



TORAT HABAYIT

THE JOURNAL OF BNEI AKIVA UK

5779/2019

IDEOLOGY: 80 YEARS ON
A STUDY OF THE CHALLENGES
FACING OUR IDEOLOGY IN THE
MODERN DAY

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2019/5779

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Torat HaBayit is the journal of Bnei Akiva UK, which aims to stimulate ideological debate within the movement and to inform the wider community of the issues at the cutting edge of the contemporary consciousness of the Jewish people.

The views expressed in Torat HaBayit are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinion of Bnei Akiva UK.

The editors would particularly like to thank Rabbanit Shira Herskovitz and Eli Maman for their invaluable help and advice throughout this project

Editorial

”כולהו סתימתאה אליבא דרבי עקיבא”¹ – פלגים רבים הולכים וזורמים, אבל הכול בא מתוך אותו ים הגדול, תורתו הכוללת של רבי עקיבא”²
“All these conclusions follow Rabbi Akiva’s opinion” – many streams flow down, but all come from the same ocean, the all-encompassing Torah of Rabbi Akiva.’

In a letter to Bnei Akiva, then a nascent youth movement in the pre-State Land of Israel, Rav Kook looks to Rabbi Akiva, upon whom the movement was named, for inspiration, to outline aims for the movement to impact their generation. In the second aim, quoted above, Rav Kook writes how Torah has been taught and interpreted in many different ways, but ultimately its source is the same Torah taught by Rabbi Akiva. It is Rabbi Akiva after whom Bnei Akiva is named, and whose Torah it seeks to learn from, teach and develop.

When, ninety years ago this month, Bnei Akiva was formed in Israel, its founders cited their core ideological ideal as ‘Torah v’Avodah’, a phrase we know and still idealise today. The context of the time was markedly different, with founder member Yechiel Eliash noting that ‘anti-religious sentiment was rife’, and urging that Bnei Akiva to challenge the Religious establishment, ‘based on a religious revolt’. The aim, however, was the same – ‘A movement...to enhance dynamic religiousness, improve Torah and glorify it.’³ Choosing the name Bnei Akiva, they sought to emulate the love of Torah of Rabbi Akiva.

As Bnei Akiva celebrates 90 years, and 80 years in the UK, it calls for reflection on how best to interpret our ideology and achieve its ambitious aims. This edition of Torat HaBayit seeks to take a pause and look again at what our ideology means for us in the year 5779. It contains articles questioning what our core values mean in the modern world, challenging some of our assumptions and taking on the most pressing questions for Bnei Akiva’s future.

Rav Kook’s imagery of Torah flowing down in streams from a sea draws on the Talmudic statement that “אינ מימ אלא תורה” – “There is no water except Torah”⁴. Just like the water of streams and seas, the Torah doesn’t stand still but constantly moves forward. We see Bnei Akiva today as part of that flow of Torah emanating from Rabbi Akiva. As a movement, it is reinventing itself, redesigning its camps, formulating new programmes and producing original Torah. This edition of Torat HaBayit is itself somewhat inward-looking, hoping to re-evaluate our movement’s ideology. However, in bringing back Bnei Akiva’s journal, after a six-year hiatus, we hope to re-establish Bnei Akiva UK as leading the ideological conversations of Anglo-Jewry, and Modern Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism at large. As Rav Kook concludes in his letter, all the streams of Torah should one day join together to bring our eternal redemption.

Happy Reading,

The Editors

Penina Myerson Kobi Weiner

¹Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin, 86a.

² Kook, AI, ‘Ma’amarei HaRaai’a’, Letter to Bnei Akiva. he.wikisource.org/wiki/עקיבא_לבני_מכתב

³ Zarum, R, ‘So why is your movement called Bnei Akiva?’, Torat HaBayit, Volume 1, Issue 4, (2001).

⁴ Talmud Bavli, Bava Kamma, 17a.



Iyar 5779

Shalom Chaverim,

עם ישראל בארץ ישראל על פי תורת ישראל

The People of Israel, in the Land of Israel, according to the Torah of Israel

The ideology of Bnei Akiva passionately espoused at every Mifkad puts our existence as the nation of Israel, the Torah we live by, and the Land in which we yearn to live at the forefront of our ideological commitment. Each lacking without the other two.

Bnei Akiva's ideology is what has formed the basis of every Peula at Sviva, every Kvutza on Machane, every article published by Yediot and every comment that has invariably followed for the past 80 years since ArieH Handler z"l founded Bnei Akiva UK. With hundreds of Chaverim actualising and teaching this ideology each summer, winter, and every week, the ideology is sure to have evolved into 5779/2019, so as we celebrate these 80 years, it is our responsibility, as any celebration of age would require, to look back, but in this case to specifically look back at exactly how our ideology has evolved and re-evaluate it for the next 80 years.

We are blessed with wise and talented Bogrim, and Torat HaBayit is the mouthpiece of ideological debate and discussion and we would like to thank the Bogrim that have written for this publication. We would also like to thank the editors for the hard work they have put into this publication.

It is important that we discuss our ideology on a regular basis and increase our own awareness of the issues and what unites us or what divides us as a Tnua; but most importantly we must act and bring the words of these pages to life in our work to achieve the basis of our ultimate goal of being *Am Yisrael, b'Eretz Yisrael, al pi Torat Yisrael*.

B'virkat shalom l'Torah v'Avodah

Eli Maman
Chinuch Worker

Hannah Reuben
Mazkira

Rafi Cohen
Svivot Worker

Bnei Akiva's ideology and the future

Rav Aharon Herskovitz

I'VE BEEN asked to write about the relevance and application of Bnei Akiva's ideology in the future. In order to do so, I'd like first to clarify that I'll be focusing on one specific part of the ideology: Torah v'Avodah. One could have focused on the three core values of Am Yisrael, Torat Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael (and on the ways that the three interact with each other). Additionally, there are other aspects that are central to Bnei Akiva's existence in the past and present, that deserve examination to determine their application in the future. For example, Bnei Akiva in the UK (perhaps more than in other countries) has had a certain "counter-cultural" vibe, accompanied by an element of pride in having its message sometimes being more stridently against the prevailing institutions. For example, being more proudly and wholeheartedly Zionist and supportive of Israel when tacit support may have been the norm. As Bnei Akiva has become more established, and as the community values have changed, Bnei Akiva's role as an additional communal institution or a counter-cultural mover and shaker ought to be examined.

Additionally, as a youth movement, Bnei Akiva has, and still very much does, emphasise the role of youth empowerment, both as a means of developing young leaders and as an end unto itself. In the long run, this has helped the movement have an incredible impact

on both British and Israeli Jewry. Related to the discussion of the counter-cultural ideal, this aspect of Bnei Akiva has also undergone some changes over the last generation, perhaps out of technical issues (such as liability issues and/or competition with other concerns vying for children's time) and perhaps from fundamental issues relating to the way adolescence and young adulthood are being experienced in society as a whole (for example, recent studies have shown that young people are achieving certain markers of independence, such as driving a car and getting a job, at later stages¹). Bnei Akiva is still very much a youth-run movement, but it would be worthwhile to aim to understand in what modes this will continue in the future.

Other aspects worthy of examination include the role Bnei Akiva has played regarding women's empowerment (in learning and leadership opportunities), inclusion, activism (such as in the demonstrations in support of Sharansky and Russian Jewry in the 1980s) and more, but all that must wait for another time.

With that being said, let us turn to Torah v'Avodah. What relevance does it have in the modern day? How will and should it be continued to apply in the future?

Although both Torah and Avodah are overarching principles, relevant for many different generations, there are various ways of understanding how they are **expressed**, and this **expression** is usually tied to the issues of the day. What relevance do Torah and Avodah have, both separately and together?

Torah composes many different aspects. First, and foremost, it is a sense of a commitment to the obligations listed in the Torah, both the *Torah SheBichtav* and *Torah SheBa'al Peh*. That, as a movement, we strive to fulfil all obligations in the most complete way possible. This value is incumbent not only upon Bnei Akiva as a

¹ Twenge, JM, 'Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?', (2017).

movement, but is expected from our Chaverim as well, with the understanding that many in Bnei Akiva are on a religious journey and will hopefully grow and continue to grow in this area of their lives. This aspect of Torah is incredibly relevant in the modern day when the value of commitment is sometimes called into question, and motivated youth are more likely to seek connection than commitment.

Secondly, Torah indicates a commitment to Torah study. That our lives are to be not only lived according to our commitment to our obligations and values but that we dedicate time to study. This stems both out of a belief that *ein Am HaAretz chassid*, that an ignoramus cannot know what they are supposed to be doing, but also that if something is truly important in your life, you set aside time to engage with it, to focus on it, to cherish it. This aspect is all the more important nowadays when in the current social media age, most content that we encounter has been made shallow and processed. My Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yehuda Amital zt"l said once that he had learned later in his career 'If you gave a speech in twenty minutes, then you probably could have given it in fifteen minutes.' Although the importance of brevity and clarity cannot be understated, we have reached an extreme. Nowadays, if your message cannot be distilled into a 30-second soundbite (preferably with a video), you are considered inaccessible and unengaging. Encouraging the study of Torah in a deep and intensive way encourages our Chaverim to develop a comprehensive, complex and complicated understanding of Torah. If we want them to develop a Torah that is capable of interacting with and formulating responses to complex issues of the modern world (as will be discussed below), this deep understanding is critical.

What is Avodah? Primarily, earlier formulations of Bnei Akiva's Avodah referred to physical work of the land of

Israel, as evidenced by the purchase of Thaxted farm in 1944, the intensive focus on training for work on kibbutzim and the establishment of Kibbutz Lavi (1949), and later Alumim (1966) and Beit Rimon (1979). This understanding of Avodah developed over time, and eventually, Hachshara was expanded to include a Torani track with study in yeshivot and seminaries. Additionally, the ideal of Aliyah was expanded to include "professional" Aliyah, meaning moving to Israel and working in areas besides for in a kibbutz setting.

How is Avodah understood nowadays? First and foremost, its focus is on building up Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael. There still is clearly an element of **physical** development, as in the times of the stress on the kibbutz movement, but there is clearly a more expansive definition currently. Nowadays, Avodah could include a host of efforts that make the **land**, the **country** and **society** more developed, from an economic, social and political standpoint. Activities as diverse as working in hi-tech, running a non-profit organisation or working on one's *moetza ezorit* (local council) are part of Avodah. This aspect is incredibly important and is a unique part of our ideology: 'mundane' activities, necessary both for one's financial well-being and for a community's smooth running are not truly mundane, but are imbued with a deeper level of meaning, of being an act of building up Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael. Certainly, one's mindset upon acting within this expansive understanding still needs to be focused on the **why** of what they are doing: we would not want our work in the land of Israel to be *shelo lishma*, for extrinsic purposes alone, but rather out of a deep sense of commitment to making it a better place.

How do Torah and Avodah come together to create Torah v'Avodah? Merely ascribing to a value system that contains both Torah and Avodah is a *chiddush*: we could theoretically (as many in fact do) focus on Torah as the sole source of meaning. All

involvement in the world, even if necessary, has no inherent value and must be minimised to as great a degree as possible in order to maximise our ability to focus on and study Torah. On the other hand, we could focus on our work and labour, without an understanding of them being rooted in spiritual realms.

The synergy of Torah and Avodah leave both of them enriched. In other words, our Torah is different due to our Avodah, and our Avodah is different thanks to our Torah.

How does Avodah affect our Torah? A Torah of Avodah is one that focuses on modern issues, aiming to tackle them head-on, out of the belief that the Torah has the ability to develop comprehensive ways to deal with them. The Torah is not one that is left in the corner, dealing only with arcane topics but is fresh, dramatic and exciting, relevant for all times, including our own. After plumbing the depths of the Torah, we must think of ways to harness its strength, beauty and pleasantness to address topics such as the role of women and opportunities granted to them in the communal sphere, how a modern state and society can be function in a way that is consonant with our deeply held values, how do technological advances challenge and further our Torah worldview. Additionally, a Torah of Avodah understands that a value system must be formulated that, while independent to a degree from the cultural milieu in which its adherents' practice, will be relevant and engaging enough to encourage young people to ascribe to it instead of to competing secular ideologies or mere apathy.

And how does Torah affect our Avodah? An Avodah of Torah is one that has deep roots, spreading from the very first mission given by Hashem to humankind. Hashem places Adam in the Garden of Eden: "לעבדה ולשמרה" – "to work it and guard it"².

We view our involvement and activity in Israel not just as meaningful in the present day, nor just as a continuation of millennia of Jewish history, but as part of a Divine mission to better it and the entire world. This gives a different character to the Avodah, one that is firmer and more deeply rooted.

An Avodah affected by Torah is all the more important in the modern day. In a modern Jewish society that is both surrounded by, and very much a part of the wider secular culture, the vast majority of youth can imbibe a whole system of values from the outside world without questioning if they are consonant with Torah values. Merely educating about the importance of Israel is not enough to overcome the possibility that the secondary will become primary: we must ensure that our educational system is rooted in the unique tradition of Torat Yisrael. We must make it clear that our message is **not** 'In Bnei Akiva, you can be religious and still be "normal"', but that we profess a complex and comprehensive value system enriched by worlds that can be complementary to our tradition.

Focusing on either Torah or Avodah at the expense of the other will not only decrease our effectiveness and strength but may make the ideology irrelevant in the long-term. The continued relevance of Torah v'Avodah is dependent on our ability to understand, utilise and transmit this **synergy** between the two. May Hashem grant that our continued blessings to each other b'Torah v'Avodah are heard.

■ RAV AHARON HERSKOVITZ grew up in America, and after making Aliyah and serving in the army, received Semicha while studying at Yeshivat Har Etzion. He and his wife, Shira, moved to Givat Shmuel, where they worked with the student population of Bar Ilan University. He is currently the Rav Shaliach for Bnei Akiva and the Jewish Agency.

² Bereishit, 2:15. Author's own translation.

Should Bnei Akiva UK interact with other youth movements?

Josh Zeltser

BNEI AKIVA UK is the main representative body of Religious Zionist, Modern Orthodox youth in the United Kingdom. Although its members have a large variety of different views and opinions, they all see value in Bnei Akiva's core mission statement of '*Am Yisrael, b'Eretz Yisrael, al pi Torat Yisrael*' – '*The People of Israel, in the Land of Israel, according to the Torah of Israel*'. The UK Jewish community also has several other youth movements representing other denominations and strands of Judaism and Zionist ideologies. For a movement like Bnei Akiva, we are often faced with the dilemma of how much we should interact with these other movements, and whether to join them for communal events. This is especially the case when joint events may conflict with our core ideology and beliefs. For example, Bnei Akiva may be asked to sign a joint letter to the Israeli government criticising their actions or supporting events which include speakers from other denominations, such as Reform Rabbis who we fundamentally disagree with. To take this question even further, how should Bnei Akiva react to other

movements who take part in events such as 'Kaddish for Gaza', which from our point of view is completely unimaginable. Should we be interacting with such movements? In this article, I want to try to address this question from a Jewish perspective and hopefully, this will give us some ideas as we tackle this important dilemma.

Firstly, I wanted to explore the idea of unity in Judaism. In Judaism, there exists the mitzvah of Ahavat Yisrael, loving one's fellow Jew. The Gemara¹ explains the idea of this mitzvah using the following parable. If a man was to cut a piece of meat with a knife and the knife mistakenly cut his other hand, one wouldn't imagine that one hand would hit the other to tell it off, so too, with Ahavat Yisrael each Jew must view the other as a part of the same body. The fact that this is a mitzvah, therefore, shows how important it is to Hashem that we love our fellow Jew. Rabbi Sacks², when discussing this topic, brings a quote from Rambam³, where he states that: 'though diversity applies to all life forms, it applies more to humans than any other'. Rabbi Sacks says that to this one surely must add 'and among Jews more than most. No small people are more diverse, ethnically culturally, attitudinally and religiously – and the more religious the more diverse'. He explains how although we are so diverse this is not a sign of weakness, but merely a strength. He then quotes the Netziv in his commentary on the passage describing the Tower of Babel, where he says how 'uniformity of thought is not a sign of freedom but its opposite'. I think that we can take these ideas of the importance of Ahavat Yisrael and the idea of how diverse the Jewish people are and apply them to our question. Within Judaism, there are lots of people with different opinions, yet we are still one people and we, therefore, must still love and interact with each other.

¹ Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim, 9:5.

² Sacks, J, 'Jewish Diversity & Unity', (2012), <http://rabbisacks.org/jewish-unity-published-in-jewish-action/>

³ Moreh haNevuchim, 2:40. Translation by Sacks, J.

I next want to look into some Jewish perspectives on whether we, as Orthodox Jews, can or should accept other denominations. We can start to approach this with another quote from Rabbi Sacks⁴: 'Within Judaism, [...] Orthodoxy, Conservatism, Reform and Reconstructionism are regularly portrayed as the four Jewish denominations [...] It imports pluralism into Judaism. And this itself is an accommodation of secularisation. Orthodoxy does not, and cannot, make this accommodation, [...] it does not see itself as one version of Judaism among others.' This quote is very clear. As Orthodox Jews, we fundamentally can't accept other versions of Judaism that 'abandon fundamental beliefs or halachic authority.' This being the case, how should we act towards these other denominations, and should we consider working with them at all?

To explore this, I investigated a shiur given by Rav Judah Goldberg⁵, where he explains some of the key thoughts of Rav Soloveitchik on this topic. Rav Soloveitchik, in his book *Kol Dodi Dofek*⁶, introduces the idea of the Covenant of Fate. He describes the Jewish people being bound by two separate historical covenants, the covenant at Egypt which he describes as the 'Covenant of Fate', and the covenant at Sinai which he calls the 'Covenant of Destiny'. In terms of the Covenant of Fate, he says how it 'is expressed in four positive categories that stem from the awareness of shared fate'⁷. The categories being a sense of shared experience, an experience of shared suffering, shared obligation and responsibility, and finally cooperation between us and our fellow Jew. Rav Soloveitchik clearly believed in the importance of all Jews cooperating with

each other and this is further highlighted in a newspaper article from 1954 where he says: 'When we are faced with a problem for Jews and Jewish interests towards the world, regarding the defence of Jewish rights in the non-Jewish world, then all groups and movements must be united.'⁸ Thus, we can clearly see that when it comes to our fate, we share a common identity, and Orthodox Jews should cooperate with Jews of all types in order to protect our shared interests. However, in terms of our 'Destiny', in religious matters, we should not work with other denominations who fundamentally disagree with our values. This was also the opinion of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein who was asked whether Orthodox Jews should participate in a joint Yom HaShoah service with the non-Orthodox community, to which he responded, 'as far as I know, the Nazis had not differentiated, could we?'⁹ There clearly is a basis here for some collaboration between Orthodox and non-Orthodox organisations depending on the circumstance involved.

The question now is how all of this fits into the case of Bnei Akiva. It is clear from the sources above that there is a core idea in Judaism of Jewish unity and togetherness, in particular in terms of the 'Covenant of Fate' that is described by Rav Soloveitchik. On top of this, other youth movements, in the UK in particular, have a large array of resources and creative ideas that we could greatly benefit from as a movement. On the other hand, how can we join with and support organisations that we fundamentally disagree with, that interfere with our 'Covenant of Destiny'? Based on the discussion in this article the answer really is: it all depends. When it comes to events or rallies on issues that affect us as

⁴ Sacks, J, *One People*, (1993), p.31.

⁵ Goldberg, J, 'Before Sinai: Jewish Values and Jewish Law', Shiur 16.

⁶ Soloveitchik, JB, 'Kol Dodi Dofek', (2005). Translation by Gordon, DZ.

⁷ *ibid.*, *The Covenants of Sinai and Egypt*, 7.

⁸ Soloveitchik, JB, *Community Covenant and Commitment: Selected Letters and Communications*, (2005), p145. Edited by Helfgot, N.

⁹ Lichtenstein, A, 'Beyond the Pale? Contemporary Relations with Non-Orthodox Jews, Varieties of Jewish Experience', (2011), p149.

a Jewish nation, such as anti-Semitism, we should work and interact with them even if it means joining with organisations whose ideology is contrary to ours. We should go out of our way to make an effort to collaborate with them, as we would be doing it to help the collective Jewish nation. However, when it comes to events or other collaborations that completely contradict our core religious beliefs then we need to stick to our own 'Destiny' and refrain from joining in. Having said this, we should be careful to ensure that the way we communicate our decisions to the other movements is thoughtful and polite and does not cause any offence whatsoever. One other consideration that we have to take into account on this topic is the fact that increasingly, Bnei Akiva UK is having to cater to a growing number of non-Orthodox Chanichim. Chanichim these days tend to join the movement that their friends attend, whether or not its ideology is aligned with their own. This leaves another question as to how much we should be accepting of these Chanichim's beliefs, and also how much we should encourage them to accept ours while they are attending our events. I will leave this as an open question that we as a movement should definitely discuss in the future.

In conclusion, I have explored in this article how much Bnei Akiva UK as a movement should interact with other youth movements. I have outlined the ideas of Jewish unity and togetherness and looked at whether we should be accepting of other denominations of Jews that we may be asked to interact with. This is one of the fundamental questions that our movement needs to come to a consensus on and I hope that the ideas outlined in this article will act as a springboard for continued discussion in this area.

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Reaching out: are we a kiruv movement?

Dani Jacobson

ONE OF the coolest things about being a part of a youth movement is the journey on which it takes you. Going from a participant in community programmes and camps to a leader, and on the way learning new skills, being able to experiment with your leadership style, and meeting the new scary challenge of each job with pride. However, something that in my experience is quite unique to Bnei Akiva is that this Hadracha journey is almost invariably paralleled with a religious one. It's normal for any movement's most dedicated and enthusiastic participants (read: 'keenos') to be the ones who stay involved for the longest time, yet for us in Bnei Akiva, the dedication in question is of a dual form: to the movement, of course, but also to Judaism, specifically our own brand of Modern Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism. Is Bnei Akiva, then, a kiruv movement? Is religious growth an inevitable consequence of what we do, or what we're aiming for?

The fact that youth normally (with many exceptions) translates to lesser religiousness is something far from unique to Bnei Akiva. By nature – as a philosophical, intellectual, very difficult exercise – religion is something to be grappled with as you grow. In our case, the religious makeup of the chanichim of any given machane also reflects trends in the community. Despite having an obviously strong religious ethos, Bnei Akiva caters for many different types of people and does not discriminate in who can attend events;

by nature, such an open movement which nevertheless adheres to important religious values will involve lots of education as a crucial part of its activities. This education is the central part of the Bnei Akiva journey and mission (one of the principal reasons we look up to Rabbi Akiva as a role model), and parents and guardians know this when entrusting us with their children.

Many BANiks grow up religious, but many of them also praise the movement – and especially Hachshara, as the culmination of all the work done on Machanot and in Sviva – for its influence on their spiritual growth. I'm sure I don't have to clarify here that I think it's a positive thing that lots of religious people remain involved in Bnei Akiva: these are often the people who felt they got a lot out of the movement and that they have a lot to give back to the next generation. But I don't think any specific religious outcome is a necessary result of these programmes, and I think that an essential part of being an effective and relatable Madrich/a – as well as a good person in general – is retaining honesty about one's journey. I personally think that part of my strength as a Madricha has always been the fact that I talk openly about being the first one in my family to get involved in Bnei Akiva, about my teenage life and how it got me to where I am, and why there are still some areas where I disagree with more commonly held opinions. A plurality of opinions and honesty about beliefs will always be a good thing, and I don't like the idea that there is anything compulsory to think or feel to be a "good" Jew, Madrich/a or Boger/et.

Kiruv has become a dirty word in many religious circles, with connotations of either the fluffy "lightening" of Judaism to make it more attractive or the forceful brainwashing of unsuspecting individuals. I do not believe that our movement falls into either of these categories. The religious aspects of activities are presented in the most beautiful way possible but are never lightened; talk to any Madrich/a who

has struggled through leading a boisterous Machane minyan, or any Madricha who has been on Shabbat skirt patrol. At the other end of the spectrum, despite what one might think if watching us all stand on chairs and shout 'WE BELIEVE IN THE TORAH', Bnei Akiva does not and should not brainwash. The organisation clearly expects a certain adherence to rules but allows for mistakes, and constantly pushes for questions and debate. The independent thinking that brainwashing by nature negates is a crucial part of all Bnei Akiva education.

Nonetheless, kiruv in its purest sense – coming from the *kuf-reish-bet* root meaning 'coming close' (in this sense, to God) – is not a negative thing. Helping others along a religious journey is beautiful and something to which to aspire. These moments of "closeness" are some of the most magical of any Bnei Akiva experience: watching an animated and engaged shiur group, especially when the Madrich/a giving the shiur was a Chanich/a sitting in your own group not long ago and is now confidently leading their own; talking to Chanichim who have just experienced Shabbat for the first time; watching as individuals become more comfortable with Hebrew, be it bentching or street slang; discussing the complexities of the modern state of Israel in Kvutza; a really, really good tisch. Former Mazkir Michael Rainsbury explains that organisations that outwardly aim for kiruv will take youths or adults on a two-week programme and expect that participants will be keeping Shabbat within the year. Bnei Akiva, rather, builds the pathway for a twenty-year process of moments of closeness like those mentioned above, combined with community involvement, a meaningful gap year and Bnei Akiva's influence on your family life – a long term vision that is quite remarkable for any organisation in Anglo-Jewry – and yet, expecting and encouraging critical thinking, is open to the fact that participants will walk away with a myriad of different views.

These moments of "kiruv" are inherent in our Bnei Akiva mission and reflected in the life of the Rabbi whose name we bear, as I have suggested, and can happen to individuals of all – even, and especially, high – religious levels. Yet I would still argue that we aren't a kiruv movement, not really. We are a "chinuch" movement, here to inform and educate, starting from one point of view but making room for many and encouraging their exploration. Former Shaliach to Bnei Akiva UK Rav Ilan Goldman differentiates between kiruv, to make you like me, and chinuch, to bring out the best in you.

If we bring people closer to Judaism, that is a fantastic thing, but there is no expectation that we must, that if Chanichim do not go home from Machane more religious than when they came, we have failed. Rav Ilan also highlights that Bnei Akiva remains exceptionally proud of Bogrim even when they live out only part of its ideology, such as making Aliyah but not being especially religious, or staying in the UK but becoming a community leader. The question is whether we prioritise the end result or the *derech* taken to achieve it, and Bnei Akiva focuses (and should focus) on the latter. Our goal is to delve into and really think about Judaism, and while we do this within a Religious Zionist format, the subsequent Jewish identities that Chanichim develop for themselves reflect a multiplicity of beliefs and ideas. This, in my view, is one of the most beautiful things about Bnei Akiva and something it would be dangerous for us to devalue.

■ DANI JACOBSON was a Madricha at Borehamwood and Elstree Sviva before studying in Midreshet Harova on Hachsharat Torani. Since returning to the UK, she has studied French and Spanish at Cambridge University and has remained involved in Bnei Akiva as a Madricha on Machanot, including Israel Machane and also as Sganit. She plans to fulfil her dream of making Aliyah in September.

An inconsistent triad: Modern Orthodoxy, Religious Zionism, and the limits of modernity

Jemma Silvert

DEFINING MODERN Orthodoxy has never been easy. If we were to ask everyone in the Tnua what Modern Orthodoxy means, it strikes me that we'd end up with twice as many definitions as the number of people we asked. Two Jews, three opinions. Classic. However, if we're going to consider the limits of modernity within Modern Orthodoxy, we need some kind of concrete definition to work with. So – in lieu of any actual market research within the Tnua – a quick Google search leads us to the following:

'Modern Orthodox Judaism is a movement within Orthodox Judaism that attempts to synthesise Jewish values and the observance of Jewish law with the secular, modern world.'¹

This kind of definition is something I think about a lot – perhaps not altogether surprising considering I've spent the latter half of my life perpetually juggling between the religious and secular aspects of my existence, desperately trying to integrate the two. I want to live a full religious life. I want to keep halacha, I want to daven, I want to learn. I want to learn the whole of Shas and then start over again; I want to have the whole of Tanach at my fingertips; I want every Shabbat to be filled with an intense connection to God and to the people around me; more – I want every day to be filled with that. But this is not enough. I also want to make a difference. I want a fulfilling job; I want to be at the cutting edge of neuroscience research, or governmental policy development; I want to write a book, to be a poet; I want to have a stake in the wider society in which I live. In short, I want to be able to participate in every area of life that I'm passionate about.

But, again, this is not enough.

I don't just want to participate; I want to participate **fully**. I want to excel. Having spent three years in the world of academia, it is not enough for me to go back to only reading a couple of scientific journal articles a week, alongside whatever else I'm doing in life. Having spent the last few months learning full-time in Israel, it is not enough for me to go back to only learning for a few hours a week, alongside whatever else I'm doing in life. This is the predicament of Generation Y, weaned on the mantra that we can do anything, achieve anything, if only we try hard enough. As motivational as that may be, I'm beginning to question the validity of

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_Orthodox_Judaism

that mantra in application to Modern Orthodoxy. After nearly ten years in the Modern Orthodox world, I still don't feel any degree of success in synthesising the religious and secular elements of my life and surroundings. If I focus on the religious, I do so at the expense of the secular; if I focus on the secular, I do so at the expense of the religious; if I try to focus on both, I simply end up only doing each by half. How can we conceive of the limits of modernity in Modern Orthodoxy when the very definition of the term divides itself into two realms; the religious and the secular?

In separating life in this way, modernity is always going to limit Modern Orthodoxy – the religious will limit the secular, and the secular will limit the religious; the modernity will limit the Orthodoxy, and the Orthodoxy will limit the modernity. The mistake we're making, it would seem, is that we're not actually trying to **synthesise** the two realms. If modernity and Orthodoxy are two circles of a Venn diagram, this way of thinking has separated the circles almost entirely, leaving alarmingly little intersect in which we can build our lives. In accentuating the divide between the two circles, we condemn ourselves to be constantly catapulting between the two, rather than working to genuinely intertwine them and create for ourselves a space in which we can be simultaneously and uncompromisingly modern **and** Orthodox. For me, I don't want Modern Orthodoxy to be a compromise, I want it to be an **ideal**. I want Modern Orthodoxy to be more than just the sum of its parts, more than just the overlap of Orthodoxy and modernity – I want the two to truly come together, to coexist and build upon each other, forming the thread from which we weave the fabric of our community. When musical notes are played together in harmony, we do not question the extent to which one is limiting the other; we marvel at their interaction,

the beauty of the chord we have created. **This** is what I want for Modern Orthodoxy.

This is, of course, nothing new. Rav Soloveitchik can tell you that. In simple terms, the goal is for religion to permeate every area of our lives. Rather than having moments that are describable in religious terms and moments that are describable in secular terms, the goal is to conceive of every moment through a religious lens. Halacha enables us to connect a large portion of the mundanity of daily life to the profundity of the Divine (think about what we wear, the prayers we say over food, even using the bathroom), but the level of permeation I'm talking about goes way beyond this. When I'm socialising with non-Jewish and secular friends and family; when I'm at work (outside of Jewish professionalism); when I'm listening to English music – all of these types of moments are ones in which we can connect with God, and with the people and world of God's creation. To deny the Avodat Hashem in these apparently secular moments is to deny the very essence of what it means to be Modern Orthodox. The value of embracing modernity, I believe, lies in what it **adds** to our Judaism – not only increasing our ability to be an *Or I'Goyim* but also enabling us to strengthen our conviction and assurance in our beliefs and practices. Someone who grows up in a homogenous religious environment and has never encountered anything outside of that has no real point of reference for evaluating their religion – heterogeneity is key to developing a true identity, on a personal, communal, and national scale. Real Modern Orthodoxy, therefore, enables us to contribute to society as a whole – a central tenet of Modern Orthodoxy is that we engage with the way the world is **today**; that we do not become insular, but rather that we live religious lives in a wider society that necessarily differs from our immediate Jewish community.

As such, the question is raised: if I surround myself only (or predominantly) with other Jews, am I losing what it means to be Modern Orthodox? In living only in a Jewish society, am I sacrificing a crucial aspect of what we understand by the “modern” in Modern Orthodoxy?

In general, I think the answer is yes – a huge part of what we conceive of as modernity involves not isolating ourselves as a Jewish community: we want to be involved in the wider world.

This is where the limits of modernity come in. During the time I was writing this article, I had an interesting conversation with a Chanich, who spoke to me about how much he missed the ‘camp bubble’ and how hard he was finding it to no longer be surrounded by a totally Jewish, Modern Orthodox, environment – emotions I fully identified with. I tried to provide some comfort, highlighting the benefits of being in a mixed environment: how it can help him strengthen his religious convictions, how he can be a Kiddush Hashem, how he can truly be the embodiment of what it means to be Modern Orthodox. His response made me think. He asked what I thought about Aliyah; namely, whether I thought that making Aliyah was contrary to Modern Orthodox ideals because we would then be surrounded by a predominantly Jewish society, thus removing that central tenet of modernity that requires us to engage with wider society, a society necessarily different from our own.

As I said, his response made me think. At first, I thought he was perhaps correct, and I wondered how I’d be able to salvage any sense of intellectual integrity and still give an appropriate Bnei Akiva, pro-Aliyah response. However, the more I thought, the more I realised that what he said does not necessarily apply to Israel. The diversity of Israeli society means that the country is comprised of Jews, Christians,

Muslims, Druze, Israelis, Arabs, Israeli-Arabs – and everything in between. Even within the Jewish population of Israel, there are secular people, Reform, Reconstructionist, Liberal, Masorti, Conservative, Modern Orthodox, Orthodox, Charedi, and so on. Making Aliyah does not necessarily entail being in a wider society that is homogenous with our own Jewish community; Israel has the heterogeneity essential to preserve our Modern Orthodox identity, as individuals and as communities. So, Modern Orthodoxy is saved. We can still make Aliyah. Phew.

However, this time my own response made me think. I thought back to the classic debates we have on camp – about the makeup of Israeli society, about the nature of running a religious state. Should halacha determine national law? Should buses run on Shabbat? Does the Prime Minister have to be Jewish? How do we ensure the role remains Jewish whilst still maintaining democracy and human rights in the region? What should the immigration and citizenship policies be in relation to religion? Essentially, living in Israel does not pose a problem to the modernity in Modern Orthodoxy primarily due to the fact that it is not solely a “religious” state – the large numbers of secular Jews and non-Jewish people mean that there is still a differential wider society for us to participate in, we can still be Modern Orthodox. Sure, you can argue that technological advances and the globalisation of the workforce mean that I would still be able to participate in wider society even if Israel was solely Jewish and solely religious – but this is not participation to the same extent; this is still limiting the degree of modernity in Modern Orthodoxy.

Considering this, it seems we are now in a position whereby we’re forced to maintain the composition of Israeli society as it

currently is. If we need such numbers of secular-Jewish and non-Jewish people living in the land in order to preserve our Modern Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism, then we also need for Israel to not become more religious as a state, to not become solely Jewish-inhabited. This is the paradox. If we want to avoid limits within Modern Orthodoxy, we need to actively maintain a less-than-Orthodox and not-solely-Jewish Israel. If we want a halachic Orthodox and solely-Jewish Israel, then the extent to which we can be a part of a wider society is fundamentally limited.

This, I believe, is the limit of modernity in Modern Orthodoxy. This is the inconsistent triad.

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Reflections on how Bnei Akiva UK decides its ideology

Noah Haber

IT SEEMS simple enough to define the ideology of Bnei Akiva UK. We say it in every Mifkad: 'Torah v'Avoda' – '*Torah and Work*' and '*Am Yisrael, b'Eretz Yisrael, al pi Torat Yisrael*' – '*The People of Israel, in the Land of Israel, according to the Torah of Israel*'. However, these are broad ideological definitions and what these phrases mean practically for Bnei Akiva UK is far from clear.

'Torah v'Avodah' - the phrase coined by Rav Shmuel Chaim Landau - had a very clear meaning when Bnei Akiva was founded in 1929. It was the combination of the two things necessary for successful Religious Zionism. Study of and living by the Torah were required in order to be expressly religious Zionists, while Avodah referred to the need to physically build up the agriculture and infrastructure of the land of Israel in advance of it becoming the Jewish state. The Torah component is largely unchanged to this day due to the eternal relevance with which we regard the Torah. However, the meaning of Avodah has changed from what it meant pre-state or in the early days of the state of Israel. As a result of the successful Avodah of the earlier generations of Zionists, the State of Israel now has a sufficiently developed infrastructure, meaning that it is no longer necessary for Chaverim of Bnei Akiva to

dedicate themselves to Avodah in the classical sense. Therefore, there is debate around the topic of the contemporary meaning of this term. While many feel that it now refers to any activity which improves Israel's economy or society, we must ask ourselves if this definition works for Bnei Akiva in the UK?

Bnei Akiva UK's approach to Aliyah has recently been the subject of significant controversy with many Bogrim in Israel opining that the movement no longer emphasises or values Aliyah. The high rates of Bogrim making Aliyah each year as well the clear emphasis on the value of living in Israel which can be found in much of our educational material refutes these accusations. However, it must also be noted that making Aliyah is arguably not seen as an absolute requirement by our movement today. Indeed, there are many Chaverim who make huge contributions to Bnei Akiva UK and, simultaneously, have no intention to move to Israel. These people range from committed Madrichim on Machane, to Senior Tzevet members of both Machane and Sviva and even members of the Hanhalla and Mazkirut. It would be difficult to find people in Bnei Akiva UK who would be willing to term these individuals as second-rate or less valuable members of the movement. As much as we value Aliyah, it would be unacceptable to most, if not all of Bnei Akiva UK, to label these people as failures of the movement. Consequently, it is a struggle to define Aliyah in a way that applies equally to all Chaverim. The previously suggested understanding of Aliyah for our times is insufficient if we accept that all of our members are equally valued, regardless of their intention to make Aliyah.

When asked which thinker has most inspired the Bnei Akiva ideology, many people wouldn't think twice before answering Rav Kook. The case for this is

clear: we're a Religious Zionist movement and he is seen to be the father of modern Religious Zionism. One of our winter Machanot is literally named after him. We have a Machane Chomer that is based on him and his teachings and these also appear regularly in Chovrot for Sviva.

However, once again, greater scrutiny raises some important questions about how applicable this "obvious" choice really is. Let us first ask how many Chaverim of Bnei Akiva UK have ever opened one of Rav Kook's books. The teachings of Rav Kook were anthologised into a series commonly referred to as "The White Shas". Each volume of this work is large and formulated in sophisticated and poetic Hebrew which is not easily accessible to the majority of the movement's members. Whilst some may have spent time studying these works, even those who devote much of their time to Torah study do not use this time to study the teachings of Rav Kook in a serious and focussed way. The ideas may be referenced in our educational material but there has been little, if any, officially programmed study of Torat HaRav Kook in Bnei Akiva UK. This is surely a surprising way to treat the person who is viewed by many as the cornerstone of Bnei Akiva ideology. The Rav Kook themed Chomer, though changing slightly each year, generally consists of a few pages which vaguely summarise some broad ideological points. Whilst this might serve as a useful, albeit brief, introduction to the thought and ideology of Rav Kook, it hardly does justice to a thinker whose far-ranging and deeply complex ideas are studied and debated by religious scholars and academics alike to this day, 84 years after his death. This may be acceptable if the Chomer simply served as an introduction to continued study of Torat HaRav Kook but this is not the case and, thus, though

Rav Kook may serve as an ideological inspiration to some individuals in Bnei Akiva UK, can we justify the claim that his thought is an ideological inspiration for the movement as a whole? Furthermore, though Rav Kook is a useful example of this point, the same argument could be made with regards to other thinkers who are claimed as key inspirations for the movement's ideology.

So, taking into account the criticisms of these more "obvious" answers to the question, how can we define Bnei Akiva's ideology? We may have broad concepts which guide us but what do these mean in practice? The ideology of the movement, as described in the Standing Orders of Bnei Akiva UK, reads:

'Bnei Akiva espouses the ideology of Torah Va'Avodah, as a means of unifying Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael, and Torat Yisrael.¹

This is in itself a vague and not proscriptive definition and, as with all of the constitution, is vulnerable to being changed year on year during Veida. Indeed, just this year, a new point was added to the section of the Standing Orders dealing with the purpose of the movement:

'Bnei Akiva UK identifies as a Modern Orthodox Jewish youth movement defined as the synthesis of the modern world with Torah values and Halacha as prescribed by the Rabbinic head of the movement.²

This addition and the aspect of the ideology of the movement being a changeable part of the Standing Orders reflects how what is captured officially in writing does not necessarily reflect the evolving attitudes of the movement.

Neither can the formal educational content of Bnei Akiva UK be taken as a fair representation of the ideology of the

¹ Standing Orders, A2, Bnei Akiva UK (5778).

² Ibid A5

movement. These too are subject to change each year by the Chinuch Worker, and indeed, in recent years, the Chomer for Machane has undergone significant changes, at times causing controversy. In addition, each individual Rosh Machane has a certain amount of autonomy in deciding what is included in the final version of the Chomer that is presented to their Tzevet. Beyond this, the Chinuch which is actually delivered to the Chanichim is, to a large extent, in the hands of the Madrichim; it is not uncommon for different Kvutzot, working with the same educational material, to deliver distinctly dissimilar sessions with very different takes, coming from different angles, stemming from significant differences in political or religious outlook. Does anyone in the movement have the authority to define one of these approaches as in line with the ideology and one as sitting outside of it? Another example from Machane is Limmud. This is the source of the main Torah content being given over on Machane - made all the more important by the fact that Torah is literally half of our ideological catchphrase. Despite this, aside from the occasional vetting, Madrichim have more or less total freedom to give over their Limmud sessions on whatever they want and present it according to their own wishes. Additionally, many Madrichim will say that their greatest achievements in the realm of Hadracha were realised in informal settings; experiences where they have engaged with Chanichim using their own personal journeys and approaches to a range of issues, as opposed to the times when they were delivering formal Hadracha based on Chomer written by the Chinuch Worker and edited by their Roshim.

It is clear that the true ideology of the movement does not come from written definitions or booklets. Rather it is a living, dynamic ideology which belongs to all the

members of our movement equally. Accordingly, Rav Kook is very much part of our ideological inspiration, because as long there are individuals in the movement who have studied and been inspired by Rav Kook and pass on that inspiration to their chanichim, Torat HaRav Kook is part of our ideology. The same can be said for many other thinkers and strands of thought relating to Religious Zionism and Modern Orthodoxy. While the constitution can give a broad ideological definition and a Chinuch Worker can provide what they personally see as important Chinuch content, from the point at which the Chinuch is delivered and the ideology is actually expressed, it belongs to everyone.

Of course, this approach to Bnei Akiva UK's ideology gives rise to several issues. How do we ensure that our constantly evolving ideology doesn't stray from the broad goals of 'Torah Va'Avodah, as a means of unifying Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael, and Torat Yisrael'? Can we really police everyone's individual ideology to make sure nothing has extended too far beyond the general spectrum of beliefs within the movement? Can we really tell someone that their personal beliefs are not welcome, but everyone else's is? These issues obviously require much thought and deliberation, although 'as prescribed by the Rabbinic head of the movement' implies that, constitutionally, the Rav Shaliach has a significant role to play in making these decisions.

Issues aside, this reality of how ideology is decided is one of our greatest strengths as a movement. Rav Yehuda Amital is famously quoted as having said, when speaking about his approach to education, 'I do not want to create mini Amitals'. Our goal as a Chinuch movement should not be to create an army of carbon copy BANiks. We should embrace the fact that each Chaver is a unique individual, and that the best chance of ensuring that each

individual Chanich/a has access to the Chinuch that they need is to make sure that each individual Madrich is able to make their own unique Chinuch contribution. The resulting ideological fusion is far more effective than what any single person could formulate.

■ NOAH HABER went to Yavneh Boys High School in Manchester before learning for two years at Yeshivat HaKotel in Jerusalem. He is currently studying Mechanical Engineering at the University of Liverpool. Noah has been Rosh of Salford Bnei Akiva, Rosh of Machane, and a Madrich on Israel Machane.

Does Chalutzit still exist?

Shulamit Finn

WHENEVER I hear the word 'chalutz' – 'pioneer' the same image comes to mind. It's a cartoon of a chirpy young boy wearing a pointy hat, baggy shirt, shorts and sandals. It paints an idyllic image of being an Israeli child, working the land and seemingly loving every moment of it. But why is it that this is the image that comes to mind? And how many of us have actually come across the real-life equivalent of this cartoon?

Before we can discuss whether Chalutzit still exists we need to define it with a bit more sophistication than my little cartoon friend. The obvious starting point in trying to define Chalutzit is seeing how it is used in the Tanach. The first time we see the concept of a chalutz is in Bamidbar when Bnei Yisrael are preparing to enter Eretz Yisrael.¹

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מֹשֶׁה, אִם תַּעֲשׂוּן אֶת הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה: אִם תִּחַלְצוּ לַפָּנִי ה' לַמִּלְחָמָה. וְעָבְרוּ לָכֶם כָּל חַלּוּצֵי אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן לַפָּנִי ה', עַד הוֹרִישׁוּ אֶת אֹיְבֵי מִפְּנֵי."

*"And Moses said to them, "If you do this thing, if you **arm yourselves** before God for battle. And every **armed person** will cross the Jordan, before God, until God has driven out His enemies before Him."*

Here it seems "chalutz" refers to being armed in the context of preparing for conquest.

Similarly, in Joshua, when the Jewish people are preparing to enter Eretz Yisrael (this time with success), we again see the word "chalutz".²

וַיֹּאמֶר (ו) אֶל הָעָם, עָבְרוּ וְסָבּוּ אֶת הָעִיר, וְהַחֲלוּץ יַעֲבֹר לַפָּנִי אֲרוֹן ה'."

*"And he (Joshua) said to the people "Pass and go round the city **and those who are armed** should pass before the ark."*

However, King David uses the same word, chalutz, within Tehillim with a different application.³

כִּי חֲלַצְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִמָּוֶת, אֶת עֵינַי מִן דְּמְעָה, אֶת רַגְלִי מִדְּחִי."

*"For You have **delivered** my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling."*

This verse praises God for saving Bnei Yisrael and "chalutz" in this context seems to indicate rescue and salvation.

Although the application of this word varies from context to context, its core meaning is ultimately the same. Chalutzit means a battle, struggle or confrontation with the ultimate goal of salvation and liberation, with the chalutz being the person who struggles yet emerges victorious. Its application is fluid depending on the situation and challenges faced at each moment in time.

Having seen the Biblical source of the word chalutz we can understand why in 1917, Joseph Trumpledor called his movement which established agricultural settlements *HaChalutz*. It was a crucial part of the struggle, arming the Land of Israel with the agricultural foundations to thrive, a gentle delivery from a barren country to the thriving country we know today. The early Zionist translation as pioneering makes sense - anyone willing enough to spend years working a barren land certainly was a pioneer!

So does Chalutzit still exist today? According to its 1917 definition of working

¹ Bamidbar, 32:20-21.

² Joshua, 6:7.

³ Tehillim, 116:8.

the land to regenerate agriculture, hardly. But according to the Biblical definition, most certainly.

Countless people use their skills gained both in Israel and the diaspora to arm Israel as strongly as possible to not only thrive but to become world leaders in every sector possible; agriculture, medicine, technology.

In the 1950s when people spoke of olim, they spoke of pioneers, selflessly giving of themselves to work the land of Israel, sacrificing a seemingly better life in the diaspora. However, nowadays olim aren't necessarily spoken about in such heroic terms. It can even be argued that, on the contrary, people now make Aliyah out of selfishness, seeking a better life in a booming and beautiful country, where they can buy kosher food practically anywhere and where they can raise children sheltered from casual anti-Semitism in the streets.

Yes, on the surface, Aliyah nowadays may be viewed as selfish, but that does not detract from the fact that emigrating anywhere is a massive struggle, particularly somewhere with a different language, frustrating bureaucracy and scary cab drivers! And the qualities that olim bring with them continue to add enormous value to Israeli society, arming Israel with a few more manners, patience and good humour at the very least.

So yes, Chalutzit does still exist.

■ SHULAMIT FINN is a physiotherapist currently living in Manchester. She has been involved in Bnei Akiva since she was seven, attending Hendon Sviva and being a Madricha there. After spending a year learning in Michlelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim (MMY) she was elected as the Rosh Nivcheret in 5776 and was a Sganit on Machane. Shulamit, along with her husband Adam and son Natan, plans on making Aliya this summer.

Ben shmonim lagvura: The exceptional strength of Bnei Akiva

Hannah Reuben

This article is a lightly edited version of the Mazkira's speech at Bnei Akiva's Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration this year. We thank Hannah for letting us include it here.

YOM HAZIKARON is always one of the hardest days in the Jewish Calendar. We stand in silence remembering those who have fought for our homeland who were taken from this world too soon. Since the last time we stood here together a year ago, 17 new names have been added to this harrowing list. Included in these names is Sergeant First Class Zechariah Baumel, who fought for our country 37 years ago. Last month, his body was finally returned to the State of Israel to rest. Zechariah was raised on Religious Zionist values passed on from his parents. Yona, his father, was one of the founding members of *HaShomer HaDati*, an organisation that evolved into modern-day Bnei Akiva.

Tragically, four new names have been added to this list in the past week.

Moshe Agadi, Ziad Alhamada, Moshe Feder and Pinchas Menachem Prezuzman were all brutally murdered by rocket fire from

terrorists in Gaza. Although they came from diverse backgrounds, all were Israeli citizens. Each were devoted parents and partners who left behind grieving family and friends. Tonight, we have them in our hearts and prayers. We stand united with them along with all of Israel.

From silence to joy.

From stillness to dance.

From Yom Hazikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut.

Israel: a country that we know today to have achieved so much in its short life. It has revived our ancient tongue - turning it from a language of text and study into a language which lives, breathes and expresses the vibrancy of our brothers and sisters in Israel today. It has the highest number of startups per capita placing Israel at the forefront of technological advances in the world. Our homeland is leading the way. There is so much to celebrate.

71 years ago, on the 5th of Iyar 1948, David Ben Gurion stood proudly and declared the establishment of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel. Present in that room and personally invited by David Ben Gurion, a young man who was active in helping Jews escape Germany in the years leading up to the Holocaust.

His name was Arieh Handler, one of the founding visionaries of Bnei Akiva UK, our movement, 80 years ago this year.

Yes, our movement, this year turned 80 years old!

80 years of encouraging our Chaverim, to live a life of Torat Yisrael.

80 years of success, guiding hundreds of our Chaverim towards Aliya.

80 years of our Bogrim leading the way, contributing in countless ways in Israel and across the world.

However, though we are an old and proud movement, we cannot rest on our laurels.

How does an 80-year-old movement stand up to the extra pressures on today's young people? How does an 80-year-old movement, with a proud tradition of camping in fields stand up to the technology that permeates every aspect of our day to day lives? How does an 80-year-old movement renew and reinvent itself for the next 80 years and beyond?

This year we are running a revamped summer Machane programme. Aleph, Aleph Chalutz and Bet Base will be in the Peak District with reinvigorated programming; Bet Chalutz will be travelling to the Czech Republic, where they will engage with our nation's past whilst learning about Israel - our nation's future; and Gimmel Machane will be expanding their horizons, learning with and from Bnei Akiva Chaverim in South Africa.

The sixth, and brand new Machane, is a recognition that in order to build our future, we must appreciate the connection we have to our past.

Machane Ari, named after Arie Handler, is a day camp in London and Manchester designed especially for our young Chaverim in school years 3 to 6 - the future of our movement.

Chinuch is at the heart of our movement. We have launched a new educational series starting with *Chanukat HaBayit* - a book of Divrei Torah written by our Chanichim and Bogrim for the Chagim. Our publications are reaching thousands in shuls and campuses across the country as well as hundreds more online each week.

After the launch last year, we are running our re-energised Israel Machane which has three tailor-made tracks, each emphasising a part of our motto: Am, Eretz and Torah. This format has gained us our highest number of participants to date with 220 Chanichim!

With hundreds of Chanichim coming through our doors on a weekly basis at Sviva, Bnei Akiva is educating proudly about Religious Zionism and Modern Orthodoxy to the youth and children in an informal environment.

So, that's what the movement is doing...what are **you** going to do?

There are countless opportunities to get involved: whether it's at Sviva or on Machane - as a Rosh, Sgan, Madrich, Madricha, Chanich or Chanicha.

Whether it's in Israel on our two Hachshara gap year programmes Torani and Kivun, going on the Shevet Shabbaton or taking part in our advanced leadership programme.

Whether it's as a Boger or Bogeret at the Student Bet Midrash, Shabbat Bogrim or writing for Shabbat Lashem...the list goes on. We cannot do it without you.

Bnei Akiva's success relies upon everyone in this room.

Chanichim, look around the room. Your Madrichim, your leaders, are here because they believe in you. They believe in our ideology, they live by our values and they want to see us progress and prosper.

Madrichim, look around the room. Bogrim and parents are here because they see our ideology as the way one should live their life, they built the best of memories and friends and they want to see the movement evolve and grow.

Bogrim and parents, look around the room. Our Chanichim are learning the ideology that we espouse, becoming the leaders of tomorrow and developing our movement to become the best it can be.

You are already taking *achrayut*, taking responsibility for, and ownership of our movement to make sure that it continues to grow. We are having a ground-breaking effect on the entire community, and you must continue to drive it forward.

What better example of this than tonight when we have experienced the power of everyone coming together with one voice with the powerful rendition of Hallel to praise and say thank you to Hashem for the miracle that is the State of Israel.

We have just celebrated Pesach, where we rejoice over our freedom. Just seven days after leaving Egypt, the Jewish people found themselves trapped between the sea and an aggrieved Egyptian army. God gave Moshe a commandment: "Speak to Am Yisrael; let them journey forth"¹. The order was given to advance, sea or no sea. At that moment, the devotion and bravery of one man - Nachshon ben Aminadav came to the fore.

The Talmud shares²: When Israel stood facing the Sea and the command was given to move forward, each of the tribes hesitated, saying 'We do not want to be the first to jump into the sea.'

Nachshon saw what was happening and took the initiative to leap into the waters.

Meanwhile, Moshe was standing and praying for a solution to Israel's plight.

God then admonishes Moshe for standing by, whilst Nachshon had already entered the sea, saying 'My beloved ones are drowning in the stormy seas, and you are standing and praying?!'

Moshe replied, 'God, what am I to do?'

God replied, 'Lift your staff and stretch your hand over the sea, which will split, and Bnei Yisrael will enter the sea upon dry land.'

And so it was. Following Nachshon's lead, Am Yisrael entered the sea and were saved.

Bnei Akiva learns our leadership style from Nachshon: Ours is a leadership of action -

refusing to let society pass us by. Ours is a leadership of bravery, unafraid to stand up for what is right. And ours is a leadership of commitment to our values and the future of the Jewish people.

We are proud of our ideology - *Am Yisrael, b'Eretz Yisrael, al pi Torat Yisrael*. We welcome, educate and encourage others to live by our ideology. However, it does not compromise itself. It has strong foundations that we stand by and live for.

We are here to educate Jewish youth with values of Torah, Avodah and Aliyah, to provide stimulating experiential and informal opportunities for encountering Zionism and Judaism, and to encourage Jewish continuity and leadership in Israel and the UK.

We have led for 80 years and we are still leading the way!

The future of Bnei Akiva is strong - it is a future that is built upon foundations 80 years in the making, of which everyone in this room plays a part.

In Pirkei Avot, it says, "בן שמונים לגבורה" - "at 80 one has exceptional strength"³. Chaverim, let me tell you - Bnei Akiva has **exceptional** strength.

Kadima Bnei Akiva.

■ HANNAH REUBEN is the current Mazkira of Bnei Akiva. Prior to becoming Mazkira, Hannah was the Technical Director last year and also has held numerous positions within the movement both at Edgware Sviva and on various Machanot, including being a Madricha on Israel Machane, and as a Nivcheret Hanhalla. She went on Hachsharat Lehava before studying Early Childhood Studies at Birmingham City University.

¹ Shemot, 14:16. Author's own translation.

² Talmud Bavli Sotah, 37a.

³ Mishnah Avot, 5:21.



עם ישראל

בארץ ישראל

על פי תורת ישראל

