

Rav Kook: Part 1



Aims:

- 1) To learn about the life and times of Rav Kook.
- 2) To understand how great Rav Kook's achievements were, given the magnitude of the challenges which he faced in his lifetime.
- 3) To appreciate how Rav Kook is a role model to us more than 78 years after his time.



Dearest Madrichim, Sganim and Roshim

This week we are starting to look at some legends of our history, of our movement, and of our religion!

For the next two weeks we are learning about the great Religious Zionist leader and first Chief Rabbi of modern Israel – Rav Kook. This week we will focus on who he was, what he achieved, and how he was a role model in general. Next week we will move on to look more specifically at his contribution to Eretz Yisrael and what we can learn from that in the context of our ideology at Bnei Akiva.

For all those of you that were at the Hachshara Information Evening, I hope it was very useful and that it gave you a better insight for your year to come!... If I can help in anyway please do give me a call and I will try my best to help. (0208 209 1319 ext: 8)

A special shout out to Edgware United who had fantastic numbers this week, keep up the good work!

Please continue to email me any feedback that you have on the Choveret to svivot@bauk.org.

Have a wonderful Shabbat, enjoy Sviva, and make sure your Chanichim enjoy it too while learning something they didn't know!

All the best

Reubs



The first Chief Rabbi of the Yishuv in what was then called Palestine, and a profound thinker, teacher and writer, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook has had an immeasurable influence on the religious Zionist world. Although religious Zionists claim him as their own, Rav Kook also towered above ideological differences 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 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* (building up the land) at the heart of the Divine plan for Am Yisrael.

Avraham Yitzchak the child prodigy

Avraham Yitzchak was born in 1865 in north-west Russia in the little shtetl of Grieve. Plunged into the sea of Talmud very early on, by the age of 9 he had already earned himself the name of





'illuy' (child prodigy). He continued his Yeshiva studies in Lutzin and then at the great Yeshiva of Volozhin under the leadership of Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (the Netziv). In Volozhin he spoke to his friends in Hebrew rather than the Yiddish vernacular and he became more interested in Zionism.

After he got married, Rav Kook ventured beyond the sphere of Talmud, reading literature of the *haskalah* (enlightenment) in Hebrew, and philosophers like Kant in German, drawing from western philosophy and culture elements that enriched his religious beliefs. Rav Yisrael Meir of Radin (the Chafetz Chaim) urged him to enter the Rabbinate and become the Rabbi in Zoimel. At the age of 30, he became the Rabbi of the larger city of Boisk, where his brilliant sermons and essays on current problems brought him national recognition.



Rav Kook was a big supporter of Jewish nationalism and worked tirelessly to obtain the cooperation of the Orthodox masses towards the practical tasks involved in building up Eretz Yisrael. To sum up his view on Zionism he wrote: 'There is no doubt that we cannot fulfil 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.' Based on these ideas, he willingly accepted a call from the community of Jaffa to become its Rabbi.



Having spent all of World War I in Europe, when the war ended in 1918 Rav Kook launched the 'Banner of Jerusalem' movement for orthodox Jews dedicated to the building of Palestine. In 1919 Rav Kook became the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem and in 1921 he became the Chief Rabbi of all of Palestine.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook the Chief Rabbi

Rav Kook's first achievement as The Chief was to organise the Rabbinate of the Holy Land, which allowed the religious character of the growing Jewish community to be maintained. However, despite his attempts to harmonise all Jews, the splintering of the community continued. An orthodox group led by Hungarian Rav Sonnenfeld refused to recognise him as Chief Rabbi or to abide by his religious authority, due to his supposed leniency in the interpretation of Halacha and his friendly attitude towards secular Jews. Despite this Rav Kook and Rav Sonnenfeld were very close, respected each other hugely, and despite ideological differences Rav Kook had a very close relationship with all the non/anti-Zionist rabbis also.



In the dark days of the 1930s, when cynicism and despair enveloped Jewish communities, Rav Kook was an inexhaustible fountain of faith. His home became a haven for distraught Jewish leaders, including Ussishkin and Chaim Nachman Bialik. Both observant and non-observant Jews saw



his spirit as an inspiration to weary souls, radiating faith and hope in the future of Israel.

Questions in Jewish law and thought came to Rav Kook from every corner of the Jewish world. His replies comprise four big volumes, covering every aspect of Jewish life. Regarding himself as a servant of his people, he personally attended to a multitude of requests. He could be seen at all hours, walking in his shtreimel and long gown which he always wore, visiting the sick and ministering to the diverse concerns of the community.

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 that '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's love of every Jew

Rav Kook had close ties with many secular Jews and genuinely believed that secular Zionists, thinkers and pioneers were doing the work of Hashem.

In his first few months in Eretz Yisrael he went on a preaching tour of kibbutzim and moshavim. His openness and care were a real eye



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



opener to secular pioneers, who thought that all orthodox rabbis lived in an insulated and circumscribed world without any concern for the problems of the day.

When challenged by other orthodox leaders as to why Hashem would allow atheists to build the path towards redemption he would answer that in the Temple the Holy of Holies was so holy that even the high priest could only enter it once a year on Yom Kippur, yet when the temple had to be rebuilt ordinary workmen in working clothes could enter and do their jobs. The present time was one of building which would lead to the re-establishment of the Holy of Holies, and therefore secular workmen preceded priests.

Rav Kook understood that the secular Jew of his generation was unique and completely different from that of earlier generations. The non-religious had a great commitment to Eretz Yisrael and to Am Yisrael, which were surely religious virtues. He still believed that they were wrong for not adhering to Torat Yisrael, but he recognised that at the same time they had many merits which expressed their *neshamot* (souls) and in that way they were religious.

Rav Kook is therefore a role model to us not just for of his personal commitment to Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Torat Yisrael, but also for his ability and willingness to work together with (rather than against) Jews of any background in his desire to help bring about the ultimate redemption.





GAMES

- **Prepare some famous quotes from Rav Kook and our Chief Rabbi or Rabbi Sacks and see if they can guess who said which ones. Lead into discussion about the importance Chief Rabbis and what they do for the community.**
- **Get the chanichim to make skits about Israelis doing different things with some being very religious and some very irreligious. Lead into discussion about the diversity of Jews in Israel and how this has been the case since before 1948 as there were both religious and secular pioneers.**
- Ready Steady Kook: Competition to make something which represents Rav Kook with limited Tziud in the style of Ready Steady Cook.
- 'Chief Rabbi's Coming': A Jewish variation on 'Captain's Coming'.
- Do you love your neighbor?: Because Rav Kook loved all of his neighbours regardless of their level of religious observance.
- Ask your Chanichim what their earliest memories are and what their proudest achievements were when they were young. See how many of them mention things related to being Jewish and then explain how much Rav Kook accomplished in Jewish learning at such a young age.

Quite a few svivot have already contacted me about the tzedaka projects that there chanichim have been talking about. Please let me know what yours are and I will help as much as I can!

Bnei Akiva 5774: Dates for your Diary

Limmud: Come and learn in Chavrutot and hear some fantastic speakers:

Every Monday evening in the London Bayit

There will be no limmud in Manchester this week because of the Yeshiva and Sem fair in King David, however it will be back NEXT WEEK

Every Monday evening at 6:00pm in “Standard location” in Brum



-KVUTSAH PLANNING SHEET-

THEME		
<p><u>Aim 1:</u></p> <p><u>Related Activities</u> <u>Activities</u></p>	<p><u>Aim 2:</u></p> <p><u>Related Activities</u></p>	<p><u>Aim 3:</u></p> <p><u>Related</u></p>

