

תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA UK

K1 - Jewish Identity



Aims:

1. To **understand** the two different aspects of being a Jew.
2. To **explore** what it means to be a Jew to us
3. To **consider** the reality of Am Yisrael today.



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Who was the first Jew?

Before we begin our topic, nay, the entire Machane, we must answer a question which, at first, seems very easily answered, but is in fact one that leads us into an elementary understanding of Jewish identity – who was the first Jew?

On the one hand, Avraham would seem to be the founder of our people, and was known as the Ivri (“the Hebrew”). However, Rashi states **5** times in the Gemara that Avraham was simply a Noachide who did the other mitzvot because he wanted to! In which case, the first Jews would have to be those who accepted the Torah at Har Sinai nearly 500 years later!



In truth, we tend to accept that Avraham was the first Jew in terms of the “label”, however it wasn’t until Matan Torah that we received the Torah and thus became full Jews.

We have thus highlighted two major aspects of Judaism, the **ancestral** and the **covenantal**.

Who is a Jew today?

As we know, the primary definition of who a Jew is is defined by the mother, in keeping with the ancestral aspect of Judaism. However, in response to the famous JFS case of 2009 (where a child was denied entry to the school because he mother was a non-orthodox convert) the House of Lords decided that this is not a good way to define Judaism. Their new definition for a Jew is based on how much you keep. Thus, the more you keep, the more Jewish you are.



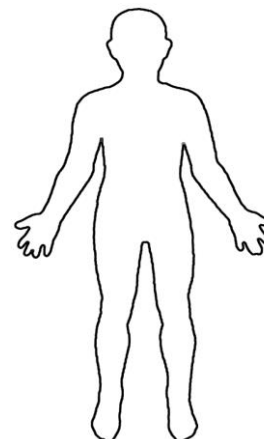
While at first this may seem a tad strange, nevertheless, Rabbanim for centuries had been highlighting this very point to be a second and also important definition of Judaism, the *covenantal* aspect of Judaism.

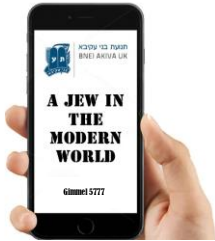
And it is this very concept which is far more relevant to our machane’s theme, rather than devoting time to informing the chanichim that all Jews regardless of their religiosity are still Jews, (which is, nevertheless, an important message), a more potent question to ask is **what does it mean to be a Jew?**



Hadracha Hot Tip!

Draw a body (like the one to the right) and get your Chanichim to “fill it up” with what it means to be a Jew? For example: born to a Jew, Israeli, Zionist, hated, servant of Hashem, to have a mission, to be chosen....





Where does our Jewish identity come from?

To really get a good understanding on where Jewish identity comes from its recommended to read the essay in your files – ‘Jean Paul Sartre, Anti-Semitism and Jewish Identity’ by Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo, but just to refresh your minds or fill you in...

According to the French existential philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre:

“The sole tie that binds them (the Jewish people) is the hostility and the disdain of the societies which surround them. Thus the authentic Jew is the one who asserts his claim in the face of the disdain shown toward him.”



In other words, to be Jewish is to be the object of anti-Semitism and to just accept it.

Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks quotes a young Israeli who was once asked what it meant to him to be Jewish:

“Judaism ‘is a hereditary illness..You can get it from your parents and also pass it along to your children. And why call it an illness? Because not a small number of people have died from it.” [Radical Then, Radical Now, p.2]

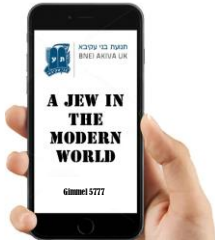
The force of anti-semitism faced by the Jews was noticed by Mark Twain:

“If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of...He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it. The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greeks and Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they were gone...The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities, of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert but aggressive mind. **All things are mortal but the Jews; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?** [Mark Twain, September 1897]

It is understandable how the stereotype of the ‘persecuted Jew’ has come about.

“Earlier generations saw their Jewishness in the light of their universal ethical-monotheistic mission to bring God-consciousness into the world. It was a great privilege and an honour to be a Jew, and to live by the commandments of the Torah and its oral Tradition. But when the mission was removed from the heart of being Jewish, Judaism turned into a burden without a rational *raison d’être*....Gone was the mission and the awareness that one lived by a divine covenant of high responsibility and dignity. And since there is no alternative definition of Jewishness, because Jewishness *is* just about our special relationship with the Creator of the Universe, Judaism for the uninitiated became a negative burden.” [Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo, “Jean Paul Sartre, Anti-Semitism and Jewish Identity”]





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Rav Cardozo has homed in on a fundamental message for us as Bnei Akiva. Jewishness is to have a mission, to be aware that one lives by a divine covenant of high responsibility and dignity. It is this feeling we must share with the chanichim. Jewishness must come out of feeling the privilege of being a Jew and the importance of the task that we have been given.



When we consider our roles as Jews, particularly in the modern world, we have to show our chanichim what it means to be a Jew. Our Jewish identity should be embraced from a positive perspective. We don't cling to our Judaism as a vestige of the past or to deny Hitler a posthumous victory. Everything we do in Bnei Akiva is for this purpose. We create a machane environment, a sort of mini-society, to show our chanichim a paradigm of a religious ideal and that they can have a great time within a Bnei Akiva religious environment, that being Jewish doesn't mean being hated, or having to do something because our parents want to do it, but rather doing it because **we** want to, because **we** feel our responsibility.

So what is our responsibility?

What is the Jewish role in the world? Where do we go from here? Now we've established who we are, what being Jewish means, what do we do with this knowledge?

One concept many of us will be familiar is, is אור לגויים. The idea that Bnei Yisrael are 'a light among the nations'. It is our job to 'stand up for what we believe in, even if we stand alone'.

If we truly believe in our Torah values and morals we should not be afraid to fight for them. Perhaps this is the secret to our immortality? Our refusal to be intimidated or shouted down; to deny our beliefs.

"I can't deny what I believe; I can't be what I'm not"

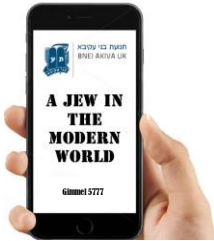
~ Boyzone, No Matter What



This idea, succinctly put by Boyzone in their song No Matter What, also known as Journey Through Faith (a coincidence??), encapsulates this idea.

We, as part of Bnei Akiva, understand this acutely. We are *supposed* to be getting involved with the world. We are *commanded* to be a light unto the nations. We are *obligated* to bring Hashem's ethical words into this world.

Ask your chanachim how they see their role in the world!!!



The reality of Am Yisrael today

But what about those who don't accept this vision of Am Yisrael, who do not believe in this divine mission? How should we approach them? Should we ignore them? Are they even part of Am Yisrael?

Rav Milston gives a brilliant explanation of Yosef's actions at the beginning of Parshat Vayeshev: Yosef knows that the brothers aren't so keen on him and yet when Ya'akov asks him to shlep all the way from Chevron to Shechem to find out what they're up to he does not hesitate. On his way, Yosef encounters a man in a field who asks him what he is looking for:

15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying: 'What do you seek?'

טו וַיִּמְצְאוּהוּ אִישׁ, וְהָיָה תֹעֵה בַשָּׂדֶה;

16 And he said: 'I seek my brethren. Tell me please, where they are feeding the flock.'

טז וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶת-אֶחָי אֲנֹכִי מְבַקֵּשׁ; הַגִּידָה-נָא לִי, אֵיפֹה הֵם רֹעִים.'

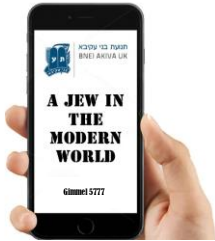
Yosef, despite knowing that the brothers are out to get him, despite knowing that they will see him coming, Yosef goes to look for them, he is seeking his brothers, to put aside their differences, and to be together with them.

Rav Milston explains that we can learn a profound lesson from the actions of Yosef, whilst we may find that as an Orthodox community we are alienated from wider Jewry, it is not for them to come to us, we should be looking for them, going to find them, to make peace with them, to build relationships with them.

As Rav Milston explains elsewhere, we are the bridge; sort of respected by the ultra-orthodox community for being orthodox, sort of respected by the secular community for not being ultra-orthodox, we **must** use the central-ish position to bring together the disparate elements of the wider community of Am Yisrael.

We cannot solve the differences within Am Yisrael, all we can do is try and bring the different parts together a bit. We can ask the question, 'Who is a Jew?' but ultimately, can we really find a conclusive answer? We must put aside our differences and embrace our fellow Jews in order to unite Am Yisrael.

To get us pumping for this Kvutseh, let's enjoy the words of Shlock Rock's song 'Ani Yehudi', Lenny's message is clear, we have differences, but ultimately, we are Jews, we are brothers and we must unite to move forward...



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Shlock Rock – Ani Yehudi (translated)

When they ask, who am I? I am not Ashkenazi, not Sephardic, not French or Yemenite, not Moroccan, not American nor Russian, I'm Jewish.

Chorus: I'm Jewish

When they ask me, what's with me? I'm not religious or secular, left or right wing, not an optimist or a pessimist, or naive. I'm Jewish.

Chorus: I'm Jewish

All in Israel are connected with each other, all in Israel are brothers, we live here together, living with hope and, more important than anything else is love.

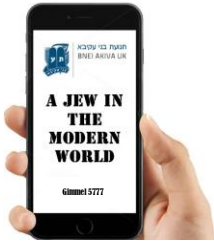
We are citizens, we are soldiers, people, we are all are human beings, we progress and move forward, we believe and we remain hopeful, we are Jews.

Chorus: We are Jews...



Summary of K1:

1. There are two different aspects of being a Jew – ancestral and covenantal.
2. Judaism is more than just rules; we must make be a moral “light unto the nations” and make a positive contribution to the world.
3. We must use our position as Modern Orthodox Jews to unite all different types of Jews.



Extra Chomer

If Jews are to live successfully in the modern world do they have to change?

Listed below are a number of possible changes. Rank them according to your willingness to accept this change: 1 = most willing – 12 = least willing

You also have the last option, which does not agree with any change.

1. Cancelling belief in Mashiah
2. Dropping Hebrew as the language of Jewish Prayer
3. Rejecting belief in the Jewish return to Eretz Yisrael
4. Abolishing traditional Jewish dress
5. Not living apart from the rest of society
6. Eating food that is not strictly kosher enabling Jews to eat with Non-Jews
7. Reducing the power of Rabbis – allowing individuals to make their own decisions
8. Abolish restrictions on use of musical instruments in synagogue
9. Abolish separate seating for women and men in shul
10. Abolish restriction on women rabbis
11. Make Shabbat on a Sunday
12. Permit Jews to use non- Jewish sources and ideas for lifestyle decisions
13. Do not agree with any changes

Although as Bnei Akiva we do not advocate these changes, it may be interesting to spark off a debate in Kvutza.

How do the chanichim view their place in society? Do they view Judaism as a clash to modern life?

Hadracha Hot Tip!! - ‘Running Shtick’

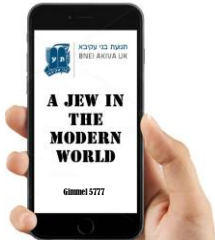
Some madrichim might want to introduce some sort of five-minute shtick for the end of each of kvutza. This is a useful tool for both revising what has been covered already, and for showing the chanichim an overarching structure. The chomer is not a selection of interesting individual session based on random things affecting Am Yisrael; it has a structure and specific aims.

A couple of examples you could do:

Draw a giant outline of a person on a piece of poster paper. Give the person a name. At the end of each kvutza, add one or two different character traits to the person based on what has been learnt during the kvutza. S/he is your ‘Jew in the modern world’.

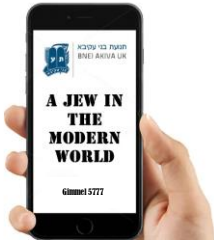
Have each chanich create a real-life facebook wall. Put whatever information on it that you want using post-it notes; details of “friends” (other members of the kvutza), you can have each person “post” on another member’s wall each day, one person writes a “status update” which is a summary of the kvutza and “shares” it with everyone else etc.

The structure of the kvutzot is concentric circles – you could make individual/a group circle-y thing representing the kvutzot



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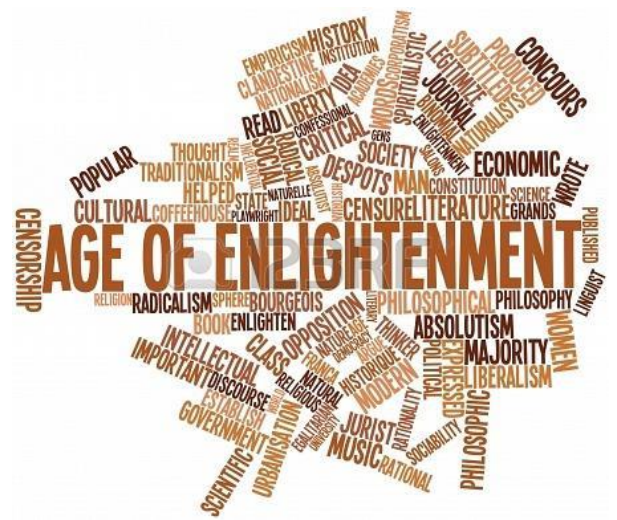
K2 – Modern Orthodoxy

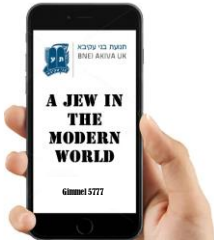


Aims:

1. To **see** the view Judaism has of the modern world.
2. To **learn** if Modern Orthodoxy is a Torah ideal or not.
3. To **realise** the dangers of living a Modern Orthodox life.

Modernity





In the 18th Century, a movement called the “Enlightenment” began. New ideas and concepts were becoming mainstream, and different cultures reacted differently. Within Judaism, a fierce debate began over how much we should be engaging with the outside world. This debate has continued right up to the present day, though using different points of reference. Throughout Gimmel Winter 5776 we will be looking at a number of different issues affecting contemporary Judaism. We will look at areas where the ideas and ideals of the modern world seem to clash with those of our ancient traditions, as well as looking at issues facing Am Yisrael which we have never had to deal with before.

Before we move on to specific issues, we must discuss a far more fundamental question: if the purpose of life is simply to serve Hashem, then why do we interact with the world at all? Why do we not retreat from it and spend all our time in learning and prayer?

Does Hashem Want Us in the Modern World?

This famous question is highlighted by a story recorded in Masechet Brachot, 35b. Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai (of Kabbalah fame) have a dispute as to how to live life: Rashbi says that one should learn Torah their entire day, and financial support will come from elsewhere, but Rabbi Yishmael states, based on the famous passuk we find in the Shema

וְאַסְפְּתָ דְגָנְךָ, וְתִירְשָׁךָ וְיִצְהָרְךָ

And you shall gather in your corn, your wine and your oil. –[Devarim 11:14]

- that Hashem is clearly implying that we shouldn't just learn Torah all day, rather, one is also required to earn a living.

And thus the Gemara states,

אמר אביי הרבה עשו כרבי ישמעאל ועלתה בידן כר' שמעון בן יוחי ולא עלתה בידן

“Abaye said, many followed the approach of Rabbi Yishmael and succeeded; while those who followed the way of Rashbi did not succeed.”

From here we see there is definitely a valid Torah opinion that one should be involved in secular studies, at the very least for a livelihood.

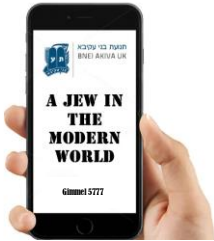
There are a whole bunch of other sources throughout the Chumash and the Gemara which indicate not only are we allowed to go out into the world, but that we are actually *supposed* to:

בראשית פרק ב

(טו) וַיִּקַּח יְקֹנֶן אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיְנַחֵהוּ בְּגֵן עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ:

And Hashem took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to work it and to protect it.

The phrase *Torah im Derech Eretz*, one of the first slogans of Modern Orthodoxy coined by Rabbi Samson Refael Hirsch, comes from a Mishna in Avot (2:2):



רבן גמליאל בנו של רבי יהודה הנשיא אומר יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ שיגיעת שניהם משכחת עון

Rabban Gamaliel the son of Rabbi Judah the Prince said: Great is study of the Torah when combined with a worldly occupation, for toil in them both puts sin out of mind

This line of reasoning applies beyond simply going out to try and earn a living. The outside world can also have a lot to teach us. As cited in *By His Light*, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein זצ"ל says:

...the concept of “Torah and” suggests that there are other values besides intellection, other human and Jewish goals, that there is a need to supplement, to give an integrated vision of human life. The *gemara* in *Avoda Zara* (17b), which I have quoted many times with reference to *Hesder*, speaks with great sharpness of someone who engages only in Torah and not in *gemilut chasadim* (acts of kindness): “It is as if he has no God!” Quite apart from learning—which is a cardinal, central value—there are other areas of human life that need to be dealt with. Surely, the creation and the sustenance of a viable and just society—*chesed* in the broader sense, as in “The world is built by *chesed*” (*Tehillim* 9:3)—needs to be perceived, and this too is a predominantly Centrist perception.



So we see that in order to have an “integrated vision of human life”, we must be a part of the world, we must be able to take from it and grow into the best people we can be. So perhaps we can accept that engaged with the modern world can lead us to become more developed personalities, but surely there are many things about the modern world which run counter to our Jewish values and heritage?

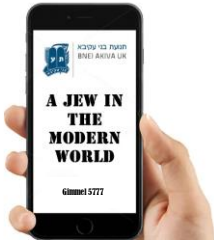
Hadracha Hot Tip!!

Make a value museum. Write out some different values or just “things that the modern world likes” on different sheets of paper; celebrity culture, community life, corporate greed, the ‘X Factor’, human rights etc. Also do some more “traditional” ones; respecting your elders, being religious, married life etc. If you want add some specifically Jewish ones; listening to Rabbis, keeping kosher etc. Stick them up around the room. Give the chanichim some coloured ibble dibble stickers (of the same colour). Ask a question like “which of these do you think modern people identify with most?” Let them go around and put their sticker on the one or two that

The Dangers of Modernity: Two Different Views

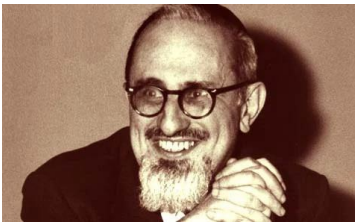
For any Jew who fears Hashem, looking at the world can nowadays seem a rather frightening and depressing sight. In this western civilisation we





inhabit, there is much which is the exact opposite to our values and morality. Corruption and greed have become mainstream. Sexual immorality has become expected across the board. Tradition is no longer seen as binding. It is no wonder then that we could think this is no place for a Jew.

So the question all Jews must ask themselves when faced with this reality is- *how can we live?* The easiest way to do answer the question is by simply picking a side. Charedi and Reform Judaism both take this approach, despite their conclusions being polar opposites. But we're assuming that our chanichim do not come from either of these 'camps', rather they come from homes which have some degree of balance. And so, the question remains, how can all of us, who claim to be Jews in the Modern World legitimise our lifestyle?



Rav Soloveitchik, thought by many to be the foremost thinker of Modern Orthodoxy, puts it this way:

"I cannot join up to any group or association that has emblazoned on its banner the call: 'Separate from the vast world and go into dark caves and set yourself apart from the world and the rest of the Jewish people.' This retreat from the battle is the beginning of defeat and reflects a lack of faith in the eternity of Judaism and its ability to dominate the new world with its

powerful currents and changing forms." (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant and Commitment*)

The key to what he is saying lies in the terminology of "battle" and "defeat". No one ever said that it was supposed to be easy. Living in the modern world brings with it many spiritual rewards, but a person needs to be aware that much of modernity is detrimental.

A Balancing Act

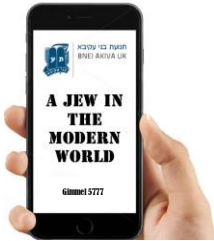
*A friend of mine, he's a Rabbi, and do you know what he says when he sees the Modern Orthodox community? **Modern?** That must mean **not very**...*

The quote above highlights a frightening realism of Jews in their attempt to become at one with the modern world. Despite all the arguments we could make as to its legitimacy, there is an inherent danger, simply because Modern Orthodox people don't necessarily always live up to the Orthodoxy bit!

As we mentioned earlier on, the modern world is a dangerous one, full of temptations that are opposing to Judaism. And too often we, as the Modern Orthodox community are led astray by their appeal.



In order to live a life of Modern Orthodoxy we are forced to walk a path much like a tightrope. Choosing to immerse ourselves within the outside world provides us



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with all sorts of distractions and temptations that make walking the path of an Orthodox Jew more difficult, the end point however, is undoubtedly more rewarding. The alternative is either to not walk the path at all or walk a path that is far removed from the outside world and thus removes any risk of falling in anyway.

Rabbi Meir was a student of Elisha ben Abuya, the most famous heretic in the times of the Mishna. His students explained that he was able to remain in close contact with such a corrosive person because Rabbi Meir was able to extract the truth and spit out the falsehood. We have chosen to live in an environment which can be corrosive, and we must deal with that as mature and sensible Jews, we must attempt to eat the fruit and spit out the seeds.

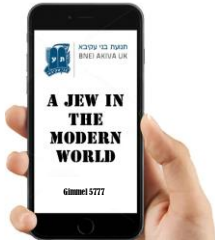
As part of our maturing process, we must look both within ourselves and at the world around us. We must think very carefully about the types of people that we want to become, about which environments and cultures we choose to expose ourselves to. It is critical that we realise that many of our values may have come from the world outside. If this is true then we must figure out if those values fit at all with our tradition or are alien imports.

Summary of K2:

1. It is a fundamentally Jewish value to be involved in the outside world, yet we must be aware of the dangers. Learn how to take in the good stuff and throw out the bad stuff.

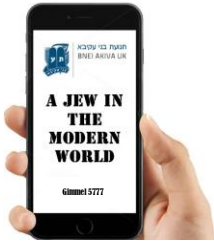
Hadracha Bonus Point from your friendly neighbourhood spiderman:

Perhaps take a moment to consider the role that social media has to play in the modern Jewish world through mediums such as blogs, facebook, twitter and instagram. You can incorporate it in some way into your kvutza by for example, designing a facebook news feed to record all your fun and games.



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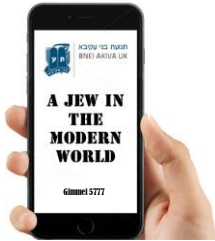
אני וארצי...

K3 - Israel Advocacy



Aims:

1. To **realise** that we have a personal connection to Israel.
2. To **explore** the need for Israel advocacy.
3. To **consider** how to defend Israel.



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In the first two Ks we've looked at who we are as Jews, how we fit into our religion. In K3, we're moving from the individual level, beyond the 'four amot' of halacha, to the 'us' as members of a nation.

Adam Yisraeli or Ish Yehudi?

Since the beginning of the second exile, Judaism has been very much a religion of the individual. Jews followed the Halacha as dictated by the code of law, the Shulchan Aruch. Hundreds of books were written on Jewish practice: this period of time focussed on Jews and individuals, perhaps because in exile nationhood wasn't a possibility. Judaism was a religion.

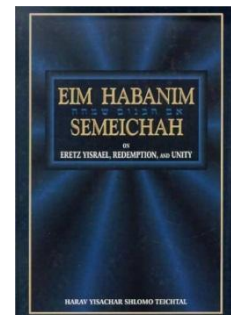
However, the whole idea behind the giving of the Torah is that we became not a religion; rather we became a **Nation**.

וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי מְמַלְכֶת כֹּהֲנִים, וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ: אֱלֹהִים, הַדְּבָרִים, אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹר, אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

“And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Shemot 19:6)

Jews lived in the land of Israel, facing issues together, fighting wars together, experiencing both strife and joy together. The Tanach is a book that is a document of our history as a nation, not of a religion. We lived and we died together.

Rav Teichtal was a well-respected virulently anti-Zionist Rabbi who lived during the Holocaust. Communities across Europe lived in small shtetls, keeping halacha by the letter of the law, but there was no sense of collective responsibility in the national sense. But, amidst the destruction of the Holocaust, Teichtal realised that the Judaism that he lived wasn't the original Judaism: it had over-emphasised being a religion, not a nation. And so he changed his views, arguing that we must act together, rebuilding the nation in our own land. In the context of the Holocaust, he realised that we must become a nation that cares for itself, not be an individual who cares for himself.



B'kitzur, the Jewish People have nationhood on a communal level, as well as 'religious' laws on an individual level, and it is by creating a Jewish society in the Land of Israel, that we are fulfilled as a people.

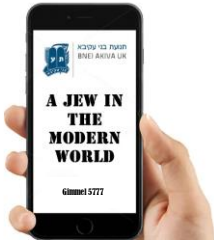
Why don't all sections of the nation accept this change today?

Our relationship today

In the wake of European nationalism in the 1880s, Herzl argued in the First Zionist Congress (1897) that the Jewish People are also a nation, and as such we had a right to self-determination in our own land, just as everyone else was. 'Nationalism' often has negative connotations, with Nazi Germany, the BNP et al providing good reason, but it doesn't have to. Being Jewish in Chutz LaAretz is being a member of a religion, but being a Jew in Israel is being a member of a nation. Nations are made up of culture, language, land, flag, with religion being one (albeit important) component.

Hadracha Hot Tip!!
Put two pieces of paper on either side of the room – one labelled Israel and one labelled England. Describe the room as a scale, asking the chanichim to stand between the two walls nearest the country that they most identify with, e.g. if

So: in order to practice the Torah to the fullest extent, the best place to do it is as a nation in our own land. And, as the Torah, (and later the cultural Zionist Ahad Ha'am) predicted, we as a nation have flourished there: Religious learning has exploded to the biggest size in the history of us as a nation. And once again, we can defend ourselves with our own army, music, cuisine, and literature.



Do our chanichim really adhere to nationalist ideology?

There are many different reasons why we Jews might have a personal connection to Israel. For some of our chanichim, Israel may just be the place they go on holiday some years. Others may have family there. Some of us may see Israel as our home, the place where we intend to live and the place where we feel most comfortable. Others may see the country as the safest place for us to live in; where we have our own self-determination and can choose our own destiny. Many Jews have a religious relationship with Eretz Yisrael, seeing the land as holy, the country as the fulfilment of prophecy, and living there as the fulfilment of the mitzvah of yishuv Eretz Yisrael.

But what is clear is that our chanichim feel a connection with the State of Israel. We feel collective pain when Israel is at war, when there's a terrorist attack. During the recent terrorist attacks, British Jews were in uproar that it wasn't in the British press. Why? Because we feel we have a stake in Israel, a share in the nation.

Lighting up the World

We've all heard the term "chosen nation", the idea that we should be getting involved with the world, spreading Hashem's ethical words (more to come in K5). Yet there are billions of people in the world that have never met a Jew in their lives. How are we, the chosen nation supposed to influence these people and spread Hashem's message to them?

Rav Kook answers this by saying that the ideal form of Am Yisrael being a light unto the nations is when we are together in Eretz Yisrael. From there everyone will see how morally just and economically successful our state is and will attribute our success to our collective worship of Hashem. This will in turn encourage the rest of the world to recognise the importance of ethics and develop a relationship with Hashem. As David Ben-Gurion said about Israel:

History did not spoil us with power, wealth, nor with broad territories or an enormous community lot, however, it did grant us the uncommon intellectual and moral virtue, and thus it [the virtue] is both a privilege and an obligation to be a "Light unto the Nations".

This notion of "light unto the nations"; Or Lagoyim, is based in a few verses in Yishayahu for example:

ישעיהו פרק מט פסוק ו

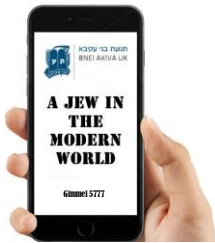
וַיֹּאמֶר נְקַל מִהְיוֹתָהּ לִי עֶבֶד לְהִקִּים אֶת שְׂבִטִי יַעֲקֹב <וּנְצִירִי> וּנְצִירֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהָשִׁיב וּנְתַתִּיךָ לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם לְהַיּוֹת יְשׁוּעָתִי עַד קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ:

*He said, 'It is too light a thing for you to be My servant, to establish the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the scions of Israel, and I shall submit you as a **light unto the nations**, to be My salvation until the end of the earth*

Hadracha Hot Tip!!

Play tug of war with only two chanichim on each side. Gradually add chanichim to each side. At the end of the game, explain that they are stronger and are influencing more people when more people are working together. Or make Origami that requires all the kvutza members to join something together. Draw on parallels with the State of Israel.





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The official emblem of the State of Israel is the menorah. Whilst this obviously has biblical and historical significance, it is also derived from the image of the State of Israel as an Or Lagoyim. Rabbi Dr. Shmuel Kahana presents a parable to how this was chosen:



And then one person stood up and suggested: "The Menorah shall be the Emblem of Israel", and why a Menorah?, "Since Israel was designated to serve as the "Light Unto the Nations", a light unto the whole world, and the Glow-light that was lighted in the First and Second Temple spread the light to the entire world. And even nowadays, the days of the Third Temple - the Menorah will return to light [our] people and the world".

Advocating for Israel

Israel as you probably know is a small country in the Middle East surrounded by many hostile neighbours. Throughout its short existence it has been plagued by war and terror with those around it refusing even to recognise its right to exist. In July 1853 Lord Shaftesbury wrote "There is a country without a nation; and God now in his wisdom and mercy, directs us to a nation without a country". For many this was a view of the Zionist dream, that Palestine was an empty land waiting for new residents to move in.

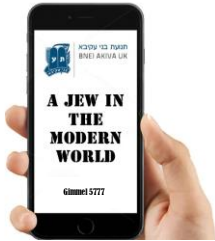
Hadracha Hot Tip!!

Cut out some newspaper headlines – some real, some made up, some positive and some negative. Ask the chanichim to guess which of are the real headlines. Do the chanichim find this shocking? Ask the chanichim whether they think these are fair and see if they can respond to the accusations.

But this was not exactly the case. There were some people living in the land, mostly Arabs - both Muslim and Christian - who had lived there for many years but did not have their own independent state. For many years Palestine had passed between different empires who ruled over it. And here is born one of the objections to our beloved State of Israel: the fact that we are settling a land which was inhabited by people before us.

Regardless of the politics, when we have established a personal connection to Israel, critical attacks against Israel are even harder for us since it is not just a criticism against a foreign government but rather attacks against our country, our nation. If Israel is demonised by the world, then that will affect its status as an Or Lagoyim and it will cause the world to think negatively about Am Yisrael and our task becomes mission impossible. The whole pre-amble about nationhood is in this K because without the land of Israel is integral to our Judaism. As we know, it is not enough to pray for our brethren; if there are any opportunities to help then we must not hold back. As Jews we see ourselves as part of a bigger picture and ultimately we are responsible for one another. And that's a responsibility to ourselves, as well as a responsibility to Hashem, to prevent a Chillul Hashem and the demonization of the country that represents us.

We should also take into account that we now live in a global village and that Israel is influenced by what the rest of the world says, especially the USA. In 2006, when media coverage slanted Israel during the Second Lebanon War it was not long before international



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pressure forced Israel to abandon their offensive. This is another reason why our defending of Israel here in the UK is important.

However, it should be noted that legitimate criticism is not the same as anti-Semitism; every country has its flaws and issues and Israel is no exception. As Rabbi Dr. Harvey Belovski points out:



“One who always criticises Israel is a fool, but one who never criticises Israel is also a fool.”

The point to be made from this is that although we should hold Israel to a higher moral standard than other countries, it is still only a nascent country and has room for improvement.

What is the difference between legitimate and illegitimate criticism of Israel? We are being counter-productive if we defend Israel when it has actually done something wrong. Helpfully, Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet refusnik and present Chairman of the Jewish Agency answers this with the 3 ‘D’s test:

Demonization: When the Jewish state is being demonized; when Israel's actions are blown out of all sensible proportion; when comparisons are made between Israelis and Nazis and between Palestinian refugee camps and Auschwitz - this is anti-Semitism, not legitimate criticism of Israel.

Double Standards: When criticism of Israel is applied selectively; when Israel is singled out by the United Nations for human rights abuses while the behaviour of known and major abusers, such as China, Iran, Cuba, and Syria, is ignored; when Israel's Magen David Adom, alone among the world's ambulance services, is denied admission to the International Red Cross - this is anti-Semitism.

Delegitimization: when Israel's fundamental right to exist is denied - alone among all peoples in the world - this too is anti-Semitism.

Who are you talking to?

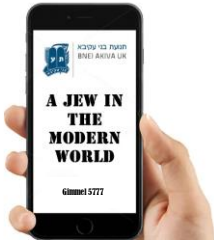
Israel advocacy is not about trying to change the minds of people who are staunchly anti-Israel. Rather, it is more about speaking with those in the middle who know very little about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and have not made up their minds. These people are the bulk of public opinion and our role is to make sure that they see that Israel is a small nation striving for existence and ultimately peace. This element of Israel Advocacy may represent our role as an Or LaGoyim.



Chomer is traditionally aimed at madrichim, to be passed on to the chanichim. On campus, advocacy makes sense. But in Jewish (or even non-Jewish) schools, why are we talking about Israel advocacy to our 15 year old chanichim? Is it too

early?





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Addressing Israel's Critics

So how do we address demonising claims against Israel, let's take a look at some of the common claims and consider how we feel about them and how we would respond to them.

1. Israel has displaced the Palestinian people from their homeland.
2. Israel is an exploitation of the Palestinian people in the name of the Holocaust.
3. Israel has started wars in order to expand its borders.
4. Israel is a Racist State.
5. Israel violates Human Rights.

These and many other accusations can be found on websites and in newspapers not just in the Muslim world but across Europe, the UK and the USA. But how do we respond to them? Do we know the answers to give?

Some tips for advocating on Israel's behalf

Stay informed: Israel's critics spend a lot of time and energy investigating what goes on and if you want to argue Israel's case effectively then you need to learn the facts. Books and the internet are great resources as well as keeping up to date by reading newspapers and watching the news.

Make sure the basic facts get out: e.g., Arafat's rejection of 96% of the West Bank; Hamas' launch of 6,000 missiles, etc. — you'll be amazed by how little of the information shown is actually accurate.

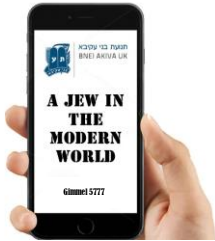
Normalise and Civilise Israel: It's a place where people can actually live a normal life; it's technologically advanced nation, a leader in computer tech, etc. When people read about Israel, 90% of the time it's in the context of war, crisis – as advocates, we should “lower the disaster quotient” and show Israel's normality!

Use the Internet: During the latest conflict – Operation Pillar of Fire/Cloud, the role of social media in the war became evident. Battle information came out in real time on twitter and public opinion was swayed by information on blogs.

Ultimately, we are Bnei Akiva, and Eretz Yisrael is a central point in our ideology. It is our homeland and it is the source around which our whole identity was built. Whilst we cannot ignore the realities of the outside world, we also owe it to Am Yisrael to play our part in Jewish history. Whilst we are here in Chutz La'aretz, we cannot play an active part in building the state or serve in the army, but we must not forget that we are here for a reason and as Jews in the Diaspora we have to defend Israel's borders in any way that we can. This kvutza should be the first time we introduce to our chanichim the significance of our contribution, that while we may be one person, a tzevet, a shevet, a community, whatever we are – Israel needs us and we should be there for her.

Summary of K3:

1. Our relationship with Israel should stem from us as individuals as members of a nation.
2. Israel is the best place that we can do Or Lagoyim from.
3. Advocating for Israel is an important way that we can help it become an Or Lagoyim.



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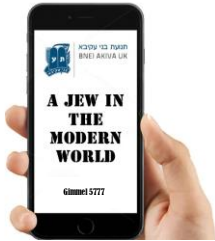
אני ועמי...

K4 – Challenges for the Jewish People



Aims:

1. To **understand** where the antisemitic movement came from.
2. To **look** at the reasons for antisemitism.
3. To **consider** how modern antisemitism affects us.



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The aim of this Kvutza is to consider some of the major challenges facing the Jewish People today that will have significant bearing on the future of our nation: Where will our grandchildren be? Will they be in Israel, continuing the Judaism that the Torah intended, in the correct place? Will they have assimilated so much that they no longer identify as Jewish? Will history repeat itself with a new wave of antisemitism? And will your grandchildren be the MO Jew you want to be, or have gone down the Haredi path?

It would seem that the crux of the matter is thus: Do we want it to be the same as today, or have progressed to a better version? And how can we do that?
Let's look at some of the challenges facing us.

*“Challenge is a dragon with a gift in its mouth. Tame the dragon and the gift is yours.”-
Noela Evans*

Am Yisrael

We define as Modern Orthodox. But how far from Haredi Judaism is that? And are Conservative and Masorti still within the domain of ‘Judaism’? Has Reform gone so far beyond that it's no longer Judaism? Aren't all these movements made up of Jews, just like you and me? What is Judaism if so many people define themselves under the same banner? What is ‘Am Yisrael’ if we all believe different things, practice different things, look different.

We have seen in previous kvutzot that Hashem has a plan for His people – and as Bnei Akiva we believe in Am Yisrael, B'ereitz Yisrael, v'al pi Torat Yisrael; that our mission in this world can only be carried out by the People of Israel living in the land of Israel according to the Torah of Israel. But how do we achieve this when these groups seem so different from us and our beliefs?

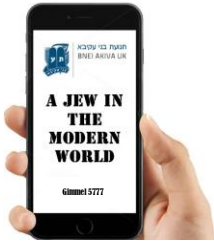
Some recent issues dividing Am Yisrael include:

1. Women of the Wall and the Egalitarian session of the Kotel
2. Charedi Army Draft Exemptions
- 3.
- 4.

These divisions have recently come to a head with the Limmud Conference debate. Can Orthodoxy stand side by side with Reform? Here's one of the first thinkers to address this point, Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, who is widely recognised as one of the founders of Modern Orthodoxy. He wrote the following:

...a Jew can never form one religious community with baptized Jews, or regard as his own a community or communal institutions established and administered by and for baptized Jews. By the same token he cannot accept as his own a religious community or religious institutions that have been established and are managed by and for Reformers. The Orthodox and Reform do not belong together in spirit before G-d...





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This seems to be fairly unequivocal. Rabbi Hirsch was very keen on the historical mission of the Jewish people of bringing Hashem into this world. For Hirsch, unity of the Jewish people was only worth it if it was within the bounds of halacha, and furthered the word of the Torah.



Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer, a contemporary of Rabbi Hirsch, and another founder of modern orthodoxy, took the opposite view. As we saw in K3, Judaism isn't just a religion; rather it's a nation. In that context, to turn away from our fellow Jews, regardless of their beliefs, would be to divide the nation. Halacha isn't the only goal of Am Yisrael, and therefore Hirsch's views "*make it even less likely for a bridge to be built from your congregation to those who are secessionists...*" Hildesheimer believed the nation is furthered by interaction with other denominations; Hirsch believed it was an affront to the Word of Hashem.

Many of these opinions are from a long time ago, and much has changed. Below are a series of talking points on the topic of interdenominational dialogue:

- Do we want to engage in debate with movements which deny the authenticity of the Torah? Or do we have nothing to hide?
- How do we deal with the fact that some groups consider people to be Jewish who we do not?
- Even if we cannot find common ground in theology, are there not societal things that we can work together on; combating anti-Semitism, defending Israel?
- Should we be reaching out to them, not necessarily so that Am Yisrael can be unified, but so that we can bring them closer to Hashem?
- Where do the Charedim fit in in all this?
- Should we, as Bnei Akiva, be participating in Limmud?

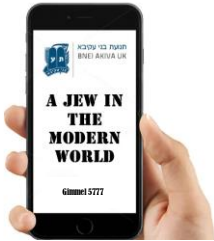
The main point here is to understand that the Jewish people is fractured and splintered. It is worthwhile to debate how exactly we are supposed to approach these fractures.

Anti-Semitism

Antisemitism today is global; it manifests itself in different forms across the world, some more common than others, but in some form or another will affect our Chanichim as Jews living in the modern world. Antisemitism comes in the forms of terrorism, physical attacks, abuse or intimidation, racism in sport, property damage and cemetery desecration. Some of your chanichim will have experienced it themselves in school, on the bus, online.

Where do we draw the line between rude and actual hatred?

There are dozens of theories as to why it happens, but this is beyond the scope of this K. Instead, it is an issue to think about how it affects us in the modern world, and what we can do about it (see later).



Assimilation

Assimilation means “to absorb into the culture or mores of a population or group”. In Judaism, we use this definition when we talk about Jews who stray from the traditions of their past. But what is the extent of this drifting, and how would we go about measuring it?

Obviously, it is not easy to define an individual’s attachment to Judaism. One variable that is often used is that of “marrying out”. The number of Jews who marry out probably serves as a good indicator as to how many people are drifting away. According to the most recent statistics (2007) provided by the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, 54% of American Jews marry out. 54%. That’s right. And things aren’t too much better in England either, where the figure hovers between 40 and 45%. That means statistically that as time goes on the Jewish people will diminish rapidly, cutting by one half every generation.

In a 2009 conference of 300 European Rabbis, Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, former chief rabbi of Israel and currently chairman of Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, said assimilation "is today the biggest threat to the Jewish people." Even the briefest of glances shows his statement to be reasonable.

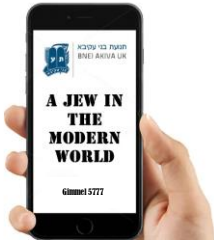
The British Jewish community, estimated in the 1950s to number some 450,000 individuals, had declined by the late 1990s to 280,000. This means that the Jewish community has lost **ten Jews a day**, every day, for more than forty years. From 1985-90, 57% of U.S. Jews married non-Jews. Only a small percentage of the couples planned to raise their children as Jews. In Britain, during the same time period, 44% of Jews married non-Jews. And those staying Orthodox is just a fraction of the remaining percent (see the most recent Pew report below).

Orthodox Retention, by Age

Among those raised as Orthodox Jews by religion who are now age...

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
<i>% who are currently...</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Orthodox Jews by religion	83	57	41	22
Conservative Jews by religion	1	9	17	29
Reform Jews by religion	0	7	7	23
Jews by religion – other denom.	0	1	3	6
Jews by religion – no denom.	3	22	11	9
Jews of no religion	6	4	4	6
Not Jewish	<u>7</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100	100

This is not necessarily a new problem. Whenever two cultures come into contact there is always going to be intermingling, and since the times of the Gemara we have had various halachot which demand that we maintain our distance from those around us. So why is problem so much bigger today?



Contemporary Assimilation

Reasons include, but are not limited to: -

1) Cultural integration: as mentioned above, any time two cultures come into contact there will inevitably be some measure of borrowing and sharing of practices and customs. In its most benign forms this can just be expressed by things like “Jewish humour”. In its less desirable forms it can involve people abandoning their old heritage and cultural background for a new one.

In days gone by, this was not possible. According to Professor Monika Richarz, Former Director of the Institute for German-Jewish History, “Before emancipation Jews had traditionally been a separate nation with their own culture. [...] This was regarded as a barrier to full citizenship in many modern nation states.”

It was not until the emancipation that Jews were even able to *encounter* any outside cultures, let alone integrate into them. However, once they were ‘emancipated’ a whole world of opportunity opened for them. This is similar to what happened in the times of the Maccabees so many years ago. If a person was not a Greek ‘citizen’, they found their path to success to be hindered and blocked right from the start. With citizenship came enhanced social mobility. But in order to gain citizenship a person had to become educated in Greek ways and manners. This led to a surging tide of assimilation.

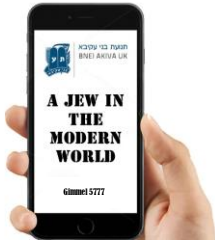
Quick Quote:

Nature made us individuals, as she did the flowers and the pebbles; but we are afraid to be peculiar, and so our society resembles a bag of marbles, or a string of mold candles. Why should we all dress after the same fashion? The frost never paints my windows twice alike. ~Lydia Maria Child

2) Personal autonomy: Autonomy is the ability of a person to make their own decisions about their life, free from authority, be it of their parents or of their heritage. Before the enlightenment, you did not have a choice about whether to live as a Jew or not; you just did what your parents did and what your Rabbi told you. The religious authorities held all the power in the shtetl. With the enlightenment however, people became able to make their own decisions. They could choose to opt out. Of course there was a spectrum – everybody chose which bits they wanted to hang on to and which bits they wanted to discard, but the key point is that they had the ability to choose.

3) New Atheism: In the modern era, we have seen an unprecedented upsurge in atheism and its proponents. The four knights of the apocalypse; Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and the late Christopher Hitchens have proved to be eloquent spokespeople for the atheist movement, to the point of being evangelical. Intellectual attacks on both religious belief and religious history have caused many to abandon the faith of their parents.

In the modern era, Judaism has faced a question which it has never faced before: how can it ensure that it stays relevant and reasonable to its adherents? In short, **Judaism must be sold to the Jews.**



Many groups have chosen to ignore the problem; rejecting and ostracising those who do not feel comfortable within Orthodoxy. Others have tried to broaden their church, abandoning many of their ancient practices in a bid to stay relevant. There is a question of relevance versus authenticity at stake. However, the whole point of religion is that it makes claims to great spiritual truths and demands action in accordance with those truths. If religion compromises on those actions for the sake of getting more people into shul, then can it really still be called religion?

In short, contemporary Judaism must address two problems. The first is sociological; how to we practically integrate into the modern world as authentic Jews? The second is intellectual; how do we frame our beliefs and practices in language that a modern person can accept?

The Response

“You may delay, but time will not”-Benjamin Franklin

There are no easy answers to the questions we’ve discussed. But the point of the K is the give the idea that there are challenges, and we can do something about them. Your chanichim are, in a few short years, going to be the ones addressing these issues and it is vital that they start looking at them now and understanding their own importance. And remember: the best place to start the change is with yourself. “Be the change you want to see in the world.”

Think about:

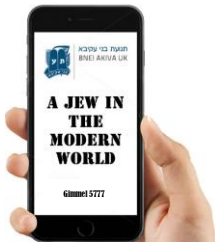
- Education!
- Letter writing?
- Online petitions?
- Facebook groups?
- Interfaith activity? Interdenominational activity?
- Rallies
- Aliya? Being active in Israeli society?



Which of these do you think works best? Is our best response to cut our losses here and go to Israel? Or is that a cop-out?

Summary of K4:

1. Diversity within Judaism has created many challenges for us.
2. Assimilation and anti-semitism are two threats to the existence of Judaism. Modernity has made conditions that are rife for assimilation
3. Bnei Akiva is a movement dedicated to addressing the issues presented above, and empowering our chanichim to do that.



Extra Chomer

Appendix 1: Interfaith/Interdenomination Dialogue

Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, Collected Writings VI, pg. 81

...It is true that those Jewish sons who have most openly deserted their calling and their irrevocable Jewish duty remain Jews nevertheless, just as, according to the basic principles of Judaism, even a baptized Jew remains a Jew. But a Jew can never form one religious community with baptized Jews, or regard as his own a community or communal institutions established and administered by and for baptized Jews. By the same token he cannot accept as his own a religious community or religious institutions that have been established and are managed by and for Reformers. The Orthodox and Reform do not belong together in spirit before G-d...

Rabbi Seligman Baer Halevi Bamberger, *ibid.*, pp. 238-9

It is categorically forbidden for Orthodox Jews to participate in any manner in the operation and maintenance of a hospital run by a Reform community. The reason for this is clear when one considers the observance of the Sabbath and dietary laws...Since, according to the law of July 26, 1876, the right to secede from such a community has been granted, those who fail to take advantage of it would actually be guilty of a breach of the above-mentioned religious ordinances.

Rabbi Eliyahu Meir Klugman, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch – Architect of Torah Judaism for the Modern World, pg. 166

...I learned that the Community Board was now prepared to deal fairly with Orthodox members who did not secede; that the institutions which they needed would be established on their behalf out of communal funds and would be entirely under Orthodox guidance and supervision...I thereupon replied that provided all the necessary guarantees were given for the carrying out of these concessions, it could no longer be deemed necessary to secede from the Reform community.

***Ibid.*, pp. 189-190**

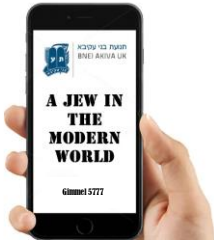
The vigorous campaign by Rabbi Hirsch on behalf of *Austritt* has been interpreted by some as manifesting a focus on narrow partisan concerns, and a disregard for and an insensitivity to the fate of *Klal Yisrael*...Nothing could be further from the truth. Rabbi Hirsch consistently stressed that his battle was with heresy, not with heretics as individuals. *Austritt* cannot be construed as a move to shun the broader Jewish world. Rather it was precisely his concern with the historical mission of the Jewish people that led him to insist on a radical break from anything threatening that mission...

...Jewish unity is important, even a supreme value, only if it furthers, or at least does not impede, the purpose for which the Jew was placed on this world. Unity for the sake of the transgression of His Will, or as a substitute for authentic observance, is not Jewish unity at all...it is only as the Torah nation that the unity of Jews has meaning and significance.

David Ellenson, Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of a Modern Jewish Orthodoxy, pp. 92-3

...rather, it (the disagreement regarding *Austritt*) stems from a basic attitudinal difference Hildesheimer had with Hirsch as to the nature of Judaism itself. For Hildesheimer did not view the Jewish people solely as a religious entity, as did Hirsch. He could not agree with Hirsch's statement, "All who turn from Torah have revolted against the Jewish people, and all who return to Torah become once again a part of the body which is Israel." His notion of the peoplehood of Israel, though based on a religious foundation, went beyond it. Thus, although he agreed with Hirsch on the necessity of religious secession from a non-Orthodox Jewish community, he wrote to Hirsch: "I do dissent from several passages [in your open letter] directed against Bamberger which appear to me to be too strong. They make it even less likely for a bridge to be built from your congregation to those who are 'secessionists. (Rav Hildesheimer viewed the reformers as the secessionists)'"...

...they were clearly Jews and, consequently, Hildesheimer felt that Hirsch should have exerted every effort possible to bring them into his community...His decision not to side publicly with Hirsch in the dispute with Bamberger thus arose both from his conviction that no positive result would derive from such comment and



because he had a greater sense of Jewish solidarity than did Hirsch. This sense did not permit Hildesheimer to define all Jews who were non-observant as beyond the pale of the Jewish people.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, *One People?*, pp. 182-3

There are, as Kook notes, three possibilities (as to how to deal with non-Orthodox movements). The first is temporary halakhic accommodation, *hora'at sha'ah*. The second is tactical silence, letting transgressors sin unwittingly. The third is active denunciation, which creates rebellion. One who fully believes in providence will have the faith that the results of all three strategies will be the same. That which Heaven wishes to happen will happen. But Kook leaves us in no doubt as to his preferred alternative, *hora'at sha'ah*, a temporary, emergency adjustment of the law to the times. He is equally clear as to why it is the route not taken. The generation is unworthy. The prophetic spirit is in eclipse. Halakhic leadership of that transcending order, he profoundly believes, lay in the future, not the present. Jewish law, in other words, cannot function with the full flexibility of tradition until it recovers its traditional constituency; until Jews once again become a people of halakhah.

Rabbi Kook leaves us with short-term pessimism and long-term optimism...

Rav Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant and Commitment*, 3.21

...The political-historical unity as a nation is based upon the conclusion of the covenant in Egypt, which occurred even prior to the giving of the Torah at Sinai...and this covenant forced upon us all one uniform historical fate. The Hebrew *am*, nation, is identical to the Hebrew word, *im*, with. Our fate of unity manifests itself through a historical indispensable union.

...When we are faced with a problem for Jews and Jewish interests toward the world without, regarding the defence of Jewish rights in the non-Jewish world, then all groups and movements must be united. In this area, there may not be any division, because any friction in the Jewish camp may be disastrous for the entire people. In this realm we must consider the ideal of unity, as a political-historical nation...and we all must fight the enemy, who does not differentiate between those who believe in God and those who reject Him.

With regard to our problem within [the Jewish community], however, - our spiritual-religious interests such as Jewish education, synagogues, councils of rabbis - whereby unity is expressed through spiritual-ideological collectivism as a Torah community, it is my opinion that Orthodoxy cannot and should not unite with such groups which deny the fundamentals of our *weltanschauung*...a rabbinical organization is not a professional fraternity, which fights for the economic interests of the rabbi. It is an ideological entity where members work for one purpose and one ideal. The fundamental difference in ideology and observance make such a unity impossible...

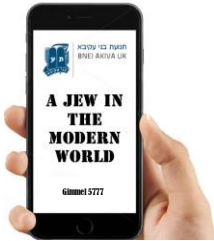
In eternal problems, where the unity of Israel is based upon the concept of *edah*, it is halakhically more advisable and practically wiser not to unite with Reform or semi-Reform movements. Too much harmony and peace can cause confusion of the minds and will erase outwardly the boundaries between orthodoxy and other movements...

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, *One People?*, pp. 214-

We have argued that internal Jewish pluralism that would *de jure* acknowledge different religious denominations is ruled out by the classic terms of Judaism. Precisely because Judaism is the religion of a nation, one of its central terms is halakhah, law...

...exclusivism, though it has had advocates in the Jewish past, runs against the main thrust of Jewish tradition...Reform Jews who believe Orthodoxy to have been refuted by the enlightenment, and Orthodox Jews who see Reform Jews as gentiles - all have the great virtue of intellectual purity. History, on this view, is a war of truth against falsehood, and we can be certain that we are the sole possessors of truth...At most, so the midrash implies, we can aspire to truth as it is on earth, not as it is in Heaven. Only by acknowledging this are peace and coexistence possible.

The alternative is inclusivism. My reading of the Jewish sources, which may of course be faulty, suggests that God, in choosing Israel, made a covenant with an entire people...Inclusivism is the belief that the covenant was made with a people, not with righteous individuals alone. one may leave or enter the people by apostasy on the one hand, conversion on the other. But the normal mode of faith is through birth, community, and the transmission of tradition across the generations. That is why the central institutions of Judaism are the family,



the *kehillah*, and education as induction into a people, its past and laws. Western modernity, by contrast, has given peculiar weight to the individual and the state, a dichotomy into which Judaism cannot be translated. This either-or was internalized in Jewry's two most striking innovations: Reform (the individual) and secular Zionism (the state). Neither, I believe, if pursued with consistency, represents continuity with the Jewish past or a formula for 'one people' in the Jewish present.

Inclusivism understands the present alienation of many Jews from Torah as neither a mandate to fragment the covenant nor justification for a clash of competing exclusive truths. Instead it is evidence of the overwhelming force of a secular culture in which many of Judaism's truths are unstateable...Judaism demands of Jews, now as always in the past, that they go against the current of the times. But it understands that those who go with it are not necessarily acting out of an individual renunciation of Judaism...

This perception lies behind the inclusivist ruling that Jews today who abandon halakhah are for the most part to be judged *tinokot shenishbu*, subjects of cultural duress...Inclusivism involves a denial of truth to secular and liberal Judaisms (much as these Judaisms involve a denial of truth to Orthodoxy). But it insists that secular and liberal Jews are part of the covenant, participants in Judaism's bonds of collective responsibility, to be related to with love, dignity, and respect. This offends the modern self, which demands to be respected not for what it is but for what it believes and does. It is, in terms of modern consciousness, an imperfect solution. But perfect solutions are not to be found this side of messianic time...

What, then, would an inclusivist advocate in the present? Firstly, a deep sensitivity to the language in which we speak of other Jews...we may not speak of other Jews except in the language of love and respect...there is a covenantal obligation to search out and articulate the good in fellow Jews. To be sure, Jewish law recognizes exceptions to the rule against 'evil speech'. Heresy is one. But the inclusivist, by insisting that non-believing Jews today are *tinokot shenishbu*, has ruled out this clause in almost all cases...

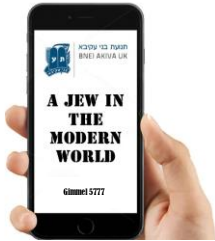
Secondly, the inclusivist would not seek to use coercive means to bring Jews back to tradition...Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch has argued that the sages 'perceived in every reduction of the power of coercion a step forward in preparing the world for the Heavenly kingdom'. The whole thrust of Judaism is, he suggests, of a gradual society-wide education towards the uncoerced acceptance of halakhah. The inclusivist, sensitive to these arguments, seeks to draw Jews back not by legislative or political means but by 'words of peace' and 'cords of love'.

Thirdly, the inclusivist understands the supreme importance Judaism attaches to education. For it is through constant study that Torah is transformed from external law to internalized command. Knowing that Torah is a law not of nature but of revelation, he is aware that acceptance of it does not come naturally...he believes that only through universal Jewish education can Jews satisfy the first requirement of a people: that its members share a language of discourse...without the acquisition of a shared textual heritage it is difficult to see how Jews can begin to communicate as 'one people with one language'.

Fourthly, while not advocating halakhic change along the lines argued by Rabbi Chaim Hirschensohn or Eliezer Berkovits, the inclusivist seeks to apply halakhah to its widest possible constituency. To the extent that precedent and consensus allow, the inclusivist is mindful of the metahalakhic principles recorded in the Talmud: that Jewish law should, as far as possible, not be beyond the reach of the poor; that it should be sensitive to the needs and rights of women; and that it should not bar the way to religious return...he seeks to create an environment in which Jews will bring their problems to halakhah rather than to some other solution...

Fifthly, the inclusivist seeks a nuanced understanding of secular and liberal Jews. He refuses a dualism that divides Jewry into unmixed categories of good and evil. He is aware that there are some authorities who maintain that even the good deeds of those who reject halakhah have no religious value. None the less, he interprets this as applying to heretics in the past, not to the Jews of today. In so doing, he relies on the general inclusivist argument that secular and liberal Jews are not to be judged as deliberate rebels but as unwitting or coerced products of their environment...the inclusivist attaches positive significance to the fact that liberal Judaisms have played their part in keeping alive many Jews the values of Jewish identity, faith, and practice...

Sixthly, believing as he does in divine providence, the inclusivist strives to recognize the positive consequences of Jewish liberalism and secularism even as he refuses to recognize their truth or ultimate viability. He recalls the statement of Rabbi Kook...that...good sometimes comes about through means which one would not have chosen *ab initio*...each of these groups (which formed during the Enlightenment era), while dissenting from



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tradition, none the less gave new life to some aspect of tradition...in retrospect, halakhic Judaism might say to its opponents what the biblical Joseph said to his brothers: 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'

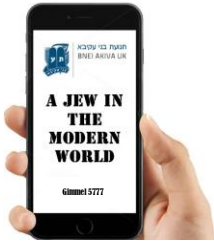
Seventhly, the inclusivist, because he sees the shadings, not just the black and white, in contemporary Jewish life, calls on liberal and secular Jewish leaders to act responsibly in the context of the totality of Judaism and the Jewish people. He does not judge their decisions indifferently. He values modern Reform Judaism's partial return to religious practice, Jewish education, a sense of peoplehood, the Hebrew language, and a love of the land of Israel. He respects secular Israelis' new interest in the Jewish history and literature of the past eighteen hundred years...at the same time, he discerns and is bound to warn against conflicting tendencies. Within Reform, the laxity of conversions, the decision on patrilineal descent, the endorsement of homosexuality, premarital sex, and abortion on demand are fateful breaks not only with the letter but with the whole spirit of Jewish law...he asks non-Orthodox Jews at least to make the effort to understand the logic of his position, and why no other is available within the terms of a tradition which he believes to be true, revealed, and binding.

Eighthly, the inclusivist makes a parallel plea for understanding to exclusivist Orthodoxy...Rabbi Yechiel Weinberg requested those opposed to efforts to draw marginal Jews back to Judaism to recall that those who engaged in such efforts were also driven by the same love and reverence for Torah...he does not ask exclusivists to become inclusivists. He merely asks them not to destroy what he is labouring to build.

Ninthly, the inclusivist calls on all Jews to respect the sanctity of the Jewish people, collectively and individually...every Jew is heir to a succession of tragedies and deliverances, trials and affirmations, unparalleled by any other nation...even if we must sometimes reject the beliefs and deeds of an individual Jew, none the less he or she is a fragment of the *shekhinah*, the divine presence which dwells in the midst of Jews wherever and whatever they are...

Lastly, the inclusivist calls on Jews to hear the divine call in history...if Hitler scheduled all Jews for death, may we do less than affirm all Jews for life?...may we protest against anti-Semitism without practising Jewish philo-Semitism, *ahavat Yisrael*?...if history is a commentary on the covenant, can we avoid the conclusion that the past unspeakable century has been summoning Jews to return to one another and to God?

http://www.totallyjewish.com/news/special_reports/?content_id=13477



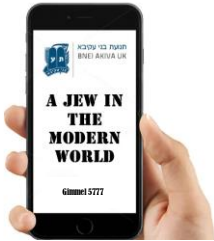
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K5 – Tikkun Olam



Aims:

1. To **look** at the background behind the phrase 'Tikkun Olam'
2. To **consider** what it means today.
3. To **realise** our responsibility to 'Metaken Ha'Olam'



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"I Wanted To Change the World"

When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world.

I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation.

When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn't change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family.

Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world.

Author: Unknown Monk 1100 A.D.

Tikkun Olam Episode 1 – In the Mishnah

The expression Tikkun Olam is first used in the Mishnah in the phrase 'mip'nei tikkun ha-olam' ("for the sake of *tikkun* of the world") to indicate that a practice should be followed not because it is required by Biblical law, but because it helps avoid social chaos.

An example is found in Gittin Perek 4 Mishnah 2:

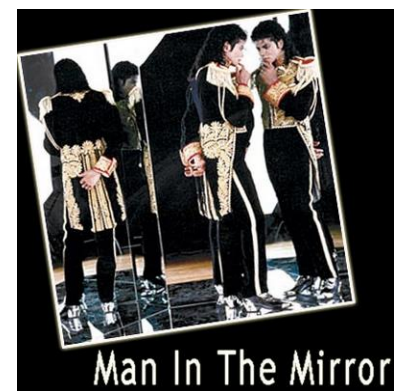
בראשונה, היה עושה בית דין במקום אחר ומבטלו; התקין רבן גמליאל הזקן, שלא יהו עושין כן, מפני תיקון העולם. בראשונה, היה משנה שמו ושמה, שם עירו ושם עירה; התקין רבן גמליאל הזקן, שיהא כותב איש פלוני וכל שם שיש לו, אישה פלונית וכל שם שיש לה, מפני תיקון העולם.

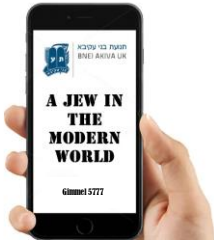
"At first a person used to convene a Court in another place and cancel it. Rabban Gamliel the Elder enacted that they should not do so in the public interest (mip'nei tikkun ha-olam). At first a person used to change his name and her name, the name of his city and the name of her city, and Rabban Gamliel the Elder enacted in the public interest (mip'nei tikkun ha-olam) that he should write, "The man so-and-so and every name that he has," "The woman so-and-so and every name that she has."

But what's this talking about? And what's it got to do with Tikkun Olam, even if we say it means 'for the public interest?'

Well, the rabbanim of the Mishnah made these rules because they were concerned that a woman might receive a get and think she was divorced when because of a confusion of name or place, she was, in fact, not. She might then come to marry not knowing that she was really still married to her previous husband, any children she would then have in her new 'marriage' would be mamzerim.

The phrase 'mipnei tikkun ha-olam' is also used in laws about the collection of ketubah money for a widow (Gittin 4:3), the limit on payments to redeem captives (Gittin 4:6),





purchasing religious articles from non-Jews (Gittin 4:6), divorce threatened by vows (Gittin 4:7), and the bringing of first fruits for land purchased from non-Jews (Gittin 4:9).

As we have seen, in the times of the Mishnah, Tikkun Olam had completely different connotations to how we see it today, it meant something along the lines of not ‘perverting the course of justice’, found within a purely judicial context and not a general social one.

*Do you think the usage in the Mishnah is appropriate?
Can you think of other terms that could have been used instead?*



Tikkun Olam Episode 2 – The Arizal Strikes Back!

In the 16th Century, the Kabbalist Isaac Luria, aka: The Arizal, asked a simple and yet also complex question. If Hashem exists, how does the world exist? If Hashem is infinite, filling the world with his glory, how is there room – physical or metaphysical – for anything else? The answer, according to the Kabbalah of the Arizal was that Hashem contracted part of Himself into vessels of light to create the world. These vessels, not able to contain the G-dliness shattered and their shards became sparks of divine light trapped within the material of creation.



Ok....what?

Basically...you know how we can find G-dliness in everything but we need to reveal it in order to show it, for example, an apple is an apple, but when you make a bracha on it you imbue it with G-dliness and then you eat it. Why isn't it G-dly already? It is, kinda, but we need to reveal that light of G-dliness in this world which appears to be void of it. In the words of what we said above ‘sparks of divine light trapped within the material of creation.’

If you don't quite get it, don't worry! We're not the Arizal so we're only going to understand it all to an extent, but according to the Kabbalah of the Arizal or ‘Lurianic Kabbalah’, through davening and doing mitzvot we release these sparks of divinity in the world and help them reunite in this world with G-d's essence, fixing what was broken and fixing the world – tikkun olam!

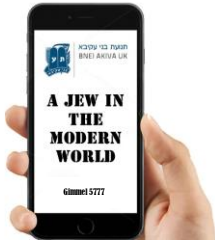


“Tikkun Olam in the Lurianic sense is about the soul, not the world, the spirit, not the body, metaphysical fracture, not poverty and disease...It suggests that our acts make a difference. They repair fractures in the world. They restore a lost order. They rescue fragments of divine light...Out of broken fragments, it shapes a mosaic of hope.”

Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks – To Heal a Fractured World p.78



*Are the ideas of the Arizal really relevant to us today?
How can we apply them to our lives as Jews in the modern world?*



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Tikkun Olam Episode 3 – Make The World A Better Place

“Jewish traditions teach us to see the world globally in ever-widening ripples of responsibility. Our family lies closest to us, our community next, and so on. Tzedek believes that the ripples don’t stop rippling at a certain point beyond which we have no responsibility. Our belief in Tikkun Olam, repairing of the world, stretches beyond racial or religious boundaries.” Tzedek Website

Today, we see Tikkun Olam used frequently to claim our responsibility to the world for a whole variety of things, particularly social action projects.

Based on either of the previous ‘episodes’, is this a correct usage of the term?



MitzvahDay International



It would seem that Mitzvah Day, something which for many epitomizes the new usage of the term Tikkun Olam and everything that’s wrong with it. But is this fair?

Mitzvah Day was planned as an addition to the Jewish calendar and placed in the month of Cheshvan in order to create a ‘festival’ in a month noted for its lack thereof.

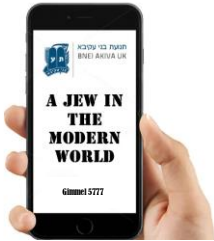
Mitzvah Day UK’s mission statement says:

“Our mission is to reduce hardship and poverty, to help our environment and to bring a little joy all through volunteering – not by fund raising. It is a way for all of us to make our mark regardless of our affiliation, level of religious conviction, wealth, age, sex or nationality.”

“Over 18,000 volunteers from a dozen countries spanning four continents came together on Mitzvah Day 2010 to do a good deed – and we didn’t raise a penny! Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks helped make bird boxes at the Camley St Nature Reserve working side by side with the Head of the Reform Movement, Tony Bayfield, the President of Liberal Judaism, Baroness Neuberger, the Head of the Sephardi and Portuguese Synagogues, Abraham Levy, and Chaim Weiner, a senior rabbi of the Assembly of Masorti Synagogues. Pictured here with Maureen Lipman”



Thinking back to Mitzvah Day this year, one story really helps us as Bnei Akiva know where we should stand. The ultimate irony was that whilst everyone was doing good deeds on Mitzvah Day, they still struggled for a minyan in a certain United Synagogue shul and probably others too. The ultimate mitzvah day is a combination of both active involvement in gemillut chassadim but also not forgetting our obligations to HaShem, the mitzvot Bein Adam L’Makom. It sounds slightly silly, but the same is no less true in reverse, our mitzvot



Bein Adam L'Makom are worth very little if we do not pay attention to our responsibilities to our fellow man or woman.

Nevertheless, encouraging people to volunteer some of their time for some kind of cause is a valuable project and definitely something that is in the spirit of Torah ideals.

*“Of all the ideas in Judaism’s ethics of responsibility it (Tikkun Olam) is the least halachic, the least rooted in law. Its origins, we will see, are mystical. Not everything of religious significance in Judaism can be expressed in precise formulas: laws, codes of conduct, guidelines that do not change from one generation to the next, one situation to the next. Tikkun olam is something each of us does differently. It is an expression of the faith that it is no accident that we are here, in this time and place, with these gifts and capacities, and this opportunity to make a positive difference to the world. This belief is known as divine providence: the idea that G-d is operative in our lives as individuals, not only, as the Greek philosophers believed, concerned with universals. We are here because someone wanted us to be and because there is a task that only we can fulfil. No two people, places, times and circumstances are the same. **Where what I can do meets what needs to be done – there is G-d’s challenge and our task.***



Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks, To Heal a Fractured World, p.72

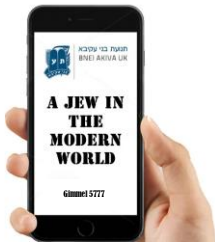
It seems that as Orthodox Jews today, everything we do is really part of tikkun olam. Through our mitzvot and tefillot, we bring G-dliness into this world, elevating the ordinary to higher levels and repairing the world in a kabbalistic sense. But also, through building our relationships with each other and making the world, socially a better place, we are literally repairing the problems in the world. This mission statement is something we remind ourselves of three times a day, at the climactic end to our prayers with the tefillah of Aleinu, when we say:

עַל כֵּן נִמְנָה לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְרֵאוֹת מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאֵרֶת עֲצֻדָּה. לְהַעֲבִיר גִּלּוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ. וְהַאֲלִילִים כָּרוֹת וּפְרִתוּן. לְמַקּוֹן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שְׁקִי... ”

“Therefore, we put our hope in You, HaShem, our G-d, that we may see very soon the splendour of your might, to remove detestable idolatry from the earth, and false gods will be utterly cut off, to perfect the universe through the sovereignty of the Almighty.... ”

This paragraph of Aleinu is really about our ultimate hope that one day the world will turn towards HaShem and recognise His power in the world and this is achieved through an elimination of ‘detestable idolatry from the earth’. Whilst it’s slightly difficult for us to locate our nearest detestable idolatry, that doesn’t mean there aren’t plenty of other detestable things in this world which aren’t also stopping people from recognising HaShem in this world. HaShem wants us to do good things, and through that, we reveal Him, just a lil bit in this world and get a step closer to that ultimate hope.

When we talk about Tikkun Olam in our peulot, the words of the Chief, Lord Sacks of Aldgate should be fresh on our mind – the idea that it means the ‘**what I can do meets what needs to be done.**’ There are plenty of problems in the world, it’s impossible and immoral to ignore them, and we can’t really go about solving each one, however, HaShem has granted us



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all abilities to be able to make a difference in the world and this is where the Kabbalistic idea of Tikkun Olam comes into it.

The Lurianic Tikkun Olam emphasises the importance of the individual action on the world – we should not write ourselves off because we are few in number, if we believe passionately in something and we believe in ourselves that we can make a real difference then we should chase after the opportunity to make a difference, as it says in the good book...

'צֶדֶק צְדָק תִּרְדְּרִי'

'Justice, Justice, you shall pursue'

Devarim 16:20

This K is going to be the message that we're sending Shevet ?? away with, it should be something that we push throughout machane and really drill into them – **they can make a difference.**

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

US anthropologist & popularizer of anthropology (1901 - 1978)

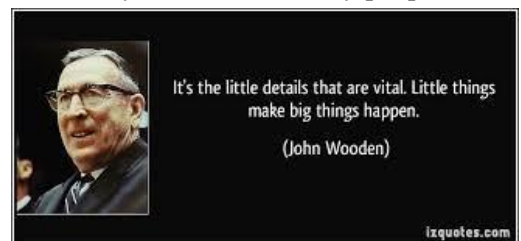
Furthermore, it's not about a small group of people mounting worldwide schemes to change the world; the world becomes perfected when everyone takes responsibility for just a small something.



The importance of a small action is illustrated in this story:

"During my 2nd year of nursing school our professor gave us a quiz. I breezed through until the last question. "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?" Surely this was a joke. I had seen the cleaning woman but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Before class ended, one student asked if the last question counted toward our final grade. "Absolutely" the professor said. "In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello". I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy. (Joann C. Jones)

Although it would be amazing to start a Shevet ?? tikkun olam programme (get brainstorming!), let's encourage this idea too. Our chanichim have so many chances to do small things. Let's make sure they do!



Summary of K5:

1. Tikkun Olam in the Mishna is about preventing social chaos, for the Arizal it's about bringing the Divine back into the world, and in a modern context usually refers to social action.
2. We "fix the world" today by doing Torah and Mitzvot, as well as *all* playing a *small* part in social action.