



Choveret L'Chomer

Introduction

The Chomer for Gimmel Machane is the culmination of the Summer Machane Chinuch Journey that began way back on Aleph Machane. Having looked at many different people, places, and periods in our history and applied many of the messages that we learned to Bnei Akiva, on Gimmel we will focus more directly on the Bnei Akiva Ideology. Through a series of stimulating Kvutzot, we will address the fundamental questions of who we are, what we believe in, and what we strive to achieve. (I feel a song coming on...)

Let's look at the Gimmel journey towards understanding Bnei Akiva...

K1 We start by looking at our **Lifestyle, Beliefs & Ideology** and how they impact on how we live our daily lives.

K2 Now that we know why we have an ideology, we introduce **Bnei Akiva** and our ideology, Torah, Avodah and Aliya, from its origin to the present day

K3 It's then time to travel back to Aleph Machane, where we'll delve further into **Bikvot Avoteinu**, looking at how the key Torah characters are relevant to B'nei Akiva today

K4 Before long, the silly-bus takes us to become **Ha'am Ba'aretz** where we become the nation living in our own land for the first time, a true B'nei Akiva example?

K5 Next on the whistle stop tour, we go from **Galut to Geula**, taking an Elal flight from the second temple to modern Zionism today and how this is relevant to us as a movement

K6 Finally we end the Machane Journey with **Medina Bevinayana**, where we'll delve deeper into Israel and Zionism today, looking at how this reflects on B'nei Akiva today.

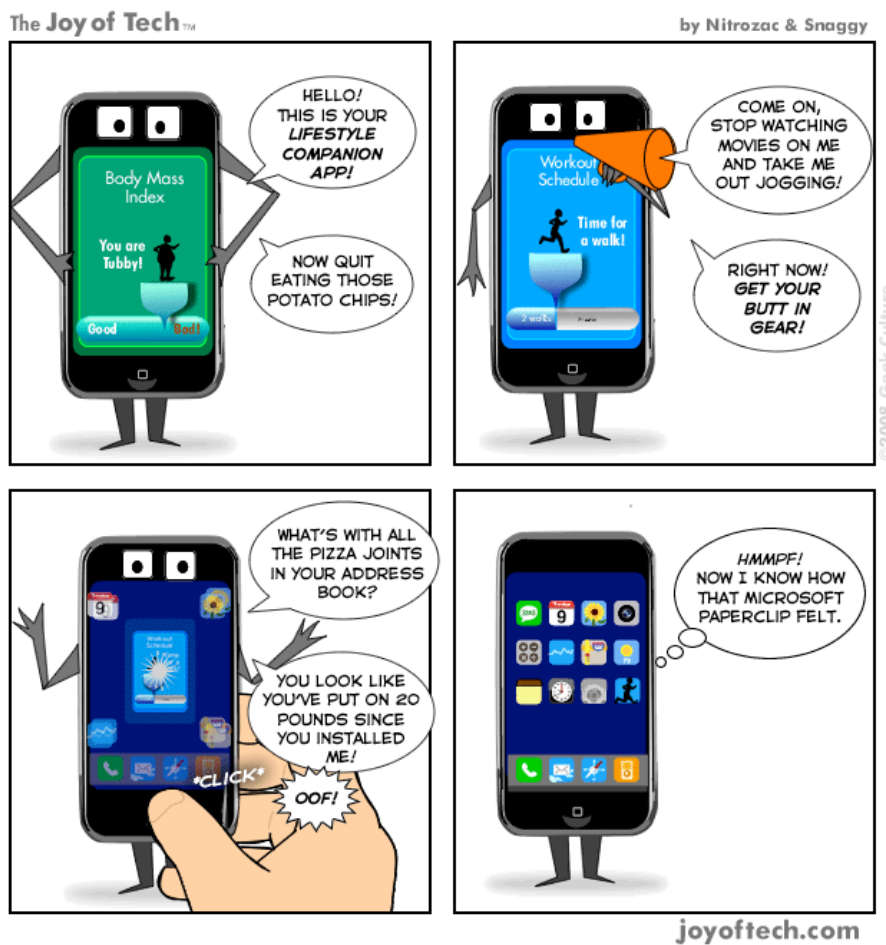
K7 Then we take a step back to look at more recent **Bnei Akiva Heroes** - Arieh Handler, Rav Neriah and Yoni Jesner.

K8 Next we look at **Youth Power** and learn about how the passionate and dynamic nature of young people enables us to change the world.

K9 Finally we look to the future, as we empower Shevet Morasha to be the people who take our ideology forward over the coming years – they are the future!



K1: Life and Lifestyle



Aims:

1. To understand the relationship between ideology and lifestyle.
2. To think about why people make certain lifestyle choices.
3. To appreciate how having an ideology can provide meaning in our lives.



What is an ideology?

Gimmel Machane provides an opportunity to explore what makes Bnei Akiva the movement we all know and love. It's a time to reflect upon everything that contributes to Bnei Akiva's ideology and think about what it means to us.



The term ideology refers to the body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class or culture, or a set of doctrines or beliefs that form the basis of a political, economic or other system. Ultimately it is the beliefs we have which should govern the way we live our lives.

Does your world-view define your lifestyle or does your lifestyle define your world-view?

Having a deeply held ideology has an impact upon our lifestyle in every possible way. If we care about something profoundly then it will affect every decision we make. Ultimately, each and every decision we make also creates the person that we are.

The outcome of a certain ideology is a certain lifestyle. The way in which the Bnei Akiva ideology translates into real terms is through the Bnei Akiva lifestyle. Over the course of Machane, we will examine how different beliefs and attitudes can shape us as people and as a people.

So why now?

A newborn baby is completely helpless and relies on his or her parents for more or less everything. As children grow up, they soon learn to do things for themselves, and ultimately they learn to think for themselves as well. Before long, they become so independent that they no longer need to live in their parents' house at all, and hopefully they will leave home and set up their own, continuing this cycle.

At what point do children become independent?

Are there different aspects to this independence?



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What is the significance of each of the following milestones?

- Speech _____
- Mobility _____
- First day at school _____
- 13 _____
- 16 _____
- 18 _____
- 21 _____

'And the boys grew' (Bereishit. 25:27) – Up to thirteen years Esav and Yaakov went together to the primary school and came back home. After the thirteen years were over, the one went to the Beit Hamidrash for the study of the Law, and the other to the house of idols. With reference to this, Rabbi Eleazar remarks: 'Until the thirteenth year it is the father's duty to train his boy. After this he must say: "Blessed is He who has taken from me the responsibility [the punishment] for this boy!'"

Does independence come with any dangers?

The reason for this Kvutzah is that our Chanichim are now turning sixteen and they are entering (or have already entered) a crucial period in their lives in which what their parents, teachers, and even madrichim tell them is no longer necessarily the same as what they think. We want to show them that it is important to think for themselves about issues of ideology, and that it is worth putting in the time and effort required. But it is more than that. When they think about these things, we want them to be fully equipped to be able to think about them from a Bnei Akiva point of view: this is a perfect opportunity for us to present them with Bnei Akiva's approach to answering some of the key questions which they will be addressing.

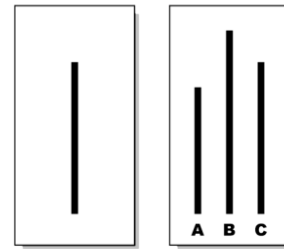
Gimmel Machane is a significant point in the lives of our Chanichim. They stand in the midst of their teenage years, developing ideas about the world around them. Possibly for the first time, these ideas will be their own. We are not here to make their decisions, but we are here to give them food for thought and to show them the scope and substance of our ideology. We want to make them aware that there are decisions to be made, that these decisions should be made consciously and thoughtfully, and that the ideology of Bnei Akiva (which



continues to be moulded and developed in each generation) is a reliable source of understanding.

Peer Pressure?

Pink Floyd Experimenters, led by Solomon Asch, asked students to participate in a 'vision test'. In reality, all but one of the participants were accomplices of the experimenter, and the study was really about how the remaining student would react to his fellow students' behaviour.



The participants were told to announce their judgment of the length of several lines drawn on a series of displays. The confederates had been informed to all give an incorrect answer to the tests. While most of the real subjects answered correctly, many showed extreme discomfort, and a high proportion (33%) conformed to the erroneous majority view of the others. Across all trials, Asch found that the majority of 'naïve' participants conformed at least once. In other words, they agreed with their fellow participants on an entirely objective, unambiguous task, purely for fear of being ridiculed.

Do we make lifestyle choices based on those we associate ourselves with? (See the Extra Chomer for info on the Nature vs Nurture debate).

אל יעבור במחשבתך דבר זה שאומרים טיפשי האומות ורוב גולמי בני ישראל, שהקדוש ברוך הוא גוזר על האדם מתחילת ברייתו להיות צדיק או רשע. אין הדבר כן, אלא כל אדם ואדם ראוי להיות צדיק כמשה רבנו או רשע כירובעם, או חכם או סכל, או רחמן או אכזרי, או כיליי או שוע; וכן שאר כל הדעות.

A person should not entertain the thought held by the fools among the gentiles and the majority of the undeveloped among Israel that, at the time of a person's creation, The Holy One, blessed be He, decrees whether he will be righteous or wicked. This is untrue. Each person is fit to be righteous like Moses, our teacher, or wicked, like Jeroboam. [Similarly,] he may be wise or foolish, merciful or cruel, miserly or generous, or [acquire] any other character traits.

Is there an ideal lifestyle for Madrichim?

Do we act differently in different social contexts?

Do you describe yourself differently to different people?

If so, why?



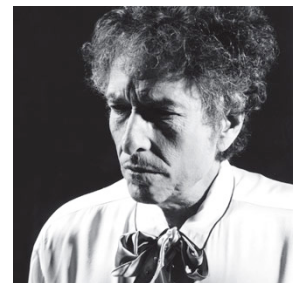
The Bnei Akiva Lifestyle

To be part of Bnei Akiva is a lifestyle choice which can impact on one's entire life. Any fully worked-out and all-encompassing ideology, including a Torah Va'Avodah outlook, is not something that we can just sign up for; it takes constant work and self-improvement. To become a vegetarian one simply has to refrain from eating meat and then the status has been achieved, but to become a Bnei Akiva Jew, one cannot stand still.

Hoshea 14:10

כִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּרְכֵי ה', וְצַדִּיקִים יֵלְכוּ בָם, וּפְשָׁעִים, יִפְשְׁלוּ בָם.
The ways of the Lord are upright, and the righteous walk in them and sinners stumble in them.

Rav Dessler picks up on the specific usage of “walk.” In his mind, a place of learning Torah should be a ‘Yeshiva’ in name alone. What does this mean? Yeshiva literally means sitting; but Judaism does not allow us to sit and watch things go by. Especially in our spiritual existence, to sit still is to fall backwards; like being on a down escalator, even to maintain the same height, and certainly to make progress, requires effort. Or as Bob Dylan puts it: ‘He not busy being born is busy dying.’



To know that every one of our actions contributes to our character and personality, and can create a new and better reality, should mean that we see the significance of every choice



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and every action: by making good choices, we can live our lives in a way that improves ourselves.

Ideology as Purpose

It is proper for a person to subordinate all of his personal capacities to reason... and to place a single goal before his eyes. That is, he should understand it [the goal] and direct all his actions, movements, and utterances to that end, so that none of his actions are in vain (i.e. not directed to the goal)

Rambam, Shemona Perakim (Introduction to Pirkei Avot)

Having an ideology means that your life is imbued with a purpose. Ideology gives you the desire to wake up every morning, and helps you shape your choices towards a goal. It is what keeps you excited, passionate and motivated throughout the day.

If our actions are motivated by ideology, we can mould ourselves towards the lifestyle associated with that ideology, bringing it from a set of ideas to a concrete reality, constantly shaping and improving ourselves, and ultimately the world.

Key Ideas:

- Life is made up of decisions which shape who we are.
- To be a certain type of person requires constant work.
- Having an ideology gives our lives purpose



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Extra Chomer:

Nature V Nurture: Are We Really Born That Way?

By Kimberly Powell, About.com Guide

You got your green eyes from your mother and your freckles from your father. But where did you get your thrill-seeking personality and talent for singing? Did you learn these from your parents or was it predetermined by your genes? While it's clear that physical characteristics are hereditary, the genetic waters get a bit murkier when it comes to an individual's behaviour, intelligence, and personality. Ultimately, the old argument of nature vs. nurture has never really been won. We do not yet know how much of what we are is determined by our DNA and how much by our life experience. But we do know that both play a part.

What is Nature vs. Nurture?

It has been reported that the use of the terms "nature" and "nurture" as a convenient catchphrase for the roles of heredity and environment in human development can be traced back to 13th century France. Some scientists think that people behave as they do according to genetic predispositions or even "animal instincts." This is known as the "nature" theory of human behaviour. Other scientists believe that people think and behave in certain ways because they are taught to do so. This is known as the "nurture" theory of human behaviour.

Fast-growing understanding of the human genome has recently made it clear that both sides are partly right. Nature endows us with inborn abilities and traits; nurture takes these genetic tendencies and moulds them as we learn and mature. End of story, right? Nope. The "nature vs. nurture" debate still rages on, as scientist fight over how much of who we are is shaped by genes and how much by the environment.

The Nature Theory - Heredity

Scientists have known for years that traits such as eye colour and hair colour are determined by specific genes encoded in each human cell. The Nature Theory takes things a step further to say those more abstract traits such as intelligence; personality, aggression, and sexual orientation are also encoded in an individual's DNA.

The search for "behavioural" genes is the source of constant debate. Many fear that genetic arguments might be used to excuse criminal acts or justify divorce. The most debated issue pertaining to the nature theory is the existence of a "gay gene," pointing to a genetic component to sexual orientation. An April, 1998 article in LIFE Magazine, "Were You Born That Way" by George Howe Colt, claimed that "new studies show it's mostly in your genes."



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If genetics didn't play a part, then fraternal twins, reared under the same conditions, would be alike, regardless of differences in their genes. But, while studies show they do more closely resemble each other than do non-twin brothers and sisters, they also show these same striking similarities when reared apart - as in similar studies done with identical twins.

The Nurture Theory - Environment

While not discounting that genetic tendencies may exist, supporters of the nurture theory believe they ultimately don't matter - that our behavioural aspects originate only from the environmental factors of our upbringing. Studies on infant and child temperament have revealed the most crucial evidence for nurture theories.

American psychologist John Watson, best known for his controversial experiments with a young orphan named Albert, demonstrated that the acquisition of a phobia could be explained by classical conditioning. A strong proponent of environmental learning, he said: *Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select...regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations and race of his ancestors.*

Harvard psychologist B. F. Skinner's early experiments produced pigeons that could dance, do figure eights, and play tennis. Today known as the father of behavioural science, he eventually went on to prove that human behaviour could be conditioned in much the same way as animals.

A study in *New Scientist* suggests that sense of humour is a learned trait, influenced by family and cultural environment, and not genetically determined.

If environment didn't play a part in determining an individual's traits and behaviours, then identical twins should, theoretically, be exactly the same in all respects, even if reared apart. But a number of studies show that they are never exactly alike, even though they are remarkably similar in most respects.

So, was the way we behave engrained in us before we were born? Or has it developed over time in response to our experiences? Researchers on all sides of the nature vs. nurture debate agree that the link between a gene and a behaviour is not the same as cause and effect. While a gene may increase the likelihood that you'll behave in a particular way, it does not make people do things. Which means that we still get to choose who we'll be when we grow up.



K2: Bnei Akiva



leading the way for **seventy years**

Aims:

1. To explore the world of Bnei Akiva!
2. To see Bnei Akiva as the combination of having an ideology and believing in the power of youth.
3. To look at Bnei Akiva's unique contribution to Am Yisrael and why it is so important.



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BA stands for...

So far, we have taken a look at what it means to have an ideology. Now we can move on to the real purpose of our trip to the Gredos Centre, Spain (and Caerwys, North Wales)... Bnei Akiva!

Our beliefs...

TORAH: We keep halacha and do our bit of actual Talmud Torah but it's more than that. Everything we do in our lives is directed towards fulfilling the Torah, its mitzvot and its principles. One of the wonderful things about Bnei Akiva is that chinuch is not just done during Kvutseh or shiur. We show the chanichim that it is possible to live as a religious Jew, with everything directed towards the service of Hashem and keeping of His Torah, whilst also feeling fulfilled, excited and inspired.

AVODAH: Avodah represents the aspect of a Torah lifestyle which needs to be done but may not be clearly instructed. Avodah facilitates our ideal of Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael Al Pi Torat Yisrael, and therefore surely anything which helps us to achieve this goal is considered Avodah. There are therefore many different types of Avodah, from literally working the land to helping the economic growth of Israel.

ALIYAH: Aliyah is one of the greatest Jewish phenomena of the past one hundred years and is something that we in Bnei Akiva do not shy away from!

Now is the time to look at where Bnei Akiva has come from and why it is more than just a service provider for parents who want a Shabbat afternoon shluf and a summer holiday, and a social for 16-23 year olds who want a cheap holiday with friends.

Where did we come from ...

The origins of Bnei Akiva are bound up very closely with the history of the Religious Zionist movement as a whole. Although in a sense Religious Zionism preceded political Zionism, with the calls of Rav Alkali and Rav Kalischer to return to Zion, in reality Theodor Herzl was the crucial figure in setting the ball rolling to actualise the age-old dream to create a Jewish state.



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However, many of the early Zionist leaders were religious, and with the founding of Hapoel Hamizrachi - a religious Zionist organisation that supported the founding of religious kibbutzim and moshavim – in 1921, the Zionist movement received official recognition of the fact that there could be a synthesis between labour and Torah. In addition, the anti-religious stance of the Histadrut Klalit (National Labour Organisation), made up of secular Zionist labourers, froze out the religious labourers, often preventing them from getting land or employment. This had a dramatic impact on the religious youth, who were drawn to secular social groups.

In the winter of 1929 (5689), Yechiel Eliash, then an officer of the Brit Olamit shel Torah Va'Avodah (National Alliance of Torah and Labour), suggested the establishment of a religious youth movement to Hapoel Hamizrachi, with the purpose of strengthening young people's spirit and organising them within a proud social framework. This proposal was met with a lack of enthusiasm and even opposition. The reasons for its rejection were that youth movements were by their very nature rebellious, and therefore have no place in religious society. They were also worried that it would interfere with studies (in this sense, times haven't changed!). However, Eliash did not bow to the views of his opponents. Years later, he explained: "At that time, there was a need to rebel; we believed that a youth movement would have to engender faith in its own strength and in our power to erect a religious Judaism with great accomplishments."

The first peula took place on 29th Adar Rishon 5689, with the official founding date of Bnei Akiva occurring two months later on Lag BaOmer, 18th Iyar 5689 / 28th May 1929. Bnei Akiva spread around the world and was eventually brought to the UK ten years later.

Did You Know?

- *The name 'Bnei Akiva' was thought of by Avraham Kestenbaum.*
- *Originally, it was only for boys; it took two more months (in Tammuz 5689) for girls' activities to start.*
- *The first machanot were held in 1934 in Israel.*
- *In the 1940s the first Bnei Akiva Kibbutzim were founded, and still exist today: Sa'ad was the first followed by Ein Tzurim. Kibbutz Lavi was founded by Bnei Akiva in 1949. Its founders were survivors of the Kindertransport.*



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Why AKIVA?

Of all the great Jewish leaders, patriarchs, rabbis, prophets and sages, why are we called Bnei AKIVA? What did he stand for that makes us want to follow in his footsteps?

Akiva ben Yosef was born around the year 50 CE, in the midst of Roman rule in the Land of Israel. He lived through the tragic events of the destruction of the Second Temple and Jerusalem. He was tortured and killed by the Romans in the persecutions at the time of Emperor Hadrian and the Revolt, with his last words being the Shema.

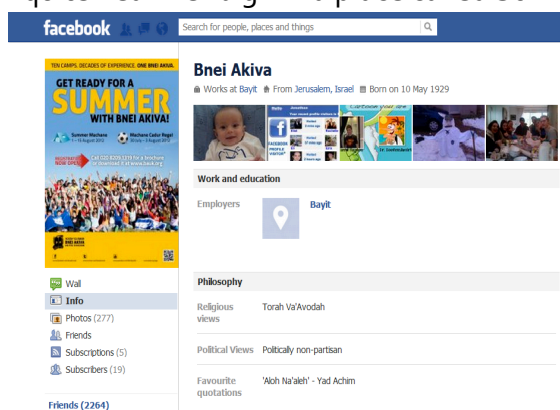
Key Points to take from Rabbi Akiva

- The ability to grow and change: he became religious at the age of 40. It's never too late to start earning or growing and that anyone can change at any age. The Torah is accessible to anyone who is willing to put in the work.
- More than just able, Rabbi Akiva was also influential. He derived laws from every tiny detail in the Torah, seeking to demonstrate how the Written Law contained the oral tradition.
- So Rabbi Akiva's greatness started with the recognition of the hard work, effort, and proactivity that was required.
- After the destruction of the Temple, it would be easy to give up on Judaism. No Temple, no state, no nation – what is there left? A mere 60 years later and Rabbi Akiva was actively supporting a revolution by Bar Kochba to regain control of Israel. We know that he ensured his students took part (therefore meaning they led lives as part-yeshiva student and part-soldier) and gave him support.
- Rabbi Akiva believed in the idea of actively bringing the geula, as opposed to passively waiting for it to happen.
- "Veahavta Lereicha Camocha": This true Ahavat Yisrael, love for each and every Jew, is a key part of why we follow Rabbi Akiva, for all the Torah learning and ideals we may have are all worthless if we do not respect one another.



What about the UK?

Groups of religious boys and girls were meeting in various parts of London under the name Bnei Akiva in 1939. The movement grew out of the Torah Va'Avodah group as well as the German Bachad movement, led by Israeli Shaliach Arieh Handler, who entered this country at the outbreak of the war. Bachad, an acronym for Brit Chalutzim Dati'im (Covenant of Religious Pioneers), consisted of those chaverim who were on Hachsharah on the continent and did not receive certificates for Aliyah in 1939 and therefore came to the UK as a temporary alternative and set up training centres, first in North Wales (actually, quite near Denbigh in a place called St. Asaph!) and later in other places too.



In July 1941, the movement became official when representatives of these two groups met in Woburn House, the then centre of Anglo-Jewish life in London, and decided to form a nationwide movement called Bnei Akiva. They saw the urgency of creating a Religious Zionist youth movement which would spur young Jews towards the ideals of Torah Va'Avodah and

religious chalutzit. The subsequent years saw the growth and expansion of Bnei Akiva to all major Jewish communities in the country.

In 1942 the first summer camps were held and these were to become the outstanding annual event of the movement. Soon afterwards courses for madrichim were organised, publications began to appear and a nationwide movement took shape. In those early days our resources were small, our budget pitiful and yet the message of Bnei Akiva quickly spread and inspired the youth of that generation. All this work could not have been possible without the constant help and guidance given by the Bachad Fellowship. Through the active work of the various committees set up by the Bachad Fellowship, the practical achievements of the movement itself increased each year.



Throughout the decades, Bnei Akiva has changed to meet the needs of the times. Whereas Hachshara, Bnei Akiva's gap year scheme, was primarily a year spent on a farm in places



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such as Thaxted, Essex or Bromsgrove, near Birmingham, learning agricultural techniques in preparation for working the Land of Israel, nowadays Hachshara takes place in Israel, giving unique experiences of Israel's land, people, culture and Torah. Bachad has also changed, as it is now the parent body of Bnei Akiva, supporting Bnei Akiva financially in all its activities.

Movement or Organisation?

Every living organism on the planet has its time: In Judaism we consider a full life as 120 years. Organisations and world movements also have a time-span – I have heard it said that the average life-span for a Shul in the UK is 75 years: communities spring up, flourish and then people leave for pastures anew. What is it about Bnei Akiva that has ensured it is as dynamic and as popular as ever?

The **key** is that we are not an organisation; we are a movement – a **tnua**.

Organisations are static, whereas a movement moves. We change with the times. This is mainly due to the fact that young people run the movement.

The Mazkirut changes each year, allowing for fresh people to come in, with new ideas.

There is nobody on the Mazkirut in Bnei Akiva UK over the age of 25!

But, if the leadership of the movement changes every year then how can anything possibly get done!?! How can there be any amount of continuity?!

But that's almost exactly the point. Yes there are problems to overcome. Yes each mazkirut only has a year to make an impact. But yes, this ensures the movement is always fresh and doing something new! The same can be said for the Hanhallah (cough ****APPLY NOW****cough)!, madrichim and chanichim as well, everyone must reapply.

Now, we all know that Bnei Akiva looks good on our CV (if we don't mention Zionism or Israel too much!), but what 'added value' do Chanichim and Madrichim actually get?

- **Ideals by which to live:** Possibly the most obvious, but needs to be said. Bnei Akiva gives us direction, aims and goals. We might leave Bnei Akiva in our early 20s, but the ideals should stay with us forever. And it's not just any old ideology we are given, and give over – we believe that Religious Zionism is the ideal way to live as an observant Jew in the year 2013!
- More specifically, **Torah**. In Bnei Akiva, Chanichim learn tefilla in its unabridged format, unashamedly done three times a day as part of machane. They learn how to bentsch, sing zemirot, and more fundamentally keep and enjoy Shabbat! In



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addition, one can learn how to daven, how to be a gabbai, how to cook for Shabbat, and many other areas of Halacha from spending time in a BA environment.

→ **A chevra.** The concept of having shevatim means that you build close relationships with like-minded people from across the UK that you would otherwise never have met. Shared experiences on camps, Shabbatot Ha'Irgun and adventures in Israel drive friendships for life. There are still BAUK shevet reunions in Israel today!

→ **Leadership:** There is no better way of improving leadership skills than in Bnei Akiva. Being a Madrich at Sviva, then at Machane, being a Sgan and Rosh Sviva and a Sgan and Rosh Machane – these are all unparalleled opportunities to learn how to lead,



educate and inspire others; how to organise a team and work with others – life skills that can all be traced back to a tent in Wales and now, a building in France. The fact

that a 24 year old has the responsibility of being a Mazkir, running everything BA does, is literally unheard of in any other context in the UK – and that works for every other position as well. Each step up in responsibility, from Sgan to Rosh etc, would take years in a business – but takes months in BA – truly a fast-track in leadership!

→ **Caring about causes:** A few years ago FZY ran a Gilad Shalit information vigil outside Downing Street and Bnei Akiva was asked to fill some time. Around 40 people, possibly more than needed, turned up throughout the day and informed the public about Gilad Shalit. The Mazkir of FZY said how every time there is a cause to take up, Bnei Akiva are always the first there and bring the most people. Why is this? Because our ideology and our Madrichim have taught us to care about everything – from Talmud Torah to social action, from Aliyah to Israel advocacy, from helping children with disabilities to helping Ethiopian immigrants, from Chinuch to Tzedaka, and so much more.

→ **Making Judaism Fun!** Only on Machane can you have an amazing supper quiz tochnit, lein, have a talent show, hear a Shiur, make bracelets or humus (or any kind of Chug), daven three times a day, stand on chairs singing pessukim, learn in a Beit Midrash and build a chanukiah out of chocolate! On a sviva level, the two hours spent with BA on a Shabbat afternoon can make Shabbat fun for chanichim and ultimately something worth keeping. BA allows young people to enjoy their Judaism in a fun yet committed environment.

→ **Informal Education:** By using the method of



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informal education, which has proven to be so successful, Bnei Akiva has produced so many great Madrichim and teachers of Am Yisrael on so many levels. Look around the schools and shuls today, how many educators made the journey through Bnei Akiva.

- **Group Identity:** Whatever we say in public, everyone loves their many BA t-shirts, mugs, pencils, teddy bears, naff presents after Shabbatot Ha'Irgun, glasses, pillowcases, and movement shirts. It's part of our group identity. And we all love Mifkad, Yad Achim, Veida, singing Atah Echad and Baruch Hagever, don't we?!
- **Connections:** Bogrim who represent Bnei Akiva, especially those on the Mazkirut, have a great opportunity to meet important and interesting people within the community, from the Chief Rabbi to Israeli politicians and from UK educators to business people. Members of Bnei AKiva are privileged to meet some of the most unique and inspirational people who have a major impact on the Jewish community and the world that we live in as a whole.

In 70 years, Bnei Akiva has done so much for Am Yisrael, primarily in helping to build a Jewish country with many other organisations and movements. There are over 100,000 people around the world currently involved in Bnei Akiva – this means that hundreds of thousands of people have been affected by Bnei Akiva at some stage or another throughout the 85 years of its existence. Bnei Akiva has had a massive impact on Israeli society, building kibbutzim – some of them started by people from BAUK – and this was commemorated recently by a special session in the Knesset. In this Kvutzah, we want to show this to the Chanichim, and help them to appreciate why it is so important to stay involved in our movement – for them as individuals, for Bnei Akiva as a collective, and for Am Yisrael as a whole. **Aloh Na'aleh!**

Key Ideas:

- Bnei Akiva has a long and rich history – something we should be proud of!
- The fact we are a movement rather than an organisation has its ups and downs, but allows us to adapt to the current needs of the tnuva.
- Being part of Bnei Akiva will earn you countless rewards, presents and life experience!

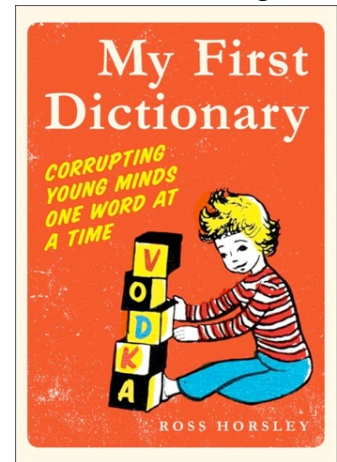


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Extra Chomer:

BNEI AKIVA DICTIONARY: One would expect a gimmel chanich to know a lot of our nomenclature (jargon) by now, but nevertheless it could be important to start with some basics. I think one of the greatest things about us is how international we are – mifkad is pretty much the same anywhere in the world, so is Baruch hagever and a lot of other things. Try to give the chanichim the bigger (literally) picture:

- **Chanichim:** the kids (lit. pupils / students).
- **Chevraya:** an age group.
- **Hadracha:** leadership.
- **Madrich/a:** individual leader.
- **Mifkad:** process in which all the Chanichim and the Tzevet assemble and the Rosh leads them in singing Hatikva, Yad Achim, and the Brachot.
- **Peulah:** game – usually a game that balances fun with educational information about Judaism or Israel.
- **Rosh:** head madrich/a – responsible for everything that happens in each Tzevet/Snif/Machane.
- **Shevet:** Bnei Akiva grouping of individual years over the whole Bnei Akiva tnuva.
- **Shlichim:** Bnei Akiva leaders sent from Israel to help with Bnei Akiva in Chutz La'aretz.
- **Sviva:** branch – the weekly Shabbat afternoon groups that take place in 30 places in the UK.
- **Tzevet:** team of staff.
- **Yad Achim:** Bnei Akiva anthem



EXTRA CHOMER ON TORAH:

What qualifies as leading a life of Torah?

It seems to me that a true ben Torah is one that truly is a son of the Torah. His (or her) life should be a product of the Torah - regardless of what he or she does from day to day. The Torah does not mandate a particular lifestyle; rather, it demands that regardless of what lifestyle (profession, location, nationality, fashion taste, etc.) a person adopts as fitting their particular nature and needs, that person regulates their conduct in accordance with the Torah's laws.

Simply put, a true ben Torah is anyone whose daily conduct in every sphere of human endeavour testifies to the content of the Torah itself. Just as a child is a reflection of its parent - not precisely identical, but reflective nonetheless - a ben Torah is reflective of the Torah itself. Even when a parent's many children look and act differently and take different paths in their lives, they are truly their children if the WAY they go about on the paths they have chosen reflects the upbringing their parents provided for them.

'RSRH' on Yeshiva World News

But really, how do values become actions?

Luckily for us, Torah is not just theoretical wisdom; it is fundamentally and essentially practical: the values we learn about in the stories of the Avot, for example, are not just interesting, but also applicable. More explicitly, our values are embedded in laws. This means that we don't just recognise general ideals of being socially responsible, respecting people's property and valuing human life; we have concrete laws which tell us to leave the corners of our fields to the poor, to return lost objects, and to save lives and not murder. Indeed, much of the energy expended on the Oral Torah side of the chart above has gone into working out how the values expressed in the Torah's laws are to be applied in practice.

At the end of that process, we come out with what we know as halacha – the rules and regulations about what we can and can't do.

So the practical consequences of everything that the complex and beautiful beast that is Torah has taught, is halacha. But the key here is that halacha is not just arbitrary rules, but rules which express ideas – and so to fulfil it properly, we need to think about the values which lie behind the individual actions – the ideology motivating the whole project, and the specific value expressed in each mitzva. Remember what Abaye taught us a few pages back – keeping halacha without reference to the Torah's values is corrupt and ugly.

So in the end, we seem to have come a full circle: we started by saying that Torah first means halacha, but must include more than that. Now, we have discovered that Torah indeed means more than the robotic adherence to 613 regulations, but that ultimately, halacha is the core in which the values of Torah are expressed.



EXTRA CHOMER ON AVODAH:

Pirkei Avot 1:2

שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלושה דברים העולם עומד על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות החסדים.

Shimon the Tzaddik was one of the last survivors of the Great Assembly: He used to say, Upon three things the world is based: upon the Torah, upon work (Avodah), and upon acts of loving kindness.

Some different possibilities of the meaning of Avodah:

1.

Bereishit 2:15

ויקח ה' אֶל־אָדָם, אֶת־הָאָדָם; וַיִּנְחֵהוּ בְּגֵן־עֵדֶן, לְעֲבֹדָהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ.

Hashem, G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to work it and to guard it.

2.

Shemot 1:14

וַיִּמְרְרוּ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶם בְּעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה בְּחֵמָר וּבִלְבָנִים וּבְכֹל עֲבֹדָה בְּשֹׁדָה אֶת־כָּל עֲבֹדָתָם אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ בָהֶם בְּפָרֹךְ.

And they embittered their lives with hard labor, with clay and with bricks and with all kinds of labor in the fields, all their work that they worked with them with back breaking labor.

3.

Rashi

רש"י: ועל העבודה – של בית המקדש

And on Avodah – of the temple service.

4.

Ta'anit 2a

דתניא (דברים יא) "לאהבה את ה' אלהיכם ולעבדו בכל לבבכם." איזו היא עבודה שהיא בלב? הוי אומר זו תפלה.

As we are taught in a baraita: "to love Hashem your G-d and to serve him with all your heart." What is this service of the heart? You must say that it is prayer.

Are all these types of Avodah relevant today? Can they change with time?



If Avodah is a component of a Torah outlook then why do we need to make it a distinct part of our belief system?

Why do we subscribe to an ideology or a system of thought in the first place? The attitudes which one holds affect one's actions in a very direct way. People like their actions to be in line with their attitudes, and if they are not then people experience 'cognitive dissonance' – discomfort at living a dual life.

If we have certain attitudes then we want to be part of a group which supports these ideals, but it is also important to appreciate how those ideas are distinct from other groups. It is the Avodah aspect which makes our lifestyle distinct from other groups.

How do Religious Zionists in Israel and how can we practice Avoda today?

We can see from the history of Religious Zionism [and history of Zionism in general] as well as the accounts from Thaxted in the extra chomer that the early Avodah was agricultural, the draining of swamps, moving rocks and planting seeds on land which had been almost completely barren for two thousand years. British Bnei Akiva olim also make up large numbers on other Religious Zionist kibbutzim such as Bet Rimon, Sa'ad and Alumim. The Religious Zionist movement was hugely kibbutz based and a kibbutz socialist-style lifestyle was seen as the Religious Zionist ideal [though interestingly many of the more stricter socialist rules of the secular kibbutzim were not implemented on the Religious kibbutzim].

It is also important to note that Religious Zionism in Israel today encompasses a broad range of opinions and ideologies within the ideology. These different beliefs inform and are informed by the different ways in which Religious Zionists do Avoda.

The Kibbutzim:

Though times have changed the Bnei Akiva kibbutzim are still doing Avoda by building up and developing Israel in many ways. Some still have much traditional though large-scale agriculture such as Alumim which export carrots to Tesco and Sainsbury's. Tirat Tzvi has developed and produces long-life lulavim and Lavi manufactures world-renowned furniture.

The Mitnachalim Movement:

The Mitnachalim [Settlement] movement started after the Six-Day war when Yehuda and Shomron were liberated by Israel. The Religious Zionist movement and Bnei Akiva were the main group behind the building of Jewish communities there. Though [contrary to the



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picture painted by the BBC] the majority of Israelis in the 'West Bank' are not religious, nevertheless the movement to re-settle the area was predominantly a Religious Zionist goal. The most central ideological figure behind this movement was Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook [son of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook] who was Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav and many of the more well-known Jewish communities in Yehuda and Shomron such as Bet-El, Kiryat Arba and Shilo [pic below] were founded by his students.

It is significant to note that though this group of Religious Zionists are heavily demonised by the international media and are portrayed as THE obstacle to peace and a load of Messianistic fanatics, in the vast majority of cases this is not true, and if you ever studied at HaKotel, Midreshet HaRova, Netiv, Gush or Migdal Oz, then the BBC considers you a 'settler' also!

Development of Galil and Negev:

The above expression of Religious Zionism has been seen by some as contentious and divisive and in the past 20 years as Israeli society has sadly in some ways become more divided between right and left wing, religious and secular as seen at the time of the murder of Yitzchak Rabin and the aftermath, the societal divisions at the times of each peace talk, and the Hitnatkut [disengagement] from Gush Katif. In response to this, some Religious Zionists have changed focus and have focused on other ways of doing the Avoda of settling the land beyond the traditional Kibbutzim and beyond the yishuvim of Yehuda and Shomron.

Whilst the Tel Aviv and surrounding areas [the 'Merkaz'] has been built up hugely as well as Yerushalayim and other major cities, much of the Galil has hardly any Jewish population and the economy lags behind the Merkaz. Similarly, the Negev is physically and economically under-developed. As a result, another manifestation of Avoda has developed in building new yishuvim and communities particularly in the Negev in order to build up the periphery of Israel.

Garinei Torani

A more recent manifestation of Avoda which though started in the late 1960's, really kicked off in the 1990's is the Garin Torani. A Garin Torani – literally meaning a 'Torah seed' are basically a group of young religious Zionist families move to a poorer or more disadvantaged town or area in order to help the area develop socially, communally and religiously etc.



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Garinim Torani'im vary in size, structure and how they operate, but a traditional model will see the Garin start and develop structures which help and benefit the community, both social structures like youth clubs and centres for elderly people as well as Torah programmes, schools and of course Bnei Akiva snifim.

Army

Serving in the army whether in a combat role or any other role directly or indirectly is defending the existence of the State of Israel and of Am Yisrael. Additionally by serving in the army, one may also be helping the country develop socially, religiously and economically as well. We do not have statistics to hand but it is well-known that the Religious Zionist community in Israel punches mahussively above its demographic weight in terms of soldiers in elite units, as well as officers, commanders and other senior positions.

Academia & Technologia

Those Science and Technology geeks amongst us will know that Israel is leading the way in high tech, and R&D. We've all probably read those factsheets about all the Israeli inventions from the messaging system used on msn messenger [old school!] to camera pills and drip irrigation systems. However what is also significant is the large proportion of Religious Zionists involved in scientific and technological development. These advancements which improve and develop Israel economically and also provide services to the whole world in classic Religious Zionist style Or LaGoyim are thus also a fulfilment of Avoda.

Question though: Is Avoda limited to the examples above and a few others or is doing any kind of job in Israel today Avoda? Are there boundaries as to what is and is not Avoda, and if so what are they?



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EXTRA CHOMER ON ALIYAH:

Bereishit 12:1

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם, לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ עֵבְרָה וּמְמֹלַדְתָּהּ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל הָאֲרֶז, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה.

And Hashem said to Avram: 'Go away from your land, from your birthplace, from your father's house to the land which I will show you.'

From this pasuk, we can see that from the very beginning of our nation, our end goal was living in Israel. Our religion, at its very core, was built on the idea of always moving towards the land that Hashem will show us.

Ramban

'Performing a Mitzvah outside of Israel is only practice for when you are in Israel.'



We can see here that the Ramban places so much importance on living in Israel that he even said that any mitzvot performed outside of the land of Israel aren't really counted until you actually perform them inside the borders of Eretz Yisrael.

This is a very interesting statement seeing as the Rambam doesn't count living in Israel as one of the 613 mitzvot in his Sefer HaMitzvot.

How can the Ramban say that living in Israel is so important that mitzvot outside of it are not even considered real mitzvot, while the Rambam doesn't even include it as one of the mitzvot at all?

Rav Teichtal – Eim Habanim Semeichah

It is well known that according to the Ramban there is a positive, biblical commandment to take possession of the Land, even today. "We must not leave it in the hands of any other nation." He derives this from the verse: "You shall dispossess [the inhabitants of] the Land and dwell in it, for I have given you the Land to possess it. You shall divide the Land as an inheritance..." (Bamidbar 33:53-54). The Ramban discusses this at length and proves that it is a positive commandment for all generations. Thus, according to the Ramban it is one of the 613 mitzvot...

...However, he [the Rambam] does not count it as one of the 613; because it does not fit into the fourteen rules which the Rambam set down to determine which mitzvot are included in this number. There are several biblically ordained mitzvot which are not included in this number because they do not fulfil the conditions of the Rambam's fourteen rules. The mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael is in the same category.



What Rav Teichtal is teaching us is that of course the Rambam held that Yishuv Eretz Yisrael is a positive mitzvah. However, he did not include it in his counting of the 613 mitzvot because, according to the Rambam, the **mitzvah of Yishuv Eretz Yisrael is an all encompassing mitzvah**. This means that rather than being a mitzvah on its own, it is a mitzvah which, when we are keeping it, allows us to experience the other mitzvot in the Torah fully. Therefore, the Rambam felt it could not be included in the number of mitzvot because Yishuv Eretz Yisrael acts as an umbrella mitzvah rather than a 'stand alone' one. This not only beautifully solves our disagreement between the Ramban and Rambam but also explains an internal contradiction within the Rambam, who elsewhere explains that living in Israel is a fundamental pillar of the Jewish faith, even though it is not one of his 613 mitzvot, as we can see below:



Can it really be that life is incomplete and perhaps even that mitzvot don't count unless we are in Israel?

Rabbi David Samson on Orot

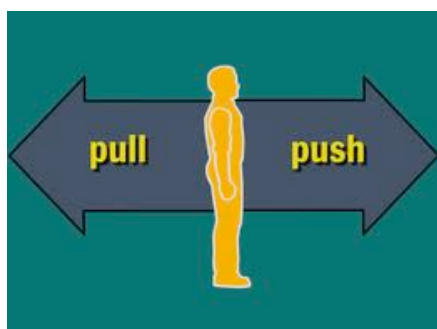
'In the Diaspora Jewish nationhood is shattered. We lack the Divine spirit which fills the klal Yisrael when the nation is living its full sovereign life in Israel [...] Eretz Yisrael is a land created for klal Yisrael. By Divine will, the Jewish people cannot be a nation in Germany, Uganda, America or any other land. [...] Just as the Jewish people are a people of prophecy, the land of Israel is a place of prophecy on earth. Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi, in his book, the Kuzari, explains how prophecy distinguishes Israel from all other lands. [...] Only by living in Israel can the Jewish people attain their true and maximum potential.

We can see here how Rabbi Samson explains, through Rav Kook's teachings, that a Jew living outside of Israel lacks connection to the klal of the Jewish people and therefore is not a fully complete Jew. Seeing as a Jew is not a 'complete Jew' (is as much as he is not part of the klal) unless he is in Israel, the mitzvot are not really considered mitzvot in the sense that Hashem originally saw them to be. Furthermore, as a Jew is connected to something spiritually higher in Israel (as we can see from the connection to prophecy) and is part of the klal, he is able to connect to the channels of Teshuva much more easily than if he was outside of Israel.



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So Israel is great and we love it. But why aliyah? And why now?



Many people decide to move to Israel because the countries they are living in become unbearable. It could be because of famine, war, unemployment, anti-Semitism, or one of many other reasons. These reasons would fall under the category of 'push factors' as they, for lack of a better word, push a person to moving to Israel.

Other reasons why people may decide to move to Israel is because they like the way of life there, there may be a better economy or better opportunities for their work, or there may be favourable immigration laws. These reasons therefore, come under the category of 'pull factors' as all those great things about Israel making it so attractive to us chutznikim, pull us towards the land.

It is very important to note that, combined with all of these factors, a big part of the decision for Jewish people who choose to make Aliyah (religious or not) is the desire to be in a land which is our own and in the land that has been promised to us by Hashem.

Nefesh B'Nefesh

Nefesh B'Nefesh was set up Rabbi Yehoshua Fass in conjunction with a Florida businessman and a philanthropist, Tony Gelbart. Their main goal was to eliminate the small obstacles that stop people from making aliyah. This includes setting up bank accounts, dealing with mortgages, finding work etc.



Nefesh B'Nefesh flew its first flight in 2002 and by 2007 it had flown over 30 flights and had expanded its services to include the United Kingdom.



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Olim Bingo!

Naomi Alper	Janine Fine	Leora Youngerwood	Jordana Young
Baruch Baigel	Sophie Dias	Daniel Pearlman	Lisa Sager
Emma Baigel	Jonny Daniels	Tamar Pearlman	Judy Zinkin
Abigail Cohen	Avi Wiesenberg	Joe Waiman	Ariel Ben-David
Chaya Cohen	Vicki Hyman	Raoul Wootliff	Miriam Caller
Daniel Cohen	Hannah Filer	Gideon Shaw	Leah Silverman
Sheara Cowan	Gary Brown	Daniel Sueke	Trevor Silverman
Joseph Finkelstein	Eliana Brown	Sarah Sueke	Sam Caplan
David Kaplan	Simon Bentley	Mascha Kosky	Katie Woolf
Naomi Kaplan	Sophie White	Avital Angel	Netanel Kleinman
Mark Kaye	Sam Potashnick	David Angel	Binny Davis
Miriam Kaye	Robert Pearl	Adam Finkelstein	Yair Lehrer
Gabi Landau	Robbie Littner	Deborah Finkelstein	Jordanna Lehrer
Alexis Levy	David Gross	Yishai Kaye	Gideon Sacofsky
Joel Mack	Judith Westbrook	Syma Weinberg	Joe Wolfson
Clara Manson	Hannah Fisher	Henry Weinberg	Corinne Wolfson
Dina Marks	Jamie Lazarus	Ben Levene	Arella Phillips
Sarah Michelson	Tamar Lazarus	Ilan Kon-Weiner	Ethan Phillips
Anna Prais	Josh Churney	James Proops	Sophia Davis
David Prais	Daniel Caller	Sarah Proops	Josh Cohen
Lily Prais	Abygail Caller	Daniel Mendelsohn	Eve Minsky
Phil Schajer	Gidi Dominitz	Aaron Shaw	Gabi Sacofsky
Sharon Schajer	Abi Dominitz	Elan Miller	Gideon Bratt
Sophie Segal	Sam Lebens	Sarah Liss	
Rachel Smith	Gaby Lebens	Aron Gillis	
Doron Youngerwood	Avi Azizoff	Alex Greenberg	
Alexis Levy	Robert Pearl	Yael Krieger	
Daniel Robinson	Robbie Littner	Yoel Lax	
Samantha Robinson	Daniel Benari	Joel Weiner	
Eliezer Steinbock	Ruth Fluss	Gila Granat	
Chananya Steinbock	Sam Crowne	Ditza Granat	
Hannah Filer	Elana Crowne	Yariv Granat	
Rachel Alper	Anna Coleman	Gabriella Miller	
Jonny Caller	Janine Fine	Daniel Braunold	
Rachel Friend	Sophie Dias	Natan Weisenberg	
Daniel Fine	Jonny Daniels	Udi Engelsman	



K3: B'ikvot Avoteinu



Aims:

1. To see how B'ikvot Avoteinu relates to Avodah
2. To see how B'ikvot Avoteinu relates to Aliyah
3. To see how B'ikvot Avoteinu relates to Torah



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B'ikvot Avoteinu

The phrase "B'ikvot Avoteinu" translates to "in the footsteps of our Fathers". Everybody knows who the Avot were and a little about their lives and what they did, but often they remain as mythical characters from our distant past that embarked on great adventures and fanciful tales. Are they in anyway relatable to today?

The Torah is not just a book of laws



Each of its stories has layer upon layer of meaning and significance, which we only grasp after repeated readings. Our understanding of the book grows as we grow. Each age adds insights, commentaries and interpretations of its' own. The book's literary style allows it to be read afresh in each generation. That too tells us something significant about the

Torah's view of human knowledge: The truths of the human condition are simply too deep to be understood at once and on the surface. Only stories have this depth, this ambiguity, this principled multiplicity of meanings.

Covenant and Conversation: Genesis, pg. 7

In this K we will be looking at just a few of the amazing role models in the Torah. There are so many positive characteristics we will see in the stories of our forefathers – here we have highlighted just a few of them and how they relate to our Bnei Akiva values of Torah, Avodah and Aliyah. **(Feel free to of course consider your own too!)** Throughout all the examples, please keep in the back of your mind how relevant these example are to today.

What is important is not just to appreciate the character traits of the individuals, but to also take these attributes as a direct example for ourselves and apply them to our everyday lives as well as the B'nei Akiva ideology.

Adam and Noah do Avodah

When Adam finally awoke in Gan Eden, he was given the following instruction:

בראשית פרק ב פסוק ט"ו

"וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיִּנְחֵהוּ בְּגֵן עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ:"

Bereshit 2:15 - "The Lord G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and to guard it"

Man's first instruction from Hashem is a dual task, our first two Avodah missions. Not only are we told to 'guard' the land, we are also told to 'cultivate' it, in other words get creative. L'shemorah literally means to guard, but some would choose to interpret it as to protect, honour or preserve. Being a shomer implies that you are responsible for an object that is being guarded.



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To be successful in our role as a shomer, we must realise that there can be no element of passivity in our job. We must be ACTIVE in our jobs to ensure we are guarding what we have been left with appropriately and with the best intentions. We must be alert, looking for and dealing with potential. Guarding does not simply expect us to merely preserve what exists already; it relies on us to ensure it is there for those who come after us.



The world is very clearly not ours. We are very much just looking after it. Whilst we may have the right to use it, we certainly don't have the right to abuse it. However, the obvious question is **to what extent we are able to use the world?** In an age of scientific innovation, where questions about complex matters such as genetic engineering are apparent, **at what stage is it too much?** On the same level though, if it is our job to cultivate, to expand and to get creative with the world, is it appropriate to NOT consider furthering scientific knowledge?

Moving onto Noach, it is well known that his generation is described as a terrible one and although Noach is described as a Tzaddik, a righteous man, many debate his true righteousness. Rashi offers two opinions about "he was perfect in his generation":



Some of our Sages interpret it [the word *בְּדוֹרְתּוֹ*] favourably: **How much more so if he had lived in a generation of righteous people, he would have been even more righteous.** Others interpret it derogatorily: In comparison with his generation he was righteous, **but if he had been in Abraham's generation, he would not have been considered of any importance.**

Whatever the case, Noach still made a point of sharing a message of social responsibility that isn't just between us and other Jews, but a universal responsibility; things like taking care of the environment together, reducing poverty, anti-genocide education programs, standing up for moral values etc. These are awareness's which are part of our universal obligation of social responsibility

Today, we may focus on the social injustices such as poverty, gender un-equality, refugees and racism. Individual acts of social injustice may appear to us as unfortunate but ultimately, isolated actions add up. In fact we can learn from the story of Noach that no improper action is too small and isolated and we should take a stand against them all because cumulatively they can pull the threads of the fabric of society. There are so many different causes in the world that aggravate and enrage us, but we never actually deal with. Is there a specific cause that you think B'nei Akiva has perhaps dealt with well, or perhaps a cause you felt that has never dealt with at all? This is the time to emphasise to your chanichim that B'nei Akiva is a movement. **Perhaps you want your chanichim to feel empowered to move B'nei Akiva in a specific direction?**



There is a concept in Judaism which arises in Gemara Shavuot 39a that "All of Israel is responsible for each other". This message is so important for B'nei Akiva; the idea that leadership isn't about having the loudest voice, it's about having responsibility for those around you. In Judaism and in life no man is an island, simply because the world cannot exist if everyone had this attitude.

Therefore whilst Noach highlighted the Avodah of Social Responsibility and Adam HaRishon encapsulated the Avodah of Working the Land, us as B'nei Akiva are left with the difficult decision of how to take this forward.

Avraham & His Spiritual/Physical Aliyah

The Rambam describes how in the generations following Noach, the people once again reverted to their idolatrous practices. They began to follow false prophets and embarked on a cultic journey of worship; stones, rivers, the stars and the heavens were all deified.



It is into this very same society that Avraham is born. But his attitude is different from that of his contemporaries: he looks at the world around him and concludes that there must be some sort of being behind the scenes making everything work:

Zohar 1:86a - In the morning when he saw the sun rise in the east, he thought "This is a great power; it must be the king who created me". That whole day he prayed to the sun. In the evening, upon seeing the sun set and the moon rise, he said "Surely this one rules even that other power to which I prayed, for it no longer shines". All night he prayed to the moon. In the morning, upon seeing the darkness pass and the east light up, he said "Surely all these have a King and Ruler Who directs them". When Hashem saw Avraham's longing for Him, He appeared to Avraham and spoke with him.

Hence by connecting with prayer, a connection can be made with Hashem, an Aliyah of the soul if you will. Does this provide more meaning to Tefillah? Can each and every Yid really bring the Geulah?

We see from this chazal that Avraham was not happy to just go about his life in an unthinking fashion. He wanted to question the world around him and ultimately to strive for a deeper truth, an explanation at the heart of the mystery of the cosmos. As B'nei Akiva



we do not simply stand 'idly' by as the world passes us, we get up and we make it happen! Here we can see that the Jewish people were founded as a protest movement. The world around Avraham was unsatisfactory; it was founded on lies and dishonesty. Part of our mission statement as a people is to follow along in our forefather's footsteps and point out to the world when it is moving in the wrong direction.



So who was the first person to make Aliyah?

Bereishit 12:1

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם, לֵךְ לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ עֵבֶר וּמְמֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל הָאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ.

And Hashem said to Avram: 'Go away from your land, from your birthplace, from your father's house to the land which I will show you.'

From this pasuk, we can see that from the very beginning of our nation, our end goal was living in Israel. Our movement and even our religion, at its very core, was built on the idea of always moving towards the land that Hashem will show us.

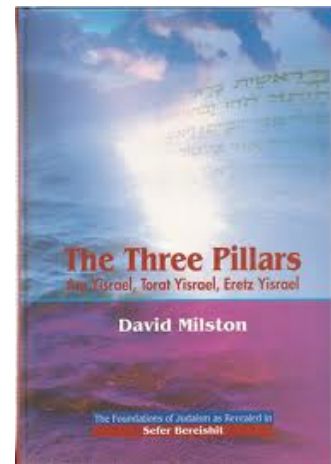
However, we can see the order of the pasuk is strange, as it says that Avraham should leave his land, then birthplace, then his father's house. If you leave your land then by definition you will be leaving your birthplace and your father's house. No?

Ohr Hachaim explains that Hashem was asking Avraham not just to live his birthplace but to leave his old life behind. It was not enough to just physically leave his land but he had to leave the people and ideologies from his past.

Avraham was the first oleh that left his homeland and everything he had known behind.

Rav David Milston: The Three Pillars

Nothing could be harder. As we embark on our journey, we are expected not only to leave familiar surroundings and warm memories but often our entire families. This is a test that never really ends; the daily reality of an oleh chadash in the land of Israel with his family far away. Our 'father's house' is even more part of who we are than our childhood memories. Our parents, grandparents and siblings are part of our being, and to leave them is the hardest test of all [...] I know that the difficulties alluded to in our verse are real difficulties. It is no easy task to leave one's land, birthplace and father's house, but it is our duty to do so. We look to Avraham Avinu for inspiration; we look to the Torah and we gain strength and commitment.



Is this a task that you can see yourself completing? Many times madrichim attempt to teach chanichim about making Aliyah, but perhaps it's time to have an open and frank discussion about the **difficulties and about the various issues** such a decision can impose. Thankfully nowadays there is more support and infrastructure present from organisations such as

Nefesh B'Nefesh, as well as our families who might support the idea. **Surely that should make the job easier?** But then, **why are we here in Spain and not in Israel right now?**

Nefesh B'Nefesh
Aliyah: Live the dream



תנועת בני עקיבא
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Who was Yitzchak?

We must understand Yitzchak's life in its context. His life does not seem to have been an easy one. Being a son of Avraham, with all the weight of that heritage on his shoulders, he would need to be an extraordinary person to be known in his own right. History is full of many overwhelming fathers who seem to fill the entire space and leave no room for their sons to assert themselves.

This puts into context Yitzchak's life: the mission he undertook was not to be the novel, superman-esque hero that daddy Avraham was, rather it was an equally noble and worthy one - to carry on. The task of the "successor" has always been one of the most unrewarding of all tasks in history. While it is true that "all beginnings are difficult", continuation can be even more challenging.

Quote:

Consider the postage stamp: its usefulness consists in the ability to stick to one thing until it reaches its destination.

Josh Billings

Yitzchak's place is of utmost value and significance. The verse, "These are the generations of Yitzchak... Avraham begat Yitzchak" contains deeper meaning in that although Avraham and Yitzchak may be worlds apart and Avraham towers over Yitzchak both in personality and in the magnitude of his actions, they are nonetheless together as one – Yitzchak not only justifies Avraham, but establishes him forever. By virtue of Yitzchak, Avraham's legacy is made what it is. Yitzchak was different but no less important because of it. His worthy destiny was to be the one who carried on.



This message is especially apt in today's world where the most visible role-models for children are celebrities. Although some celebrities do incredible work, the emphasis is on appearance, and we see them doing one-off events, a far cry from the long-term day-to-day commitment we learn from Yitzchak Avinu.

There is perhaps a deeper message here though, that perhaps sometimes as both madrichim and chanichim we feel like we are not performing as well as those who came before us. For example, we can never quite live up to that example of being a madrich is that we idealised on our first machane. However, it is important to realise the true importance of being the 'successor', as through you, **continuation of the B'nei Akiva message** can occur.



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Yaakov the BANik

A study of the various and well known episodes in Yaakov's life, however, reveal that the tricking of Eisav and Yitzchak about the birthright was only the beginning of a complete transformation of personality:



- He lived with Lavan for 20 years, as a manual labourer, on the land, i.e. living an Eisav-like life! He faced the challenges of physical enslavement and succeeded. Yet he kept his values as a "pure man, a tent-dweller".

However, this was not enough. Yaakov was not yet a fighter like brother Eisav. Remember Yaakov was previously someone who was always fleeing wars, not fighting them!

- Several of the commentators (Ramban & Rashbam) even tell us that he was trying to flee to fighting with Eisav and avoid a confrontation just before they met.
- Worry not, Yaakov did change even more...
- While Yaakov was preparing to meet Eisav, he found himself face-to-face with some wondrous man. Yet instead of running away, as you may have expected from his previous history, Yaakov fights to the bitter end and succeeds, coming out unscathed (apart from a dodgy sciatic nerve in his thigh).

Only at this stage in the development of his character is Yaakov considered a new man and merits a new name:

בראשית פרק לב פסוק כט

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יִעֲקֹב יֵאמָר עוֹד שְׂמִי כִּי אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעִם אַנְשִׁים וַתִּוְכַל:
Bereishit 32:29 - And he said, "You name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but Yisrael – for you have striven with Hashem and with men, and succeeded".

Only at this point does Yaakov really merit Yitzchak's bracha, that he has now shown that he can use have the power and will of Eisav, while keeping the inner voice of Yaakov. It is clear that the "person" whom Yitzchak blessed was neither Yaakov nor Eisav, rather it was this magical mixture, 'Yisrael'.

The moral, religious Yaakov was not compromised, but gained the physical strength of Eisav through long, hard struggles. Only now is Yisrael born! From this point on, Yaakov is often referred to as Yisrael, to reflect the transformation of his personality. **Is Yisrael, the concept, therefore the perfect balance of both Torah and Avodah?**

On another note, does this perhaps highlight how through combining his Torah knowledge, with the Avodah he had developed throughout his struggles, he was finally ready to make Aliyah. **Was Yaakov therefore the first BANik?**



The modern Jew



Just like Yaakov, who is initially described as an **אִישׁ תָּם, יָשׁוּב**, a Torah scholar, who was involved in spiritual matters yet impotent as a fighter and a defender, Am Yisrael had a similar fate during its 2,000 years of exile. Jews spent much of their time and effort learning Torah in yeshivot from North Africa to Eastern Europe, from central Asia to France. For the most part, they had no means of self-defence, shown by the countless episodes of persecution, most starkly during the horrors of the Holocaust, as six million were led like sheep to the slaughter.

This period of “impotent” exile is an important part in Jewish history. Rav Kook compares the nation to Yaakov, arguing that we needed this period just as Yaakov did, to consolidate our foundations, even though we had neither a land nor physical strength. Conversely, if we only had physical strength, how could the Jewish nation possibly build a state according to the moral values of the Torah?

From when the burgeoning ideology of Zionism became increasingly popular amongst secular Jews throughout the Diaspora in the late 19th Century, up until today’s flourishing state, many have mistakenly tried to separate the Yaakov and the Eisav figures amongst our people. We regularly hear voices saying, “Let the religious sit in their Beit Midrash learning Torah, while the secular can build up Medinat Yisrael and defend it.” We totally reject this stance and believe that the spirituality of Yaakov is consistent with the physical strength and prowess of Eisav.



It is not incidental that our people are named after the “Yisrael” figure – and we have reached those heights before...but not for about 2000 years. However in the last century we are starting to experience a Yaakov → Yisrael transformation. At the beginning of the end of the long night of exile, we are starting to relive this unique combination, and to merit the mysterious berachot of Yitzchak.

It is these values that make Bnei Akiva so unique – we believe that the ideal is the “Yisrael” model. Today that may mean serving in the army alongside Yeshiva/Midrasha study. We are not apologetic about putting aside our gemara and leaving the Beit Midrash to defend our country. Rather, should we need to, we go into battle unashamedly – Tanach in hand (The IDF gives each soldier a Tanach at their swearing-in ceremony). Is this however, contentious?

Nonetheless, our newfound military might often challenge our Torah-based sensitivities. But hey, nobody said it was easy...



Key Points

- Adam and Noach are the first shining examples of what 'Avodah' truly means, but how do we take this forward?
- Avraham has shown us as B'nei Akiva what it means to really make Aliyah but does that make it any easier?
- Ya'akov utilised both Torah and Avodah to become a great example to B'nei Akiva and the modern orthodox way of life

Extra Chomer

Rachel and Leah

We are all familiar with the story of Rachel, Yaakov and Leah.

Yaakov and Rachel decide to get married but he is tricked and marries Leah, her sister, instead. Rachel did not want to cause an upset and embarrass her family. Rachel gives Leah the secret signs to display to Yaakov at the wedding to make him think that he's marrying Rachel. Yaakov then marries Rachel after working for Lavan, her father, for a further seven years.

Rachel Screws Up

The first major point of interest is Rachel's barrenness. Although she is following a proud biblical tradition in being barren, the situation is slightly different to that of Sarah and of Rivkah. When it comes to Sarah, she takes the initiative and offers Hagar to Avraham. In the case of Rivkah, Yitzchak davens for her. Rachel seeks to emulate this model by asking Yaakov to daven on her behalf, but his reaction is quite different from his father's:



בראשית פרק ל פסוק א ב

וַיִּרְא רָחֵל כִּי לֹא יִלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב וַתִּקְנֶנָּה רָחֵל בְּאֶחָתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל יַעֲקֹב הֲבָה לִי בָנִים וְאִם אֵין מִתָּה אֲנֹכִי: וַיַּחַר אַף יַעֲקֹב בְּרָחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר הֲתַחַת אֱלֹהִים אֲנֹכִי אֲשֶׁר מְנַע מִמֶּנּוּ פְרִי בֶטֶן:

Bereishit 30:1-2 - And Rachel saw that she had not given birth for Yaakov and became jealous of her sister and said to Yaakov: Give me sons! And if not I will die! And Yaakov became angry with Rachel and said: Am I in the place of Hashem, Who withheld a child from you?

The reason for the difference between Yitzchak and Yaakov is obvious; Yaakov already has children. How is he supposed to approach Hashem and ask for a child when he already has one? Effectively what he is saying is "Hashem has no problem with me – He proved so by giving me children. The one who He is holding children from is you and you need to be the one to sort it out." It seems that he is quite justified in his anger; Rachel should be turning to Hashem – not to her husband. Instead of looking within herself she is trying to cut corners.



Rachel Repents

When she does finally have a child, the Torah says that Hashem remembered and heard her. Obviously He could not have done so had she not prayed. So it seems that she took her husband's advice and stopped acting like a spoiled child, and entered before Hashem in honest and sincere prayer.

Self-sacrifice

Another really important characteristic which Rachel demonstrates is that of self-sacrifice. When she gave the signs to Leah, so that Lavan's trick would not be recognised, she thought only of Leah's well-being. She had no idea that Yaakov would end up marrying her too. She was prepared to sacrifice her hopes and dreams merely to prevent her sister from being embarrassed.

Leah and giving thanks



Leah can teach us a very important message which is directly transferrable to our lives, and that is how to give thanks. Leah calls her fourth son Yehuda, which comes from the root of hoda'a – which means thanks. Chazal interpret her as a character who appreciates that all she has comes from Hashem:

Gemarah Berachot 7b - From the day that Hashem created the world, there was no one who thanked Hashem until Leah came and thanked Him"

All too often in the modern, scientific era, we attribute the things that go on around us to the rules of nature and forget He Who Stands Behind that nature. We would do well to view Leah as a role model in this regard; someone who never forgets the guiding hand of Hashem in our lives.

So effectively, it's a double message. The first is about true thanks; genuinely appreciating that without the people around us we would not be the same. The other is about Divine Providence; recognising the hand of Hashem in our everyday lives.

We have seen that Rachel is an extremely relatable character - she falls down a number of times but also picks herself up and repents. Leah teaches us exactly how we should view the amazing things which we have received, from Hashem and from others, and also how to turn to Hashem and recognise his permanent place in our lives.



K4: Ha'am Ba'aretz



Aims:

1. To understand Ha'am B'aretz in a context of Torah, Aliyah, Avodah.
2. Notice that the themes of Tanakh are in direct link with Bnei Akiva's ideology.
3. Show that the lessons of the Tanakh are a platform to build their own ideology and global outlook on.



Ha'am Ba'aretz

This K will be analyzing the people in the land. This theme looks at Nach and focuses on the Jewish people living as a nation in the Land of Israel from the moment that they enter the land until the Second Temple times.

What is Tanakh

The Tanakh is the Written Law, the collection of writings codified by Chazal and passed down through generations. Or a Tevye says "The Good Book". And so in the spirit of Tevye we shall try to start to understand Tanakh as a living text constantly relevant to our lives because of...



Before we start going through the chomer lets think of some stories of Tanakh that clearly link with our ideology.

Torah:

Avodah:

Aliyah:

Torah	Bereshit Shemot Vayikra Bamidbar Devarim	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
Nevi'im	Yehoshua Shoftim Shmuel Aleph Shmuel Bet Melachim Aleph Melachim Bet Yeshaya Yirmiya Yechezkel Tre Asar	Joshua Judges Samuel I Samuel II Kings I Kings II Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Minor Prophets
Ketuvim	Tehillim Mishlei Iyov Shir HaShirim Rut Eicha Kohelet Esther Daniel Ezra Nehemiah Divrei Hayamim Aleph Divre Hayamim Bet	Psalms Proverbs Job Song of Songs Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther Daniel Ezra Nehemiah Chronicles I Chronicles II



Nakh (Neviim and Ketuvim) is the story of Am Yisrael arriving in the land of Israel and establishing the mechanisms of a state. Throughout history these mechanisms have changed and evolved, and we see this clearly in the Tanakh itself. During the time of Yehoshua we were a pseudo-military lead force which then divided itself into 12 regions organised by Tribe, establishing a so called Federal Israel. During the time of Shoftim our leadership constantly changed and developed, depending on the Judge and the Tribe. As time goes on we see Am Yisrael crying for more united leadership and so through Shmuel, Hashem establishes the Kingdom of Israel through Shaul, then David, which united the 12 states into one Kingdom of Israel. Over years we start to spiral into decline, with weaker and more corrupt leadership, and so we were expelled from the land of Israel, the Kingdom was destroyed and Bnei Yisrael we scattered in the Persian Empire. Years later, under Ezra, the new Israel was reborn and a new system of leadership was established, with a rebirth of Jewish ideas, leadership and religious revival. In the Tanakh we learn about how the Jews lived in Persia, under Achaushverosh, in Megilat Esther, showing even in those times, the strong temptations of Galut as well as how Am Yisrael we divided and as such vulnerable to people like Hamman (boooooo).

This is simply a brief description of how we can learn so many lessons from the Tanakh. Tanakh can be seen as a guide to Jewish leadership and government. Used as a blueprint for the Jewish state, or as a guide of Am Yisrael's moral failures and obligations throughout its stewardship of Eretz Yisrael.

Themes of Tanakh

Whilst on AC the objective is to look at the stories of Tanakh and draw lessons from it, this kvutzah will seek to understand the themes of Tanakh as a whole. The themes learnt will be put to the chanichim in an attempt to get them to understand and seek how TAA fits into Tanakh, and how a fusion of TAA and Tanakh fit into their own lives and ideology.

1) Bnei Yisrael are the Chosen people

Bnei Yisrael are referred to as the 'Am Segulah' translated as 'treasured' people. The Chosen People is the belief that the Jews are chosen amongst the nations to be in a covenant with God. This covenant was originally given to Avraham that his nation will be a great nation with a land, and that God will be with them. Throughout Chumash this theme is repeated again and again as Bnei Yisrael progress from slavery to the land of Canaan.

But why us??

ב כי עם קדוש אתה, ליהוה
 אלהיך; ובך בחר יהוה, להיות לו
 לעם סגלה, מכל העמים, אשר
 על-פני האדמה. {ס}

2 For thou art a holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be His own treasure out of all peoples that are upon the face of the earth. {S}



The Rashi here, enumerates this point of the forefathers, we are the Chosen People because of the merit of our forefathers, we are Chosen because of their greatness. Rabbi Menachem Leibtag explains that God loves all mankind but chose one nation to show Godliness to the rest of the nations. We are the Chosen People to be an example to the other nations.

Throughout Tanakh there is a sense of purpose in the Chosen people title. The success and failures of characters in Tanakh can be predicted, not by understanding their skilful tactics, their intelligence or their power, but by seeing whether they fulfilled the goals set out by Hashem when we were made his Chosen people - the goal of Or Lagoyim.

We are told to be "a light unto the nations", an example of an ethical civic-state, in the service of Hashem, moving towards a society which worked within the framework set out by Hashem. Whilst this shall come later, let's think of stories of success and failures of Bnei Yisrael in Tanakh and how the concept of Or Lagoyim plays a part in this?

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love! **Ps 145:8** but after a random lightning strike, Rufus was now a bit jumpy.

2) Learning from our mistakes

We often see in Tanakh that our heroes behave badly, Moshe hits the rock instead of talking to it, Miriam talking Lashon Hora about Moshe, the whole of Sefer Shoftim sees Bnei Yisrael making mistake after mistake in a vicious cycle. We're not reading these to point them out necessarily and have a good laugh at the mistakes our forefathers made but to learn from them. The mistakes our heroes made in Tanakh teach us that they are also open to mistakes and that doesn't mean they aren't a great person and we shouldn't admire them. We instead should learn from how they dealt with their mistake and how they learned from it. The case that speaks out against all others is David. David commits adultery with Batsheva and says in the open "לֵיָהּ חָטָאתִי" that he sinned against the Lord. The brutal honesty of David of what he did took enormous strength. He knew he did wrong and doesn't try to hide it or make excuses. We need to see the mistakes of our forefathers and how they dealt with it to try and reflect this in our own lives.

3) Return to Zion

I wonder how this can fit into our ideology?

What would any piece by Bnei Akiva be without talking about Israel and how great it is! But on a serious note, all the books of Tanakh in some way focus on the Land of Israel and from the very beginning, we are narrowing our journey down to return to the Land which God promised to us.



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It all starts with Avraham and God saying to him 'Go from your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you'. Tanakh beautifully ends in Divre Hayamim with the declaration from King Koresh allowing the Jews back to the land. The land is so integral to Bnei Yisrael, that even without it, we mention returning to Zion all the time and many customs are there to purely remind us of what we lost. Tanakh centers itself on the idea that Bnei Yisrael are a chosen people with a chosen land.

One of the strongest themes seen in Tanakh is not just the Return to Zion but the constant bettering of Zion. Whilst there are many times that Eretz Yisrael is heading on a downward spiral into decline, there is always a theme of working towards a better Israel. Even during the time of Shlomo, whilst there was peace and prosperity in the land, the Temple was being built, and Eretz Yisrael enjoyed widespread respect, Shlomo was wanting to make Israel and Jerusalem the best place in the world. This theme of returning to Israel, and constantly making it a better place is central to the Tanakh.



There are countless other themes in the Tanakh. We learn about leadership, how to treat non-Jews, relationship with prayer, and attitudes towards the environment. However it is these three central themes that we should focus on. Our aim should be to use these themes to give over lessons from stories in the Tanakh.

How do these themes relate to our ideology and more importantly, what we as madrichim aim to achieve on machane?

Stories in Tanakh - A Song of Ice and Fire

Despite the many themes and lessons, the Tanakh is ultimately a story book. It's not quite what you would read to your child on the long donkey ride from Bethlehem, but still the lessons are learnt from learning stories and interpreting these stories alongside the historical, social and religious context that they were set in. For Kvatza we suggest you use the stories of Yehoshua, Devora and Ezra as well as any of the other stories in the extra chomer at the back to understand the theme further.

Yehoshua

Groomed for leadership by Moshe, Yehoshua took over leadership from Moshe. He led was the one to lead Bnei Yisrael into Israel and acted as a Military Leader.

Yehoshua's leadership shows a transition point from the Miraculous to the Natural. Under Moshe's leadership, Bnei Yisrael we lead through miracles and Hashem's actions. Moshe would consult with Hashem before events and then would lead through his instruction. Yehoshua acted differently. He was proactive in his leadership, before great battles he sent out his own scouts and did his own planning before he would speak to Hashem.



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We see this clearly in the first battle that Bnei Yisrael engage in – in the battle of Jericho. Yehoshua doesn't wait for a direct instruction, but he takes the initiative and sends spies to scout out the land. It's only after Yehoshua and his army are fully prepared for battle that he receives an instruction from Hashem:



"know that I have delivered Jericho... into your hands. Have all your warriors march around the city and circle the city once. Do

so for six days, with seven priests carrying seven rams' shofars before the Ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, as the priests blow the shofars. When the ram's horn sounds an extended blast and you hear the sound of the shofar, all the people shall give a mighty shout, and the city will collapse" (Yehoshua 6:2-5)

Yehoshua marks a turning point for Am Yisrael, and in true Yehoshua style he leads by example. This is a point in which Am Yisrael no longer work from instruction and instead must lead by initiative. Proactive not reactive organisation, where they must look to use the tools that Hashem gave them to fulfil their goals.



Shoftim: Devorah

The period of the Judges can be defined by Ha'am B'artez without the Torah. There is a sense of a downward spiral during the time of the Judges, an almost insanity driven cycle of repetitive failure where the arrogance and complacency of Am Yisrael and the Judges lead to the same failures time again.

The cycle is as follows:

1	Bnei Yisrael live comfortably in peace in the Land of Israel
2	They become arrogant and complacent, forgetting their success comes from HaShem
3	They go off the derech – sexual immorality, Avodah zara (reliance on powers other than G-d), taking more than their tuck allowance...
4	HaShem reminds the people of his involvement in their success by removing his protection and allowing their oppressors to attack them.



5	Am Yisrael then pray to HaShem for help
6	Hashem has mercy and sends a prophet/shofet to save them.
7	Am Yisrael recognise that HaShem has saved them and subsequently do teshuva
8	HaShem restores his support and protection, they live comfortably with material wealth, in peace in our land once again.... Until...

The lessons learnt from these stories are simple.

Now to focus on Devorah and how her role as Shofet was unique and inspiring:

1. Devorah had to step up and take control because there were no male candidates able to assume leadership.
2. She was a strong leader during a time period where it was uncommon for women to be leaders – particularly military leaders.
3. Devorah was the only Shofet to be called a Neviah and to actually have engaged in judging the people.
4. She was also a 'fiery' speaker, (evident as she tries to persuade Barak to go and fight, and also later on in the next perek, in her Shirah, with her scathing criticism of the tribes who do not come and fight.)



The manner of Devorah's leadership was also unusual as she did not want to follow the typical formula of a Shofet and only act as a military leader; instead Devorah tries to convince Barak to be the military saviour in this story and do the fighting alone (ultimately, he refuses to do it without her) while she preferred to lead and guide from the sidelines.

Why would Devorah have preferred this role?

Option 1: She felt it pragmatically advantageous to keep military guidance – Barak – separate from spiritual guidance – herself.

Option 2: Or perhaps because she felt that a background role was more 'tzanua' (modest).

Devorah judged the people under a palm tree out in the open. The fact that the people travelled to her rather than vice versa displays the degree of respect they held for her, while the outdoor setting ensured that she would avoid any potential difficulties presented by having to meet men one-on-one indoors.

During her shira, Devorah sings: 'I arose a mother in Israel'. Of course she was far more



than just a mother: she was a judge; a warrior; a prophetess but Devorah's choice of 'mother' to represent herself reflects her maternal attitude towards Bnei Yisrael. Her selfless and brave conduct arose from motherly instinct as she committed to leading them to victory against the fearsome Canaanites at a time when Bnei Yisrael had a distinct lack of men able to lead the people.

The theme of valiant females continues as after General Sisera flees from Devorah to the apparent comfort of Yael's tent, she lulls him into a deep sleep before using a hammer to drive a tent peg through his head. Again we see unlikely characters using unlikely methods: Yael doesn't fight with conventional weapons but uses a tent peg and milk to kill Sisera, not a sword (Don't get any ideas!)

Yirmiyahu

Jump forward quite a few years and the spiritual decline that had already begun during the time of Eliyahu was reaching its dreadful climax. In this time of spiritual unease, G-d appointed a new prophet, Yirmiyahu. Yirmiyahu was relatively young when he began to prophesy, and he has to be instructed by G-d: "Do not say: I am a boy!" Indeed Abarbanel in his introduction to Sefer Yirmiyahu comments on the relatively poor literary quality of the book: many verbs incorrectly conjugated, and he often confuses the word 'el' (to) with 'al' (on). Abarbanel blames this on Yirmiyahu's youth.



Yirmiyahu was young and passionate (just like you guys!). However, he had the horrible task of prophesying about the destruction of the Temple, and warning Bnei Yisrael of their imminent exile from the land. He both predicted the exile and witnessed the destruction of the Temple.

His attempts to rebuke Bnei Yisrael and urge them to repent were met with scorn. There were many false prophets at the time, and Am Yisrael preferred to listen to their positive prophecies than to Yirmiyahu's negative ones. Yirmiyahu was arrested, beaten and ignored.

It is possible that Yirmiyahu's age was the reason why nobody listened to him. Here was a young, passionate man telling Bnei Yisrael how to act. Taking the Abarbanel's view, perhaps due to his youth Yirmiyahu found it difficult to express himself well, and people could easily view him as arrogant, even though he was acting with the purest of intentions. Youthful enthusiasm and passion are incredible things, but sometimes they can be out of place when relating to other people.



Ezra

The Book of Ezra doesn't start with Ezra, he doesn't really appear until chapter 7. The book starts with the decree to let the Jews back into Israel:

'In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of The Lord spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled, The Lord roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his realm by word of mouth and in writing as follows: 2 "So said Cyrus, the king



of Persia, 'All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of the heavens delivered to me, and He commanded me to build Him a House in Jerusalem, which is in Judea.³ Who is among you of all His people, may his God be with him, and he may ascend to Jerusalem, which is in Judea, and let him build the House of the Lord, God of Israel; He is the God

Who is in Jerusalem. 4 And whoever remains from all the places where he sojourns, the people of his place shall help him with silver and with gold and with possessions and with cattle, with the donation to the House of God, which is in Jerusalem.' What does this remind you of? The Balfour Declaration!

But who exactly went back to Israel? We assume that when Ezra brought the people of Israel back to the land of Israel that everybody hopped on board and went. The sad reality was that only 42,360 went back to Jerusalem. To put that in perspective, more people currently live in West Devon than went back to Israel with Ezra. To put in a more biblical perspective, in Bamidbar in the counting of all the tribes of Israel, each tribe averaged around 30,000 people. It was a really small proportion of the Israelites, most stayed in Babylon. This was the harsh reality of what Ezra was facing trying to get people to move back.

So what were the reasons they stayed in exile?

1. They had comfortable lives in Babylon
2. There was a high level of Torah scholarship with the Babylonian Talmud
3. Most other people were staying in Bablyon and not making Aliyah

This seems a little familiar....

Ezra cared deeply about the Torah and the Jewish people. He dedicated his life work to make sure that the Jews weren't assimilating. Compare that to nowadays, all these amazing organisations making sure Jews stay connected to their Jewish identity. There are so many adverts for one to show their Jewish identity, and Bnei Akiva is one of these amazing organisations keeping Modern Orthodox Jews connected to Am Yisrael, B'Eretz Yisrael V'al Pi Torat Yisrael. We can learn a lot as Madrichim from Ezra's tireless efforts to keep Jews from straying.



These are a list of the Ten Decrees Ezra made that changed Jewish life and worship at the time

1. That the Torah can be read publicly at Mincha on Shabbat
2. That the Torah can be read publicly on Mondays and Thursdays
3. That Courts be held on Mondays and Thursdays
4. That clothes be washed on Thursdays
5. That garlic can be eaten on Fridays
6. That housewives rise early to make the bread
7. That women should wear a 'sinnar'
8. Obligation of women to prepare pedantically for mikveh
9. That pedlars selling spices and jewellery should be allowed into towns
10. Immersion for those who were unclear before they study Torah

Except for the obvious weird ones (I feel like people still ate garlic on Fridays even if it wasn't allowed), some of these decrees are ones we do to this day. Imagine what Mondays and Thursdays would be like without the Torah reading, or if mikveh didn't exist. Ezra saw what was happening to the Jewish people and the rate of intermarriage and tried to get as many people involved in Jewish activity (sound familiar to nowadays?). He cared deeply about Am Yisrael and making sure they were abiding by Torat Yisrael. In fact, the Hebrew text we use to this day is the one Ezra created so it was more accessible.

Key Points

- Understanding Ha'am B'aretz in a context of Torah, Aliyah, Avodah.
- Further understanding that the themes of Tanakh are in direct link with Bnei Akiva's ideology.
- Show that the lessons of the Tanakh are a platform to build your own ideology and global



Extra Chomer

Esther

We all know the story of Purim. Achashverosh has big munch, gets drunk and kills Vashti. Marries Esther. Mordechai saves Achashverosh life, this gets written down and forgotten. Hamman (BOO) hates Jews. Achashverosh remembers Mordechai and wants to honour him. Hamman (BOO) gets pissed off, hates Jews more, wants to kill Jews, so goes pulls a number out a hat. Esther and Mordechai want to save the world. Esther gets all the Jews to fast twice. Esther calls out Hamman's BS to Achashverosh. Saves all the Jews. Jews kill all the baddies. In memory we eat and get pissed. THE END!!!

But there is a closer theme that we should look at. Purim is a story of what happens to the Jews when we are not Am Echad.

What we see in the Purim story is the potential ease that someone could have to eliminate the Jews. Because we know Esther and Mordechai will save the day from the beginning we fail to understand that the future of the Jewish people rested on a knife edge and there was the serious potential for Hamman (BOO) to succeed.



This is because Am Yisrael were not Am Echad - we were a divided people spread throughout the diaspora. It didn't stop here. The Purim story revolves around the Palace of Achashverosh - this is hugely significant. Whereas the Tanakh revolves around Israel, the fact that the Palace is the focal location of the Purim story goes to show that Galut has replaced Israel.

This then puts Esther's insistence of making Am Yisrael fast in such clear context. They had to prove that they were still capable of being Am Echad. They had to prove that there was still an Am Yisrael to be defeated. They unite and prove to Esther that they still have the potential to be saved. Esther wants to prove that this is how Am Yisrael will survive - through being Am Echad.

The real question is do Am Yisrael learn their lesson? (Hint: NO)

The Megilah ends as it started, talking about Achashverosh. Mordechai was promoted to viceroy of Persia and it is even recorded that this is the case. However if you read just the last chapter it almost reads as "Mordechai the Jew was the Kings Viceroy". The leaders of Am Yisrael chose to stay outside of Israel when they had the opportunity to unite, return and rebuild the Beit Hamikdash. The fact that they chose not to do so shows that in spite of the unity displayed during the defeat of Hamman this did not last, nor transcend into a national reawakening.



Shmuel - The Hand of the King

Shmuel was the quintessential Hand of the King (I mean he did choose the King!!!)



Shmuel became the leader of Am Yisrael in the midst of this decline. Israel was a divided nation, with the people split into twelve tribes, twelve territories. The unity that Moshe and Yehoshua achieved had dissipated in the time of the Shoftim. The people were greatly influenced by their idolatrous neighbours; even the sons of Eli were severely criticised for their immorality.

Shmuel led Am Yisrael out of this spiritual decline. Realising the lack of knowledge of the Torah, he sought to spread the Torah amongst the people. Unlike many of his predecessors who judged the people from their own homes, Shmuel took the Torah to the people.

The Tanakh describes Shmuel's sons as being corrupt – "they turned aside after unjust gain, and took bribes, and perverted judgment". As Shmuel grows old, there's a genuine worry: who will take over from him after his death? Shmuel had heralded a reign of stability and an era of return to Hashem. Now Am Yisrael come to him with a new request: "All the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Shmuel in Ramah. they said to him, behold, you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways; now make us a King to Judge us like all the nations" (Shmuel I, 8:4-5)

Am Yisrael are no longer content with the unstable string of judges and demand a new kind of leader. But for some reason, this request displeases Shmuel: "Shmuel was greatly displeased when they said, 'Give us a King to rule us', and Shmuel prayed to God. And God said to Shmuel 'Listen to the voice of the people in all that they said to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (Shmuel I, 8:6-7)

This therefore begs the question - is a monarchy the ideal form of Government?

R. Yehuda said: Three commandments were given to Israel when they entered the land: 1) to appoint a king, 2) to cut off the seed of Amalek, and 3) to build themselves The Chosen House. R. Nehorai said: This section was spoken only in anticipation of their future murmurings, as it is written, 'And they shall say, I will set a king over me etc' (Sanhedrin 20b)

Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Nehorai disagree on this exact issue. Rabbi Yehuda interprets what is written in Parashat Shoftim to say that there is a Mitzvah to appoint a king. In other words, the Torah is telling us that monarchy is the ideal system of rule.

On the other hand, Rabbi Nehorai takes into account what is written in Shmuel, and sees the monarchy as something that is not ideal – God gave the command in anticipation of what was going to happen, not because a monarchy is what we should strive for. God is effectively saying, "Since you're going to want to place a king over yourselves anyway, at least do it in this way". What do you think is the ideal?



Shaul and David - The Mad King and The Usurper

Both Shaul and David made significant mistakes whilst being King, for Shaul it marked the end of his reign, for David, he was able to continue in rule, lets take a closer look at the two errors of Kingship and see what we can learn:



Shaul's Incident

<p>כ וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוּל אֶל שְׂמוּאֵל, אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּקוֹל ה', וְאַלֹהִים, בְּדַרְדָּר אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחְנִי ה'; וְאַבְיָא, אֶת אַגַּג מֶלֶךְ עַמְלֵק, וְאֶת עַמְלֵק, הַחֲרַמְתִּי.</p>	<p>Shaul: 'I listened to HaShem and pretty much did what He told me, I brought King Agag and completely destroyed the Amalekites....</p>
<p>כא וַיִּקַּח הָעָם מֵהַשָּׁלָל צֹאן וּבָקָר, רֵאשִׁית הַחֲרָם, לְזִבְחַת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, בְּגִלְגָל. {ס}</p>	<p><i>...But the rest of the people, it was them that took the good stuff from the Amalekites, the sheep and what-not in order to sacrifice it to G-d.</i></p>
<p>כב וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂמוּאֵל, הַחֲפֹץ לַיהוָה בְּעֹלוֹת וּזְבָחִים, כְּשֹׁמֵעַ, בְּקוֹל ה': הֲנֵה שֹׁמֵעַ מִזְבַּח טוֹב, לְהִקְשִׁיב מִחֲלָב אֵילִים.</p>	<p>Shmuel: Even the G-d quite likes His sacrifices; He'd definitely prefer that you just listened to him.</p>
<p>כג כִּי חָטֵאתָ קָסָם מְרִי, וְאַנּוֹן וּתְרָפִים הַפְּצָר: יַעַן, מָאַסְתָּ אֶת דְּבַר ה', וַיִּמְאַסֶּה, מִמֶּלֶךְ. {ס}</p>	<p>... Rebelling against Him is basically the same as witchcraft, and stubbornness is as seen like idolatry and teraphim. Because you rejected His instructions, He has rejected you as King!</p>
<p>כד וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂאוּל אֶל שְׂמוּאֵל חֲטָאתִי, כִּי עֲבַרְתִּי אֶת פִּי ה' וְאֶת דְּבָרֶיךָ: כִּי יִרְאֲתִי אֶת הָעָם, וְאֲשַׁמַּע בְּקוֹלָם.</p>	<p>Shaul: <i>Ok, ok... I have sinned; because I didn't follow G-d's instructions, I got scared because of how the people might react and listened to them instead!</i></p>
<p>כה וְעַתָּה, שָׂא נָא אֶת חֲטָאתִי; וְשׁוּב עִמָּי, וְאֲשַׁתְּחִנֶּה לָּהּ.</p>	<p>...But now, I pray that you forgive me and return with me, that I may serve HaShem.</p>
<p>כו וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂמוּאֵל אֶל שְׂאוּל, לֹא אָשׁוּב עִמָּךְ: כִּי מָאַסְתָּהּ, אֶת דְּבַר ה', וַיִּמְאַסֶּה ה', מִהַיּוֹת מֶלֶךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל. {ס}</p>	<p>Shmuel: I will not return with you because you rejected G-d's word and He rejected you as King of Israel.</p>
<p>כז וַיִּסַּב שְׂמוּאֵל, לָלֶכֶת; וַיִּחַזַק בְּכַנָּף מַעִילוֹ, וַיִּקְרַע. {ס}</p>	<p>And as Shmuel turned about to go away, Shaul grabbed the bottom of his robe .</p>
<p>כח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, שְׂמוּאֵל, קִרַּע ה' אֶת מַמְלַכּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעֲלֶיךָ, הַיּוֹם; וַיִּתְּנָהּ, לְרֵעֶה הַטוֹב מִמֶּךָ. {ס}</p>	<p>Shmuel: G-d has taken the Kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to a friend of yours who is much cooler!</p>

What does Shaul first say when Shmuel comes up to speak to him? What is Shaul's first reaction when Shmuel admonishes him? How many times does Shaul speak before he admits his mistake?

Note that Shaul only admits his mistake after being told that he has lost the kingship. At the beginning of his Kingship Shaul possesses huge amounts of anava [humility]. So much so that Shaul even hides from the Kingship amongst the pots and jugs in order to avoid being appointed as King. After becoming the king, Shaul obviously needs to act as a King and therefore such humility would be out of place. It is



inappropriate that a King would be swayed by the whims of his people. Moreover it is crucial that though he does not show humility with regard to himself as the Melech of Am Yisrael, he still, like all Kings must show humility towards HaShem and towards HaShem's messenger on Earth – the prophet – Shmuel.

What does Shaul's actions here teach us about him and his skills as a leader of Am Yisrael?

David's Incident

Let's compare this to David. David's sin with BatSheva can be understood in a number of different ways and from many different points of view.

According to the vast majority of other commentators and interpretations, though David sinned, what his sin was is subject to different opinions and the Gemara in Shabbat even says that 'Whoever says David sinned [with BatSheva] is mistaken'.



All in all, after this whole incident, G-d isn't most pleased and in Shmuel Bet, Perek 12, G-d sends the prophet Natan to reprimand David. Here's what happened:

<p>ד ויש העשיר, ויחמל לקחת מצאנו ומבקריו, לעשות לארם הבא לו; ויקח, את כבשת האיש הראש, ויעשה, בא הלו, לאילאיש הבא אליו.</p>	<p>There was a traveller that met a rich guy. The rich guy didn't want to take any sheep from his own flock to help clothe the poor traveller, instead he used one of the poor travellers lambs to clothe the traveller.</p>
<p>ה ויחר אף דוד באיש, מאד; ויאמר, אל נתן, חי ה', כי בן מנת האיש העשה זאת.</p>	<p>David felt really angry about this rich guy and said to Natan: "The Living G-d should kill this man..."</p>
<p>ו ואת הכבשה, ישלם ארבעתים: עקב, אשר עשה את הדבר הזה, ועל, אשר לא חמל. {ס}</p>	<p>...And restore the lamb four times over because this rich guy had no sympathy".</p>
<p>ז ויאמר נתן אל דוד, אתה האיש; {ס} כה אמר ה' אלקי ישראל, אנכי משחתיה למלך על ישראל, ואנכי הצלתיה, מיד שאול.</p>	<p>Natan: You are that rich guy David, think about it, G-d appointed you King and saved you from Shaul...</p>
<p>ח ואתנה לך את בית אדניך, ואת נשי אדניך בחיקך, ואתנה לך, את בית ישראל ויהודה; ואם מעט ואספה לך, כהנה וכהנה.</p>	<p>... I gave you your master's old palace and his wives and his entire Kingdom, Israel and Yehudah. If if that wasn't enough I could continue to elaborate...</p>
<p>ט מדוע בזית את דבר ה', לעשות הרע בעיניו (בעיני), את אורייה החתי הכית בקרב, ואת אשתו לקחת לך לאשה; ואת הרגת, בקרב בני עמון.</p>	<p>So why on earth would you act in spite of what G-d told you to do and do what to me looks evil? Uriah the Hittite was only just killed in battle and you took his wife and it was you that put him in battle with the children of Ammon in the first place.</p>
<p>י ועתה, לא תסור תרב מביתך עד עולם: עקב, כי בזתני, ותקח את אשת אורייה החתי, להיות לך לאשה. {ס}</p>	<p>Now, you will be under constant threat because you have despised G-d and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own wife.</p>



<p>יא כֹּה אָמַר ה', הֲנִי מִקִּיִּם עָלֶיךָ רָעָה מִבֵּיתְךָ, וְלִקְחָתִי אֶת נְשֵׁיךָ לְעֵינֶיךָ, וְנָתַתִּי לָרֵעִי; וְשָׁכַב עִם נְשֵׁיךָ, לְעֵינֵי הַשָּׁמַשׁ הַזֹּאת.</p>	<p>Natan (In the name of G-d): Behold, I will raise up evil from your own house, I will take you wives from in front of your face and give them to your friend and he shall lie with them today!</p>
<p>יב כִּי אַתָּה, עָשִׂיתָ בְּסֵתֶר; וְאֲנִי, אֶעֱשֶׂה אֶת הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה, נֶגְדַּי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְנֶגְדַּי הַשָּׁמַשׁ. {ס}</p>	<p>...You acted in secret, but I will do all this publicly and today!</p>
<p>יג וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל נָתָן, חַטָּאתִי לֹה'; {ס} וַיֹּאמֶר נָתָן אֶל דָּוִד, גַּם ה' הֶעֱבִיר חַטָּאתְךָ לֹא תָמוּת.</p>	<p>David: <i>'I have sinned</i> against the LORD. Natan: HaShem has forgiven your sin so you won't be killed ☺</p>

What was David HaMelech originally upset about? What is the comparison made between the rich man and David HaMelech? How does David HaMelech's reaction/s differ from that of Shaul?

Unlike Shaul who is insistent on his innocence and only admits his mistake once he has already been told that the Kingship is being taken away from him despite his pleas that Am Yisrael swayed him. David HaMelech when challenged immediately responds 'chatati'. Shaul refuses to accept and admit that he has done wrong whereas David realises the importance of accepting that he has erred and is eager to correct his mistakes.

As mentioned before, David is the descendant of Yehuda. Yehuda was the prototype for the 'man of teshuva' as after his relationship with Tamar, he immediately owns up and admits his sin rather than hiding it. Shaul on the other hand coming from the line of Yosef/Binyamin is a son of the prototypes for the 'man of righteousness'. These represent the two paths to HaShem and in establishing David as the permanent Melech of Am Yisrael rather than Shaul, we declare that we know ourselves to be ba'alei teshuvot.

How do you think this whole message relevant to us today?

Whether an individual? Whether as a Jewish community? Whether as the State of Israel?

The answers to these above vital, crucial and extremely important questions, will now become the basis for your kvutza explaining why exactly David became the more ideal King over Shaul and why it is the Davidic line of kingship which is retained rather than that of Shaul and what that means for us today.

Shlomo

The Tanach tells us that after tying up the loose ends of Adoniah's rebellion, Shlomo's first act as king was to offer 1000 sacrifices to Hashem. The Ralbag, a 14th century Jewish philosopher and mathematician, explains that the reason he did was to "induce prophecy" since "offerings have a powerful effect in generating prophecy".



In other words, Shlomo's first act as king was an attempt to connect with G-d.



THE GREAT EMPIRE

Shlomo's reign saw a golden age for the land of Israel. Peace was maintained throughout his reign, and having inherited an empire from his father, Shlomo managed to turn it into a centre of wisdom and wealth.

Shlomo was undoubtedly an impressive thinker, and not just in legal and religious matters. The Tanach mentions his knowledge of trees and of animals, which Rashi interprets as referring to his knowledge of natural science.

One way of interpreting this passage about Shlomo's wisdom is that he himself amassed all this knowledge. However, when the Tanach says, "Shlomo's built", we do not take it to literally mean that Shlomo actually laid down bricks – we understand it to mean that Shlomo supervised and financed the construction. Similarly, we could interpret this passage to say that it was Shlomo's kingdom which amassed all this knowledge.

Shlomo's plan was to harness all worldly knowledge and make Jerusalem the hub of all wisdom. For example, when he wants wood and timber to build the Bet Hamikdash, he obviously wants the best, and the inhabitants of Sidon are known for being the most skilled in the world at cutting timber. But rather than simply buying wood from them, Shlomo insists, "My servants will work with yours", and he sends his men to go and cut timber with the men of Sidon. His intention is that his men will learn the skills from those from Sidon, and in doing so, he does not just import wood but also knowledge!

Shlomo established Jerusalem as the Oxbridge of the ancient world. Such was its renown that the Queen of Sheba, a powerful leader of a kingdom which is believed to have become present day Ethiopia, heard of Israel's glory and came to visit, bringing gifts of gold and precious stones.

Seeing Jerusalem's majesty, the Queen of Sheba responds by praising Hashem and recognising G-d's gift of wisdom to Shlomo. Indeed, this seems to have been part of Shlomo's plan all along – when he dedicates the Temple he declares that it should be a place of prayer for **ALL** nations so that non-Jews will hear about G-d and come to hear more. (see Melachim 1: 8:41-43)

Eliyahu

If there is one word to best describe Eliyahu, it is zeal. Eliyahu is one of the best examples of a zealot: someone who is fervently and enthusiastically devoted to a cause (in this case G-d), often in a fanatical way. He lived during the reign of King Achav, one of the most evil Kings of Israel, made even worse by his marriage to Jezebel. We are told very little about him – the first time we meet Eliyahu, after an introduction of exactly four words as to who he is, he storms up to the king and proclaims a drought as punishment for Bnei Yisrael's actions!

Eliyahu makes it his mission to rid Israel of its pagan influences and fiercely stands up for Hashem in a way strong enough to earn him the title of "guardian angel of the Jews" throughout Jewish history. He is a man unafraid to confront kings and speak truth to power, a man with the strength to lead our nation into the era of



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the Mashiach.

The best example of this fearlessness is his defeat of the prophets of Ba'al. Ba'al was a foreign god whose worship had become particularly popular amongst the Jews, much to the dismay of Eliyahu. Eliyahu challenged 450 prophets of Ba'al to a kind of "god-duel" – a face off of sacrificial proportions. He took two oxen, one for the prophets and one for himself, and told them to prepare a sacrifice without using any fire. Their god would have to make the fire. The prophets cried out all day, but fire never came.

Eliyahu even got a bit cheeky with them:

"And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said: 'Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.'" (Melachim 1, 18:27) In other words: "you should shout louder, you utter morons, maybe your god is cba or asleep." Top banter. Then Eliyahu took his turn and shouted, "Let this people know that you the Lord G-d", and Hashem responded in turn, sending a fire to consume the offering. To this the people responded "האֱלֹהִים הוּא ה'", "Hashem is the Lord". Eliyahu returned the faith of the Jews by demonstrating the true might of G-d's power, but he did not stop there: Eliyahu was not satisfied with disproving the prophets. He wanted to punish them for misleading Bnei Yisrael and make sure they would never have the chance again.

The Tanach's Response

So far, the story seems to be about to reach its conclusion: truth wins, idolatry is cast out and faith in Hashem is restored. What happens next is one of the strangest episodes in Tanach. When Jezebel, the evil wife of King Achav hears of what Eliyahu has done, she puts a price on his head and he is forced into hiding. We next find Eliyahu hiding out in a cave (Perek 19):

<p>9. And he came there to the cave, and he lodged there. And behold! The word of the Lord came to him. And He said to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"</p> <p>10. And he said: "I have been zealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant. They have torn down Your altars and they have killed Your prophets by the sword, and I have remained alone, and they seek my life to take it.</p>	<p>ט. וַיָּבֹא שָׁם אֶל הַמְעָרָה וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם וְהִנֵּה דְבַר יְהוָה אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַה לְךָ פֹּה אֵלֶיְהוָה:</p> <p>י. וַיֹּאמֶר קִנְיָא קִנְיָתִי לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת כִּי עָזְבוּ בְרִיתְךָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מִזְבְּחֹתֶיךָ הָרְסוּ וְאֶת נְבִיאֶיךָ הָרְגוּ בַחֶרֶב וְאוֹתֵר אֲנִי לְבַדִּי וַיִּבְקְשׂוּ אֶת נַפְשִׁי לְקַחְתָּהּ:</p>
<p>11. And He said: "Go out and stand in the mountain before the Lord, Behold! the Lord passes, and a great and strong wind splitting mountains and shattering boulders before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake-not in the earthquake was the Lord.</p>	<p>יא. וַיֹּאמֶר צֵא וּעֲמַדְתָּ בְּהָר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהִנֵּה יְהוָה עֹבֵר וְרוּחַ גְּדוּלָה וְחִזָּק מִפָּרֶק הַרִים וּמִשִּׁבְר סְלַעִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לֹא בְרוּחַ יְהוָה וְאַחַר הָרוּחַ רַעַשׁ לֹא בְרַעַשׁ יְהוָה:</p>



<p>12. After the earthquake fire, not in the fire was the Lord, and after the fire a still small sound.</p>	<p>יב. ואחר הרעש אש לא באש יהוה ואחר האש קול דממה דקה:</p>
<p>13. And as Elijah heard, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and he went out and stood at the entrance to the cave, and behold a voice came to him and said: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"</p>	<p>יג. ויהי כשמע אליהו וילט פניו באדרתו ויצא ויעמד פתח המערה והנה אליו קול ויאמר מה לך פה אליהו:</p>
<p>14. And he said, "I have been zealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts, for the Children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, they have torn down Your altars, and they have killed Your prophets by the sword, and I alone remain, and they seek my soul to take it."</p>	<p>יד. ויאמר קנא קנאתי ליהוה אלהי צבאות כי עזבו בריתך בני ישראל את מזבחתיה הרסו ואת נביאיך הרגו בחרב ואותר אני לבדי ויבקשו את נפשי לקחתה:</p>
<p>15. And the Lord said to him: "Go, return to your way to the desert of Damascus and you shall come and anoint Hazael to be king over Aram."</p>	<p>טו. ויאמר יהוה אליו לך שוב לדרכך מדברת דמשק ובאת ומשחת את חזאל למלך על ארם:</p>
<p>16. And Jehu, the son of Nimshi, you shall anoint as king over Israel, and Elisha, the son of Shafat from Abel Meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your stead."</p>	<p>טז. ואת יהוא בן נמשי תמשח למלך על ישראל ואת אלישע בן שפט מאבל מחולה תמשח לנביא תחתיה:</p>

Let's break this down into steps: the fact that G-d is asking Eliyahu a question that he obviously knows the answer to – "What are you doing here Eliyahu?" – suggests that the question is really one that Eliyahu should be asking himself. The question is presumable some kind of test, or some kind of lesson for Eliyahu. The fact that he is asked the same question twice suggests that maybe he is given two chances to learn his lesson. But he does not learn his lesson – otherwise he would have changed his answer! More than that, after he gives the wrong answer a second time, the very next thing that he is told to do is to appoint a replacement prophet. In other words, Eliyahu gets fired.

So in this passage, G-d tries to teach Eliyahu a lesson that he fails to internalise, and because of that, Eliyahu is no longer deemed to be the person to prophesy for Israel. But what lesson is the passage trying to teach us?

It shows us that zeal is not always the answer. We see that whilst strength of will and passionate devotion to Hashem is good, acting with zeal and almost arrogant conviction is not the way in which we fulfil Hashem's commandments. Rabbi Sacks puts it perfectly "In effect, G-d is saying to Eliyahu: false prophets believe in power. At Mt Carmel you showed that I am of greater power. You defeated idolatry on its own terms. That may be fine for those tempted by idolatry, but that is not who I am. The supreme power cares for the powerless. The creator of life loves life. The voice that summoned the universe into being is still and small, hardly louder than a whisper. To hear G-d you have to listen".

This shows that whilst Eliyahu came from the right place, his understanding of how to go about Gods will was wrong. It is not by forcing proof but by nurturing belief and fostering love.



K5: Galut to Geulah



Aims:

1. To explore what Galut to Geulah means
2. To see how Galut to Geulah relates to Torah, Avodah and Aliyah
3. To consider our journey from Galut to Geulah and the point we are currently at



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What is Galut?

Galut or **Golus** (Hebrew: תולג), means literally exile. Galut classically refers to the exile of the Jewish people from the Land of Israel.

Although Galut can mean any exile, and in fact there were 4 main Jewish exiles, when we refer to Galut, we normally mean either the destruction of the 2nd Temple itself or the whole of Jewish history from that point until now. However, to really understand what Galut is, we must understand what the point of it is.



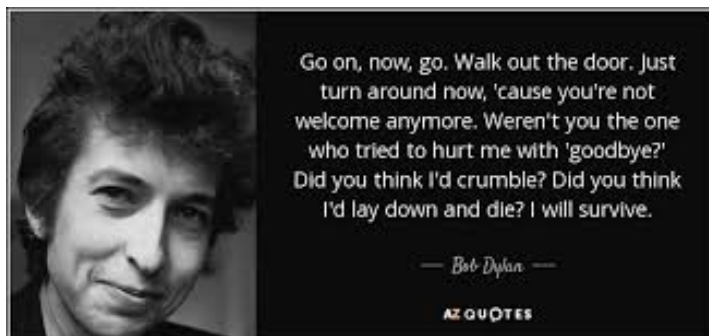
1700 B.C.—“THE WANDERING JEW”—1939 A.D.
This “weary, despised, blood-grimed, hoary-headed trekker of the ages” was seen on a dirty, dusty country road in Poland. Martin Munkacsy, artist photographer, instantly recognized and grasped the opportunity of a lifetime, and got his picture! The silhouette sets forth the pathos of the bowed and aged son of sorrow, wandering on and on and on, over the face of the whole wide world, in search of a place whereon he may find rest for the soles of his feet!

Why were we punished specifically with Galut?

Punishment always comes in direct consequence of sin, and with the purpose of rectifying it. How does our Galut rectify the sins of the generations of the First and Second Temples? It is possible to theorise that Am Yisrael failed to fully fulfil its mission to be the holy **nation** and a **light to the nations** during the thousand years of the two Temples. Thus, the punishment of Galut is saying that perhaps, at that current time, this mission is too high an ideal. Instead of achieving our potential as a nation, we must first work on ourselves as individuals. Is this perhaps why **Brexit** occurred, so Britain could better work on its own agenda before considering relations with the rest of the world?



Galut comes to dismantle the national framework -- the nation and the land. It breaks the



nation into individual communities and families -- a nation of individuals -- who can deal with their own personal and religious issues, so as to "charge their batteries," and thereby have enough strength to rejoin and become a nation at a later time.

This was carried out through the destruction of land. The Land of Israel became desolate; it became impossible to live there. Therefore, the **nation** was dispersed throughout the world, much alike to the Tower of Babel. People no longer had the motivation to be a nation, to go to Israel. They felt, and many still feel such as Neturei Karta, that it was better to remain in exile under the shelter of other nations than to establish a kingdom of their own in the Land of Israel.



Therefore, when we lost our land, our temple, the possibility to self autonomy – we lost part of the ability to be a nation. By not realising the benefits we got from living in Jerusalem and Israel – we lost them. The question is though the extent to which we have them back?

Geulah

Often, people picture "the redemption" or the coming of the Mashiach as a one-moment miraculous event. They imagine that they will hear the shofar and then the Beit HaMikdash will fall from heaven, Mashiach will come riding on a donkey, and all the Jews will immediately come to Israel, where we will be the dominant nation of the world. It is true that some midrashim describe the redemption in these terms. However, many sources describe it quite differently.



Religious Zionism, a theory hold close to the hearts of B'nei Akiva, believes in redemption being a gradual process at its core. We believe that the Geulah is not something that will just happen after intense prayer, but that it takes time and **human** effort to bring it about. We believe that the events of history have been leading towards the point of redemption, and that recent events surrounding the creation of the state of

Israel are the beginning of the Geulah – what is known as "Reishit Smichat Geulateinu", "The First Budding of the Redemption."

Just as Galut comes to dismantle the national framework; the creation of the state of Israel – the beginning of the Geulah – is a step towards the recreation of our nation!

According to Religious Zionism, it is our job as B'nei Akiva to perform Avodah in order to get the wheel rolling in order to begin the redemption process. It is our job to go to Israel, to work the land and to prepare it for the future, and create the future that we want to see.

It's not an easy job and there are of course obstacles in our way, even other Jews, but that should not stop us and we should strive to bring the Messianic Era. It is not the motto of B'nei Akiva to chill (Letzanen) but to work and make it happen!

The Oral Torah and Galut

On Har Sinai, Moshe received the "Torah". It is well known that he received two "Torah's" – the Written Torah (Torah she'Bichtav), and the Oral Torah (Torah she'Baal Peh).

Just as a quick summary, the term Torah She'Bichtav very simply refers to the Tanach, which is made up of Torah, Neviim (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings). We believe this



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Torah was dictated to Moshe directly from Hashem on Mount Sinai.

“The Torah was not meant to be just a book lying on the shelf. It was meant to be part of the everyday life of an entire people. Because of this it could only be transmitted by word of mouth. Torah She’Baal Peh was handed down from teacher to pupil for almost 1500 years until the harsh Roman persecutions finally threatened to eradicate it completely. Finally, 1700 years ago, it was written down to form the Talmud.”

Aryeh Kaplan, Tefillin

The Torah She’Baal Peh is essentially anything that is not included in Torah She’bichtav. This means that anything that is taught beyond the parameters of the TaNach can be classified as Oral Torah.

When referring to Torah She’Baal Peh, we are primarily talking about the Mishna and Gemara. We believe that all the laws and details that are included in the Torah She’B’al Peh were also given to Moshe at Sinai.

Rav Kook suggested that the Written Torah is something that is given to the Jewish people directly from Hashem above. This means that it ultimately has the highest level of holiness possible and affects everything in the world by being above it. The Oral Torah on the other hand, is something that has the ability to enter our lives in a different way. It is something that we, the Jewish people, are always actively involved in, and have the ability to affect. This means that the Oral Torah is always changing and comes alive in each new generation.

Should we emphasise our time on ‘Knowing Halacha’ or ‘Learning Torah’?

If it’s Oral Torah, how and why was it written down?

The Oral Torah was controversially written down during times of persecution. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi (rebbe) wrote down the basics of the Mishna in a logical order in order for the tradition to be passed on correctly. The Talmud Bavli was similarly written down in times when the Jewish communities had less means to pass on the tradition effectively or correctly. **Do you feel like this was the correct approach to take? Does it perhaps show a lack of faith in the Jewish community at the time? Does this devalue the Gemara at all?**

What's the connection of Oral Torah to Galut? Why are we even discussing this here?

"In exile, these twins were separated. The written Torah rose to the heights of holiness, and the oral Torah descended to the very depths."

Rav kook, Orot HaTorah

Rav Kook makes a clear connection between the land of Israel and the Oral Torah. He says that only in Israel, when we are ruling ourselves and we have a temple, the Oral Torah will



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truly flourish. The Oral Torah gives Am Yisrael the potential to become holy by being involved in its creation process. This is no more relevant than is Israel. When we are in Israel, keeping our laws the way we should, building our country, we are directly involved in creating holiness through doing seemingly normal actions. When we fulfill the Oral Torah in Israel, we are fulfilling our potential as a people. However, this did not prevent the Talmud Bavli from being created outside of Israel! So, **is Israel really necessary** to allow the Oral Torah to 'flourish'?

However, in the Galut, we do not have the opportunity to **fulfil** the Oral Torah properly, to **grow** as a people and therefore, the Oral Torah **cannot properly exist**. It therefore had to be written down. When we lost the Beit HaMikdash and the ability to flourish as a people, we also lost the ability for the Oral Torah to flourish as it had been. In answer to the all the questions therefore, it is likely the case that the Oral Torah would have been something entirely different and more vibrant if the exile had never occurred.

The writing down of the Oral Torah is a **not just** a technicality based on practicality, it is a consequence of Am Yisrael not being able to fulfil their potential anymore in Israel. In the Galut, we are much more **restrained** in our ability to serve Hashem and truly understand Torah and therefore the Gemara tells us "From the day of Churban (destruction of the temple), Hashem has nowhere to reside in this world save the 4 Amot of Halacha."



As we have seen the Oral Torah is always alive and changing as the world grows and changes. There are many aspects of modern day life which never existed before and therefore never needed to be discussed. When learning the Oral Torah we often find that to answer our question more questions must be asked. Often to know which way to go and which path to take we must delve a little deeper. It is through constantly asking and learning we find out how to live our lives as good Jews in a very changing world.



That is what B'nei Akiva attempts to do today. As a modern orthodox movement Bnei Akiva does not shy away from the challenges of the modern world and Torah. We embrace the difficulties and the challenges to come up with a solution that allows the Jewish individual to flourish in the modern world. From complex matters such as the creation of wheelchairs that are permissible to use on Shabbat, to the more simple things such as a Kosher KLBD Food guide (and annoying facebook group), in the Galut that we are in, Modern Orthodoxy and B'nei Akiva do all that is possible to enable Jews to live a happy and religious life simultaneously.

Should there be a difference in our priorities during times of Galut and the Geula?



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Previous Redemptions

Previous redemptions also occurred gradually.

- **Egypt**

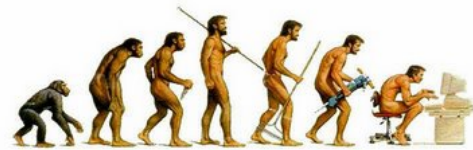
When Hashem took the Jews out of Egypt, the nation achieved physical independence without improving its spiritual standing; a first stage. The ultimate goal of this redemption – to transform Israel into a godly nation – only came about forty nine days later when they received the Torah at mount Sinai, and they only entered Israel 40 years later!

- **The Second Redemption**

The return to Israel after the destruction of the first Temple was also a slow process. At first, the exiles returned to Eretz Yisrael and established a small Jewish state, despite the fact that most of them did not keep mitzvot. In this state, they violated Shabbat, designating it as the market day in Jerusalem. Still, there is no doubt that this process was the beginning of the second redemption. Israel did not achieve full sovereignty or improve its spiritual state until the time of the Chanuka Story 200 years later!

- **Purim**

The Purim redemption also occurred in a similar way. First there was a small measure of political deliverance with Mordechai being given a position of authority. Later, Ester put Mordechai in charge of Haman's estate, but the decree to annihilate the Jews was still not annulled. Finally, towards the end of the process, the Jews reaffirmed their loyalty to God and eventually they were all saved.



The Jewish people were exiled from their Land 2000 years ago and have been



subjugated and oppressed by nearly every nation that we have lived with since. The Prophets of Tanach assured us that we would eventually return to the Land and regain sovereignty over it. The ingathering of the exiles (all the Jews living in Israel) and the resettlement of the Land are clear components of the redemption we talk of, and it has all began to occur in our generation. One who truly contemplates the events of the past century will recognise the great miracles that have transpired and the hand of God that has brought it all about.



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So what are these stages?

The Gemara in Megillah explains that the brachot in the Shemona Esrei were ordered to correspond with the order that the Geula will come and say that the order will be:

1. War will break out
2. The land of Israel bear fruits after being desolate (Bless this year...)
3. The exiled will return to the Land (Sound the great Shofar...)
4. Judges will being wicked ones to Justice (Restore our Judges...)
5. Sinners will perish (And for the heathens...)
6. The righteous will be praised (Upon the righteous...)
7. Jerusalem will return to it's glory days (And to Jerusalem...)
8. Mashiaich will come (The offspring of Your servant David...)
9. Prayer will be returned (Hear our prayers...)
10. Divine service will be returned (Be pleased...)
11. We will give thanks to G-d! (We thank you...)

What signs are there that it is happening now... that Israel is Reishit Tzmichat Geulateinu...

"Geula is the opposite of Galut. What is Galut? An abnormality. For instance, in our normal state, we need to be here, the entire nation of Israel, in the Land of Israel. And all of Eretz Yisrael needs to be in our hands. Thank G-d, Hashem's light is now shining upon us, and increasing, little by little, in gradual stages. How different things were before the establishment of the State of Israel, when we were outside the Land, and the gentiles were in it, and the possibility for a Jew to enter Eretz Yisrael rested in foreign hands. This was a time of Galut. We've progressed a bit since then and are returning to a normal condition: Eretz Yisrael is now in our hands! Jerusalem is now in our hands! And we are now independent! This process unfolds in stages. Just as Hashem can bring the redemption through miracles, He can do it without miracles, in a simpler way, through a natural process, via the conquest and settlement of Eretz Yisrael. The redemption which is unfolding before us appears in stages - not all at once,"

Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook



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Are we still in the *Vision* stage or are we now in the stage of *Reality*?

Based on the belief that a slow, gradual Geula that needs physical effort to make it happen, we believe that we are fortunate to be a part of the redemptive process and that it is something we can help to move along! (The Avoda element that we mentioned earlier)

What is our role?

Aliyah is one of the greatest Jewish phenomena of the past hundred years. For two millennia Jews across the world have been yearning to return to the Land of their ancestors.

"After almost two thousand years of homelessness the Jewish people came home. Judaism was born in the hope of land and Israel is the Jewish land of hope"



Is this the final step?

If so or if not, what does that mean for us? What are our responsibilities?

Whilst the journeys or attempted journeys of our ancestors to the Land of Israel were fraught with difficulties and danger nowadays we can settle in Israel with almost no problems. One of the first laws enacted by the State of Israel (1950) was the Law of Return; this allowed any Jew to make Aliyah and take up citizenship of the State of Israel. Since 1918 over 3.5 million Jews have made Aliyah to Israel with different eras showing different rates of Aliyah from different countries.

Now with Aliya on the increase, as B'nei Akiva we need to embrace and become a part of the Aliya movement to show people the Modern Orthodox way, to show people the Religious Zionist way and to show people the B'nei Akiva way. And perhaps the complete Geulah won't be so far away.

Key Points

- Understanding how Avodah is relevant to Religious Zionism and B'nei Akiva
- Acknowledging the role Torah plays in our lives in Galut and how we must adapt to the world around us
- Appreciating the final aim of Aliya even more



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Extra Chomer:

Jerusalem and The Beit Hamikdash

Jerusalem and the temple hold a special place at the centre of Judaism both physically and spiritually.

The temple that King Solomon built in 946 BCE, the first Beit HaMikdash, was destroyed by the Babylonians in the year 586 BCE, 410 years later. The Jewish people were exiled but returned, just 70 years later, to rebuild the second Beit HaMikdash under the leadership of Ezra and Nechemia in the year 516 BCE. In the year 37 CE, King Herod completed dramatic renovations to the dilapidated Temple, but Roman armies destroyed it in 70 CE when the current exile began.



Whoever did not see the Beit Hamikdash in its structure has never seen a beautiful building' (Gemara Succah 51b)

During 'Temple times', Judaism, as a religion, was very much focused on the Beit HaMikdash itself.

The centre of Jewish Law

The most important institution of Jewish autonomy met regularly in a special hall in the Temple yards. This was the Sanhedrin (council). A lot is uncertain about the Sanhedrin at this time but what is clear is that it was the central legislative and judicial institution in the Jewish world. It took decisions that bound the Jewish people and was responsible for all the central decisions relating to Jewish autonomy left to the people by various foreign powers who ruled the area. It not only made the law; it enforced it through the system of law courts and judges that it organised. It also sent out delegations on behalf of the Jewish people; it was the diplomatic centre of the Jewish world too.

Religious capital of the world

Over the 1st thousand years, Jerusalem had become the undisputed centre of the sacrificial worship in the Jewish world. In a belief system in which sacrifice was still the major way of making a direct personal contact with G-d as well as the major way of atonement for personal and national sin, Jerusalem was essential. During most of the period of the First Temple, other sacrificial shrines had legitimately existed but for the last six or seven hundred years, such shrines had been deemed illegitimate. Jerusalem now stood alone. Moreover, the whole system of pilgrimages, based on a



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thrice-yearly national meeting on the Temple Mount was the single largest and strongest element of physical national unity. Hundreds of thousands of Jews would crowd into the yards of the Beit HaMikdash. This was the nation standing before G-d.

The Bet HaMikdash provided the most physical connection between man and G-d. It was seen as His "home".

It was a football-stadium sized, multi-level structure that stood atop Jerusalem's Mt. Moriah. Much more is known about the architecture of the Second Bet HaMikdash than the First. It consisted of a tall, majestic hall surrounded by sweeping courtyards and stone walls. Within the courtyards were vast floor spaces for the thousands of pilgrims attending the services on Pesach, Shavuot and Succot. There was an altar for the thousands of sacrifices and storage and staff facilities for the hundreds of on-duty Kohanim and Levi'im. In the hall was a small incense altar, a ceremonial bread rack, a menorah and the Kodesh HaKedoshim – Holy of Holies. This was a small square room at the back of the hall formed by a wall-to-wall cloth curtain. In the Holy of Holies was the Aron – the Ark of the Covenant. This small room was a space so ethereal that the laws of physics were suspended within its confines. It was only entered by the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest, the most spiritual human being, on Yom Kippur, the most spiritual day of the year.



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K6 - Medina B'vinyana



Aims:

- To understand the need for Israel as the Jewish state
- To see whether there is a space for the Diaspora in our ideology
- To interpret Reishit Tzmeichaht Geulateinu as the coming of the Modern State of Israel
- To understand the role that religion plays in Zionism and the contribution of the Religious Zionists to the Birth of Israel



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Why Israel?

At the Sixth Zionist Congress at Basel on August 26, 1903, Herzl proposed the British Uganda Programme as a temporary refuge for Jews in Russia in immediate danger. By a vote of 295-178 it was decided to send an expedition ("investigatory commission") to examine the territory proposed. While Herzl made it clear that this program would not affect the ultimate aim of Zionism, a Jewish entity in the Land of Israel, the proposal aroused a storm at the Congress and nearly led to a split in the Zionist Movement. The Jewish Territorialist Organisation (JTO) was formed as a result of the unification of various groups who had supported Herzl's Uganda proposals during the period 1903-1905.

The Uganda Program was finally rejected by the Zionist movement at the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905, but Nahum Syrkin and Israel Zangwill called an alternative conference to continue the plan of the Uganda scheme. When Uganda fell through for technical reasons, Zangwill looked for other places – Canada, Australia, Texas – to settle the Jews. However the organisation failed, as they were unable to secure a definite project.



- Do you think a 'safe haven' would have been a 'temporary' solution?
- What would the State have looked like? (apart from Am Yisrael having all caught Ebola)

Ultimately the Zionist Congress chose Palestine/Zion as the land for the Jewish state. Whether it was divine providence, a deep rooted desire to go back to Jerusalem or something as simple as factional infighting, the Balfour Declaration was made, the White paper signed and after two world wars the State of Israel was born in Eretz Yisrael.

Lets briefly look back to understand the bond between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.

The first time Israel is mentioned is indirectly when Hashem speaks to Avraham. – “Hashem said to Avraham, “Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house to **the land** that I will show you.” After promising Avraham that He will make him into a great nation He says “...to your offspring I will give **this land**.” (Bereshit 12:1-7)

Many years have passed since this took place, and seeing as we are so many generations removed from this prophecy, it is hard for us to truly associate the Israel of today with the Israel – Eretz Canaan, from back then. But really it’s the same place! And this is what is so important not to forget. As we get further and further into all the kvutzot and move on in



history we must still always remember to come back to this point – that this is the land promised to us by Hashem. It's the land set-aside specifically for His people – for us!

When Hashem makes His covenant with Avraham (the covenant between the parts – Brit Bein H'Betarim) He says

וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ, וּבֵין זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ לְדֹרֹתָם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם: לְהִיּוֹת לְךָ לְאֻלָּקִים, וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ. וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ וּלְזֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ אֶת אֶרֶץ מִגְרִיךָ, אֶת כָּל אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, לְאֻחֻזַּת, עוֹלָם; וְהִיִּיתִי לָהֶם, אֱלֹקִים

"I will establish My covenant between Me and you and between your offspring after you, throughout their generations, as an everlasting covenant, **to be Hashem to you** and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and your offspring after you the land of your sojourns – the whole of the land of Canaan – as an everlasting possession; **and I shall be Hashem to them.**" (Bereshit 17:7-8)

Rashi, quoting the Bereshit Rabbah, explains why it is that the Torah repeats the phrase "**shall be Hashem to them**" when in the previous verse it says something very similar:

"and [in the Land] **I shall be "Hashem"**. But one who dwells outside the Land [of Israel] is like one who has no Hashem." (Rashi (Bereshit 17:8))

The Gur Aryeh (Maharal of Prague) explains that there is a unique dimension to Israel's relationship with Hashem when they are in the Land of Israel as that is where Hashem's Providence is most intense. One who lives outside of Israel does not receive the same degree of Divine assistance. Living in the Land of Israel is of utmost importance in Judaism and the land dominates our thoughts and prayers. Our prayers are directed towards Israel wherever we are in the world (Shulchan Aruch).

We are unable to fulfil properly any of our 613 mitzvot while we do not live there. Both Rashi and The Ramban hold that in fact the Torah intends for all mitzvot to be observed in Israel specifically and only B'diEved while in Galut should we also do them there in order to keep familiarised with them for when we return. (Even those mitzvot which are not agricultural)

Rav Neventzal (the previous Chief Rabbi of the Old City) rules this way and takes it one step further. He says that if one were to don ones phylacteries in Chutz La'aretz in the morning, they still have a chiyuv to wear them later in the day when arriving in Israel. This stands true if one has the opposite journey. The reason for this is that there are two distinct mitzvot.

1. To wear teffilin
2. To keep mitzvot in Chutz La'aretz

Even those opinions who do not adopt the views of Rashi and Ramban, argue that keeping mitzvot in Israel is a greater thing than in Chutz La'aretz.

- *What role does Eretz Yisrael play in our lives?*

- *Do you think we could have Am Yisrael, B'Eretz Yisrael, Vi Al Pi Torat Yisrael outside of Eretz Yisrael?*

- *What obstacles would be in the way?*



Having read this, there is clearly a deep rooted bond between Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael. Throughout history there has been a connection with the Land. Images of Jerusalem painted on synagogues around Europe, pilgrimages to Israel from Egypt, Morocco and Spain, prayers for the return to Zion on our lips. During the pogroms in Russia Jews walked across Asia in order to reach the Land of Milk and Honey. During the Holocaust, the underground movements in the Ghettos smuggled Jews out to the Promised Land. Throughout our history we have constantly aspired to move back to Israel.

But the bond did not end with the Birth of the State. Today Jewish schools, from all denominations send students to Israel. Jewish teenagers spend months touring Israel and full years out studying, coming from all over the diaspora. Families aspire to own property in Israel and contribute to the land.

Why is Israel so essential to the Jewish people

The role of the Diaspora

“How did a people survive for twenty centuries without a state, a home, a place where they could defend themselves? How did they sustain their identity when everywhere they were a minority? How did faith survive the massacres and pogroms, when Jews called and heaven seemed silent?”

Israel: Home of Hope

Ok so Am Yisrael lost three terrible wars to the Romans and whether they were taken captive, executed, or fled, the period of Jewish sovereignty and self-determination was all but over. And so with the end of this period for Am Yisrael, two millennia of persecution began.



- In what ways has Am Yisrael changed in the two thousand years without a state?
- How did the Jewish people survive?

Is it all doom and gloom? Yes we did lose our ability to self-determine but did we not survive? At great cost and not without terrible and unrelenting suffering we still survived. It should be noted that we managed to occupy great public offices and many Jews wielded great power. Jewish culture thrived in galut. Jews were artists and musicians, writers and poets, great innovators and academics. Not only in secular life but Judaism and its traditions flourished too. Some of the greatest studies in Torah and Talmud have been written during our exile: the Mishna (200-217 CE), Talmud Yerushalmi (350-400 CE) and Talmud Bavli (500 CE), Shulchan Aruch (1563), the Zohar (13th Century), Mishneh Torah (1170-80) and Mishneh Brurah (1906), writings of Rashi, The Rambam and Ramban, the Maharal of Prague and the various commentators on the entirety of codified literature in Jewish life. These writings were written in the Yeshivas and Beit Midrashim of Galut, and are arguably far superior to anything written after 1948.

So apart from 15 sheck shawarma, Bob Marley pants and shoko b'sakit, what have we gained by having a state?

- In what ways were the nationhood of Am Yisrael different before, during and after Galut?
- How has this sense of nationhood changed over time?
- What similarities can be seen when Am Yisrael are living in Israel and what is different about living outside of Israel

Two different answers can be provided to these questions:

1) The Torah-isn't-the-be-all-and-end-all approach

"Since the day the Temple was destroyed, Hashem has had nothing in the world except for 4 cubits of Halacha alone" **Gemara Berachot 8a**

- What does this mean?

- Is this WHY 'Torah has taken off'?

IN THE GALUT WE ARE NOT IN OUR NATURAL (or national) SITUATION...

... You see, the Torah is effectively the story of the establishment of our nation in our land.



The chosen nation has a chosen land, which it needs to dwell in for it to fulfil its mission on earth...anything else is second best! Judaism in its intended form is far more than just an individual's private performance of mitzvot – it is the national life of Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael Al Pi Torat Yisrael (sound familiar?).

Throughout the long Galut, Jews were scattered all over the world. Without a land, or a state, or a government of our own, we had been stripped of our glory and our pride. Jews were reduced from being a fulfilled nation to living in dispersed communities and impoverished ghettos. We were the lowest of peoples, at the mercy of the gentiles wherever we lived. Our physical life was utterly destroyed - Judaism lost its true national character. The emphasis and understanding of Judaism became focussed around the individual and around his private service of Hashem. Out of no other choice, sanctification of Hashem became consigned to the individual – the focus of Judaism had shifted away from the nation and towards the individual Jew.

2) Shtetle Yisrael not Am Yisrael

The moment of the destruction, Am Yisrael ceased to exist as a sovereign nation. Instead it existed as a community, pockets of people living in communities with mutual goals. The objectives and aims of the Jews living in Galut were community orientated. Aims and goals were not directed at rebuilding the Jewish state but more about flourishing in Galut. Different communities were split depending on their own goals. Communities existed within communities, depending on beliefs and priorities. The success of the Jewish people were individual ones. Torah was learnt in great droves, Jews made great strides in science, art and literature, and many prominent members of the public achieved high public office, however these were the achievements of individual Jews and not Am Yisrael.

By being scattered across the world Jews were disconnected, with the focus being on the shtetle and not on the nation. Before the exile, Jews were living in a Jewish state, this naturally fused civic and religious lives in one and progress was for the state, whereas living outside of Israel communities prioritised maintaining the shtetle, almost protectionist. Is this still the case nowadays? Many argue that the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland has re-invigorated the Jewish people. Rav Yosef B Soloveitchik says in his Sefer *Kol Dodi Dofek* that with Israel's establishment, the Jews are again able to defend themselves and "Jewish blood is not free for taking, is not *hefker*".

- In what ways do Am Yisrael differ between the Diaspora and Israel?

Having now read this we notice that a complete Jewish life is one in which Am Yisrael is a nation and not a shtetle. Where we view ourselves not as the Jewish community of England, or America but as part of sovereign body which can determine its own fate.



We are now in a place where we can answer the big question.

- Does Am Yisrael need the Diaspora???

The Religious Zionism v's Zionism

For us in Bnei Akiva we see Zionism and Religion as two in the same. We would clearly say that Judaism could not exist without the idea of Israel, that Zionism is religious at its core and Torat Yisrael and Am Yisrael are incomplete without Eretz Yisrael.

But how do we come to this view, and more crucially, how come so many others do not? It would be very difficult to pinpoint an exact starting point of the Religious-Zionist movement. Where would we begin? Perhaps we would begin with the Bar Kochva rebellion, to which the prolific tanna Rabbi Akiva attributed messianic significance. This would certainly provide a pretext for the ideology that Mashiach would be the product of a natural sequence of events, which we must proactively strive towards fulfilling. Alternatively, we could focus in on the events leading-up to the building of the Second Beit HaMikdash: The initiation of the process of return to Eretz Yisrael in the time of Ezra and Nechemiya, the "Koresh declaration" and the unenthusiastic response by the Jews of the time which lead to a limited spiritual level during the Bayit Sheni period. All these events bare a chillingly similar parallel to the events associated to the more modern shivat tzion process.

We have traced the roots of the modern Religious-Zionist movement back to the early-mid nineteenth century. This predates the birth of Theodor Herzl by nearly a decade, and the "First Aliya" by more than a generation. The movement towards settling the Land of Israel and the initiation of Jewish Nationalism did not begin in Petach Tikvah or Rishon LeTzion, and certainly not in Basel. Rather, it began in the yeshiva in Posen, where some of the greatest Rabbis of all-time discussed the possibility of re-instating the Korban Pesach. It began with the notion that the Ultimate Redemption would come about through a drawn-out process and a natural order brought about by the actions of the Jewish People. These concepts set the stage for the modern Religious-Zionist movement, and ignited the general Zionist movement.



Reishit Tzmichat Geulateinu (The Beginning of our Redemption)

A fundamental belief of religious Zionism today is that the process of redemption has begun. The events that are unfolding today with regard to Israel are Reishit Tzmichat Geulateinu, the beginning of the building of the redemption. But what does this really mean? And why did they believe this?

If we look at the sources describing the future redemption, we see that they describe two very different, almost opposite, processes by which Am Yisrael will be redeemed. Many Pessukim in Tanach and Midrashim state that the Geula will occur miraculously in a single moment, with Hashem redeeming us b'yad chazaka uvizroa netuya (with a strong hand and an outstretched arm) similar to the Geula from Egypt all those years ago.

Think of the events of modern times. The victory of 1948 and the birth of Israel, the tremendous victory of 1967, the astounding stories of 1973, the economic miracles, the heroics of Entebbe and the bravery of the Yemenite migration. Each one of these are a single moment of wonder in our history as Bnei Yisrael.

- *Why then in spite of these do people feel that Zionism is a secular idea?*
- *Where does the idea of "I am in Israel, X doesn't matter" come from?*

Quick reminder of those aims:

- To understand the need for Israel as the Jewish state
- To see whether there is a space for the Diaspora in our ideology
- To interpret Reishit Tzmeichaht Geulateinu as the coming of the Modern State of Israel
- To understand the role that religion plays in Zionism and the contribution of the Religious Zionists to the Birth of Israel



Extra Chomer

"*Reishit Tzemichat Ge'ulatenu*":

What Kind of Redemption Does Israel Represent?

By Harav Yehuda Amital

A. JOY AND TREPIDATION

"You shall say on that day: I will praise You, O God; although You were angry with me, Your anger is turned back and You comfort me." (*Yishayahu 12:1*)

We experienced this verse on the day the State of Israel was declared. The fifth of *Iyar*, 5708 (May 14, 1948), was a day of God's anger, for we received the bitter news of the fall of Gush Etzion and the many victims who were slaughtered here. But it was also a day of God "turning back" and "comforting me."

Although intellectually I understand the importance of our celebration today, it is psychologically and emotionally difficult for me to rejoice. One reason for this difficulty concerns upcoming events in Gush Katif. One of the forty-eight traits by virtue of which the Torah is acquired is "sharing the yoke with one's neighbor." In other words, one must not let the other person bear his burden alone; one must not stand by and observe from the side. Rather, one must feel existential partnership with his brother who is in distress, and help share his burden.

Along with my anxiety for the residents of Gush Katif, I also have grave concerns, which should not be hidden, regarding the security situation following the disengagement, and regarding the political results of the disengagement process as well. My personal opinion is that until the coming of the Messiah, we will have problems with the Arab world; the question is just at what level.

Beyond these problems, there is another factor that clouds my joy: we are all part of Religious Zionism, a movement that is currently in deep crisis.

For these reasons, it is difficult for me to speak. Yet it is important to emphasize that my difficulty is only emotional. From an ideological perspective, I have no problem rejoicing on *Yom Ha-atzma'ut* this year. I danced and rejoiced on the fifth of *Iyar* 5708, when the State was declared without Gush Katif, without Jaffa, without Nahariya, and without the Old City of Jerusalem – so should I not rejoice today? We cannot deny that the current period is a bitter one, but then, too – when we heard about the fall of Gush Etzion – it was bitter, and nevertheless we rejoiced! Therefore the problem is more emotional than substantial.

This year we are hearing, for the first time, some voices from within the Religious Zionist camp calling on us not to celebrate *Yom Ha-atzma'ut* and not to recite *Hallel*. Although several leading rabbis have denounced this call, the very fact that rabbis have come out with a statement that "We have no portion and inheritance in the Lord of Israel" must give rise to very serious questions. What is the origin of this confusion, which has completely reversed the attitude of many people towards the State?

It seems to me that the main problem stems from the fact that among various groups, doubts have begun to arise concerning the expression, "*reishit tzemichat ge'ulateinu*, the beginning of the flowering of our redemption." What is the source of these doubts? They arise from the philosophy of a great man, Rav Zvi Yehuda ha-Kohen Kook zt"l, and principally from the philosophy of his students. Since I believe that the majority of Religious Zionism does not identify with the philosophy that I shall discuss shortly, and I count myself among that majority, I feel a need to express my opinion and to serve as their mouthpiece. I hope that you will listen to what I have to say, although this is not an opinion that is usually voiced.

B. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATE

In fact, the concept of the "beginning of the redemption" (*atchalta de-geula*) was spoken about long before the establishment of the State. The students of the Vilna Gaon and the students of the Ba'al



Shem Tov who made *aliya* to *Eretz Yisrael* decided that they were living at the time of the "beginning of the redemption." The son-in-law of R. Yehoshua Kutner brought a letter from Rav Eliyahu Guttmacher, one of the leading disciples of R. Akiva Eiger, written in the year 5634 (1874), in which he asserts that if there would be 130 families working the land in *Eretz Yisrael*, this would be considered the "beginning of the redemption."

Before the founding of the State, Rav Avraham Yitzchak ha-Kohen Kook *zt"l* decided that we are living in the time of the "beginning of the redemption" on the basis of the well-known Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 98a):

"Rabbi Abba said: There is no more revealed sign of the redemption than that which is written: 'And you, O mountains of Israel – you shall give forth your branches and bear fruit for My nation, Israel' (*Yechezkel* 36:8)."

His son, Rav Zvi Yehuda, also spoke about this – but in his time the State was already established. And so the question arose: what was so special about the establishment of the State? If the land began to give its fruit to the Nation of Israel before the creation of the State, and the "beginning of the redemption" was already upon us, then what great change came about with the State's birth?

The students of Rav Zvi Yehuda had an answer to this question: indeed, the establishment of the State brought about something new. In light of the Ramban's teaching in his comments on Rambam's *Sefer Ha-mitzvot*, they explained that the "beginning of the redemption" refers not to the Jewish nation dwelling in the Land of Israel, but rather to the absolute sovereignty of the Jewish nation over all parts of *Eretz Yisrael*. I heard this for the first time many years ago, and I was astounded to discover that they believed that a major component of the significance of the State was that it facilitated the fulfillment of the command to dwell in the Land of Israel and to conquer it, in accordance with the teaching of the Ramban. According to this understanding, if a major aspect of the purpose of the State is the fulfillment of the command to exercise sovereignty over *Eretz Yisrael*, then a State that hands over territories betrays its purpose, and we must question whether it is still "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption." According to this view, the State is invested with significance by virtue of its exercising sovereignty over all areas of the land. To my mind, this is the source of the doubts among the Religious Zionist public today concerning the significance of the State.

I do not believe in this approach. I can testify concerning myself that I recited the blessing of "*She-hechyanu*" and I danced on the 29th of November 1947, at Be'erot Yitzchak, even though the U.N. had partitioned the land, and likewise in 1948. Our feeling was one of elation; it was as though there was an intoxicating drug in the air – Israeli independence. We weren't rejoicing because of what the Ramban taught, but rather because of the fulfillment of Herzl's vision. At that time, Rav Zvi Yehuda recounted: "I could not go out and participate in the festivities... for indeed, God's word – 'They have divided My land' (*Yoel* 4:2) – was being fulfilled... In that condition – my whole body shaken, wounded all over, cut up into pieces – I could not rejoice" (excerpt from "*Eretz Ha-Zvi*"). We – the simple Jews among whom I regard myself – didn't know about the Ramban. We knew that there was Israeli independence, Jewish sovereignty in our land – and we rejoiced over that.

C. JEWISH SOVEREIGNTY

I didn't invent this approach. In the previous generation, there were Rabbis who spoke about the "beginning of the redemption," the "revealed end," the "footsteps of the Messiah" – and a few years later came the greatest Holocaust that had ever happened in all of Jewish history. Anyone who thought that he was witnessing the signs of the complete redemption was proved wrong in the Holocaust.

When the State was established, some of the greatest Torah Sages in the world – some of whom I was fortunate to know – declared that although we are not living in the time of the "revealed end" of the "footsteps of the *Mashiach*," there is still great importance to the political freedom of establishing a State. Rambam writes that one of the reasons for the festival of Chanuka is that "Jewish sovereignty was restored for more than two hundred years" during the period of the Chashmonaim (*Hilkhot Chanuka* 3:1) – even though we know the low moral standing of the many members of the Hasmonean dynasty. The



Mishna teaches that on *Yom Kippur* the *Kohen Gadol* would recite eight blessings, one of which is "Upon Israel" (*Yoma*68b). The Gemara explains that this blessing is "Upon Your nation, Israel, who need to be saved" (*Yoma* 70a). Rambam elaborates: "Its theme is that God should save Israel, and not let them be left without a king" (*Hilkhot Avodat Yom ha-Kippurim* 3:11). Again, although we know what type of kings ruled during the Second Temple period, and we know how deficient was their moral and religious level, Rambam nevertheless asserts that the "salvation of Israel" is expressed in sovereignty, royalty.

For these reasons, the Chief Rabbis, including Rav Herzog *zt"l*, ruled that the establishment of the State of Israel is "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption." A situation in which *Am Yisrael* has "a king" (sovereignty) and freedom is a harbinger of redemption. We have no previous accounts; following the Holocaust, any previous accounts are hidden away. We do not know what is supposed to happen, what is destined to take place, but there is no doubt that the establishment of the State of Israel is of great significance in its own right.

After the Oslo Accords, when Israel transferred a few cities to Palestinian control, I participated in a panel discussion in New York with some other Israeli rabbis. One of the questions raised was whether it was still possible to speak of the "beginning of the flowering of our redemption," following the handing over of territories to the Palestinians. One of the speakers answered that if Rav Kook spoke about the "beginning of the flowering of our redemption" in his time, we can certainly speak in such terms in our own times. In response, I said that, with all due respect to the teachings of Rav Kook, a Holocaust had happened in the meantime. Hence, I would not talk about drawing inferences from Rav Kook's time to ours. Rather, I would say that if we believed in "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption" in 1948, then we could certainly still use this term after the Oslo Accords.

When Rav Herzog spoke of "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption," he did not mean the messianic redemption; rather, he meant the simple redemption consisting of Jewish sovereignty in the land. The Chatam Sofer (*parashat Shoftim*, p. 37) comments that several times during the course of history, the Holy One wanted to redeem Israel with an incomplete redemption – as during the period of the Second Temple – but the nation of Israel refused, for we have no desire for an incomplete redemption, without *Mashiach*. The Chatam Sofer wrote this prior to the Holocaust, but after that terrible period during which people sailed aimlessly in boats, with no home, we understand that there was never any *chillul Hashem* – desecration of God's Name – like the Holocaust, nor any *kiddush Hashem* – sanctification of God's Name – like the establishment of the State. There can be no doubt that praise and thanks should be offered for the establishment of the State, even if it is not a messianic redemption, the "revealed end."

Indeed, in 1948 we did not speak of the *Mashiach*. We prayed for *malkhut Yisrael*, and sufficed with sovereignty comparable to that of the Second Temple period. There is no doubt that we attained at least that much. During Ezra's time, very few people came back to Israel; in our time – thank God, we have reached five, six million. We never had such numbers here!

The messianic feeling, the sense of the "revealed end," started after the Six-Day War. In realistic terms, it was difficult to understand how we had managed to defeat seven Arab armies with such ease. Admittedly, there were Torah giants who thought otherwise. In his typically resolute fashion, Rav Shlomo Goren *z"l* said immediately after the war, in a speech at Mossad ha-Rav Kook, that all the events of that war were not miraculous. As proof, he brought the verse, "And it was, when Pharaoh sent out the nation, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines ... for God said, 'Lest the nation regret [leaving] when they see war [approaching], and return to Egypt'" (*Shemot* 13:17). Could God then not perform miracles for Israel in the war to conquer the land, as He did for them in Egypt? What Rav Goren wanted to say was that this was proof that wars of conquest of *Eretz Yisrael* are not carried out through miracles, but rather through human means. Hence, since the Six-Day War was a war for *Eretz Yisrael*, it could not be miraculous. Admittedly, this approach remains an uncommon one. For a large sector of the public, the Six-Day War actually strengthened the view that the significance of the State of Israel is bound up with ruling over *Eretz Yisrael*, rather than with the actual fact of Jewish sovereignty, autonomy and freedom. These people regarded the war as a revealed miracle, and as proof of the imminent messianic redemption.



D. MAINTAINING THE JEWISH MAJORITY

At the same time, after the Six-Day War, some Jews – both religious and secular – stood up and said that the partition of the land that had been forced upon us by the U.N. during the British mandate should be nullified. One of these people was Prof. Yisrael Eldad, who said to me: "We're finished with the partition; let's get back to the Greater Land of Israel."

These people began to speak about a vision of the complete *Eretz Yisrael*, but they didn't notice the Arabs living within the borders of that "Whole Land of Israel." At the time of the establishment of the State, the Arab population within the borders of the country was relatively small, and there was a chance that the Jewish nation would remain the majority for the long term. Today, after our conquest of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, there arises a risk that the State will not remain Jewish. When the government agreed that marriage and divorce would be handled in this country in accordance with religious principles, and that public institutions would observe *kashrut*, this flowed from the sense that this is a Jewish country. But in a Jewish country there must be a Jewish majority, and this is diminishing with time.

For this reason, since the Six-Day War, no government of Israel has dreamed of annexing Judea, Samaria and Gaza as part of the State of Israel. We annexed the Golan Heights, where there are no Arabs, and Jerusalem – based on the view that we could deal with the number of Arabs living there. But annexing Judea, Samaria and Gaza? How long could we hold on without giving the Arabs the right to vote? Even those on the far left admit that the Arabs should not be granted the "right of return," for this would destroy the Jewishness of the State.

Two approaches were proposed to deal with the problem of how to retain the entire land despite the demographic issue. One, led by Rechavam Ze'evi *Hy"d* and fundamentally secular, claimed that the solution was a "transfer" of the Arabs. Aside from the moral problem involved, no Arab state agrees to take in these Arabs. Still, the "transfer" approach arose from logical reasoning: if we want to annex the entire *Eretz Yisrael*, we must find a solution to the demographic problem.

A second approach, whose proponents included religious people with a zealous vision of a Greater *Eretz Yisrael*, claimed that the solution would be found with the coming of the *Mashiach*, and since the *Mashiach* is already knocking at the door, there is no need to worry about the pragmatic, actual ramifications of our actions. This messianic thinking - which perceived the *Mashiach* as already lurking somewhere in the Jerusalem mountains and soon to be revealed to us – is what led to this view.

To my sorrow, I have not merited Divine inspiration. I have never met a prophet who fit all of the Rambam's identifying criteria, who told me that the *Mashiach* is already on the way. When I established the yeshiva, the architect who thought up the shape of the *beit midrash* planned it without windows. I told her about the *tzaddik* in whose town a *shofar* blast was once heard, and the whole community thought that the *Mashiach* had arrived. The *tzaddik* poked his nose out of the window, sniffed gently, and said: "No. When the *Mashiach* comes, it will be possible to sense it in the air." A *beit midrash* needs windows, in order to be able to sense when the *Mashiach* is coming. If I haven't yet sensed the *Mashiach's* footsteps – it is a sign that the *Mashiach* hasn't yet come...

In any event, we must rejoice today just as we rejoiced in 1948. We must recognize that just as the Holocaust was a gargantuan *chillul Hashem*, so the State of Israel is the greatest *kiddush Hashem*. We have a problem with giving away parts of *Eretz Yisrael*, but let us look at what the Holy One has done for us! We have an independent State, we are a prosperous country, and we are militarily strong. True, there is poverty and there are plenty of other problems, but it is difficult to conceive of the magnitude of the change that has been wrought in our condition over the past sixty years.

We are permitted to rejoice wholeheartedly on *Yom Ha-atzma'ut*. Despite our pain, we must follow Rashi's words, "At a time of mourning – one mourns; at a time of joy – one rejoices" (*Bereishit* 6:6). This is "a time of joy," and therefore let us declare without reservation, "This day – God has made; let us celebrate and rejoice in it!" (*Tehillim* 118:24).

[This *sicha* was delivered on *Yom Ha-atzma'ut* 5765 (2005).

It was adapted by Shaul Barth with Reuven Ziegler and translated by Karen Fish.]



K7: Bnei Akiva Heroes



Aims:

1. To learn about the life and achievements of some Bnei Akiva heroes.
2. To understand and appreciate what they did for BAUK and Am Yisrael.
3. To recognise what makes these individuals heroes, their similarities and differences.



תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA UK

Arieh Handler

What is a hero?

Why does Bnei Akiva need heroes?

Arieh Handler was born in 1915 and grew up in Germany. In 1939 he moved to the UK, where he was instrumental in setting up Bnei Akiva UK. He married Henny in 1940 and they had two children – Danny and Gaby. Arieh made Aliyah in the 1940s and was present at the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948. Arieh recalled; “the day of the declaration was the greatest day of my life. None of us had believed we could do it, and we didn’t know if it would succeed, but there we were, declaring independence.” In fact, prior to his recent death, he was the last person alive who was present at the declaration. Not only was he present, he was also actively involved in several meetings beforehand, including those with David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir. In the 1950s he returned to England, where he continued to live a life dedicated to helping Jews in the UK, in Israel, and throughout the world, before returning to Israel permanently in 2006 at the age of 90.



Arieh passed away in May 2011 at the age of 95. Bnei Akiva and Bachad held an evening of tribute to his life at St John’s Wood Shul in June. Over 300 people of all different ages attended, and many more attended a similar event in Israel the evening after, demonstrating just how many people’s lives Arieh touched in a meaningful way.

In addition to his incredible achievements within Bnei Akiva, Arieh was heavily involved in a remarkable number of other organisations in the Jewish community throughout his life, including; Bachad, World Mizrachi, Boys Town Jerusalem, Soviet Jewry, Jewish Childs Day, to name but a few.

Arieh Handler & Bnei Akiva

Bnei Akiva might not be the large and successful movement it is today if it were not for Arieh Handler. He was sent as a shaliach from Israel to increase Religious Zionist youth activities and to encourage people to make Aliyah.

He is famous for saving Jewish children from Nazi Europe and bringing them to the UK, and his care and attention to them afterwards is indeed noteworthy. Arieh, in his capacity as one of the leaders of Bachad (Brit Chalutzim Dati'im, placed the refugees in Gwrych Castle, North Wales (not far from here!), where they learned Ivrit and Jewish Studies, as well as agricultural skills in preparation for a life in Israel.



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In December 1940, Arieh organised the first ever Kinus (gathering) of Bnei Akiva, then the feeder youth movement to Bachad, in Gwrych, where he made an impassioned ideological address for over 3 hours one Motzei Shabbat! Arieh was also famous for arriving late to his own wedding because he was at a Bnei Akiva Veida earlier on!

For the next 25 years, Arieh Handler led the Bnei Akiva and Bachad movements, encouraging members to spend a year at one of the farms, learn agricultural skills and move to Israel to work the land, realising Bnei Akiva's ideological vision of Torah Va'Avodah – leading a religious life whilst working the Land of Israel and contributing to society.



Arieh maintained a strong connection with Bnei Akiva and Bachad for the rest of his life, even after his Aliyah at the age of 90. Until Arieh's passing, Hachshara participants would visit Arieh in his home in Jerusalem and be inspired by the stories and the memories of a remarkable man.

He always proudly spoke of Bnei Akiva as one of his proudest achievements, and in turn Bnei Akiva members always looked to Arieh as a role model and a leader.

Why does Arieh Handler matter to us?

1. **Age doesn't matter**

In Bnei Akiva we talk a lot about the power of youth and how young and ideological people can change the world – just think back to K2. It's true - we can achieve an unbelievable amount through a combination of passion and dedication while we are young. However, there is no rule that this passion and dedication has to dry up once we get a bit older. We can and we should continue to contribute to Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Torat Yisrael with equal enthusiasm throughout our lives. Arieh Handler sets us a wonderful example in this regard, involving himself so heavily in so many communal organisations throughout his long life.

2. **Profession doesn't matter**

We often think that great leaders in the history of Am Yisrael have to be Rabbis, teachers, politicians, or other people who are involved in communal and national life on a professional basis. However, in reality there are many people who make a massive difference to Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Torat Yisrael, even though they do other things for a living. Once again, Arieh Handler is a great example to us all. Although he was a banker by trade, he always found time to dedicate to things that



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really mattered, and he set up and ran many organisations which have produced lots of other leaders and heroes ever since.

3. **Action does matter**

Jews often sit on committees and discuss what needs to be done. However, even if the discussions are always ideological, they help very little if we don't also act upon our discussions and our beliefs. Arieh Handler didn't sit around discussing how to get Jews out of Nazi Germany; he got himself a Gestapo visa and risked his life to arrange transport and visas for Jewish children to escape. Throughout his life, Arieh was somebody who actually did whatever needed to be done.



Hopefully, you can see from the above that Arieh Handler was an inspiring individual, who, when writing a chomer about Bnei Akiva could not be excluded. There aren't many people who have made such a significant difference to Jewry, and to Bnei Akiva, and we continue to hold his memory dear and view him as a role model. Fully understanding and expressing the influence a person such as Arieh made can be a challenge, but we must not deter from it. Considering what he did in his lifetime, every chanich and chanicha should know who Arieh Handler was.

The same can be said of.....

Rav Neria

Born in Lodz, Poland, in 1917, he made Aliyah in 1930 and went to learn in Mercaz HaRav, the yeshiva of Rav Kook. He said of his time there:

"In Russia, one's life was centered around one's personal problems – how to properly observe Shabbat when surrounded by the profane, how to get Kosher food when only one shochet was available etc. In the Rav's Yeshiva I learned how to make community or national Judaism the central part of my life. I learned that each and every person is obligated to think of, worry about, and care for Am Israel, the People of Israel, to see himself as responsible for the People of Israel."



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It was these feelings which inspired Moshe Zvi Menkin, known to his friends as 'Neriah', to go to lecture the Bnei Akiva Snif in Jerusalem. After he lectured there and was very impressed by the group of youth he decided to join them initially as the first madrich, and a short time later to take over as the merakez of the snif. His ties with the Movement remained strong throughout his life as he established many snifim, wrote songs including the movement's anthem, Yad Achim, organised many activities and authored many activity handbooks for madrichim.

Later, Rav Neriah came to the conclusion that it was necessary to establish a Bnei Akiva Yeshiva. This was known as Kfar Haroeh and was the forerunner of the Bnei Akiva Yeshivot and Ulpanot [religious girls' schools]. It also was the forerunner of tens of thousands of chanichim and chanichot, who have fulfilled in the past, and continue to do so today – the visions of Rav Neriah and of his teacher and mentor Rav Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook.

For a gripping story about how Rav Neriah thought BA wasn't frum enough, take a look at the extra chomer! (Not now though, we're not done yet!)

Major Achievements

Rav Neriah made some major contributions in his life to Am Yisrael:

1. He was the **spiritual leader of Bnei Akiva**. He might not have actually founded it but he was its driving force until his death in 1995. He made BA what it is today and turned a small movement to make it huge. He was a figurehead who influenced the tnua by attending seminars, giving shiurim and chizuk to BA-niks all over Israel. He was also the Rav of Bnei Akiva later in life.
2. He enabled the concept of the **Dati Leumi community** to happen – known as the 'kippa sruga generation'. Before him, religious youth were caught in the middle between Charedim and secular people, with each side accusing them of being close to the other. But Rav Neriah instilled pride in being a self-standing community and gave them pride, ideology. This literally stopped religious youth from going off the derech.
3. He took **Rav Kook's Torah** and translated it into everyday language, coming out with books for the 'man on the street' about Torat Rav Kook.
4. He founded the concept of **Yeshivot Bnei Akiva**, which are the jewel in the crown of the Dati Leumi community until today. They teach both secular and Kodesh and help create religious Zionist identities for children.



Now considering the above, it's a little surprising that so few of us (and almost certainly very few, if any of our chanichim) will know who Rav Neriah is, let alone his achievements. Which leads me to think about a few things.....

Does a leader need to be 'famous'?

Is, and should impact or influence be measured in terms of how much we have heard about a person?

Who is the better hero? One who is a 'figurehead' or one who does equal amounts, but is less well known.

What are the similarities and differences between ArieH Handler and Rav Neria in terms of their leadership styles and achievements?

What lessons can our chanichim learn from these people?

As is evident from above, both Rav Neriah and ArieH Handler demonstrated an immense amount of leadership and initiative whose effects can still be seen today. What is also apparent, are the different methods that they used to achieve their goals alongside their different character traits. In an explanation of how we can view different forms of leadership, the Chafetz Chaim comments on the story of Yehoshua and Calev in parashat Shelach Lecha.

So how does one go about living in an intellectually hostile environment? According to the Chafetz Chaim, there are two ways:

1. **The oppositional Road.** This is the path for the lone ranger. Along this path one speaks unequivocally and with passion, and he is unlikely to be swayed.
2. **The Quiet Road.** This is a more passive, 'go-with-the-flow' method. In this case, a person neither voices approval nor engages in any form of protest or objection.



From this we can understand that Yehoshua took the oppositional route, whilst Calev remained relatively passive. So which is the better route? One thing that is clear is that Yehoshua has become the 'historical model' for Klal Yisrael. He is the 'famous one', the figure head. But this does not necessarily mean that he took the more favourable direction. In fact Hashem says...

וְעַבְדִּי כָלֵב עֲקֹב הָיְתָה רֵיחַ אַחֲרָת עִמּוֹ וַיִּמְלֵא אַחֲרָי וַהֲבִיאֲתִיו אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בָּא שָׁמָּה וְנָרְעוּ יוֹרְשָׁנָה.
And my servant Calev – because he had a different spirit with him and he followed my path....and I shall bring him to the land that he went to.

Here Hashem is saying that Calev is equal, but different to Yehoshua. Or as the Thai might put it 'same same, but different.'

So what can be concluded from the above?

Well, we can see that there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' style of leadership or heroism in the Torah, or in Judaism. The stories of Rav Neriah and Aryeh Handler show different forms of heroism, albeit all effective, relevant, inspiring and long-lasting. Whilst this isn't H course, we must consider this machane in the greater framework of the Bnei Akiva journey. So we hope that soon our chanichim will become the future madrichim of the tnuva! Therefore, it's important that they grasp early on the message that there is not just one type of leader. In fact, Judaism values and cherishes difference, as do we. So be sure to spread the message!

When working with young people, we are sometimes faced by the challenge of ensuring that they relate to and grapple with the issues we present them with. It can sometimes unfortunately be the case that chanichim switch off, if they feel that the people whom we hope they identify with are from a different generation or time period. A BA hero who we believe we can all identify with, for reasons far beyond his age is Yoni Jesner.

Yoni Jesner

Yoni Jesner was a boger of Bnei Akiva, originally from Glasgow who was known for his sense of humour, commitment to the Jewish community, and determination to succeed in all his endeavours. In 2002, whilst studying in Yehsivat Har Etzion, he was tragically killed in a suicide bomb in a bus in Tel Aviv, erev Sukkot. After Yoni's death, his organs were donated, notably to a young Palestinian girl. Throughout his life, Yoni was liked, respected and admired, in his death; the true extents to his amazing character were brought to light. Following his death, stories and memories of Yoni, together with his own writings shed light on his true character. Yoni's



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writings can be found in the Extra Chomer, but here are a few as an example.

- If you find it difficult to motivate yourself to do something useful then ask yourself the following questions: At the end of the week what will I have accomplished? Will I have watched T.V. or will I have watched my actions? Will I have changed my hairstyle or will I have changed someone's life? Will I have shared gossip or will I have shared knowledge? Will I have spent money on kids or will I have spent time with them?
- A person, who is only concerned with himself, will wake up one morning and question his worth. A person who gives his time and effort to others will know his worth when he sees the fruits of his labour.
- Don't be scared to get up and dance. You'll get the hang of it.
- If you don't do it who will.

Yoni's character is perhaps best summed up by his actions on his final day...

On Yoni's final day, Yoni and his cousin Gideon Black went to daven shacharit at a Shiva house. It was a Thursday, and when it came to the leining, nobody was able to do it. Yoni stepped forward and leined V'zot Habracha flawlessly. Before making their way to the bus station, Yoni went into a second-hand bookstore, where 3 weeks earlier he had signed a cheque for a book and accidentally slipped the pen into his pocket. He kept it with him all the time thereafter, in case he would get the chance to return it. According to Gideon, Yoni showed a great deal of relief at having returned the pen to its rightful owner – a pen that was probably worth fifty pence. The fact that its monetary value was next to nothing, or that the shop owner probably hadn't even realised the pen was missing, did not deter Yoni away from keeping the mitzvah of returning items to their owner. Such was Yoni's commitment to keeping the mitzvot.



For what reasons do we consider Yoni Jesner a Bnei Akiva hero?

How (if at all) does he differ from the other people mentioned in this kvutza?

What lessons from Yoni can we pass down to our chanichim?

As previously mentioned, it can be hard to fully express the nature of someone, and the impact they had upon us in their lifetime. This is something I really feel when I write about Yoni Jesner. Nevertheless, again, I feel it's important, though difficult to try to convey to the chanichim what sort of person he was. When I think about Yoni and all the amazing



things he did, the common theme that comes up every time is that he was a true, selfless giver. He didn't set up a Yeshiva, he didn't save children from Nazi persecution, but this makes him no less of a leader. Compared to the other heroes mentioned in this kvutza, Yoni's deeds may seem trivial or insignificant. However, if we measure heroism and influence by how many lives a person touched, then Yoni Jesner would certainly be the top of that list.

Esther Cailingold

One last hero to conclude with is a woman who in many ways bridges the gap between the heroes of a different generation who are more difficult to relate to and the heroes of our generation such as Yoni Jesner. Her name was Esther Cailingold. The small biography written below does not do justice to the person she was. What is written below comes mainly from a book written about her called 'An Unlikely Heroine' as well as some memories from my Grandma who grew up with her. I highly recommend reading the book.

Esther was born in 1925 in the East End of London to a religious family who had moved to London from Poland. Her family was also very Zionist and her father had been heavily involved in Mizrachi in Poland. In 1936, her family moved to Stamford Hill, then the up and coming Modern Orthodox community and she was heavily involved in Stamford Hill Bnei Akiva [the first sviva] as well as on Bachad agricultural Hachshara programmes in Britain. Whilst she spent her teenage years as what we would now call a 'Bnei Akiva keeno', she went to North London Collegiate and got a first in English at Goldsmiths.

After spending much time at Thaxted, she made Aliya at the end of 1946 and became an English teacher at the Evelina de Rothschild school in Yerushalayim. As violence against the Jews increased often with the complicity of the British forces as well as events such as the Exodus ship and the need to defend the Jewish community, in 1947 Esther joined the Hagana.

In the 1948 War of Independence, Esther was one of a small group of Hagana, Irgun and Lehi fighters and local Old City Jews defending the besieged Jewish Quarter cut off and surrounded on all sides from the Jordanian Army and other Arab forces.

Weekly convoys of supplies were delivered to the civilian Jewish community under British guard and Esther was able to enter the Old City in her capacity as a teacher in one of the last of the convoys. Her job was to be a runner supplying and transporting food, drink, ammunitions and communications.



There was a tense cease fire at the time but after the British withdrew on 14th May [the first Yom Ha'Atzmaut] Arab attacks on the small Jewish population increased. Esther was injured but carried on her role as a runner. As the Jordanian Legion's attacks increased and they closed in on the Jewish Quarter the fighting became close combat house to house fighting. Since her role as a runner now became impossible she became one of the fighting defenders as a Sten Gunner. On 26th May she was seriously injured in an explosion and eventually passed away three days later after the surrender of the Old City.

She had written many letters to her family and friends in England and her last one intended for her parents she had given to another soldier to deliver to the family. It read as follows:

May 23rd 1948.

Dear Mummy, Daddy and everyone,

If you do get this at all, it will be, I suppose, typical of all my hurried, messy letters. I am writing it to beg of you that, whatever might have happened to me, you will make the effort to take it in the spirit that I want and to understand that for myself I have no regrets. We have had a bitter fight, I have tasted of Gehennem - but it has been worthwhile because I am convinced that the end will see a Jewish State and the realisation of all our longings. I shall only be one of many who fell (in) sacrifice, and I was urged to write this letter because one in particular was killed today who meant a great deal to me. Because of the sorrow I felt, I want you to take it otherwise - to remember that we were soldiers and had the greatest and noblest cause to fight for. God is with us, I know, in his own Holy City, and I am proud and ready to pay the price it may cost to reprieve (?) it. Don't think that I have taken "unnecessary risks" - that does not pay when manpower is short, but I did find the excitement I always needed and have enjoyed it. I hope that you may have the chance of meeting any of my co-fighters who survive, if I do not, and that you will be pleased and not sad of how they talk of me. Please, please do not be sadder than you can help - I have lived my life fully if briefly, and I think that is the best way - "short and sweet", very sweet it has been here in our own land. I hope you will enjoy from Mimi and Asher the satisfaction you have missed in me - let it be without regrets, and then I too shall be happy. I am thinking of you all, every single one of you in the family, and am full of pleasure at the thought that you will one day, very soon I hope, come and enjoy the fruits of that for which we are fighting. Much, much love, and remember me only in happiness.

Shalom and Lehitraot,

Your loving Esther.

One of the things which is so significant to us about Esther Caillingold, is though she is someone of a previous generation, she was very much one of us and someone we feel we can connect to. She was a Modern Orthodox, proudly Zionist, London girl who put



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everything on the line and ultimately her life for what we believe in. What is perhaps most poignant is that she is the kind of person who if she would have so happen to be born in 1993 rather than 1925 she would probably be sitting around this table with us now. If we had been born in 1925 she probably would have been one of our mates. She was an extraordinary yet at the same time totally ordinary person.

What lessons from Esther can we give over to our Chanichim?

Which of these heroes do you connect to the most?

What can we do to become Bnei Akiva heroes?

Key Ideas:

- Arieh Handler, Rav Neriah, Yoni Jesner and Esther Cailingold are all Bnei Akiva heroes.
- Heroism can take many forms and is not only the classic, Superman kind.
- All four of these heroes displayed different forms of leadership, which we can all learn from.

Extra Chomer:

Rav Neria – Story time...

Originally, Rav Neriah was not a big fan of Bnei Akiva. He didn't think BA was that frum and he was not planning on getting involved. Until one day when the first ever football match on Shabbat took place in Jerusalem. Naturally, there were demonstrations and the BA people ensured the game was abandoned. On hearing this, Rav Neriah realised that there was potential within this movement – their Mesirut Nefesh was something to work with, and the rest, as they say, is history.



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Yoni's Writings:

Amongst Yoni's belongings that were found on the bus, were two pages of A4 in his handwriting. These had been started in 1999 and the latest date on them was 13 July 2001.

They are of Yoni's thoughts on life; very brief, but incredible when read. He wasn't writing them to show people, he wasn't writing them to impress. He was writing them for himself - to live by and to think about:

- Don't make out that something is very obvious or people will be scared to ask questions.
- Don't wear your trousers too high up.
- Don't argue a point, even if you are sure that you are correct. Always say "I'll have to check it out because you might be right."
- Never say 'obviously' or 'of course'.
- Sleep before a test or exam.
- Always push yourself to go out with friends, even if you can't be bothered – you'll be happy in the end.
- Do every question on the paper.
- Always laugh when someone makes a joke.
- Never blow your nose in front of people.
- Never get so drunk that you are not in control.
- Always listen when people tell you about themselves.
- Don't bore people with details about yourself.
- Don't do drugs; they seem to muck up your memory.
- Never go into town without a few friends' mobile numbers in case you're stood up.
- Always give, taking rarely makes you liked or feel good about yourself.
- Don't be scared to get up and dance. You'll get the hang of it.
- Never be scared to tell someone how you feel about them.
- Don't be sarcastic.
- Never rely on anybody too much if at all.
- Always have a reasonable sum of money easily accessible.
- Ceilidhs – too much fun. (No one could quite work out what Yoni wrote on this one)
- Always be prompt – never arrive late.
- Always make an effort to look good.
- Always do homework on the night that you get it.
- Always buy presents at least one week in advance.
- Never be impatient.
- Learn from those around you.
- When teaching, never disregard an answer curtly.
- Always be enthusiastic.
- Never raise your voice.
- Don't bore people by complaining and moaning to them about things.



- The job always expands to fill the time at hand, so don't be scared of assuming extra responsibilities.
- Always call parents of new chanichim to make sure that they are settled in.
- Always be tolerant of other people's imperfections.
- When you feel that you've got too much to do, make a list – there's nothing like organisation to bring you back down to earth.
- When drunk, think a bit more than usual before you act.
- Relationships must not be based pure or mostly on the physical aspect, so if you see yourself depending too much on it... do some major thinking.
- Be very aware of peoples' immaturities so that when they hurt you, you don't bear a major grudge.
- NEVER push girls too far.
- Always wash your shoes before packing them.
- Don't slag off past girlfriends/boyfriends in front of prospective ones – very off putting.
- Forgive but do not forget, remember what was done and be on your toes when around the person.
- Don't play games with people; trying to think round another person can end up blowing up in your face.
- Mental approached to different problems and situations will vary from person to person, be VERY aware of that fact when explaining or discussing – a different approach is not necessarily wrong.
- Focus on the blue kite. (Paul Silk)
- If you can't improvise then don't even think about working with kids.
- Go to people where they are, not where you want them to be. (Susan Simpson)
- If you find it difficult to motivate yourself to do something useful then ask yourself the following questions: At the end of the week what will I have accomplished? Will I have watched T.V. or will I have watched my actions? Will I have changed my hairstyle or will I have changed someone's life? Will I have shared gossip or will I have shared knowledge? Will I have spent money on kids or will I have spent time with them?
- A person who is only concerned with himself will wake up one morning and question his worth. A person who gives his time and effort to others will know his worth when he sees the fruits of his labour.
- Give that complement!
- You can only give it if you've got it.
- Always look for the good, both in people and situations.
- There is no surer way of gaining someone's respect and admiration than by making them feel special.
- If you don't do it who will?



K8: Youth Power



Aims:

1. To understand the power of youth.
2. To think about the difference between the energy of youth and adults.
3. To appreciate the impact that we as a youth movement can have on Anglo-Jewry.



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Youth Movements...

Daniel Rose: The world of the Jewish youth movement

Zionist youth movements play a tremendously important role in Jewish communities across the Jewish world, including Europe, North America, South America, Australia, and in Israel. They are a dynamic and powerful source of Jewish identity and knowledge for hundreds of thousands of young Jews around the world, using their passion and commitment to their ideology and charismatic leaders to literally transform people's lives.

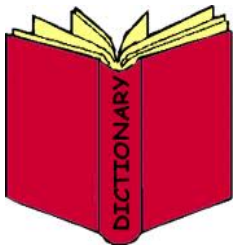
In this Kvutzah, we hope to explore why being a part of a youth movement is not just a coincidence. Rather, it is a way in which we can realise the aims and ideologies of our movement through our youth.

Now, it is well known that we are named after Rabbi Akiva, but when we shout at Mifkad who we are, we do not just say that we are simply followers of Rabbi Akiva. If so, we would reply to the question 'Mi Anachnu?' Talmidei Akiva or Chassidei Akiva!



Instead there is good reason why we are called a YOUTH movement, and there is a reason why we are called Bnei (CHILDREN of) Akiva.

Youth... What is it???



The Oxford Dictionary gives three definitions of 'youth':

1. *Having lived or existed for only a short time.*
2. *The period between childhood and adult age.*
3. *The qualities of vigour, freshness, immaturity, etc. associated with being young.*

The Oxford Dictionary seems to be saying two separate things here. On the one hand, there is nothing special about 'youth'. It simply means not being an adult, and no longer being a child.

On the other hand, youth is seen not as a type of person but as an adjective which describes the qualities of 'being young'. This implies there is something specific and special about this 'age period' that involves special qualities such as vigour and freshness. In short, the period of youth involves and arouses qualities unlike that of adulthood.



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Rav Kook wrote:

*A child's sense develops before his understanding so that he can develop a true world view without the interference of subjective influences. This sense of the world, which is developed without explanation, now gives a person a clean base to understand the world and life ahead of him. He sees the world as plain as it is. **Every elevated ideal that he pursues or is inspired by in his later life, originated from this untainted period of development.** This pure youth must be given the freedom to flourish as necessary to drive him for the rest of his life.*

Rav Kook is explaining here the special qualities that develop during youth and how this period differs to that of adulthood. We can see this description of Rav Kook very clearly nowadays. At a young age, a person looks at the world from a very idealistic point of view. They have not yet been tainted by the hardships of life and therefore have a very positive outlook on the world.



This idealism however, is often lost as they get older and see the world in a different light. Rav Kook explains that we are specifically created this way so that our original understanding of the world will be pure. We need this in order that our ultimate goals, dreams, hopes and efforts come from this pure, idealistic place, not from the subsequent, less idealistic view that we have of the world now. According to Rav Kook, our thought processes and goals we have when we are young are what should gear us through our lives.

So why are young people more idealistic?

- They have longer to put their goals into practice.
- They have a fresh and objective outlook on issues.
- They want to be different from previous generations.
- They have more options available so it's easier to change.
- They have a smaller world so things are easier to accomplish.
- They don't see boundaries as clearly as older people see them.
- They take risks because they know they can get up when they fall.
- They are growing and maturing rapidly so they can visualise rapid change.



So what about adulthood? Shouldn't we all just be Peter Pan?



Obviously, however, youth doesn't last forever. If it did, it wouldn't be a confined time, with differences from adulthood. In fact, perhaps young people would not be as idealistic or enthusiastic if this period lasted indefinitely. Seeing as youth doesn't last forever, where do adults fit in? And how can youth and adults, work together towards a common goal?

As we explained before, as people get older, the fire of youth can burn out from within them as they face the sometimes harsh realities and disappointments of this world. The young have not yet been lied to, not yet felt the loss of a loved one, not yet had to struggle to support a family. These hardships, however, are inevitable consequences of life and to ignore the lessons that could be learnt from life for youthful passion would be nothing but naive.

How can we compromise this seeming contradiction? How can we stay young with all of our youthful ideals but still react appropriately to the natural flow of life? The final pessukim of Nevi'im talk about the days of the Mashiach:

Show me a **young Conservative** and I'll show you someone with no heart. Show me an **old Liberal** and I'll show you someone with no brains.

Malachi 3:23-24

הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי שֶׁלַח לְכֶם אֶת אֱלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא לְפָנַי בּוֹא יוֹם ה' הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא. וְהָשִׁיב לֵב אָבוֹת עַל בָּנִים וְלֵב בָּנִים עַל אָבוֹתָם פֶּן אָבוֹא וְהִפִּיתִי אֶת הָאָרֶץ חֵרֶם.
Behold I send before you Eliyahu Hanavi before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem. And he will turn back [to Hashem] the hearts of fathers with their sons and the hearts of sons with their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with utter destruction.

Rav Kook comments on this prophecy saying that this speaks about the ideal state of interaction between youth and adults:

Rav Kook – Orot

Here the wild spirit of the youth is awake with strength and gvurah and it comes together with the orderly spirit of the elderly which is filled with caution and heavy headedness. Together they form a union to pave their path in life, spiritually and physically. The youth bring the spirit; the adults bring the physical experience to bring about redemption and they make the base for the flowering of Hashem and to create an everlasting light for Ben Yishai, Mashiach Hashem, whose spirit is upon us. They will both come to us together Eliyahu HaNavi, the eternally young, with Mashiach Ben David, the eternally old.



We see from here that the youth and the older generations possess different and vital qualities. The youth with their enthusiasm alone lack the skill and experience to create an eternal impact on the world, yet the adults who do possess this experience lack the inspiration and passionate drive to bring about change. Only through both of these powers working together can each realise its full potential in this world.

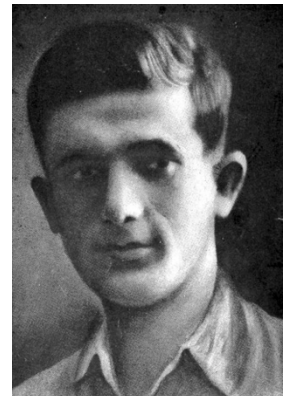
The way to achieve a balance between the two forces is not by compromising and becoming less idealistic or less realistic, *but by working together*. The youth need to bring the spark, the passion, the idealism, while the older generation needs to fan that flame and allow the fire to spread.

As youth, we must know how to keep our ideals, how not to be affected by the strains of the world and to stand up for what we believe in. We must also know how to balance this idealism with the older generations without compromising our dreams or goals.

So I guess the question you're all thinking is...**how do we do it?** We've looked a little at how the different ways ideology manifests itself in both youth and adults, but can we really have an effect on the wider community? Is "youth idealism" enough to make a difference?

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – Mordecai Anielewicz

Mordecai was born into a poor family in 1919 in a small town near Warsaw. After school he joined and became a leader of 'Hashomer HaTzair', the Zionist-Socialist youth movement. In 1939, a week after the German invasion of Poland, he escaped with a group from Warsaw to the east of the country in the hopes of preventing the German advance. After hearing that other Jews and youth movement members had flown to Vilna, Lithuania, Anielewicz travelled there to convince them to return to Poland and fight against the Germans. He later attempted to open the Romanian border in order that Jewish people could make their way to the then Palestine, under the British Mandate. However he was caught and sent to prison for a short time. After his release he returned to Poland.



In 1942, after returning from a trip to another region of Poland, Anielewicz discovered that there had been a major deportation to Treblinka, and now only 60,000 of the 350,000 Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto remained. He joined, soon becoming commander of the Jewish Combat Organisation and became instrumental in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.



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There were no surviving eyewitnesses, but it is thought that he took his own life, alongside his girlfriend and his staff in a mass suicide. His body was never found, but the inscription at 'Mila 18' states that he is buried there.

Another case of 'Youth Power' in our own history: Aliyah to Biriya

The Mizrachi movement founded the settlement of Biriya, a small yishuv near Tzfat, in 1945. It was also a stronghold of the Hagana. In 1946, upon discovering a cache of arms, the British attacked Biriya, destroyed its structures, and sent its settlers to Acre Prison. In response to the first British destruction of a Jewish settlement, on the 11th of Adar, 5,000 members of Bnei Akiva came from all over the country to ascend Biriya under cover of going to nearby Tel Chai to commemorate the Tel Chai battle (in March 1920). They went up in the night and built huts which the British destroyed in the following days. This happened a second time too. The third time, nineteen members of Haroeh went up and, with support from others, stayed there for a year until the British left in 1948. The setting up of Biriya ensured that the whole Biriyan Forest was included in the settlement of what would be Israel in 1948 and from here Golani troops were able to open up the whole of the Golan in 1967. Some of you may have visited Biriya, and hopefully your chanichim will do so next year on Israel Tour-Machane.

The story of Biriya may seem far-fetched and out of reach for us BAUK members, but it can teach us something very important. It was only through the passion and courage of the youth of Bnei Akiva that Biriya was kept a Jewish settlement and part of Israel.

Considering the impact that youth has, should we as members of Bnei Akiva be expected to show the same level of commitment?

"Because it is just another part of a decrepit Anglo-Jewry. The real way to commitment is shouting aloud that we reject the hypocrisy of the rest of Anglo-Jewry and we have something positive to offer instead.

We reject your materialism!

We reject your armchair Zionism!

We believe in using our youth to great aims before we too stagnate!

Only when it is made clear that there is something exciting and daring to which we can be committed will there be real commitment and "pride" instead of the dangerously parrot-like saccharin variety.



Let us commit ourselves to Torah Va'Avodah and the powers of rebellion and youth instead of committing ourselves to the establishment. Youth of the Tnua unite; you have nothing to lose but your B.A. sweatshirts."



The above (previous page obvs) was written over 20 years ago, but does some of it ring true still today? Have we moved on since then, or will our very own Mazkir echo these words? Are we indeed rebels or have we committed ourselves to the establishment?

The following discussion topics relate to some of the other Kvutzot but put a focus on youth. If you link them to the idea of youth power and youth idealism then they could help the Chanichim to understand the bigger picture:

- What can the youth's role be in Torah education?
- Where can the youth play a role in Torah education within Anglo-Jewry?
- Do the youth have a role to play in showing people a life lead by Halacha?
- Can the youth really be a dugma to older people?
- When should youth make Aliyah? What should they consider?
- How can the youth encourage Aliyah in the UK?
- Can youth really believe in Ideology or are they too young?
- How can youth teach Religious Zionism to an Anglo-Jewish community?

People don't often realise what youth movements can achieve. There is a richness of youth in our community, and with commitment and enthusiasm, we are able to build and carry forward our ideals. At present, Israel is being attacked from all sides - spiritually and politically, and suffering daily killings by terrorists. Bnei Akiva, with our strong ideals, and belief in Torah Va'Avodah in the Land of Israel, has a duty to stand up and defend our country, even from the comfort of the Diaspora.



However, this approach can only be temporary. Bnei Akiva's direction has always been forward and upwards. Israel remains a reality because thousands of like-minded young Jews have made the ultimate sacrifice. The best educational tool is personal example; the fulfilment of a lifelong dream. Since the founding of the State, thousands of members of Bnei Akiva have fulfilled their dream and settled in Israel. We are the biggest and the best in the UK. To be a member of Bnei Akiva is to aim high, and the responsibility lies with us to lead



the way. Throughout our years with Bnei Akiva, we learn constantly about love for Israel, and the need to support Israel. During the past year in particular, there has been an emphasis on supporting Israeli shopkeepers and manufacturers, both generally and through specially set up events; and also by showing solidarity with the Israeli people and the support of the Israeli tourist industry with encouragement to take our holidays in the Holy Land. However, more than this, we can shout aloud that we are not simply armchair Zionists but that we have something more long-term to offer instead.

Key Ideas:

- The youth, with their enthusiasm and inexperience, can have a huge impact.
- Bnei Akiva has a history of demonstrating the power of youth.
- We should be as enthusiastic and rebellious as we ever were!



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K9: Shevet Morasha



Aims:

1. To understand the importance of a Shevet in Bnei Akiva.
2. To enthuse Shevet Morasha to make a big impact on Bnei Akiva and the world!
3. To help them appreciate that the Shevet is the link to Bnei Akiva the world over!



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When two become one...the shevet.

Well, actually it's more like when many become one...the shevet. But the spice girls never put that particular lyric in...

The question is really why are we so anti the individual? We know it's better to bench with 3 people, and even better to bench with 10. We prefer to daven with a minyan of 10, you need at least 2 people to bear witness in bet din, the preferred method of Talmud torah is a chavruta of 2, we love chaburot of more than that and we go crazy for shiurim of hundreds of people! What did the single person do that made us so reticent towards allowing them to do anything important?!



"We are all individuals...I'm not!"

But I suppose the above question is really skewed the wrong way. It's not what is wrong with the individual, but more what is right about the community.

One easy answer is that it is just a numbers game. The more people you do all these things with, the more people there are doing them and that makes Hashem happy! But is there some sort of qualitative difference as well?

Mishlei 14:28

כָּרֵב עִם הַדָּרֶת מְלֶכֶה וּבְאַפְסֵי לֵאמֹם מִחֲתַת רִזְזוֹן.

The King's glory is in a multitude of people, but the ruin of His Princedom is in lack of people.

Gemarrah Berachot 6a

It has been taught: Abba Benjamin says: A man's prayer is heard [by Hashem] only in the Synagogue. For it is said: To hearken unto the song and to the prayer. The prayer is to be recited where there is song. Rabin b. R. Adda says in the name of R. Isaac: How do you know that the Holy One, blessed be He, is to be found in the Synagogue? For it is said: Hashem stands in the congregation of Hashem. And how do you know that if ten people pray together the Divine presence is with them? For it is said: 'Hashem stands in the congregation of Hashem. And how do you know that if three are sitting as a court of judges the Divine Presence is with them? For it is said: In the midst of the judges He judges. And how do you know that if two are sitting and studying the Torah together the Divine Presence is with them? For it is said: Then they that feared the Lord spoke one with another; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written



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before Him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name. (What does it mean: 'And that thought upon His name'? — R. Ashi says: If a man thought to fulfil a commandment and he did not do it, because he was prevented by force or accident, then the Scripture credits it to him as if he had performed it.) And how do you know that even if one man sits and studies the Torah the Divine Presence is with him? For it is said: In every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee. Now, since [the Divine presence is] even with one man, why is it necessary to mention two? — The words of two are written down in the book of remembrance, the words of one are not written down in the book of remembrance. Since this is the case with two, why mention three? — I might think [the dispensing of] justice is only for making peace, and the Divine Presence does not come [to participate]. Therefore he teaches us that justice also is Torah. Since it is the case with three, why mention ten? — To [a gathering of] ten the Divine Presence comes first, to three, it comes only after they sit down.

Clearly Hashem prefers it when there are more people...it basically says so in the Torah. But why might that be?

How does the Queen's jubilee help us understand these concepts?



Do something about it!

So doing things with a lot of other people is both quantitatively and qualitatively better than doing something by yourself. To that end on this machane there will be a Gimmel Veida, which will give the chanichim a chance to discuss what they feel about Bnei Akiva – what we can do for them and what problems they feel need to be addressed. They also have the responsibility of electing their own hanhallah – a body that has the ability to put real ideas into practice as a shevet.

Hopefully the result of all these things is to solidify the feeling that Shevet Morasha is a powerful entity in and of itself.

Ghandi

'Be the change you want to see in the world.'

Nowhere is there more evidence of the power of one shevet than in the work of the Chanichim just a few years above them – Shevet Hagevurah (your senior Tzevet). In spite of



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all their faults and flaws (which are limited), these Chanichim understood how they could play an important role in the world and they were active in doing something about it. They saw an issue which spoke to them – The plight of Sderot, so they set up the Sderot Relief charity. (See extra chomer for the flyer).

Shevet Hagevurah are an example to us all about what we can achieve as a group if we put our minds to it. Sderot Relief has raised a large sum of money through selling wristbands, organising sports events such as tennis, table tennis and cycling, and even putting on a charity balloon race! This is the power of the Shevet. Let's try to encourage our Chanichim to do a similar thing. There are a huge number of causes that can be supported, or initiatives that can be undertaken. They really do have the power to make a difference.

It's a small world after all

One thing that we always neglect to give over to the chanichim is that BAUK is just one cog in a global machine. Bnei Akiva is a worldwide movement and the shevet is the one thing that connects BA-nikim to each other from distant corners of the globe!



Locations of Bnei Akiva across the globe

For us to know that we are part of something huge is a very heartening thing. To know that there are thousands of people doing more or less the same things as us, who belong to the same shevet as us, but are thousands of miles away is just plain cool!

When our chanichim get to hachshara in Israel, they will meet people in Shevet Morasha from Bnei Akivas in all sorts of places...but it's a shame nothing happens now between



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BAUK and BAAnywhereElse on the chanichim level. Back in the day we could feasibly be talking pen-pals...now I think we're a little technologically advanced of that, but see what your chanichim think about the idea of connecting Shevet Morasha around the world!

So tachlis how can Shevet Morasha impact Bnei Akiva UK and the whole world?

As madrichim in Sviva, involvement in Bnei Akiva events, going on Hachshara and continuing involvement in Bnei Akiva taking machane and as active Boger are good places to start. The impact Shevet Morasha can have on the above over the coming year/s and well into the future is immeasurable – make sure they know it!!!

But, things don't end there. If we look back on our Bnei Akiva heroes as well as the uniqueness of the power of youth, of what we have learnt about the practical manifestations of Torah, Avoda and Aliya, we can see how Shevet Morasha can impact the State of Israel well into the future as a group in so many ways.

What ways can members of Shevet Morasha improve the State of Israel both now in England and well into the future when they make Aliya?

Key Ideas:

- The Shevet is both quantitatively and qualitatively a more powerful force than the individual.
- The Shevet connects chavirim of Bnei Akiva worldwide.
- Shevet Ne'eman Avichai has the huge potential to impact Bnei Akiva UK and the world!



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**Extra Chomer:
Sderot Relief**

<http://sderotrelief.com/default.aspx>
<http://www.causes.com/causes/14932>



Starting in October 2000, the people of Sderot have been frequently assaulted by Qassam rockets, fired from the Gaza Strip. Fired indiscriminately into the civilian population, the rockets have caused considerable damage to infrastructure and taken a number of lives in the past eight years.

Since then many conditions in the area have changed, most notably in the form of a significant decrease in population, leaving behind mainly those who cannot afford to move.

The installation of a red-dawn alarm system and several military actions have also changed the situation, but to think that the battle is over is fundamentally incorrect. In fact, Sderot is still targeted almost daily, including during 'cease-fires'. These rockets, along with the constant sound of sirens and sight of shelters have led to an essential problem which is where Sderot Relief really aims to help.

The underlying problem that haunts those in Sderot is a rate of mental illness unseen almost anywhere else in the world. A report by NATAL (The Israel Trauma Centre for Victims of Terror and War) showed that between 75% and 94% of children in Sderot exhibit post-traumatic stress disease symptoms, and the disorder has manifested itself fully in 33% of the population, prompting the creation of Sderot Relief.

Sderot Relief is aiming, primarily through voluntary donations and a variety of events, to raise money for a cause that is currently being decided on by the citizens of Sderot.

This project stems from a charity workshop that took place on Bnei Akiva summer camp, Bet Base 5767. A group aged between 12 and 13 went home from that camp, and immediately got to work. They created what is now an up and running charity, with a large group of dedicated members raising money and awareness for the people of Sderot through several initiatives and events we hope to see you at soon.

Sderot Relief is currently consulting the citizens of Sderot to find out how they want the funds raised to be spent.

We hope you believe the people of Sderot to be as worthy a cause as we do, and will therefore donate to Sderot Relief.

