

K1



Rav's Kookin' Good Lookin'

AIMS:

- ❖ To learn about Rav Kook's life
- ❖ To learn about his philosophy regarding the secular Zionists building the state
- ❖ To learn about his *vision* for (the State of) Israel

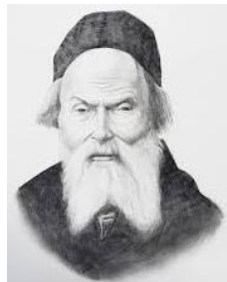
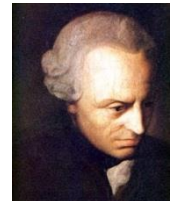
Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, first Chief Rabbi of the Yishuv in what was then called Palestine and a profound thinker, teacher and writer, has had an immeasurable influence on the religious Zionist world. In truth, although religious Zionism claims him as their own, Rav Kook towered above ideological differences and political bickering and concerned himself with **all** groups of the Jewish community.

Rav Kook was aware of the need to inject the ancient doctrines and concepts of Judaism with fresh life and relevance to the problems of the day. To achieve this goal, however, he never compromised a single principle of Orthodoxy. What was needed was not the trimming down of Jewish theory or practice but rather its emotional revitalisation and intellectual reinterpretation. Rav Kook's works are often considered the conceptual foundation stone for religious Zionism because his teachings place Jewish nationalism and binyan ha'aretz at the centre of the Divine plan for the Jewish people.

Early Life

Avraham Yitzchak was born in 1865, in north-west Russia the little shtetl of Grieve (as I would do if I was a shtetl in NW Russia). Rav Kook had important yichus (ancestral lineage) on both his mother's and father's side. He was plunged into the sea of Talmud at a very early age and by the age of 9 he had already earned himself the name of "illui" (child prodigy). He joined his father's yeshiva in Volozhin where he spoke to his friends in Hebrew rather than Yiddish and he became more interested in Zionism...

After he got married, he began to venture outside the sphere of Talmud and read the literature of the *haskalah* (enlightenment), Kant and other philosophers in German. He drew from western philosophy and culture the elements that enriched and deepened his religious beliefs. He also became highly prolific in his studies of the *kabbalah*, and The Leshem (his teacher) testified that he was holding in all kabalstic doctrines and approaches.



The Chafetz Chaim urged Rav Kook to enter the rabbinate and take up the position of rabbi in Zaumel. At the age of 30, Rav Kook became the rabbi of the city of Boisk where his brilliant sermons and essays on current problems brought him national recognition and fame (everyone loves that Rabbi who makes the odd political gag).

During this time, Rav Kook published a number of articles about Zionism and the necessity to return to Eretz Yisrael. At the same time, he worked tirelessly to obtain the cooperation of the Orthodox masses toward the **practical** tasks involved in building up Eretz Yisrael. Based on these ideals, he willingly accepted a call from the community of Jaffa to become its rabbi in 1904.



Jaffa Cake – cake or biscuit?



Living in Palestine

As well as being the Rabbi of Jaffa, Rav Kook also took an interest in the moshavot in the area surrounding Jaffa. Further, in 1913 (and again in 1923 and 1927), Rav Kook went on ‘tour’ (Israel Machane?) of the kibbutzim and moshavot in the Galilee, with Rav Chaim Sonnenfeld and other Rabbis to meet and inspire their residents. He took a particular interest in ensuring the young people in these areas received a sound Jewish education, and sought to assist the chalutzim in observing the mitzvot hateluyot ba’aretz (mitzvot that are specific to the land of Israel). As well as helping in these practical matters, he deliberately sought to build positive relationships with the secular settlers, countering the common view that all Orthodox rabbis lived in an insulated bubble without concern for the problems of the day.



Is there spiritual value in religious Jews interacting with non-religious Jews regarding things that seem to have nothing to do with religion?



Challenges in the Diaspora

In 1914, Rav Kook travelled to Germany to attend a conference. World War 1 (which at the time was optimistically called the Great War) broke out during his visit, so he was unable to return to Eretz Yisrael for the duration of the war. During this time, he lived in St Gallen, Switzerland and London. Whilst in London, he served as Rabbi of the Machzikei Hadat Synagogue in the East End (now the Brick Lane Mosque!). During his time chutz la’aretz he campaigned for a Jewish State, particularly in the run-up to the Balfour Declaration in 1917. He particularly focused on addressing the prevailing sentiment among religious Jews that nationalism contradicted Torah. Following the war, Rav Kook launched the “Banner of Jerusalem” (Degel Yerushalayim) movement. He noticed that other organisations which focused on practical measures to further the Zionist cause – such as Mizrahi – failed to attract Orthodox Jews. “Banner of Jerusalem” was supposed to attract this group. Sadly, little came of the organisation – the challenge of galvanising Orthodox Jews was a hefty one. In 1919 Rav Kook accepted an invitation from the Jewish community of Jerusalem to become its chief rabbi and, in 1921; he became chief rabbi of all of Palestine.



Challenges in Israel

As Chief Rabbi, Rav Kook’s first achievement was the organisation of the rabbinate of Eretz Yisrael, which allowed the religious character of the rapidly growing Jewish community to be maintained. Despite the Chief Rabbi’s attempts to harmonise the factions within the Jews in Palestine, the splintering of the community continued. Rav Yosef Chayim Sonnenfeld, leader of the Edah Chareidis movement, did not recognise Rav Kook’s authority and often challenged his seemingly more lenient halachic rulings towards issues such as Shemittah, as well as Rav Kook’s warm attitude towards the secular Zionists. It’s important to note that there was never a personal disagreement between the two Rabbis, only Machloket Leshem Shamayim, although some of Rav Sonnenfeld’s followers made personal attacks against Rav Kook.

Story time ☺

When Rav Kook first came to Jerusalem, word spread quickly that he was always willing to help a fellow Jew in need. Consequently, numerous people came to him at all hours of the day, burdening him with all kinds of requests. When his friends and relatives realised what was happening, they decided to take action. Without delay, they prepared a sign listing reception hours and hung it on Rav Kook's front door. The next day, however, the sign was gone. Rav Kook's well-wishers immediately drew up another sign and hung it in place of the first; but that, too, disappeared after a day. Finally, they decided to investigate the matter and find out who was responsible for taking down the signs. Unexpectedly, they discovered that the Rav himself was the culprit! When asked why he opposed an arrangement that was designed to help lighten his load, he explained: "A rabbi is not his own master. He is a servant of the people, and a servant must be available to serve his master at all times."

One of Rav Kook's greatest educational achievements was the founding of Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav. Rav Kook called for a creative approach to the study of the Talmud, an approach that would make it the basis for a renaissance in Orthodox Judaism. His dream was that great minds, in approaching Torah with fresh genius, would enrich Judaism. One of his much-quoted expressions, fervently uttered on the occasion of a visit from a nonreligious scientist, was, "May the day come when the great of the Jews will also be Jewishly great."

To the last day of his life, while suffering from cancer, Rav Kook laboured for the strengthening of the united community of Palestine, remarking with the last ounce of his strength, "there is nothing that justifies and permits division in Israel". On the last Friday evening before his death, he urged participation in the nineteenth World Zionist Congress, observing "How can one not be a Zionist seeing that the Lord G-d has chosen Zion?"



Rav Kook passed away in Jerusalem in 1935.

Rav Kook and Secular Zionists

Rav Kook's philosophy is highly complex but the bottom line is that there is no black and white in the world, in terms of *kodesh vechol*, but rather a myriad of colours.



With the pioneers of "Avodat Yisrael," during the Teshuvah Campaign

This is why Rav Kook serves as one of the conceptual foundation stones of religious Zionism. **A complete separation of 'kodesh' and 'chol' is not possible or in fact desirable, but rather the two concepts play off one another.** The building up of the land and the establishment of our state in Israel was a process which was dominated by forces which, to the untrained eye, seemed to be thoroughly *chol* but to anyone wearing the spectacles of Rav Kook contained holy sparks of kedusha. Rav Kook felt that secular Zionists, thinkers and pioneers were, in fact, doing the work of G-d even if it was being done unwittingly, or even unwillingly.

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In a pseudo-prophetic manner, Rav Kook even recognised “that a spiritual rebellion [would] come to pass in Eretz Yisrael amongst the people of Israel, in the beginnings of the nation’s revival” (Orot HaTechiya). Rav Kook predicted that the early Zionists would rebel against the Torah, but saw it as a mere ‘birth pang’ of redemption: “The planting of G-d develops and blooms; and the light of Salvation and Redemption spreads out slowly like the dawn which stretches over the mountains” (Orot HaTeshuva).

The question is: Why would G-d bring about the beginning of the redemption of Israel through those who are not loyal to Him and have rejected his Torah? Surely one imagines the Geulah to be spearheaded by faithful Jews who shine with Kedusha?

To this, Rav Kook answers:

“In all paths of life it is the secular which awakens first, and then the holy is compelled to awaken, to complete the renewal of the secular, to beautify it and to redeem it.” Indeed this was evident in his struggles to win support of religious people in Europe and America, and in the way the Degel Yerushalayim movement floundered. Secular Jews led the modern Zionist movement from its inception. However, well after Rav Kook’s death, Rabbis who called for active participation of the religious community in this enterprise were very much the minority.



When challenged by other Orthodox leaders as to why G-d would allow atheists to build the path towards redemption, he would answer that:

In the Temple the Holy of Holies was of such a degree of holiness that even the high priest was only allowed to enter it once a year on Yom Kippur. Yet, when the temple needed to be rebuilt, **ordinary workmen in working clothes** were allowed to enter and do their jobs. The present time, he declared, was one of building which would lead one day to the establishment of the Holy of Holies. Secular workmen therefore precede priests.

In other words, the tree grows before the fruit. May the tree blossom and the fruit ripen speedily in our days!!



Was Rav Kook right? Were the secular Zionists the builders of something holy? Or has their input resulted in a country that is not what Eretz Yisrael is supposed to be??

Rav Kook and (the State of) Israel

As a child, Rav Kook was famous for his special love and passion for Eretz Israel. It is told that he would play with his mates a game about Aliyah to Israel (sounds like Sviva/Machane...!).

His well-known book Orot begins with the following statement:

ארץ ישראל איננה דבר חיצוני, קנין חיצוני לאומה רק בתור אמצעי למטרה של ההתאגדות הכללית והחזקת קיומה החמרי או אפילו הרוחני. ארץ ישראל היא חטיבה עצמאית קשורה בקשר חיים עם האומה, חבוקה בסגולות פנימיות עם מציאותה

Eretz Yisrael is not a peripheral matter, an external acquisition of the nation; it is not merely a means toward the goal of the general coalescing of the nation, nor of strengthening its material existence, nor even its spiritual existence. Eretz Yisrael is an independent unit, bound with a living attachment with the nation, bound with inner Segulot with the nation's existence.

What is the meaning of this special relationship between the people and the land?

The Torah in Vayikra 26 reveals to us the horrors that will come on the Jewish people if they do not listen to Hashem. In this long list the Torah states the following:

וְהִשְׁמַתִּי אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְשָׂמְמוּ עָלֶיהָ אֹיְבֵיכֶם הַיֹּשְׁבִים בָּהּ. (ויקרא כ"ו:ל"ב)

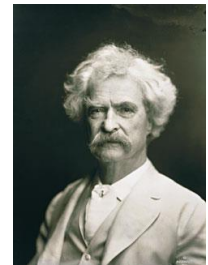
And I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies that dwell therein shall be astonished at it.

The simple understanding of the verse seems to be that this is a continuation of the terrible events that will occur to the Jewish people, but the Ramban explains differently:

רמב"ן

וכן מה שאמר בכאן (בפסוק לב) ושממו עליה אויביכם, היא בשורה טובה מבשרת בכל הגליות שאין ארצנו מקבלת את אויבינו, וגם זו ראייה גדולה והבטחה לנו, כי לא תמצא בכל הישוב ארץ אשר היא טובה ורחבה ואשר היתה נושבת מעולם והיא חרבה כמותה, כי מאז יצאנו ממנה לא קבלה אומה ולשון, וכולם משתדלים להושיבה ואין לאל ידם:

Similarly, that which He stated here, and your enemies that shall dwell therein shall be desolate in it constitutes a good tiding, proclaiming that during all our exiles, our Land will not accept our enemies. This also is a great proof and assurance to us, for in the whole inhabited part of the world one cannot find such a good and large Land which was always lived in and yet is as ruined as it is [today], for since the time that we left it, it has not accepted any nation or people, and they all try to settle it, but to no avail.



Throughout the centuries the Land of Israel has received visitors who described their visits in their memoirs. The famous author Mark Twain wrote a book (Innocents Abroad) describing his journeys which brought him to Israel and thus he writes:

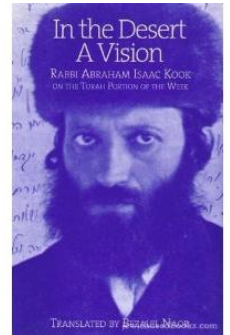
"Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes...Renowned Jerusalem itself, the stateliest name in history, has lost all its ancient grandeur, and is become a pauper village; the riches of Solomon are no longer there to compel the admiration of visiting Oriental queens; the wonderful temple which was the pride and the glory of Israel, is gone, and the Ottoman crescent is lifted above the spot where, on that most memorable day in the annals of the world, they reared the Holy Cross. Palestine is desolate and unlovely. And why should it be otherwise? Can the curse of the Deity beautify a land? Palestine is no more of this work-day world, it is sacred to poetry and tradition--it is dream-land."

It seems that Hashem kept His promise that the Land would remain desolate for all these centuries! It is a well-known fact the first settlers, who came to Petach Tikva, had to first deal with swampy grounds and struggling in squalid conditions with malaria and typhus. A hundred years later, we can witness that the Land of Israel is fertile with trees fields and orchids. This idea can be explained nicely by the Gemara in Senhedrin 97b which claims that the sign for the future redemption will be the trees of Israel producing fruit.

The only way, according to our understanding, for the land of Israel to produce fruit is to have Jewish people living and working in it.

Similarly, we believe that Mashiach will arrive humbly, “v’rochev al chamor” (Zechariah 9:9) – riding on a donkey. The Maharal connects the word ‘Chamor’ to ‘Chomer’ – physicality. Rav Kook uses this idea to explain that redemption will come ‘riding’, or on the back of, physical renewal in the Land of Israel – a physical precursor to a spiritual ideal.

Rav Kook’s vision for the State of Israel (remember he died pre-1948) was of a country run by, and populated by religious Jews. In his vision there were no secular Israelis, there were no stones being thrown at them by people who call themselves Chassidim, there was just עם ישראל בארץ ישראל על פי תורת ישראל – It sounds cheesy, but we did get the idea from somewhere! His dreams were of a united people, living according to the Torah and in a land renewed by our very presence on it.



Or in his words: “There is no doubt that we cannot fulfill our all-embracing mission unless we settle in the Holy Land, for only there can the spirit of our people develop and become a light unto the world.”

Is ‘Or LaGoyim’ best achieved when we are spread in the diaspora and able to influence them directly, or best achieved by being a ‘model’ nation in Israel ,as Rav Kook suggested?



Has Rav Kook’s vision been achieved? What is your vision of Israel? (Return here in K5)



- Rav Kook had a life.
- He thought/realised that even though the secular Zionists who were building the state at the time were irreligious, they were still carrying out the work of Hashem.
- He saw the land of Israel as an intrinsic part of the Jewish people...
- Meaning we shouldn’t live anywhere else.
- Rav Kook’s vision for the state was one of the whole Jewish people fulfilling Hashem’s Torah and being a light unto the nations.

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SUNDAY, MAY 14, 1948

THE PALESTINE POST

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has received from The Palestine Post office, Haaschi Street, Jerusalem, Tel. 4213.

STATE OF ISRAEL IS BORN

Most Crowded Hours in Palestine's History

Between Thursday night and this morning Palestine went through what by all standards must be among the most crowded hours in its history.

For the Jewish population there was the anguish over the fate of the five hundred Hagana men and women in the Kfar Etzion line of settlements near Hebron. Their surrender to a fully equipped superior foreign force desperately in need of a victory was a foregone conclusion. What could not be known, with no communications since Thursday morning, was whether and to what extent the Red Cross and the United Nations would secure civilized conditions for prisoners and wounded, and proper respect for the dead. Doubts on some of these anxious questions have now been resolved.

On Friday afternoon, from Tel Aviv, came the report of the evacuation of the Jewish State, and its official naming as such, "Molodet Yisrael"—State of Israel, with the naming in the fact Council of Government.

The proclamation of the State was made at midnight, coinciding with the ending from Haifa of Britain's last High Commissioner. Within the hour, President Truman announced in Washington that the Government of the United States had decided to give its full recognition to the Jewish State, with

Jews Take Over Security Zones

The battle for Jerusalem, which began when the British forces withdrew on Friday morning, continued all day Friday and yesterday. The results of small-scale fire and explosions of mortar shells were still being heard in the early hours of this morning as the battle entered its third day.

Repeated efforts on Friday evening and again on Saturday by the U.N. Truce Commission, in being about a "cease fire" were brought to naught when the Arab representatives failed to agree within the specified time limit.

On Friday morning, Jewish forces entered the Neve Shalom Compound and Etzion C to reoccupy the buildings previously held by Jewish forces last year. This operation was almost bloodless, but beyond the western edge of Etzion C, Arabs engaged the Jews in Jaffa Road. The Arabs were turned back and the Haartze Bank area was taken.

In other parts of the city fighting flared up. Jews overran one after another the areas evacuated by the British. By last night, the quarters, with

same fire, President Truman announced that the United States would accept recognition to the new State. A few hours later, Palestine was invaded by Moslem armies from the south, east and north, and Tel Aviv was raided from the air. On Friday the United Nations Special Assembly adjourned after adopting a resolution to appoint a mediator but without taking any action on the Partition Resolution of November 29.

Yesterday the battle for the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road was still under way, and two Arab villages were taken. In the north, Acre town was captured, and the Jewish Army consolidated its positions in Western Galilee.

U.S. RECOGNIZES JEWISH STATE

WASHINGTON, Sunday.—Ten minutes after the termination of the British Mandate on Friday, the White House released a formal statement by President Truman that the U.S. Government intended to recognize the Provisional Jewish Government as the de facto authority representing the Jewish State.

The U.S. is also considering lifting the arms embargo but it is not known whether Palestine is on the entire Middle East, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Jewish Provisional Government.

The White House press secretary, Mr. Charles Ross, said correspondents today that reaction so far to the recognition had been overwhelmingly favorable. He said this step had been discussed with Mr. Marshall and Mr. Lovett before action was taken, and it had their complete support.

Mr. Ross said that the President had decided several days ago to grant American recognition

2 Columns Cross Southern Border

By WALTER COLLINS
U.P. Correspondent
CAIRO, Saturday.—A unit

Etzion Settlers Taken P.O.W.

Fighting in the Kfar Etzion has continued throughout Friday, after Kfar Etzion is

Proclamation by Head Of Government

The creation of "Molodet Yisrael", the State of Israel, was proclaimed at midnight on Friday by Mr. David Ben Gurion, until then Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive and now head of the State's Provisional Council of Government.

The first act of the Council of Government, as announced by its head, was to obtain all legislation of the 1949 British Empire of the International League of Nations, particularly the Certificate and Order relating to investigation and land transfer.

In the declaration of independence, Mr. Ben Gurion called on the Arabs of Palestine to restore peace, asserting that full civil rights and full representation in all governmental organs of the State.

Mr. Ben Gurion prefaced the declaration with a review of the historic connection of the Jewish people with the Land of Israel and of their efforts to return, which were renewed throughout the generation of their dispersion, until the State's independence proved once the urgency of the need for a Jewish State.

The British Mandate of 1917, continued by the League of Nations, had given explicit international recognition to



Special Assembly Adjourns

FLUSHING MEADOWS, N.Y., Sunday.—The Special U.N. Assembly, called four weeks ago to discuss the U.S. propo-

1948 and all that!

Aims:

- ❖ To look at what led to the establishment of the State, and the event itself
- ❖ To look at the Declaration of Independence and some of the controversy surrounding it
- ❖ To learn about the debates surrounding other important issues at the start of the State which have continued up to the present day

So far, we have looked at Rav Kook's vision for a Jewish country – something that would unify the Jewish people, be a tool for bringing the redemption and fulfil G-d's plan for the Jewish people. Or, in the words of Rav Kook himself:

One [state] with the most supreme ideal content inscribed in its being, that is, the greatest happiness of the individual. This state is in truth uppermost on the scale of happiness, and this state is our state, the State of Israel, the foundation of God's throne in the world, whose sole desire is that the Lord will be One, and His Name One, for that is indeed the most sublime happiness. (Orot, 160).

But this vision was not shared by all the people at the time – not even the whole religious community agreed with Rav Kook's positive attitude towards Zionism. In this kvutzah we will look at what the people who founded the State wanted Israel to be like – and there's no better place to start than with the Declaration of Independence.

Background to Independence

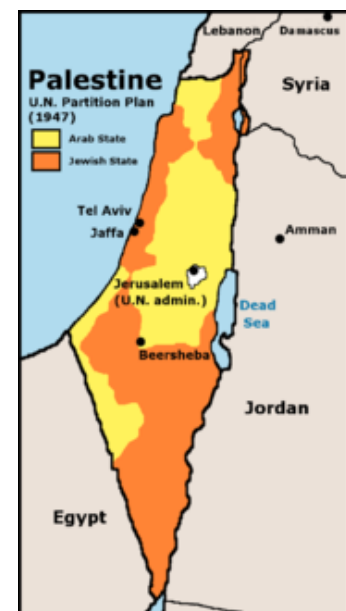
While the possibility of a Jewish homeland in Palestine had been a goal of Zionist organisations since the late 19th century, it was not until 1917 and the Balfour Declaration (which Rav Kook vociferously campaigned for in England) that the idea gained the official backing of a major power. The declaration stated that the British government supported the creation of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. In 1936 the Peel Commission suggested partitioning Mandate Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state, though it was rejected as unworkable by the government and was at least partially to blame for the 1936-39 Arab revolt.

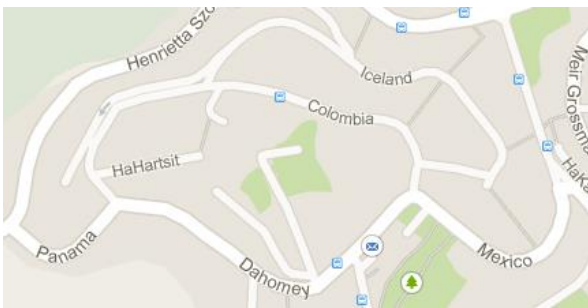
The UN partition plan

In the face of increasing violence and increased attempts at Jewish immigration, the British handed the issue over to the United Nations. The result was Resolution 181, the partition plan to divide Palestine between Jews and Arabs. The Jewish state was to receive around 56% of the land area of Mandate Palestine, encompassing 82% of the Jewish population, though it would be separated from Jerusalem, designated as an area to be administered by the UN.

The plan was accepted by most of the Jewish population, but rejected by much of the Arab populace. On 29 November 1947, the plan was put to a vote in the United Nations General Assembly. The result was 33 to 13 in favour of the plan, with 10 abstentions (including the UK). The Arab countries (all of which had opposed the plan) proposed to query the International Court of Justice on the competence of the General Assembly to partition a country against the wishes of the majority of its inhabitants, but were again defeated.

Fighting began, and Arabs attacked many Jewish towns and roads between November '47 and May '48. Likewise, many Jews retaliated, and a civil war ensued. As a result, many Arabs fled to neighbouring countries.





All the countries which voted in favour of this agreement have a road named after them in Israel!
Pretty cool right?



Independence

The Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel was publicly read by Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948, before the expiration of the British Mandate of Palestine at midnight. It was drafted during the preceding months, and the final version was a result of a compromise between the various parts of the Israeli public of that time.

The declaration was first drafted by Zvi Berenson, the Histadrut trade union's legal advisor and later a justice of the Supreme Court. A committee meeting which included David Ben-Gurion, Yehuda Leib Maimon (a Religious Zionist Rabbi), Moshe Sharett and Aharon Zisling produced the final text, which was approved at a meeting of Moetzet HaAm at the JNF building in Tel Aviv on 14 May, starting at 1:50. It ended at 15:00, an hour before the declaration was due to be made, and despite ongoing disagreements, with a unanimous vote in favour of the final text.

Controversy: Borders + the 'Tzur Yisrael' debate

During the process, there were two major debates, revolving around the issues of borders and religion. On the border issue, the original draft had declared that the borders would be that decided by the UN partition plan. While this was supported by Rosen and Bechor-Shalom Sheerit, it was opposed by Ben-Gurion and Zisling, with Ben-Gurion stating: "We accepted the UN Resolution, but the Arabs did not. They are preparing to make war on us. If we defeat them and capture western Galilee or territory on both sides of the road to Jerusalem, these areas will become part of the state. Why should we obligate ourselves to accept boundaries that in any case the Arabs don't accept?"

The second major issue was over the inclusion of God in the last section of the document, with the draft using the phrase "and placing our trust in the Almighty".

The two rabbis, R' Shapira and R' Yehuda Leib Maimon, argued for its inclusion, saying that it could not be omitted, with Shapira supporting the wording "God of Israel" or "the Almighty and Redeemer of Israel." It was strongly opposed by Zisling, a member of the secularist Mapam. In the end the phrase "Tzur Yisrael" (Rock of Israel) was used, which could be interpreted as either referring to God, or the land of Eretz Israel. Ben-Gurion said that "Each of us, in his own way, believes in the 'Rock of Israel' as he conceives it. I should like to make one request: Don't let me put this phrase to a vote." Although its use was still opposed by Zisling, the phrase was accepted without a vote.

The writers also had to decide on the name for the new state. Eretz Israel, Ever, Judea, and Zion were all suggested, as were Ziona, Ivriya and Herzliya. Judea and Zion were rejected because, according to the partition plan, Jerusalem (Zion) and most of Judean



mountains would be outside the new state. Ben-Gurion suggested 'Israel' and it passed by a vote of 6-3.

The debate over wording did not end completely even after the Declaration had been made. Declaration signatory Meir David Loewenstein later claimed that "It ignored our sole right to Eretz Israel, which is based on the covenant of the Lord with Abraham, our father, and repeated promises in the Tanach. It ignored the aliya of the Ramban and the students of the Vilna Gaon and the Ba'al Shem Tov, and the [rights of] Jews who lived in the 'Old Yishuv'."

Proclamation ceremony

The ceremony to proclaim independence was to be held in the Tel Aviv Museum (today known as Independence Hall – wonder why...?) An invitation was sent out by messenger on the morning of 14th May telling recipients to arrive at 15:30 and to keep the event a secret. The event was to start at 16:00 (a time chosen so as not to break Shabbat), and was to be broadcast live as the first transmission of the new radio station Kol Yisrael.

At 16:00, Ben-Gurion opened the ceremony by banging his gavel on the table, prompting a spontaneous rendition of Hatikvah, soon to be Israel's national anthem, from the 250 guests. On the wall behind the podium hung a picture of Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, and two flags, later to become the official flag of Israel. After telling the audience "I shall now read to you the scroll of the Establishment of the State, which has passed its first reading by the National Council", Ben-Gurion proceeded to read out the declaration, ending with calling on Rabbi Fishman to recite the Shehecheyanu blessing.



↑The invitation to the ceremony, dated 13th May 1948.



Did you know?

The last person alive who was at the declaration ceremony was Bnei Akiva Legend Arieh Handler!!!!



More controversy: Citizenship

Another major debate around the nature of the Jewish State was the **Law of Return**. This law responded to the Declaration of Independence which said that “The State of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews and for the ingathering of exiles from all countries of their dispersion.” In 1950, this principle was given shape as the Law of Return, enshrining this Zionist principle within Israeli law. It defined a Jew as anybody with at least one Jewish grandparent – this is the same definition used by the Nazis in the Nuremberg Laws. The Law of Return did not steep from ideology alone; it was also a practical measure. In the wake of the Holocaust, the first act of the new Israeli government was to abolish all



restrictions on Jewish immigration. Israel, the government declared, would provide Jews the world over with a haven from anti-Semitism.

The Law of Return has also functioned as a means of maintaining a Jewish majority within the State of Israel by promoting aliyah. During the 1940s and 50s, Israel's population balance was decisively shifted through the immigration of millions of Jews. Today, even within the pre-1967 borders, more than 20% of Israel's citizens are non-Jewish. As a result of higher birth-rates, the demography of the country continues to shift in their favour.

But there are many problems with the Law of Return – none of which have been properly solved:

- Is Israel about letting in those who the Nazis would have killed OR is it a Jewish State, i.e. halachically Jewish people only?
- Israeli marriage law obligates Jews to marry through an (orthodox) religious marriage. There are Israeli citizens who are Jewish by right of return but cannot be married in Israel because they are not halachically Jewish.
- How can Israel claim to be democratic with these rules? Does this law deny the principle of equal rights and opportunities for all?
- What happens when over a million Jews come into Israel with little Jewish background and for some, questionable halachic status, for example, the influx of Russian Immigrants after the fall of the Iron Curtain following the Cold War?
- What about those who have converted through Reform?
- Do you allow non-Jewish family of Jews to enter Israel through the Law?

In 1948, was there ANY consensus regarding the vision for the State of Israel?



- Rav Kook had grand visions for a Jewish State – but these weren't shared by those who actually founded it.
- There was such a rush to get the State up and running that many key debates about the Jewish nature of the State were avoided – and have been ever since.
- This has led to inconsistent policies and practices regarding citizenship and the Jewish character of the State (as we will discuss further later)
- Yet there are certain fundamental values that the founders shared, in common with our religious principles based on Rav Kook. It is this shared ground that allows Religious Zionism to still flourish in a secular State.

December 6, 1993

Dry Bones



DryBonesBlog.com

K3



Israeli Society

Aims:

- ❖ For the chanichim to gain an insight into the different types of people and cultures that exist in Israel
- ❖ To look at the impact Olim have on Israel
- ❖ To Discuss the idea of an 'Israeli culture'
- ❖ To look at the impact poetry and music has in Israeli life

Israel's mandate as an ingatherer of the Jewish exiles from all four corners of the earth has made it one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. It is amazing to think that there is such a variety of Jewish ethnic groups and Jewish communities in one small country. And what is even more amazing is they all call Israel home.

As Theodor Herzl suggested, Israel is an old-new country (Altnueland), small in size, but with a widely varied landscape and a culturally active, varied population of some 8.3 million. It is a place where East meets West, where past and present touch, and where ideologies mould lifestyles. Four thousand years of Jewish heritage, more than a century of Zionism, the 'ingathering of the exiles' and six decades of modern statehood have contributed to a culture which has already created an identity of its own, while preserving the uniqueness of many different communities.

To understand this better, let's look at some demographics. The table below shows the progression of religious demographics since the beginning of the state in Thousands/Percentages. [Since the 2011 census, non-Arab Christians, estimated to number 25,000, were counted as "Jews and others".]

Year	Druze		Christians		Muslims		Jews		Total	
1949	14.5	1.2352	34	2.89633	111.5	9.49825	1013.9	86.3702	1173.9	100
1960	23.3	1.08352	49.6	2.30655	166.3	7.73344	1911.3	88.8811	2150.4	100
1970	35.9	1.18792	75.5	2.49826	328.6	10.8732	2582	85.4373	3022.1	100
1980	50.7	1.29281	89.9	2.29237	498.3	12.7062	3282.7	83.706	3921.7	100
1990	82.6	1.71309	114.7	2.37883	677.7	14.0552	3946.7	81.8529	4821.7	100
2000	103.8	1.62969	135.1	2.12111	970	15.2293	4955.4	77.8013	6369.3	96.78
2009	125.3	1.65916	151.7	2.00874	1286.5	17.0352	5703.7	75.5257	7552	96.23
2011	129.8	1.65633	155.1	1.97917	1354.3	17.2817	5907.5	75.3835	7836.6	96.3
2014	135.4	1.632	163.5	1.971	1453.8	17.51	6219.2	75	8296.9	100(?)

JEWISH RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Chareidim:

Chareidim make up 11.7% of the Israeli population with a 5% growth rate (Israel Central Bureau of statistics, 2014). They live their lives strictly according to Halacha and tend to live in isolated communities. They are represented in the Knesset by the United Torah Judaism party (Ashkenazim) and the Shas party (Sephardim) and have varying attitudes towards the State. Chareidim do not usually view the State of Israel as 'Reishit Semichat geulateniu' but view living in the Land of Israel as a fulfillment of a positive Mitzvah.

Secular Jews:

Secular Jews make up the largest sector of Israeli society. Away from Jerusalem, most major cities have a secular majority, made up mainly of Mizrahi Jews. It is important to note that whilst most of these people would consider themselves secular, the majority of Israelis (72%) say they light Shabbat candles and over 90% have mezuzot on their doors. It seems that whilst people are not necessarily religious, they have a strong connection to their Judaism and see an inherent value in traditional customs. Even in Israeli popular culture, for example the music industry, it is not uncommon to hear songs with verses from tehillim and various Pesukim making up the lyrics.

Religious Zionists:

Like the Chareidim, Religious Zionists also live according to Halacha. They believe that we have a God-given right to the Land of Israel, and it is one of the most important Mitzvot to settle and build the land. They also believe that the building of the State of Israel is the beginning of the redemption (Reishit Tzemichat Geulateinu). So even though the State is not perfect from a religious perspective, they point out that after 2000 years of exile there is a Jewish government and Jewish country in the land; if Hashem has chosen to bring about the Geula this way, they argue, then the State should be viewed as Holy, and an important part of the modern religious Jewish story.

NON-JEWISH NATIONAL GROUPS

Israeli Arabs:

Israeli Arabs make up 20.7% of Israel's population Israel (2014 census). They are mainly Muslim but there are also many Christian Arabs. Palestinians living in Judea and Samaria (West Bank) and in the Gaza Strip do not have Israeli citizenship, whereas Israeli Arabs living on the Israeli side of the Green Line are full Israeli citizens. Arabic culture has worked its way into society with Arabic phrases and foods popular with Israelis. Arabs participate in Israeli life and culture in a variety of positions such as footballers, supreme court judges, policemen, and at one point, Acting President of the State of Israel (Majalli Wahabi, a Druze politician in 2007).

There has also been much hostility between Jews and Arabs, even since before the creation of the State of Israel, with terror attacks, political fighting and violent protests common on both sides.

Muslim Arabs

Almost one million people, most of whom are Sunni, reside mainly in small towns and villages, over half of them in the north of the country.

Christian Arabs

Christianity in Israel is practised by more than 161,000 Israeli citizens and 127,000 of them are Arab Citizens (Wikipedia) and live mainly in urban areas, including Nazereth, Shefarim and Haifa. Although many denominations are nominally represented, the majority are affiliated with the Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.

Druze

These are 129,800 Arabic-speakers living in approximately villages in northern Israel (2011 census). They constitute a separate cultural, social and religious community. While the Druze religion is not accessible to outsiders, one known aspect of its philosophy is the concept of taqiyya which calls for complete loyalty by its adherents to the government of the country in which they reside.

Bedouin Arabs

Also Muslim (estimated at 170,000 though this growing quickly), belong to some 30 tribes, a majority scattered over a wide area in the south. Formerly nomadic shepherds, the Bedouin are currently in transition from a tribal social framework to a permanently settled society and are gradually entering into Israel's labour force.

THE IMPACT OF NEW OLIM

Israel's Jewish populations largely an immigrant and second-generation society, and the influx of these people has had various impacts on Israeli society.

Ethiopian immigration

The first major wave of aliyah from Ethiopia took place in the mid-1970s. In 1984/5 during Operation Moses some 6,500–8,000 Ethiopian Jews were flown to Israel. In 1991 Operation Solomon was launched to bring the Beta Israel Jews of Ethiopia. On 24th May, 34 aircraft landed at Addis Ababa and brought 14,325 Jews from Ethiopia to Israel. Since that time, Ethiopian Jews have continued to immigrate to Israel bringing the number of Ethiopian-Israelis today to over 100,000. In the past they have struggled significantly to integrate in society and get jobs, but this situation is certainly improving; there are more Ethiopians in more distinguished positions in business, politics, and the army, and the Beta Israel festival of Sigd was even recognised as an official festival in Israel in 2008.



Russian Immigration

The wave of immigration from the Soviet Union that began at the end of 1989 brought 200,000 new immigrants to Israel by the end of 1990, and was a surprising turnaround after long years of low immigration. The Soviet immigration, the largest wave of immigration in the history of Israel, continued steadily until 1994. More than 100,000 Soviet Jews reached Israel during the course of the 4 years. They brought with them expertise, experience and training. However, their professional skills had been developed in Russia, and therefore could not manage the Israeli system. Furthermore, mass Russian immigration led to a population growth of about 6% and as such the job market became very saturated, with many highly qualified immigrants and local residents found it difficult to find work due to the amount of people looking for jobs.

Immigration from Arab countries

Mainly since 1948 between 800,000–1,000,000 Jews, primarily of Sephardi and Mizrahi background, migrated from Arab and Muslim countries such as Iraq, Iran & Syria. Some reasons for this are push factors, e.g persecution, anti-Semitism, political instability, poverty and expulsion and others are with pull factors e.g the desire to fulfil the Zionist dream or find a better economic status and a secure home.

Paternal country of origin of Israeli Jews (including non-Halachically Jewish Russians) as of 2014 is as follows (CBS).

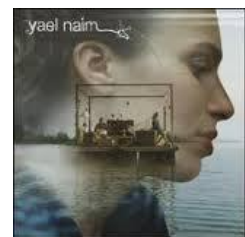
Country of origin	Born abroad	Israeli born	Total	%
Total	1,538,400	4,623,400	6,161,800	100
Israel	—	2,657,000	2,657,000	43%
Europe/Americas/Oceania	1,046,100	884,300	1,930,400	31%
Soviet Union	618,500	270,500	889,000	14%
Africa	309,000	586,300	895,300	15%
Asia	183,400	495,700	679,100	11%

Morocco	144,400	342,000	486,400	8%
Iraq	55,700	172,200	227,900	4%
Romania	76,100	126,400	202,500	3%
Poland	39,900	149,200	189,100	3%
North America/Oceania	99,900	75,600	175,500	3%
Iran/Afghanistan	46,200	94,300	140,500	2%
Yemen	24,900	110,500	135,400	2%
Algeria/Tunisia	41,400	91,800	133,200	2%
Ethiopia	79,400	49,500	128,900	2%
Turkey	22,900	52,500	75,400	1%
Germany/Austria	21,500	50,200	71,700	1%
Libya	14,100	53,300	67,400	1%
France	47,500	33,000	80,500	1%
Czech Republic/Slovakia/Hungary	16,300	44,600	60,900	1%
Argentina	34,300	28,100	62,400	1%
Egypt	16,400	38,800	55,200	1%
Europe, other	28,100	32,600	60,700	1%
Bulgaria/Greece	14,000	32,300	46,300	1%
India/Pakistan	17,400	29,800	47,200	1%
Latin America, other	28,000	19,000	47,000	1%
United Kingdom	21,100	22,800	44,900	1%
Syria/Lebanon	9,700	25,000	34,700	0.5%
Other (Africa)	13,400	10,900	24,300	0.4%
Other (Asia)	6,600	11,400	18,000	0.3%

So, we've seen the stats. Let's look at a few Olim from different places at different times, and see how they have contributed to Israel in their own sphere...

Yael Naïm

Yael Naim was born in Paris in 1978 in Paris and made Aliyah with her family when she was 4. After being a Soloist in the IAF orchestra, she began writing her own songs in French, Hebrew and English which were very successful in Israeli and French charts. In 2008, Apple used her song "New Soul" in its first MacBook Air laptop selected by Steve Jobs himself. The song peaked at No.7 on the Billboard Hot 100 becoming her first U.S. top ten single, and making her the first Israeli solo artist to ever have a top ten hit in the United States. The song was also featured on the soundtrack of the movies The House Bunny and Wild Target.



Dov Lipman

Dov Lipman was born in Silver Spring, Maryland in 1971 and made Aliyah with in 2004. And now lives in Beit Shemesh with his wife and four children. He became active in politics in response to local extremism and was asked to join the of candidates of the Yesh Atid Party for the 2013 elections where he was placed 17th on the party list. Yesh Atid won 19 seats and he entered

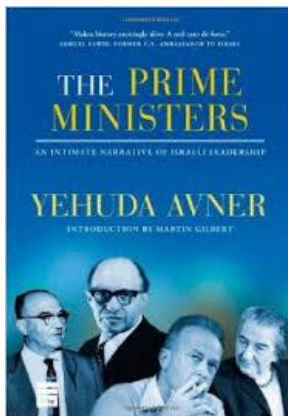


the 19th Knesset, although he lost his seat in the 2015 elections. As an MK Lipman advocates basic secular education for all schools in Israel wanting to receive government funding, increased employment opportunities for those among the Orthodox population who want to join the work force and some form of national service, whether in the IDF or Sherut Leumi for every citizen. Lipman was part of the official Israeli delegation to Nelson Mandela's funeral in South Africa.

Yehuda Avner

Yehuda Avner was born in Manchester in 1928 and made Aliyah in 1947 after being heavily involved in BAUK. Avner fought in the war of independence and was one of the founders of Kibbutz Lavi before moving back the UK be Mazkir of our beloved Tnuva BAUK for 3 years.

Over the next 25/30 years, he worked for five Israeli prime ministers. He was Speechwriter and Secretary to Prime Ministers Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir, and as Advisor to Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin, and Shimon Peres. Avner was a top aide and was present for major decisions including Operation Entebbe, and the signing of the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty.



Avner also served in diplomatic positions at the Israeli Consulate in New York City, and the Israeli Embassy in Washington D.C. Ambassador to Britain, Non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland and Ambassador to Australia.

In 1992, Avner published *The Young Inheritors: A Portrait of Israel's Children*. In 2010, he authored *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership*, in which he shares his first-hand experiences working with Israel's political leaders. This was recently turned into a 2 part film.

CULTURAL IMPACT

Israel's creative expression has absorbed many different cultural and social influences from a variety of places, as the traditions of each group not only compete with those of other groups, but also contend with the country's recent history and life in a Middle Eastern context. The constant search for cultural identity is expressed through creativity in a broad range of art forms, appreciated and enjoyed by many people as part of daily life.

Israeli Poetry and Music

What's amazing about Israeli music and poetry is it does more than entertain; it provokes emotions, discusses issues of the day and makes people think. These musicians aren't popular because they have the 'X-factor', they're popular because it's real and relates to their audiences lives.

Now let's take a look at the following poem:

An Arab Shepherd is Searching for his Goat on Mount Zion, Yehuda Amichai

An Arab shepherd is searching for his goat on Mount Zion

And on the opposite hill I am searching for my little boy.

An Arab shepherd and a Jewish father

Both in their temporary failure.

Our two voices met above

The Sultan's Pool in the valley between us.

Neither of us wants the boy or the goat

To get caught in the wheels

Of the 'Had Gadya' machine.

Afterward we found them among the bushes,

And our voices came back inside us

Laughing and crying.

Searching for a goat or for a child has always been

The beginning of a new religion in these mountains.

- *What similarities do the shepherd and the father have?*
- *What are their differences?*
- *What is their 'temporary failure' referring to?*
- *What is 'Sultan's Pool' referring to?*
- *Why is 'Had Gadya' significant?*
- *Why so much emphasis on 'voices'?*

Poems like these are scattered all over Israel – this is what the culture is like at the moment, and probably always has been. Let's move on to some songs.

Mi shema'amin/the one who believes, Eyal Golan

Bechol makom kol hazmna	Every place, all the time
Yesh lechulanu migadol ve'ad katan	The old and young has
Yamim yafim vegam pachot	Beautiful and less beautiful days
Uvenehem tshuva lechol hashe'elot	Among them answers to all the
Yesh Elohim echad gadol	questions
Hu ba'olam haze noten lanu hakol	There is one mighty God
Ben afela lekeren or	He gives us everything in this world
Et hanativ anachnu rak tzrichim	Between darkness to a sun beam
livchor	We only need to choose the path
Veze yadu'a hachayim hem matana	It is known life is a gift
Hakol tzafuy veharashut netuna	All is expected and is allowed
Mi shema'amin lo mefached	The one who believes is not afraid
Et ha'emuna le'abed	To lose faith
Velanu yesh et melech ha'olam	We all have the King of the universe
Vehu shomer otanu mikulam	Who guards us from it all
Ha'am haze hu mishpacha	This nation is a family
Echad ve'od echad ze sod	One and one more is the secret of
ha'atzlacha	success
Am Israel lo yevater	The nation of Israel will never give up
Tamid al hamapa anachnu nisha'er	We will always stay on the map
Veze yadu'a hachayim hem matana	It is known life is a gift
Hakol tzafuy veharashut netuna	All is expected and is allowed
Mi shema'amin lo mefached	The one who believes is not afraid
Et ha'emuna le'abed	To lose faith
Velanu yesh et melech ha'olam	We all have the King of the universe
Vehu shomer otanu mikulam	Who guards us from it all

Ein od Milvado/there is none but him, Shlomi Shabbat

In the face of seeming randomness and raging injustice, there is something profoundly reassuring about this meditation, which is an integral part of Jewish belief. Following are the translated lyrics to a song with that name by Israeli singer Shlomi Shabbat.

I saw stars shine in the world	Wars against the manufacturer
And eventually disappear	Like a desert thirsty for water man yields
I climbed the mountain peaks in	And again she seeks refuge soul
I also wise advice	Under the wings of the Divine Presence
I did not let my eyes dazzled by the sights	I stood in the doorway like everyone else
And I realized that too much is sometimes less	Ask forgiveness from the king of the world
I took out the Pacific	I took out the Pacific
Spiritual	Spiritual
There is none but him	There is none but him
Whole earth is full dignity	Whole earth is full dignity
Almighty King	Almighty King
And I worked	And I worked

Shirat hasticker/The Sticker Song, Hadag Nachash

Dor shalem doresh shalom,	A whole generation demands peace,
Tnu tzahal lenatze'ach,	Let the idf win,
Am chazak oseh shalom,	A strong nation makes peace,
Tnu letzahal lechaseach,	Let the idf mow down,
Ein shalom im aravim	There's no peace with arabs,
Al titnu lahem rovim	Don't give them guns,
Kravi zeh hachi achi	Combat-ready is the most, bro
Gius lekulam, ptor lekulam,	Draft for all, exemption for all
Ein shum ye'ush ba'olam	There's no despair in the world
Yesha zeh kan	Judea and samaria is here
Na nach nachman me'uman	Na nach nachman from uman
No fear, mashi'ach ba'ir	No fear, the messiah's in town
Ein aravim ein pigu'im	No arabs, no terror attacks
Bagatz mesaken yehudim	The supreme court endangers jews
Ha'am im hagolan	The nation iswith the golan
Ha'am im ha transfer	The nation is with the transfer
Test beyarka	Smog test in yarka
Chaver, atah chaser	Friend, you are missed
Hakadosh baruch hu	The holy one, blessed be he
Anachnu bocharim becha	We elect you
B'chirah yeshirah zeh rah	Direct elections are bad
Hakadosh baruch hu	The holy one, blessed be he
Anachnu kana'im lecha	We are zealots to you
Yamutu hakana'im	May the zealots/jealous die.
Kamah ro'a efshar livlo'a	How much evil can be swallowed?
Aba terachem aba terachem	Dad have mercy, dad have mercy
Kor'im li nachman ve'ani megamgem	My name is nachman and i stu-stutter
Kamah ro'a efshar livlo'a	How much evil can be swallowed?
Aba terachem aba terachem	Dad have mercy, dad have mercy
Baruch hashem ani noshem, velachen...	Blessed be the name, for i'm breathing, and therefore...
Medinat halachah - halchah hamedinah	A state of halachah - the state is gone
Mi shenolad hirvi'ach	Whoever's born, scored
Yichyeh hamelech hamashi'ach	Long live the king messiah
Yesh li bitachon bashalom shel sharon	I'm secure in sharon's peace
Chevron me'az uletamid	Hebron always and for eternity
Umi shelo nolad hifsid	Whoever wasn't born missed out
Chevron ir ha'avot	Hebron of (our) forefathers
Shalom transfer	Goodbye to transfer
Kahane tzadak	Kahane was right
Cnn meshaker	Cnn lies
Tzarich manhig chazak	A strong leader's needed
Sachtin al hashalom	Nice going on the peace
Todah al habitachon	Thanks for the security
Ein lanu yeladim lemilchamot meyutarot	We have no children left for unnecessary wars
Hasmol ozer la'aravim	The left helps the arabs
Bibi tov layehudim	Bibi's good for the jews

Posh'ei oslo ledin
 Anachnu kan hem sham
 Achim lo mafkirim
 Akirat yeshuvim mefaleget et ha'am
 Mavet lebogdim
 Tnu lachayot lichyot
 Mavet la'arachim.
 Kamah ro'a efshar livlo'a... (x3)
 Lechasel, laharog, legaresh, lehat'ot
 Lehadbir, lehasgir, onesh mavet, no fear
 Lehashmid, lehakchid, lemager, leva'er,
 Hakol biglalcha, chaver.

Send the oslo criminals to trail
 Us here, them there
 Brothres don't desert (brothers)
 Uprooting settlements splits the nation
 Death to the traitors
 Let the animals live
 Death to values!
 How much evil can be swallowed... (x3)
 To liquidate, to kill, to banish, to mislead
 To annihilate, extradite, death sentence, no fear,
 To wipe out, to make extinct, to eradicate, to burn.
 All because of you, my friend.

Speak the language of the Hebrew man, Ehud Banai

Speak up, the language of the Hebrew Man.
 Loud and clear! The language of the Hebrew Man.

It is the language of the prophets,
 Of the sign upon the wall
 It is old, and sacred,
 It will open up your soul.
 Speak up, the language of the Hebrew Man.
 Loud and clear! The language of the Hebrew Man.

From the deepest mess of downtown Babylon
 It will take you to the next train to Mount Zion,
 It will get you up, it will make you fly,
 The language of the Hebrew man will take you high.

You know, Abraham spoke the language of the
 Hebrew Man
 And also Jesus from Nazareth and Mary Magdalene,
 Einstein, Jeremiah, the Dylan and the Cohen
 They knew something about the language of the
 Hebrew Man...

And when the Lord said" "Let there be light!"
 It was in the language of the Hebrew Man
 And when Moses said: "Let my people go!"
 It was in the language of the Hebrew Man.
 Speak the language of the Hebrew Man.

Vehaya bayom hahu, or chadash gadol ya'ir
 Le`at niftach hasedek le`at nofel hakir
 Uch`shetagia ha`sha`ah yavo echad b`shem
 echad
 Yakiru v`yedu kol ha`olam safa achat
 Speak the language of the Hebrew Man

Vehaya bayom hahu, yavo echad b`shem echad
 Yakiru v`yedu kol haolam safa achat
 Le`at nivna habayit kav l`kav v`ot l`ot
 Al na tomar li bye bye, emor rak l`hitraot.
 Speak the language of the Hebrew Man.

And let us all say: "Halleluyah!"
 Let us all say: "Amen!"
 A day will come, and everybody
 Will speak the language of the Hebrew Man!

**What is the difference between these songs and ones we might hear in the charts in
 England?**

I think it is important for us to inform our chanichim that Israel is not just about tourist sites and beaches, but that it is also a very cultural country – and that the culture is SO different to what we are used to in England. Sure, there were songs written at the time of WW2 and when Princess Diana died, but come on, I love Jessie J and JLS but they're not exactly singing about the congestion charge. We are fortunate in England that politics don't dictate our culture, but this is what Israel is all about. Poems & songs like these try to unite Jews and non-Jews – but are they all in vain? Hadag Nachash seems to be making a mockery out of the political situation. The fact that this music is so popular makes us wonder exactly what Israelis are thinking...



Key Points

- There are many different types of people, not just Jewish, who live in Israel
- The demographics of Israel are on the decline
- Olim are having a largely positive impact on Israeli Society
- Israel as a melting pot is that a good thing or a bad thing?
- Will we lose our identity?
- Is there a true Israeli culture, or is there no such thing?
- Israeli music and poetry has significant meaning to what is going on in the country
- Does Israeli music and poetry has much more meaning then English music and poetry???

K4



Internal Challenges for the State of Israel

Aims:

- ❖ For the Chanichim to consider the following challenges facing Israel today.
 - The Jewish identity of the state and Religious policies
 - Economy – cost of living

[*Note: As the title suggests, this Kvutza will look at challenges within the State of Israel, as opposed to conflicts with its neighbours or the Palestinians. Important discussion to be had, but not for now....*]

1. **RELIGIOUS COERCION**

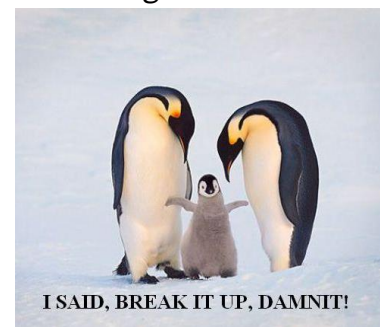
As we learned in K2, from the beginning of the Zionist enterprise, there has always been conflict regarding the role that religious Judaism should play in society. Should, for example, Torah be taught in schools as part of the national curriculum? Broadly speaking, there are two sides to this debate:

Secular(ist) Zionists: Non-observant Jews have made up the majority of Israel's population since long before Independence and still do today. Secularist Zionists seek an Israel that reflects this and want to see an Israel that is, broadly speaking, secular in a similar way to how the UK is today. For them, the main purpose of the State is political self-determination and freedom from persecution, not a fulfilment of a religious dream.

Religious(ist) Zionists: Eretz Yisrael was given to us by Hashem and is the ideal place to be fulfilling Mitzvot. Therefore, the State of Israel should be run in accordance with Halacha, or at least place some value on Judaism.

Secular and religious Zionists argue passionately about what a Jewish state should represent.

What do you think?



Below are different opinions given about the topic in question:

Professor Ariel Rosen-Zvi, an observant Jew, and one of the authors of a proposed constitution for the State of Israel, believed that religion must not be imposed by force; it can only function within the framework of freedom of choice. **“All religious laws must be withdrawn except those having general application.** For example, we need a day of rest, so it is reasonable to choose Shabbat. Anybody wishing to take a bus or visit a cinema on their day of rest should be able to.” Yet he did not believe in banning the sale of pork: “Persons ought to refrain from eating pork by their own choice, and not because it is not available.”

Aviezer Ravitsky a liberal-minded Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew University. He feels that the secular Jew requires the country to be free and the religious Jew must go along with that, **but at the same time, the secular Jew must cooperate in keeping the nation Jewish.** Concerning the Shabbat observance, Ravitsky would ban all transport because it is financed in part from the public purse. He would, however, permit private taxis and cars to run since they are financed by the individuals who travel in them.

“If we don’t believe in religion, what are we doing in this land? Hashem promised it to our ancestors on condition that we observe the Torah. If we do not, then we are here as conquerors. We were united over the ages not by common ethnic descent nor by a common history, territory or language...but by a common faith.” Rabbi Zvi Weinman

2. BUSES ON SHABBAT

Israel's policy with regard to the public bus services is that there are no buses that run within the majority of cities throughout Saturday. With regard to buses that run between cities, there are no buses at all on Friday afternoon/night. Some services start from some cities on Saturday afternoon before Shabbat is over (e.g. Eilat, Tel Aviv) but no buses leave to, or arrive from, Jerusalem during the hours of Shabbat.

Some opinions...:

- a) As Israel is a Jewish State buses should not run on Shabbat.
- b) There should be respect for Shabbat-observant Jews and traditional Halacha and thus there should be no buses at all on Shabbat, anywhere.
- c) The majority of the country is secular so there should be no restrictions at all on buses on Shabbat. However, bus drivers should not be discriminated against if they don't want to work on Shabbat.
- d) It is unfair that people who own cars can travel on Shabbat whereas those who can afford only public transportation are discriminated against. Either all transportation should be banned (including using private cars) or it should all be allowed.
- e) A "day of rest" is a value Judaism introduced to humanity millennia ago. It is appropriate that the State of Israel continue to champion this central ideal. However, that does not mean that the 'rest' needs to be according to halacha. Having a day where limited public services still run, much like Sundays in the UK, is a far more appropriate way for a modern country to mark this day of rest.
- f) There may be a halachic issue. Jews pay for the buses through the tax they pay. If the buses run on Shabbat and Jews ride on the buses thus breaking Shabbat, all Jews who pay taxes will indirectly have facilitated other Jews breaking Shabbat.



3. THE ARMY

Although Israel has conscription, many Israelis do not serve in the military for various reasons. Israeli Arabs are not drafted, though they may enlist, and small numbers serve voluntarily. Charedi Jews were exempt so long as they studied in a yeshiva, based on an arrangement worked out with David Ben-Gurion in 1948. There is, however, a debate as to whether this should continue. Many in Israel believe that it shouldn't, but most Charedim disagree. Charedi Rabbi Moshe Zeldman says:



"The difficulty a secular Israeli is going to have is just not understanding the whole world-view that the Charedi world is coming from... If you look at the whole history of the Jewish people, it can't be explained in physical terms. But, what made us survive this long? We really believe Hashem has a hand in history... You also need a balance. And the

balance has to be that as much as you're worried about your physical survival, you're also focussed on your spiritual survival".



Should all Israeli Citizens be made to serve in the Israeli army? Should all Jews living in Israel be made to serve in the Israeli army? Are Charedim right not to serve in the Israeli army?

Even though the main divide with regards to the Israeli army is between the secular and the Charedi there are many Religious Zionists who also have to make the decision of whether to serve in the army or to continue their Torah study. There have however been compromises to allow them to do both. Hesder is an Israeli yeshiva five year programme which combines advanced Talmudic studies with military service. These Yeshivot allow religious Jews to partially participate in the defence of the Israeli people, while still engaging in intense Torah study. Many Religious Zionist women choose to serve their country in a different way; through Sherut Leumi, which involves spending their years of public service doing things other than the army, such as helping public services to run.



Is Hesder a compromise or an ideal?

4. CONVERSION AND MARRIAGE

As previously mentioned, the Law of Return applies to anyone with one Jewish grandparent, or someone who has obtained a conversion (and this includes non-Orthodox conversions). However, marriage and divorce in Israel are conducted under the supervision of the Rabbanut, who follow the halachic definition of who is a Jew (i.e. one with a Jewish mother). This it creates a very unfortunate situation for many people who cannot get married in Israel, because although the State considers them Jewish the Rabbanut does not. (This difficult situation is worsened by the Rabbanut's sometimes stringent approach to conversion, leaving people in a limbo.)

Thus, Israelis who want a civil marriage/mixed marriage/gay marriage have to get married abroad.



5. JEWISH CHARACTER OF ISRAEL

“THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH STATE IN ERETZ-ISRAEL, TO BE KNOWN AS THE STATE OF ISRAEL” (Declaration of Independence)

The State of Israel was clearly founded as a country that would a) offer all Jews refuge and b) be a place where Jews could govern themselves, not be ruled over by a host power. However, this comes with some challenges:



- Demographics – the Arab Israeli population is increasing. There are areas in which it may be difficult to maintain a Jewish majority in coming years,

- National rights of minority populations – If Israel is a Jewish country, how do we cater to non-Jews living in the State? Do they have rights as a national group, as Israeli Jews do?

Recently, there has been much debate in Israel about the “Jewish State Bill”. 3 proposed versions of the bill were drafted by different MKs, which propose to establish a Basic Law (the closest thing Israel has to a constitution) declaring that Israel is "the nation state of the Jewish people". Though the 3 drafts differed slightly, the general gist of the content is:

- Reaffirming the Law of Return
- Establishing the flag, national anthem and other symbols of Israel as official emblems
- Make all of Israel’s holidays match the Jewish religious holidays
- Make Hebrew the only official language of Israel
- Jewish Law would be the basis of Israeli Law



This all very nice... but where does it leave non Jewish inhabitants of Israel? Under this proposed bill, they would have rights as individuals, but not as national groups. As of November 2015, Netanyahu is trying to advance this bill and has set up a team of MKs to look into removing any potential obstacles.



Do you agree or disagree with this bill? Does this bill seem to lean towards the formation of a two-tiered society? Or is Israel acting no differently from any other country with an official religion?

6. COST OF LIVING

Another key issue is the socio-economic situation in Israel. Rising cost of housing and living expenses, government corruption and rising poverty rates which the OECD defined as being twice the average of other developed countries,



and a widening gap between rich and poor led to the 2011 Israeli social justice protests (Hebrew: *מחאת צדק חברתי*), which are also referred to by various other names in the media, which were a series of demonstrations in Israel beginning in July 2011 involving hundreds of thousands of protesters from a variety of socio-economic and religious backgrounds opposing the continuing rise in the cost of living (particularly housing) and the deterioration of public services such as health and education. A common rallying cry at the demonstrations was the chant; "The people demand social justice!" Let’s look at some responses to these protests:

- The mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat stated "the government must produce affordable housing" and "the government and the Israel Lands Administration should take responsibility for the matter."
- Labour MK Isaac Herzog (Now party leader) stated that "all efforts to encourage affordable housing construction in Tel Aviv fail due to the resistance of the Israeli Finance ministry, the Israel Lands Administration, the Israeli ministers and due to the position of the



prime minister against government intervention of market prices," and that "it's time to examine an intervention."

- Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin (now President) announced that it is necessary to keep a free market in Israel and to be careful that the protest activists won't lead Israel towards the path of destruction and anarchy.



- Rav Meir Lau, former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel and current Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, noted that the protest movement is unprecedented in Israel, and added that "this is the first time I remember ever having seen this many people who didn't know each other before, coming together – outside of a time of war. You have captured my heart." In addition, Lau promised to contact Prime Minister Netanyahu personally and tell him to honour the mandate of the Trachtenberg committee and accept its recommendations.

In 2014, Naor Narkis, a 25-year old former intelligence officer, sparked the “Milky Protests” by making an online post on the “Olim l’Berlin” group comparing the price of the “Milky” desert pot in Israel to its equivalent in Germany, which was 20-25% of the price. This symbolised the unreasonable cost of living that is perceived by many Israelis as crippling. This issue is not going away.

Key Points

- Religious and Secular Zionists both care passionately about the state
- Whatever the decision made about certain issues someone is going to be unhappy
- Haredi Jews say that learning rather than serving in the army is in order to preserve the spirituality of the Jewish people
- Hesder is a compromise that includes some active service in the IDF and intense Torah study
- Different sectors of Israeli society have different views about whether Halacha should influence life in Israel, and if so to what extent
- This causes arguments about the running of public services and conscription, among other issues
- The Israeli economy is a prevalent topic of concern
- These disputes have been occurring since before the founding of the State

K5



Vision vs Reality: Rav Kook's vision today

Aims:

- To think about whether the modern State of Israel today lives up to Rav Kook's vision
- To think about other visions of Israel, and their actualisation (or lack thereof)
- To think about what *our* vision is *now* for the future
- To ask (and answer?) what we can DO to make this a reality

You don't go on Facebook for a week:

Expectations:



Reality:



So, it's the final kvutza, where we bring it all together and essentially ask about all the other kvutzot – Who cares? - What has it got to do with me?

We've seen all these lofty ideals, These dreams of the Jewish people returning and of essentially a messianic era, but does this match today's State of Israel? Has the state of Israel become ראשית צמיחת גאולתינו – The beginning of the flowering of our redemption (or as UJS put it in a Bencher ראשית צמיחת גלותינו – The beginning of the flowering of our exile!), or is it another “Shabbatai Tzvi” (i.e. Satmar/Monty Python's approach - “He's not the Messiah he's a...”)?



Would Rav Kook see the Israel of today and smile or cry?



Rav Kook's vision and the reality today

On a very basic level, what Rav Kook wanted from the state of Israel was a return to the Land of our forefathers, but then to have at the same time, a country like no other.

In his plea to religious people called Degel Yerushalayim (which came from England and was in fact signed by the rabbis of London, Manchester, Newcastle and Sunderland), Rav Kook put out his dream of Israel:

He dreamt of a state without a party political system, where everything and everyone would be harmonious. He called for a mass Religious Zionist movement for it. He wanted everyone religious to join together to make this happen.

Or, to put it even more succinctly, he wanted:



(Sound familiar?)

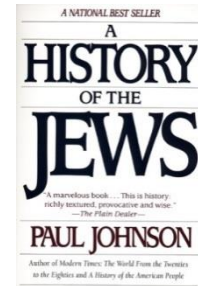
But his plea fell on deaf ears, the state came about, and there was only a very small religious element in the early governments.

This led to a downhill slope; the State didn't support religious Jews and this led to the Charedi world to distance itself from it. It spiralled to essentially what we have today.

Secondly, the dream Rav Kook had, and Yishayahu had before him, was one of Israel being an 'Or Lagoyim'. The new state was supposed to be an example to the world of how to run a country. Rav Kook said, at the founding of the Hebrew University:

“The [...] path of the spirit in the nation serves not only to deepen the holiness of the Torah deep within, but also serves as a path for a two-way traffic: to bring concepts and values of Judaism from our private domain to the public domain of the world in general, since it is for this that we stand as a light to the nations; and to bring in the general sciences from the breadth of humanity, and adapt that which is good and elevated to the treasure of our life in its purity; for ultimately doing so makes it possible for us to bring forth a logical and lovely expression from our world to the world at large.”

Furthermore, according to Paul Johnson (not a Jew) in “A History of the Jews”, the State of Israel was supposed to spread the Light of Torah and the morals of Judaism throughout the world in much the same way Avraham was able to disseminate the notion of ethical monotheism far and wide.



Rav Kook concluded that speech at Hebrew U with a warning....

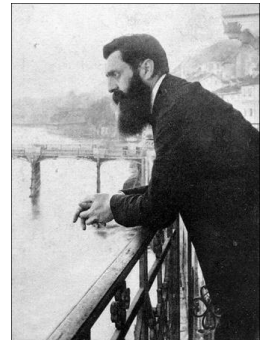


“...alongside that, this university must function at a level where it will cause God, the Jewish people and the land of Israel to be publicly sanctified and not profaned in any manner ... Then our fear, together with our great sight of the “glorious” vision of this day, and together with the illumination shining upon our souls from the radiance of the lights of the various and multi-hued currents of spirit that pass over us, will bring us to that very “happiness of heart” that we seek, and which contains a blessing within itself.”

Rav Kook's fears showed themselves pretty quickly and nowadays the academia in Israel is at the forefront of biblical criticism and similar things which were warned of. In that respect it didn't go quite to plan...

Other visions of Israel, and the reality today

Before we look at the good and the bad of Israel it's worth considering 'other' visions for the State which different Zionists had in pre-state Israel (and see if they've fared any better...).



- ✧ Labour Zionism envisaged a class-less society (in the spirit of Marxism) based on agricultural work – FAILED
- ✧ Revisionist and Revolutionary Zionism wanted a national kingdom (led by a re-established Jewish monarchy) ruling in the whole of 'Greater Israel' – FAILED
- ✧ Cultural Zionism wanted a cultural revolution to turn Israel into a cultural and educational centre of excellence, a revival of Hebrew, and not much more – Kinda worked
- ✧ Herzl's vision (set out in Altneuland – Old New Land) called for a modern welfare state, based on liberal and social values of equality, enterprise and culture – great success!!

The truth is that all the various visions of Zionism, and how the State should be, were neither total failures nor complete successes. Rav Kook's Religious Zionism was partially successful, as were the other visions for the State. We talked in K4 about the problems Israel has - these problems that in a lot of ways prevent Israel from being an Or Lagoyim - for example, Israel is one of the top places in the world for people trafficking. Nevertheless, we can be extremely proud of many contributions Israel has made.

The truth is that all the various visions of Zionism, and how the State should be, were neither complete failures nor complete successes. Religious Zionism (the Rav Kook vision) was *partially* successful, as were the other visions for the State.

We talked in K4 about the problems Israel have. The problems that in a lot of ways prevent Israel from being an Or Lagoyim - for example, Israel is one of the top places in the world for people trafficking...

So, what *has* Israel given the world? Some examples....

- The first computer anti-virus software was developed in Israel.
- Israel has developed a chemical free anti-mosquito method that has saved millions of lives from malaria.
- Intel Centrino technology was developed in Israel.
- Israel has more museums per capita than any other country in the world.
- Israel developed the ingestable camera that fits inside a pill and helps doctors diagnose cancer and digestive disorders
- Israeli engineers developed the drip irrigation system now used worldwide in water starved countries.
- Israeli rescue workers are amongst the first on the scene in disasters around the world.
- A total of 140 countries around the world have benefited from Israeli humanitarian aid.
- The Kimberly process, for certifying diamonds as being conflict free was developed in Israel.



Story Time

Story Time! Rav David Milston (formerly Rosh of Edgware United Sviva, Mazkir in 1989, Composer of 'We believe in the Torah, current Head of Midreshet Harova and ShaSha's most successful Dietician) often tells this story...



A friend of his was on the bus in Israel and two big Russians came on, and weren't too Jewish-looking. A handful of Charedim made distasteful comments about them coming into our country and not being happy about it. Rav Milston's friend accosted them, and asked them if they'd davened this morning. They replied that of course they had.

Oh, so you must've missed the Amidah?

No, we said the Amidah...

And you said all the Berachot of the Amidah?

Yes....

Even the one about קבוץ גלויות – The Ingathering of Exiles...?

Yes....

SO WHAT WERE YOU EXPECTING?!?

If you look around at Am Yisrael, the situation isn't so rosy (e.g. the rate of intermarriage is very high), so the State of Israel, which is full of these Jewish guys, is going to be indicative of that. Of course buses are going to run on Shabbat, when the vast majority of people want to use buses on Shabbat etc etc...

Furthermore, in Ma'amrei HaRe'iyah, Rav Kook writes of the early settlements that:



“When we compare their moral quality with the human morals of the masses of all nations that live on their lands, and to the state of our people in the previous period, we must admit that they stand on such a high level that we can take pride in them in the eyes of the entire world”.

However, Rav Amital zt”l says that, nowadays

“the violence, corruption and growing tensions among the various segments of society prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that we have not reached the ideal state of which Rav Kook dreamt”.



**What are we, as Madrichim/Chanichim of Bnei Akiva gonna do about it??
What is our vision? What can we do to fulfil Rav Kook’s (and our) vision?**

Sometimes it’s enough for Israelis to just appreciate that we, as Jews living in the diaspora, care. The more we learn about the topic, the more we are likely to show the necessary enthusiasm, interest and compassion to our fellow Jews living in Israel.

Possible ideas include:

- Try to read an Israeli paper every now and then online.
- Speak to Israelis who are in the UK (shlichim), and Israelis in Israel.
- Speak to your friends, parents and madrichim about Israel to learn and discuss ideas.
- If you find yourself in Israel, try to take yourself out of your comfort zone a bit and experience a different side of Israel!

Another great thing we can do once we know a little more about our beloved Israel is to educate others about it too! Try to engage with people on topics which interest you both and push them to the next level.

Possible ideas include:

- Get involved (or start up) an Israel Society in your school
- Teach those younger than you about these issues
- Suggest to your parents that the next time you are in Israel you visit somewhere where you haven’t been before.
- Start a blog/facebook note on any issue you feel particularly strongly about, so those who are interested can read up on the issues.
- Write letters into newspapers

One of the more tangible things which our chanichim can do is to raise money for a charity of their choice in Israel. This can often be done in fun and imaginative ways, whereby they can raise money for a cause they feel particularly strongly for. Often doing such acts in a group can be more fun and successful than being a lone ranger, for example:



- Raise money through sponsored events
- Write cards/send gifts to soldiers etc

Also up for discussion now: Given all we have learnt about Rav Kook, his life, vision, reality, what would he think of us? What would he think of BAUK, sitting in Denbigh, North Wales, talking about all this?

Would Rav Kook actually wear a BA shirt??



- Rav Kook's vision about a unified, religious people in the land is probably not doing all that well
- However, his idea about being an Or L'Goyim is still alive and well as illustrated by many of Israel's successes in various fields
- There were (/are) other visions of the state
- They have all had limited success, but partial failure too
- To start to think about how we, as BAUK, can help to change some of the bad stuff

