is the function of journalism in the realm of the spirit. Who were the first to teach us to always interfere in matters that are not ours, to judge people and nations, even though we were never chosen for the position of judge? The work of the journalist is a legacy from the Prophets of Israel! Our passion is to speak, to proclaim; "shouting" is what the same audience calls it, "we have no need for words, give us actions" they say. One thing that audience forgets is that speech is also an action - Perhaps the most authentic of all other actions. Cities have been destroyed, and more will fall, but what was shouted in the wilderness thousands of years ago is alive and still relevant. The world was created by the Word. The world will be mended by the Article.

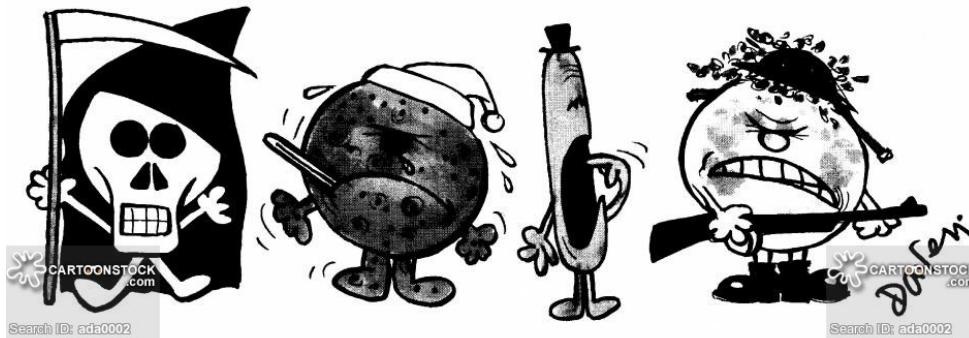
Religious Zionism pt.1: Four Craftsmen of Redemption (and early Religious Zionism)

Aims:

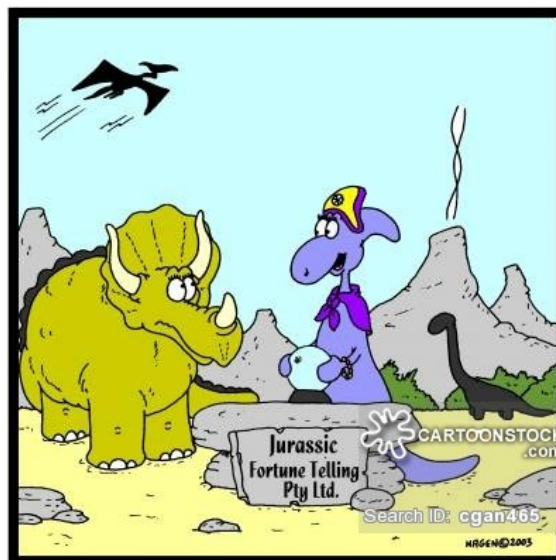
1. To understand who one of the early Religious Zionist thinkers was and their main ideas.
2. To understand two of the key debates that influenced Religious Zionism in its early stages.
3. To see the influence that general themes and theories of nationalism had on Religious Zionism.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai
3. Key Idea
4. Next Kvutzah
5. Appendix



THE FOUR MR. MEN OF THE APOCALYPSE



I've been predicting a sudden death next week
for all my clients lately: Funny hey?!...



Introduction

One of the defining features of Jewish religious life is the idea that history has religious significance; the idea that we can look at history and see within it 'yad Hashem' – the guiding hand of God. However this can be a tricky topic and it is important to know the following points:

1. It is fundamental to Orthodox Judaism that God is connected to, cares about and is involved in the world.
2. There are two different perspectives on how God interacts with the world – known as Hashgacha.
 - a. Hashgacha Klallit (general) – the idea that God is involved on a general level, guiding big events. Not involved in the day-to-day specific decisions of the normal person.
 - b. Hashgacha Pratit (specific/individual) – the idea that God is involved in the day-to-day specific decisions of the normal person.
 - ➔ Throughout history Jewish thinkers have disagreed on the exact 'amounts' of each of these two ideas – they argue over how and in what way God is involved in the world.
3. It is fundamental to Orthodox Judaism that we have free-will and can make decisions that affect the world.
 - ➔ Points 2 and 3 can clash with each other. It is not possible (philosophically consistent) to have absolute amounts of both hashgacha and free-will. Therefore thinkers throughout history have tended to limit one of them or both of them.¹
4. It is an important aspect of our religious view of the world to view the path of history as influenced by God.
5. It is an important aspect of our religious view of God to **not** claim that x thing happened because of y reason e.g. that hurricane hit that city because they are all sinners.² We do not judge others based on either historical or current events. **We do not know the mind of God and it is wrong to claim to.**
 - ➔ Points 4 and 5 (can) clash with each other. If we are going to view certain events as influenced by God, it is a very short jump to come up with reasons why these events happened. We should be cautious about doing so.³
6. There are two key trends in Religious Zionist thought about recent historical events:
 - a. The 'mystical' – that are more likely to view current events as miraculous or messianic, typified by Rav Kook. (See K7)

¹ Like most things this is very complicated and this section is not going to solve the debates around free-will. Great thinkers for history have argued about it. We're not going to come up with the solution here! Google for some answers, ask the Rav Shaliach or somebody who you think will know about it!

² Unless you happen to be a Navi (prophet) – then you can. But if you're not – no luck.

³ For an exploration of this topic see: <https://pagesoffaith.wordpress.com/2012/11/11/on-appropriate-religious-responses-to-hurricane-sandy/> - an interview with Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein z"tl.



- b. The 'pragmatic' – that are more likely to **not** view current events as miraculous or messianic, typified by Rav J.B. Soloveitchik. (See K8)

Over the next Kvutzah we're going to look at a key early Religious Zionist thinker and one of the key debates that has influenced Religious Zionism. Our thinker lived well before the establishment of the state but wrote important expressions of religious nationalism and influenced 'secular Zionism' (and was influenced by it) and definitely effected later versions of Religious Zionism.

Rav Yehuda Alkalai

Yehuda ben Solomon Chai Alkalai (1798 – October 1878) was a Sephardic Jewish rabbi, and one of the influential precursors of modern Zionism. It is important to notice that he, as a Sephardic Jew, played an important role in a process widely attributed to the Ashkenazi Jews. He even started by only writing his essays in Ladino and limited his outreach to the small European Sephardic community.

Yehuda Alkalai was born in Sarajevo in 1798. At that time Bosnia was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. He spent his youth studying in Jerusalem, which also belonged to the Ottoman Turkish Empire. He returned to Serbia as a young man where he eventually succeeded his father as Chazan and teacher and became Rav of his community at the age of twenty-seven (1825). There he came under the influence of Rabbi Judah Samuel Bias, one of the founders of the Chibat Zion movement with Leon Pinsker (who you might remember from K3).



Alkalai only really became a more active Zionist later in his life and was heavily influenced (like most of the Zionist thinkers we've looked at) by antisemitism. The primary event that affected him was the Damascus Affair in 1840. This was the arrest of thirteen notable members of the Jewish community of Damascus who were accused of murdering a Christian monk for ritual purposes. The antisemitic blood libel resulted in the accused being imprisoned and tortured by the Ottoman authorities and the populace attacking and pillaging a local synagogue. It received widespread attention across the Jewish world and reached the ears of Alkalai in Serbia. Three years later he publishes his first book "Minhat Yehuda" (The Offering of Yehuda). In it he invites Jews to take advantage of the awakening in the Jewish world for a Return to Zion and settlement of Eretz Israel, and went on to write many more essays, pamphlets and books. Unlike other Zionists at the time he offered a specifically religious argument for a Jewish nationalism and it centred around 'Geulah' – redemption – the idea that there is an end stage to the exile (Galut) from Israel hundreds of years before.

Some key points in his thought:

1. He thought that there were three things needed for redemption to occur:
 - a. Increased Torah observance – specifically as a way to 'return one's heart to Eretz Yisrael'.

- b. Increased charitable giving
 - c. Increased Tefillah – praying for a return to the land specifically.
2. He emphasized the importance of Hebrew as a way to both be comfortable with religious texts and also as a way to unify Jews from Ashkenaz and Sepherad when they would move to Israel. He noticed that Jews around the world didn't have a shared language and no-way to talk to each other. Hebrew was the solution. **(Recognise this from Achad Ha'am and Eliezer ben Yehuda in K2?)**
 3. In addition to Hebrew he argued that Jews moving to Palestine should give up their identity of 'Ashkenazi' or Morrocan or whatever and instead become 'Yisraelim'. **(Recognise this from Ben Gurion's approach in K3?)**. Alkalai actually thought that any Jew who moved to Israel would get a new soul i.e. become a whole new person and have their sins forgiven!⁴
 4. He emphasised a return to agricultural work, something he believed that Jews had become alienated from. He believed that physical labour of the land was necessary practically (to get food) and ideologically. **(Recognise this from K4 and A.D. Gordon?)**
 5. He also believed that Jews should seek permission from other nations in order to establish a state and not just move there and create settlements: "*The salvation of Israel lies in addressing to the kings of the earth a general request for the welfare of our nation and our holy cities, and for our return in repentance to the house of our mother... our salvation will come rapidly from the kings of the earth.*" (From the book Raglei Mevasser). **(Recognise this from Herzl's approach and K3?)**

A big debate Alkalai had with other religious Jews of the time was over the nature of 'Teshuva' and who would be the driving force in a return to the Land of Israel – God or Humans. The two sides of the debate were:

Thinker:	Teshuva	Driving Force in Redemption?
Alkalai	Teshuva primarily means physical return to the Land	Humans active, in partnership with God
Others	Teshuva primarily means 'repentance', changing my behaviour	Humans passive, in partnership with God

You can see from the box above that Teshuva has two meanings. The general narrative of religious Jews at the time was: Many years ago we were exiled from the Land of Israel for our sins, before we can return we need to become better i.e. stop sinning/repent for their sins. Once we have done that then God will take us back to the land and bring the Mashiach. The model for how we as people would facilitate our return to land was a passive one – there was no expectation that Jews would move en-masse to Israel. This is how for a long-time the idea of Teshuva (literally translated as 'return') was understood.

Important Note: Do not underestimate the power of this narrative. A Jew of that time asked by her neighbour "why are you here?" can answer "because I'm being punished". The reply: "oh yea, what did you do?" and the Jew's response "Not me, 1800 years ago my ancestors sinned and we were

⁴ If that's not an argument for Aliyah I don't know what is! New Nefesh b'Nefesh campaign perhaps?

exiled". This is tremendously powerful; according to this interpretation of history my life is controlled by the past! My whole identity is rooted in the events and history of my people.

Alkalai had a different understanding of this, which represented a radical shift. Read the quote below to see how he put it:

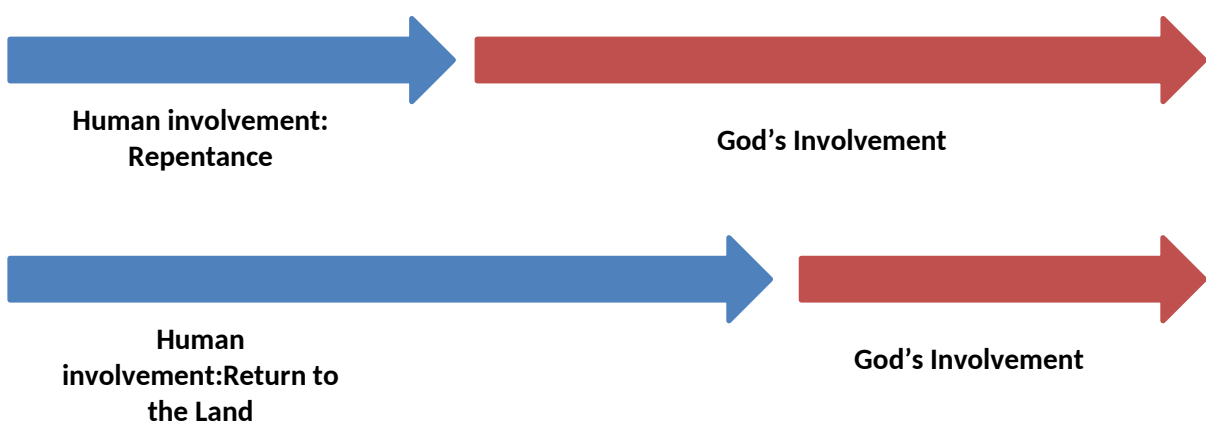
One should be aware that the word 'Teshuva' means first and foremost the return to the place from where the individual departs as it is written: "And his return was to Rama for there was his house." (Shmuel 1, Chapter 7, Verse 17) {For Shmuel returned to the place which he first left.} Our Rabbis by way of implication/inference made use of the word to refer to one who returns from his sins. Such a definition is found only in the words of our Rabbis, and because the term was needed and could be applied in all places and at all times, the great sages spoke of it until it became natural and there was no other meaning attached to the word Teshuva; its first meaning being all but forgotten. Yet the process of general return remains as described in the first definition, i.e. a return from which we have left.

Question for Madrichim: What do you think about Alkalai's analysis of how the "Rabbis" changed the understanding of the term 'Teshuva'? Why do you think they might have emphasized a different understanding? What impact do you think that Alkalai's emphasis on returning to the original understanding might have had on Jews of the time?

As Alkalai thought that Teshuva should more accurately be understood as a 'return to the place from where they came', he placed much greater emphasis on human involvement in this return to the land. He understood that the narrative described above would be better put as:

Many years ago we were exiled from the Land of Israel for our sins. We need to return to the land - that is what Teshuva means. Once we have done that then God will bring the Mashiach.

Picture the two positions as follows:





Question for Madrichim: Which position do you agree with more? Do you think the two ideas might have been more appropriate at different points in Jewish history i.e. has it always been practical to 'return to the land'?

There is one more key idea that has played a major part in shaping Religious Zionist thought and it is centred around the idea of Mashiach – the 'Saviour'.

The Four Craftsmen of Redemption⁵

This section will look at the idea of Mashiach – bear with it, it will get slightly wacky!

Question for Madrichim: What is Mashiach? Is it a person, a time-period? How many are there?

The key thing to know is that Religious Zionists argued that redemption wasn't something like a 'thunderbolt from the sky' that appeared suddenly. Rather they said that it was something that came slowly and in phases. They talked about two Mashiachs – a Mashiach ben Yoseph (from the lineage of Yoseph) and a Mashiach ben David (from the lineage of King David). The primary source for this is a vision of the prophet Zecharia:

I looked up, and I saw four horns. I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are those?" "Those," he replied, "are the horns that tossed Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." (*Nations that attacked Israel*) Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. "What are they coming to do?" I asked. He replied: "Those are the horns that tossed Judah, so that no man could raise his head; and these men have come to throw them into a panic, to hew down the horns of the nations that raise a horn against the land of Judah, to toss it." (*Zecharia 2: 1-4*) (*The craftsmen are coming to save Israel by 'attacking' the nations that attacked Israel – it's a prophecy therefore flowery language – don't take it literally*)

The Gemara then takes that vision and offers an explanation of who the 'craftsmen' are going to be:

The Gemara cites a verse and interprets it homiletically. It is stated: **"The Lord then showed me four craftsmen"** (Zechariah 2:3). **Who are these four craftsmen? Rav Hana bar Bizna said that Rabbi Shimon Hasida said: They are Messiah ben David, Messiah ben Yoseph, Elijah, and the righteous High Priest, who will serve in the Messianic era.** (Gemara Succah 52b)

This Gemara is one of the first instances⁶ where we find mention of the figure of Mashiach ben Yoseph. It continues to appear in loads of places such as in Targumim (translations/commentaries on Tanach) and Midrashic sources. For Alkalai, in his second work *Shalom Yerushalayim*, ben Yoseph represented the 'preparatory' Mashiach and ben David the 'ultimate' Mashiach. He thought that the first is a precursor to the second and would arrive through the efforts of the Jewish people and then ben David would arrive through God.

Question for Madrichim: Does the interpretation of the Gemara of Zecharia's vision make sense to you? How else might you have interpreted the verses?

⁵ Not to be confused with the 'four horseman of the apocalypse', that's a different religion.

⁶First mention in rabbinic texts, there are examples in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Gabriels Revelation stone tablet and even in something called the 'Testaments of the Twelve Patriachs' (which is probably a Christian text or a Jewish text heavily influenced by early Christianity).



Question for Madrichim: How does the idea of two 'Mashiachs' sit with you? Does it make sense?

The beginnings of Redemption?

It is quite common for Religious Zionists to look at events going on around them and view them through a messianic lens. The most common two phrase to describe this were either 'atchalta de'geuala' (the start of the redemption) and 'Akavta Demeshicha' (the footsteps of Mashiach). Many Religious Zionists at the time and since have claimed that we are living in a Messianic era, mostly a ben Yoseph one.

A famous figure (before Rav Kook) who used these phrases was the Vilna Gaon⁷ found in a book called Kol HaTor - The Voice of the Turtledove (a reference to Song of Songs 2:12) written by Rabbi Hillel Rivlin of Shklov, a disciple of the Vilna Gaon. The book discusses the Geulah and describes its signs vis-a-vis an evaluation of a proposed 999 footsteps of the Moshiach's arrival.

Yehuda Alkalai also claimed that he was living in the era of 'the start of the redemption', even going as far as to put a time-frame on it! His Kabbalistic view made him specifically assert that the year 1840 was the Year of Redemption (he didn't think that this would happen in just one 'year' i.e. 1840-1841 but rather he understood 'year' metaphorically as 'a century, from this day until 1939, representing the plural 'days of the Messiah'). He argued that unless powerful practical steps were taken, this opportunity would be lost, and the next extended "year" starting in 1940 would be one of great hardship when "with an outpouring of wrath will gather our dispersed". The outcome - the return to the Promised Land - would be the same, but under much harsher circumstances.

It seems that Alkalai was wrong about his estimations but it is important to note that predicting the future through a religious lens was something that was very common for early Religious Zionists to do.

Nowadays we are slightly more cautious about predicting events (like we saw in the introduction) as often we're left with the proverbial 'egg-on-the-face'.

Question for Madrichim: What role do you think 'predicting events' might have featured in a religious person's outlook? Come at this question from a sociological or psychological perspective - what impact might the viewing of events through a Messianic lens have on a person?

Next Kvutzah

Summary of K6:

⁷ There is some debate as to the whether the Vilna Gaon said these things. There are various versions of the book around. Check out Wikipedia for some discussion of this.



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ציונות ולאומיות: החיים בגולה – Life in Exile: Zionism and Nationalism

Kvutzah 06: Religious Zionism pt.1: Four Craftsmen of Redemption (and the early Religious Zionists)

1. Key principles of Orthodox Judaism: God cares about the world and is involved with it, humans have free-will – these two things interact with each other in complicated and sometimes messy ways
2. Key principles of Orthodox Judaism: be careful when trying to view current events through religious lenses.
3. Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai was a key early figure of religious Zionism. He argued for some very similar things to Achad Ha'am, Eliezer ben Yehuda, Ben Gurion and even Herzl. He preceded most of them.

The next Kvutzah will look at the religious Zionism of Rav Kook in detail. A key thing to remember from this Kvutzah is:

- A. The idea of the 'beginning of redemption'.

Appendix

Fun Fact

Theodor Herzl's paternal grandfather, Simon Loeb Herzl, reportedly attended Alkalai's synagogue in Semlin and the two frequently visited. Theodore Herzl's grandfather Simon Loeb Herzl 'had his hands on' one of the first copies of Alkalai's 1857 work prescribing the 'return of the Jews to the Holy Land and renewed glory of Jerusalem.' Contemporary scholars conclude that Herzl's own implementation of modern Zionism was undoubtedly influenced by that relationship. (Theodor Herzl: A New Reading, Georges Yitshak Weisz, Gefen 2013, pp. 47-51)



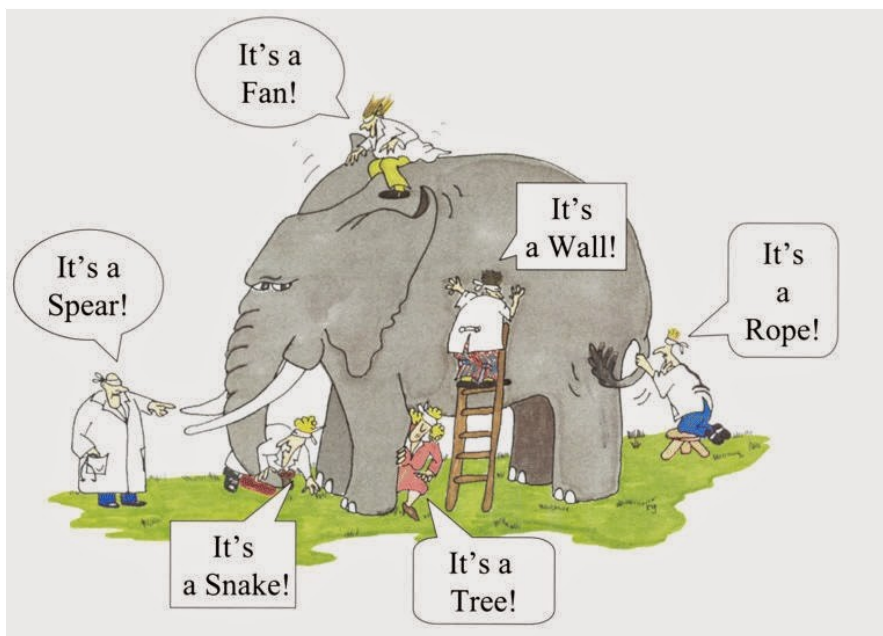
Religious Zionism pt.2: Rav Kook - Connection to the Land and Shards of Holiness

Aims:

1. To understand who Rav Kook was and what his key ideas were.
2. To understand his theory of 'benevolence/tolerance' and how it impacted Religious Zionism.
3. To think about the relevance of Rav Kook's ideas to Bnei Akiva and the modern Religious Zionist movement.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Lightning-Round: Summary of Key Ideas
3. Tolerance and the 'Search for shards of Holiness'
4. Next Kvutzah
5. Appendix





Introduction

In the previous Kvutzah, we encountered one of the forerunners of religious Zionism. In this Kvutzah we're going to look at the life and legacy of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook. It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that Rav Kook is the key figure in religious Zionism, his thought and writings stand like a colossus over religious Zionism and have influenced every major endeavour of religious Zionists in Israel since he passed away. Even those modern Rabbis and thinkers who try to articulate a new vision for religious Zionism are responding to the deep foundations of thought and philosophy that Rav Kook laid down. Even though in the previous Kvutzah we contextualised Rav Yehuda Alkalai as someone who came before Rav Kook – Rav Kook is the ultimate reference point for religious Zionism. All of this is why we're spending a whole Kvutzah focusing on him.

Brief Biography

Rav Kook was born in Griva in the Courland Governorate of the Russian Empire in 1865, the oldest of eight children. His father, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Ha-Cohen Kook, was a student of the Volozhin yeshiva, the 'mother of the Lithuanian yeshivas', whereas his maternal grandfather was an avid follower of the Kapust branch of the Chasidic movement.

As a child he gained a reputation of being an ilui (prodigy). He entered the Volozhin Yeshiva in 1884 at the age of 18, where he became close to the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (the Netziv). Although he stayed at the yeshiva for only a year and a half, the Netziv has been quoted as saying that if the Volozhin yeshiva had been founded just to educate Rav Kook, it would have been worthwhile.

In 1887, at the age of 23, Rav Kook entered his first rabbinical position as rabbi of Zaumel, Lithuania. In 1888, his wife died, and his father-in-law convinced him to marry her cousin, Raize-Rivka. The only child of Rav Kook, Zvi Yehuda Kook, was born in 1891 to Rav Kook and his second wife.

In 1904, Rav Kook moved to Ottoman Palestine to assume the rabbinical post in Jaffa (Yafo), which also included responsibility for the new mostly secular Zionist agricultural settlements nearby. During these years he wrote a number of works, most published posthumously, most notably a lengthy commentary on the Aggadot (parables and stories) of Berachot and Shabbat, titled 'Eyn Ayah' and a brief book on morality and spirituality, titled 'Mussar Avicha'.



The outbreak of the First World War caught Rav Kook in Europe, and he was forced to remain in London and Switzerland for the remainder of the war. In 1916, he became rabbi of the Spitalfields Great Synagogue (Machzike Hadat, "upholders of the law"), an immigrant Orthodox community located in Brick Lane, Spitalfields, London!



Upon returning in 1919, he was appointed the Ashkenazi Rabbi of Jerusalem, and soon after, as first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine in 1921. Rav Kook founded a yeshiva, Mercaz HaRav Kook (popularly known as "Mercaz HaRav"), in Jerusalem in 1924. Rav Kook decided to name the Yeshiva "Merkaz HaRav" to represent his vision of the Yeshiva being a place where the 'Rav,' or 'many', could come to learn from all corners of the World.

Lightning-Round: Summary of Key Ideas

1. "The Land is not an external acquisition".

Think back (or even turn back) to K1 and Johann Herder and his idea of Volksgeist – the national spirit, in that Kvutzah we talked about how the 'body' is the physical land that shapes and influences the 'spirit' or culture of the nation. Rav Kook expresses a very similar idea and wrote about how a nation is a living organism that is more than the sum of its people with both a spirit and a body. A key phrase to remember is "Eretz Yisrael Eineinah Kinyan Chitzoni – the Land is not an external acquisition". The Land is not something separate from the nation. Rav Kook saw the relationship between the Land and the People as similar to our own relationship to parts of our bodies.^{1,2}

This also helps us to understand Rav Kook's conception of Galut. Exile is a disconnect between spirit and body; 2000 years of nationhood that was only spirit (i.e. not having their land) led to a sickness in Rav Kook's eyes. A return to the land was a healing and reconnection between spirit and body.

Questions for Madrichim: Rav Kook's approach talks about a healing of the spirit of Israel. Do you think this has happened? How might we identify this 'healing'?

2. "Eulogy for Herzl"

When Theodore Herzl died two months after Rav Kook took up his position in Yafo, he delivered a public eulogy where he talked about the two stages that lead to redemption: Mashiach ben Yoseph and Mashiach ben David (**Recognise this from K6?**). He likened the phenomenon of (secular/political) Zionism to the footsteps of the Mashiach ben Yoseph, saying that Herzl represented the slain Mashiach ben Yoseph! Even though he praised the general endeavour of Zionism he was careful to emphasize that it was lacking because it did not put enough (or any!) emphasis on God and religion. (See the appendix for extracts of a letter he wrote directly after this eulogy justifying his speaking at the eulogy – clearly some people got annoyed at him!)

Questions for Madrichim: Are you surprised by Herzl being compared to a Mashiach? What impact do you think this might have had on religious Jews listening at the time?

3. "Jewish nation-ism"

¹ Rav Kook was heavily influenced by something called 'Romantic Nationalism' which argued that geography formed the natural cultural economy of a people, and that their customs and society would develop along the lines that their basic environment favoured. For Rav Kook Judaism really only had and has one home, only place where it can ever be truly expressed: Eretz Yisrael.

² A good way to understand this approach of Rav Kook is to think about the difference between the statements of "my shoes belong to me" and "my legs belong to me". The latter is an absurd thing to say, my legs are me! Rav Kook's approach views land in the same way. The land is, fundamentally, us.

In "Orot Ha-Techiya" (page 64), Rav Kook writes that the essence of (the nation of) Israel is its connection to God on a national level. The focal point around which (the nation of) Israel was created and continues to draw its existence is its relationship with God. It is impossible to relate to Israel outside the context of God. This is reflected by the fact that Judaism is ideally structured at the national level, embodying laws governing kings, taxes, the army and detailed civil laws. The commandments are addressed to the nation, not the individual. Rav Kook believed there was little significance to the Jewish nation (or Jewish nationalism) without the religious element. The relationship with God forms the character of the people and its history.³

If people like Achad Ha'am thought that the 'spirit' of the Jewish nation/state was its culture, Rav Kook thought it was its religion.

Questions for Madrichim: What do you think about Rav Kook's emphasis on the nation over the individual? How exactly do you think a national connection to God works? (Remember Rav Kook, and other nationalists, almost thought of the 'nation' as something with personhood). Do you agree with the conclusions this theory makes about non-Jews?

Tolerance and the 'Search for Shards of Holiness'

This section will look at one of the fundamental ideas of Rav Kook's approach to the world. It is sourced from Orot Ha-Techiya, section 18, which appears in Rav Kook's book "Orot" (available in English in the London Bayit, or all good booksellers). In this essay, Rav Kook describes three fundamental forces which can be found in any culture and in any individual, regardless of historical period or geographical location. These three forces are the foundation of a person's spirit (what drives a person):

1. **The first force is the holy, religious force.** This force is concerned with the relationship between Person and God - in other words, the spiritual aspect of a person's life.
2. **The second is the nationalist force,** which drives people to pursue the promotion of their own community and country above other groups.
3. **The third is the humanist, universal, ethical force.** This force knows no boundaries of state, and stresses the importance and equality of mankind.

Each one can contribute something to the other two, and can improve the other. These forces also perform an important role in limiting one another, and keeping each one under control. Unfortunately, these forces often tend not to unite, but instead to oppose one another. When we see this happening, it is our duty to speak out and to attempt to rectify the situation.⁴ Picture each force as a primary colour: blue, red, yellow.



³ This does not mean that non-Jews do not relate to God. On the contrary, there are many religious, righteous non-Jews who believe in God and have a connection with God. However, they relate to God as individual human beings, individual creations of God. They do not approach God within the larger context of a nation's group relationship with God (or so Rav Kook claimed).

⁴ Know any uber-Nationalists or ultra-Orthodox people? Tell them about Rav Kook's 3 forces and remind them that they're missing some aspects of their 'driving spirit'! (It is not recommended that you actually try this...)



Each force is by its nature incomplete, as it is just one aspect of the three-dimensional fabric of a person's spirit. If a particular group in society emphasizes a specific force above the other two, for instance, nationalism, then another group in society, the humanists, should come forward and find fault with the nationalists. Any force can easily find the flaw in its neighbour because one can no more build a balanced individual or society with just one force than one can paint a full picture with just one colour. What is required, then, is balance and equilibrium.

According to Rav Kook each person has their own natural 'hue' – some combination of these three forces that most speaks to them. Rav Kook didn't say a person couldn't emphasize one over the others, but that one without the other at all is where things go wrong. Balance is still the key, but not always a perfect balance. For that perfect balance he had a different name: super holiness.

At the end of the essay, Rav Kook explains how the perfect balance can be achieved and these three forces can be united in the 'super' holiness (kodesh elyon), also known as the holy of holies (kodesh kodashim) with God as the ultimate source of it. To continue with our colour theme – this would be white: the 'colour' you get when you unify the primary colours and best express how God wants the world to be.

Questions for Madrichim: Do you agree with Rav Kook that these three 'forces' are the building blocks of a person and their view of the world? Which of the three do you think most sums up your own beliefs?

An interesting question is where do Bnei Akiva and the Religious Zionist movement in general stand in regards to these 3 forces? They certainly aspire to be an ideal mix of all three forces, resulting in super holiness, but has it really achieved this goal?

And how do we relate to other groups that emphasize different aspects than perhaps we do? What about movements that really talk about the universal or really talk about the national – do we see them as being a part of the same 3 key forces and therefore legitimate?

Rav Kook actually addresses this last question and spends a fair amount of time in another essay (*The War of Opinions and Beliefs*) discussing exactly how different groups in a society should relate to each other. **Remember** Rav Kook has the problem of thinking nationalism is a great thing, but it was mostly being led by people who weren't religious, he has to find a way to legitimise their actions and describe them as full, functioning members of the Jewish nation/state.

He claimed that there were three types of 'tolerance':

1. Weak Tolerance:

This tolerance has as its central idea 'You do what you do, I'll do what I do – just don't bother each other' - in other words, anything goes. So why is this tolerance weak? To return to the colour analogy, you are, for example, red. The person next to you is blue. This weak tolerance means that you will not fight, you recognize that although you are different, you are equals. The weakness,

however, lies in the fact that there is no unity, no shared goal; by ignoring others, you fail to appreciate a higher truth. You only ever see one perspective, your own.

2. Intolerance – ‘Angry Zeal’:

This is the worst possible relationship which can exist between groups in society: I'm red, and I'm right. All the blues and yellows are wrong, and must all be red like me. It is angry in that it is so destructive. As we have already seen, Rav Kook thought that a healthy society requires a mixture of reds, yellows and blues (the various forces) and cannot survive otherwise.

3. Zealous tolerance or ‘Tolerant Zeal’:

The ideal relationship between groups is not a weak tolerance or angry zeal but a strong one where you recognize that whereas you are red and your neighbour is blue, you are both equally important, yet different, aspects of white. Once you recognize that everything is bathed in this upper white light of unity which descends from a single God and is the origin of your red and your neighbour's blue, then it is possible for different groups within society to live side by side, without conflict, and in unity - unity of origin, unity of goal, unity of essence.

Questions for Madrichim: Do you recognise any of these approaches in people you know or in the world today? Rav Kook's theory here can seem quite weird/'airy-fairy' – how would you explain this idea to your chanichim?

See the appendix for a useful analogy and activity if you're struggling with this idea.

Almost there!

The last application of these two ideas (3 forces and types of tolerance) comes from what appears to be a problem with the theory:

When confronted with the world around us, we witness ideas and behaviours, such as, for example, idolatry, which directly oppose our beliefs, and of which we assume we ought to be intolerant. It is seemingly inconceivable that these forces originate from the super holiness and that there can any good in them, and therefore we are unable to recognize them as a facet of the greater truth. Therefore, we conclude that monotheism and Judaism sometimes ought to be intolerant.

Arguing that this is not the case, Rav Kook makes use of a kabbalistic idea. **He explains that there is nothing in the universe which does not contain a divine spark of truth.** Any idea which is pure falsehood will spontaneously collapse; only if it contains an element of truth will the falsehood be able to survive. Therefore, as any idea that we encounter in the world hasn't collapsed, it is not totally devoid of at least a trace of truth.



Rav Kook maintains that by recognizing and extracting the truth, we can sieve through these foreign ideas which, once devoid of their anchor of truth, can no longer be sustained. In that way, we can find a trace of good even within the idol-worshippers: we do not accept the 'untruths' they preach, but we can certainly appreciate and learn from their motivation to serve a god, albeit what we think is the wrong one. No group can be dismissed and excluded, because each contains a particle of truth, of Godliness.



- ➔ This is how Rav Kook legitimised and praised the 'secular' Zionists: They were expressing one of the key forces of life – nationalism! And despite Rav Kook thinking that they were wrong for not talking about God, he can take the aspects he does agree with and see as true and value them for those! It is then up to him (and us today) to try and combine the nationalism of 'secular' Zionism with the religiosity of traditional Judaism!

Questions for Madrichim: How do you think this idea might play out in our movement and in our relationships with other types of Judaism? What role do you think we might have in modelling this approach in the British Orthodox community?

Next Kvutzah

Summary of K7:

1. Rav Kook is a very important figure in religious Zionism.
2. He thought some very complex, interesting and uber-mystical things! Such as:
 - a. The Land is not an external acquisition.
 - b. Jewish nation-ism was based on God and religion, not on culture.
3. He thinks there are 3 forces that drive all humans, as individuals and as nations:
 - a. The holy/spiritual
 - b. The nationalist
 - c. The universal/humanist
4. He thinks that tolerance is very important and should be based on recognising the grains of truth in every movement, idea and person.

The next Kvutzah will look at the religious Zionism of Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Yehuda Amital in detail. There are ideas that are 'rationale' based and much easier to understand than Rav Kook!

Appendix

Rav Kook wrote a letter to his father-in-law, Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim (also known by the acronym "The Aderet"), addressing certain misquotes which were erroneously being repeated in his name regarding a speech he gave after Theodor Herzl's passing. The following are translated excerpts from the letter Rav Kook wrote to Rav Rabinowitz-Teomim:

...Now there came to me two gentlemen ... and requested me ... since they were planning to gather in the bank building here to honor the memory of Doctor Herzl and it was their finding that even those opposed to Zionism would not deny that there were in his heart thoughts concerning the betterment of Israel. Though unfortunately he did not find the straight path, nevertheless, 'The Holy One does not withhold credit for even good talk.' It would be poor manners not to arrange a memorial in his honor in a public meeting place such as the Anglo-Palestine Bank here. Therefore I promised them I would attend.

Understandably, once I agreed to come, I did not want to refuse to speak there some words. I assessed that God willing, benefit would derive from my words, inasmuch as the other speakers would not have the audacity to belittle God, His Torah, and the sages of Israel.

Thank God, this assessment proved correct. Of course, I spoke pleasantly and politely, but I did reveal the fundamental failure of their [the Zionists'] entire enterprise, namely the fact that they do not place at the top of their list of priorities the sanctity of God and His great name, which is the power that enables Israel to survive ... In my remarks, I offered no homage to Dr. Herzl per se.



What I did say was that such a thought of improving the situation of Israel in Eretz Israel would be worthwhile if we would rise to the occasion. It would require return to G-d by observing and honoring the Torah, and a consensus that the foundation of all must be the power of Torah. Repenting of baseless hatred, and wholehearted peace-seeking as obligated [by Torah] would result in success because it would be close to G-d's will. We must make amends toward the future that the power of the sanctity of Torah be at the top of our list of priorities, that 'the son of Yishai be at the lead.' If the will to improve materially will rest on Torah – then the Lord will shine His face upon us and crown our every deed with success. At first, the salvation will be gradual, as our holy Rabbis remarked upon witnessing daybreak over the valley of Arbel, but after it will gain momentum, appearing as a great and wondrous light, as in the days of our exodus from Egypt. After [the address], others came to me and reported that some read into my words ideas I never intended ...

Rav Kook on women's suffrage:

In Rav Kook's view, since the Jewish claim to the land of Israel was based on religious principles, it followed that all decisions made by the leadership in the land must accord with religious tradition. Therefore, because according to his interpretation of Halacha women were forbidden to participate in public affairs. Rav Kook thought they should not vote or hold public offices.⁵

Rabbi Judah Maimon, the leader of Mizrachi (main religious Zionist organisation at the time), took the unprecedented step of disregarding Rav Kook's views even though they reflected rabbinical opinion in the country. In order not to appear guilty of flouting the Chief Rabbi's authority, Maimon treated Rav Kook's statement as non-binding expression of opinion rather than as a Halachic decision. There appears to have been no further discussion on the matter once he did this and women participated in elections as voters and candidates without further opposition.

There is little doubt that had Rav Kook persisted in his objections, his relationship with non-religious Jews would have been severely damaged and his influence and potential impact on the country jeopardized. When members of Mizrachi asked him if they should boycott elections that were open to women, he urged them not to do so, though he repeated his opinion that women should not hold public office.

This is a perfect example of the balance needed to live an idealistic and Halachic lifestyle – both always come up against the practicalities of life, a wise person knows how to balance the two.

Questions for Madrichim: What do you think about Rav Kook's views on women's suffrage? Why do you think that Rav Maimon went against Rav Kook? Do you think you would have done the same if you lived in this time? Why do you think that Rav Kook didn't object when Rav Maimon went against his ruling?

Questions for Madrichim: What positives do you think there might be if a country is run according to religious principles? What negatives or dangers do you think there might be? Do you think Israel today is run according to religious principles?

⁵ It's quite complicated why he thought this and there isn't space to go into it. For reference see this good article on the Jewish Women's Archive website: <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/kook-rabbi-abraham-isaac>. It is fair to say that a. Rav Kook's position is supported in standard Halachic material and b. it is a reflection of the worldview and time in which he was writing, which is not the same as ours today. Women's Suffrage in the UK, as an example, only happened in 1918. Another good reference point is that Rav Yonatan Uziel, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Yafo argued strongly against Rav Kook and Uziel maintained that both suffrage as well as participation in public life were absolute rights accorded women by the Torah and the logic of democratic principles.



Read the following analogy and try and identify the different types:

These different models of tolerance can be illustrated by likening the multiplicity of ideas to an orchestra. Each person has a particular instrument at which he excels. A violinist who displays '_____ ' would demand that everyone play the violin and use their music score. There would be no instrumental variety or harmony if they succeeded; instead, there would be a great deal of conflict as the other musicians resisted, demanding in turn that their instrument be supreme. This is hardly a desirable scenario. A flutist who is '_____ ' tolerant would play what they want, while simultaneously wearing earplugs so everyone else can play what they want. The members of the orchestra are not attacking each other (they are all wearing earplugs), but nothing has been achieved from a musical point of view. But, if all the players recognize that in front of them there is a conductor, and that under their direction they can work together towards a single, common goal, then even though they may be playing different instruments and different parts of a harmony, each can utilize their individual talent and ability while overall a beautiful symphony is produced.

Religious Zionism pt.3: Rav Soloveitchik - Fate and Destiny

Aims:

1. To understand who Rav Soloveitchik was and what his version of religious Zionism was.
2. To think about the different models of Religious Zionism and how we can apply them in Bnei Akiva and our own lives
3. To think about one of the key debates of Bnei Akiva: the place of 'Aliyah' in our ideology.

Structure:

1. Introduction
2. Fate and Destiny
3. Aliyah Debate





If you remember from K6 we discussed how there were two major trends in Religious Zionist thought:

1. The 'mystical' – those that are more likely to view current events as miraculous or messianic, typified by Rav Kook.
2. The 'pragmatic' – those that are more likely to **not** view current events as miraculous or messianic, typified by Rav J.B. Soloveitchik.

In this Kvutzah we're going to explore the 'pragmatic' approach through the thought of Rav Soloveitchik (commonly known as just 'The Rav'). Last Kvutzah we described how Rav Kook's thought and writings, as the key figure in religious Zionism, stand like a colossus over Religious Zionism and have influenced every major endeavour of Religious Zionists in Israel since he passed away. If that is true of Rav Kook for Religious Zionism then it is equally true of Rav Soloveitchik for Modern Orthodoxy. These two people are the defining forces for how Religious Zionism and Modern Orthodoxy developed in the 20th century.

Now you may ask that if the Rav's impact was on Modern Orthodoxy what is he doing in a Machane Kvutzah all about Zionism?! A good question! The exact relationship and difference between Religious Zionism and Modern Orthodoxy is a complicated one (and gets explored on Gimmel machane) but for the purposes of this Machane we're assuming that, however you define them, both ideologies need to talk about Israel if they're going to address modern Jewish life. The State of Israel is one of, if not the, defining events of Jewish history for the past 100 years. (The other is probably the Shoah but we'll talk about that on Haroeh in the winter).

So the Rav did talk about Israel and Zionism, developing a theory of 'pragmatic Religious Zionism' centred on two types of Jewish identity: Fate and Destiny – more on these in the next section. But first – a biography!

Brief Biography

Joseph Dov Soloveitchik was born on 27th February 1903, in Pruzhany, then Russia (after that Poland, now Belarus). He came from a rabbinic dynasty dating back some 200 years. His paternal grandfather was Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, and his great-grandfather and namesake was Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the Beis HaLevi. His great-great-grandfather was Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (The Netziv) (Remember him from K7 on Rav Kook?), and his great-great-great-great grandfather was Rabbi Chaim Volozhin (founder of Volozhin yeshiva). On his maternal line, the Rav was a grandson of Rabbi Eliyahu Feinstein and his wife Guta Feinstein, née Davidovitch, was a descendant of a long line of Kapulyan rabbis, and of the Tosafot Yom Tov, the Shelah, the Maharshal, and Rashi.

➔ **Major point:** the Rav came from a long line of rabbinic and distinguished figures that represented two different schools of thought and these 'traditions' pulled him in different directions:

1. Paternal: very analytical and intellectual, placed huge emphasis on Talmud Torah, thought devotion to study was (almost) the only way to properly Jewish.
2. Maternal: warmer, more tolerant version of Judaism, no less committed to Torah but open to science and non-Jewish culture.



- The Rav himself wrote that whereas his father bequeathed to him an intellectual-moral tradition of discipline and authority, his mother exposed him to the living and caring experience of God and Judaism.

Questions for Madrichim: What effect do you think the ‘pulling in two directions’ might have had on the Rav? Can you recognise a similar situation in your lives – do your parents/guardians have different approaches to life and Judaism? What effect does this have on you?

The Rav’s Jewish learning (acquired not at a yeshiva but through intensive studies with his father) was matched by a systematic secular education. Soloveitchik received his doctorate in 1931 from the University of Berlin. The Rav chose to write his dissertation on an unlikely topic for an Orthodox Jew: the thought of Hermann Cohen, a leading (neo-Kantian¹) philosopher at the time, and later the chief thinker of a decidedly non-Orthodox (and non-halachic) conception of Judaism.

Upon immigrating to the United States in 1932, Soloveitchik became Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox community of Boston. There he established the Maimonides School, the first Jewish day school in New England and one of the first institutions in which girls studied Talmud. In 1941 he was appointed the head of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University in New York, where he trained an entire generation of Orthodox rabbis (around 2000 people). The Rav chaired the Halacha Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America and served as honorary president of the Religious Zionists of America (Mizrachi).

The Rav’s children continued in his tradition of valuing intellectual pursuits. His daughter Dr Tova Lichtenstein has a PHD in Social Work from Bar Ilan University and is an important national figure in the field in Israel. (Dr Tova also married Rav Aharon Lichtenstein – Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion – considered by many to be the successor of the Rav’s approach to Judaism). His daughter Dr² Atarah Twersky was heavily involved in the Maimonides school he set up, chairing and directing its education committee. (Dr Atarah also married Professor Isadore Twersky – professor of Literature and Philosophy at Harvard).

As he got older he suffered several bouts of serious illness (Alzheimer’s Disease preceded by Parkinson’s Disease) and then passed away in 1993.

Fate and Destiny

The Rav’s version of Jewish nationalism is centred on 2 covenants the Jewish people made with God. Covenants are literally ‘agreements’ but for our purposes it may help to think of them as two levels of living or existence.

1. The Covenant of Fate
2. The Covenant of Destiny

The ‘Covenant of Fate’, according to the Rav, created the sense of Jewish isolation (separated apart from the world) and bound all Jews together in solidarity through common persecution. The Rav

¹ It’s not that important to know what neo-Kantian means. At the most basic it’s an emphasis on reason, rationality and intellect rather than more ‘spiritual/mystical’ things.

² Unfortunately we weren’t able to find out any more info on what the PHD was in, most searches online return results about her husband. #Patriarchy, am I right?



believed that this ‘covenant’ was started in Egypt and the slavery of the Jewish people, and continues until today. This covenant has four elements:

- a. **Common history and common circumstances:** all Jews rise or fall together and share in the same heritage, Jewish history does not belong to one person or one group.
- b. **Shared suffering:** When a Jew in Yemen is in distress, a Jew in London must feel their pain. If we have common circumstances we should share in Jewish suffering, as a collective. A good example is that all our prayers for those in need are in the plural, it is not just about us as individuals.
- c. **Shared responsibility:** shared suffering must lead to shared responsibility. This is both a Halachic ideal (Kol Israel Arevim Zeh BaZeh – every Jew is responsible for the other – Shevuot 39a) but also historical fact: the entire Jewish community has always been held responsible for the actions of its individual members.
- d. **Common action:** all the previous elements lead to both common acts of charity and mutual aid, and also feelings of empathy and kind-heartedness. We are obligated to love each other precisely because we have all these shared histories, experiences, suffering etc.

These are the basic building blocks of Jewish nationalism for the Rav’s approach. However, you may notice that this is quite a minimalist approach. It doesn’t tell us anything about where the ‘nation’ should be going, only that they should take care of each other – it is very people-focused. The direction for the nation comes from the second covenant: Destiny.

The second covenant creates the sense of purpose and mission for the Jewish nation. According to the Rav it was started at Har Sinai with the call from God to be a ‘Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation’ and is expressed through the Aleinu Tefilla: ‘to mend the world under the dominion of God’. **If in the Covenant of Fate shared history or shared suffering binds the people together, in the Covenant of Destiny it is shared values and ideals that binds them.** These two stages or ways of living are the two fundamental ways to interact with Judaism and to build Jewish identity. Indeed the very first person to join the nation and religion of Israel expressed these two ideas:

But Ruth replied, “Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; **your people shall be my people, and your God my God.**

וְאָמְרָה רִוּת אֶל-תִּפְגְּעֵי-בִי לֵעֲזֹב רְשָׁב
מֵאַחֲרָיִךְ כִּי אֶל-אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה אֵלֶיךָ וּבְאֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכֵנִי
אֶלְּוֶה עִמָּךְ עַד מָוֶת וְאֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי

Questions for Madrichim: What do you think about the Rav’s model of Jewish identity? What implications might it have for how the Rav understood the work of the ‘secular Zionists’ in Israel and other denominations of Judaism in the US? Do you think the Rav saw them as stages (with progression from one to the other and a hierarchy) or do you think he saw them two independent ways of living?



The Rav applied these two ideas to understanding Israel and other denominations too:

Israel

Covenant of Fate	Covenant of Destiny
The state can be a place of refuge - a way to survive or hide from persecution.	The state can further spiritual goals through the ability to fulfil more mitzvot e.g. Yishuv Ha'Aretz (settling the land) and other mitzvot dependant on the land.
The state establishes the principle of Jewish self-defence. "Jews around the world are not helpless"	The state offers an opportunity for Halacha to thrive and be reinvigorated through encounter with all the challenges of a modern state.
The state can serve as a defence against assimilation; Jews around the world can maintain a sense of Jewish identity through identification with Israel and concern for its welfare.	The state can become a centre of Torah learning.

➔ It is important to note here that the Rav did not see the 'spiritual or religious' value of the state through a Messianic lens.

He believed it to be a gift from God that could play an important role in safeguarding Jews' physical survival and identity, and that it has the potential to serve as a basis for attaining their destiny. Yet it is **no more than that**. In a letter written in 1957, the Rav stakes out his position against two other Orthodox approaches:

I agree with you that there is a third Halachic [read: acceptable] approach which is neither parallel to the position of those 'whose eyes are shut' and reject [the significance of the State] nor the belief of those dreamers who adopt a completely positive stance to the point where they identify the State with the fulfilment of the highest goal of our historical and meta-historical destiny. This third approach (which is the normative one in all areas), I would allow myself to guess, would be positively inclined toward the State, and would express the gratitude for its establishment out of a sense of love and devotion, but would not attach to it excessive value to the point of its glorification and deification. (*From Community, Covenant and Commitment, pages 163-64*)

Questions for Madrichim: Who do you think the Rav is referring to as those 'whose eyes are shut' and who do you think the 'dreamers' are? Why do you think the Rav felt the need to articulate a third way? Do you agree with it and how might you have expressed it differently?

Other denominations and 'secular' Zionists:

The Rav believed, as we've already started to see, that there are some key elements that make up Jewish identity:

- A. Religion: defined by beliefs and rituals
- B. People: defined by a sense of kinship, history and solidarity
- C. Nation: defined by its territory and sovereignty.

The Rav believed that non-religious Jews in the Diaspora of his time tended to see Jewish identity in terms of peoplehood, as an extended family, without religious or national dimensions. 'Secular'



Zionists tried to redefine Jewish identity in nationalist terms alone, downplaying peoplehood and religion. The Rav believed that Orthodox Jews had to emphasize all three elements. However, he didn't judge and see those that didn't as enemies or evil. Rather he saw them as partners! But only as partners within that particular element - to work with 'secular' Zionists to build nationalism and to work with other denominations to build connection to shared fate and common identification with the Jewish people. But not to give up the ground over 'destiny' or the religious elements: beliefs and ritual.

Questions for Madrichim: What do you think of this approach? Over the past two Ks we've seen how both major thinkers in Religious Zionism tried to develop a broad enough theory of Jewish nationalism that could incorporate people who weren't like them and didn't believe in the same things as them, why do you think this was? What messages can we take for our own lives and for Bnei Akiva as a movement?

Aliyah Debate

Interestingly although the Rav was a firm believer in the national and religious significance of the State of Israel, he never made Aliyah. This question is so insistent and obvious that, in 1967, an Israeli high school class who were studying his books asked their teacher to send a letter to the Rav asking him why he never made Aliyah. The Rav, writing several months after his wife's passing, replied:

I thank you for your words, and accept your rebuke willingly. Indeed, I sinned against the Holy Land. I am amongst those who have fallen back [in not coming to the Holy Land]. Of course, many factors that were out of my control prevented me. In spite of this, I am not searching for an excuse, nor am I justifying myself. I am guilty, and the blame rests on my shoulders. Last year we - my wife z"l and I - decided to come to Israel and remain for about six months, to see the land and the people who dwell therein. However, "many are the plans in a man's heart" (Proverbs/Mishlei 19:21), what happened, happened, and "my sighs are many and heart is sick!" (Eicha 1:22)

Questions for Madrichim: What do you think of the Rav's answer? Does it shock or surprise you?

The end of the same letter is also worth reading:

I, too, a simple Jew would say, in the words of the Rabbis of Yavneh (Berachot 17a): "I teach, and many others who work in the field of Torah education teach; my work is in the large city of New York, in an institution with great numbers of students, and they [referring to the high schools students who wrote to him], their work is in Givat Washington [where they lived] or some other moshav in a similarly small institution. One may do much or one may do little, it is all one, provided they direct their heart to Heaven. All our work is dedicated to the flourishing of the values of Judaism, the tradition of our forefathers and our sages, the bearers of the tradition and its scholars.

Questions for Madrichim: How do you think the end of the letter compares to the beginning? Do you think the Rav's argument is a good one? How might it apply to your lives?



Task for Madrichim: This is the last Kvutzah of this Machane and is a good opportunity to think about the place that the Land and State of Israel has in your and your Chanichim's lives. Which of the many thinkers we have looked at speak to you and which don't? How are you going to help your chanichim create their Jewish and Zionist identity?

Aliyah is the unofficial third pillar of Bnei Akiva. The Rav's letter above sets out a good example of the dilemma facing us as committed Jews and committed Zionists.

We were all raised in the UK Jewish communities and owe a debt to the people living here - ensuring the continuation and development of our communities is not a small or unimportant task. But on the other hand the modern State of Israel is one of the most fascinating, religiously significant and exciting developments in Jewish history - who wouldn't want to be a part of it?!

Bnei Akiva **does not** have an official line to take on this debate. It is a personal dilemma for each of you and for each of your chanichim to find the answer that works for them. Our job as madrichim is to help them along that journey - enjoy it!

Last Kvutzah:

Summary of K8:

1. The Rav represented the 'pragmatic' approach to Religious Zionism - those that are more likely to **not** view current events as miraculous or messianic.
2. Rav came from a long line of rabbinic and distinguished figures that represented two different schools of thought and these 'traditions' pulled him in different directions.
3. The Rav thought there were two aspects of Jewish Nationalism:
 - a. Covenant of Fate - shared past and shared responsibility for each other
 - b. Covenant of Destiny - shared future and values/ideals
4. Aliyah: it's complicated! The Rav tried to balance his responsibility towards the US community and his desire to move to Israel.