



## Rabbi Akiva: Part 2 (Am Yisrael)



### Aims:

- 1) To learn about some of the specific teachings of Rabbi Akiva.
- 2) To appreciate how Rabbi Akiva embodied different aspects of Bnei Akiva's ideology and to appreciate why we are named after him.
- 3) To focus in particular on Rabbi Akiva's contribution to Am Yisrael and to think about how we too can contribute to Am Yisrael.



Dear Madrichim

This week we are continuing our series on important leaders in our history who embodied the different aspects of Bnei Akiva's ideology.

Every two weeks we are taking a new leader and spending one week looking at who they were and what we can learn from them in general, and another week looking at what we can learn from their outlook on life specifically in the context of the ideology of Bnei Akiva. They are all names with which we are very familiar, but now is a great opportunity to make sure that we and our Chanichim learn who they really were, what they stood for, and what we can learn from them.

Last week we learned about who Rabbi Akiva was, what he achieved, and how he is a role model in general. This week we will focus more specifically on his contribution to Am Yisrael, one of the three pillars of Bnei Akiva's ideology, and we will also look at why Bnei Akiva is named after him.

Please continue email me any feedback that you have on the Choveret to [chinuch@bauk.org](mailto:chinuch@bauk.org) 😊

Have a wonderful Shabbat, enjoy Sviva, and make sure your Chanichim enjoy it too!

All the best

Alan 😊

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## Why Bnei 'Akiva'?

We saw last week how Rabbi Akiva is a role model to us in many different ways. But is that enough for us to name our youth movement after him? Don't we have lots of role models in Jewish history? Couldn't we just as easily have called ourselves Bnei Avraham, Bnei Yitzchak or Bnei Yisrael?

The answer is that Rabbi Akiva perfectly embodied all three elements of Bnei Akiva's ideology – Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Torat Yisrael – at a time in history which has many parallels to the time in which Bnei Akiva began.



תנועת בני אברהם?  
**BNEI AVRAHAM?**  
**UNITED KINGDOM**

## Torat Yisrael

We already looked last week at how Rabbi Akiva was the great learner and teacher of Torah in his generation. One additional source worth mentioning is a statement in the Talmud that every single anonymous Mishna, Tosefta, Sifra and Sifri is in some way based on the teaching of Rabbi Akiva. Therefore, an unbelievable amount of the Torah that we learn today is based on the teachings of Rabbi Akiva, even when we don't realise it!

## Eretz Yisrael

There is a famous story in the Talmud that when Rabbi Akiva visits the site where the Beit Hamikdash once stood with the other great Rabbis of his time, they see a fox coming out from where the Holy of Holies had been. The other Rabbis all cry, but Rabbi Akiva laughs. He explains that now that he has witnessed the fulfilment of the prophecy of destruction to its full extent, he knows that the prophecy of redemption and the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash will also be fulfilled to its full extent.

However, Rabbi Akiva was not an armchair Zionist who sat back and waited for it to happen, but an activist who tried to help bring about the redemption in his own time. He had seen the Second Beit Hamikdash standing in his own lifetime and he wanted to see the Third Beit Hamikdash built before his death. When the Bar Kochba revolt began, he did not play the 'Rabbi card' and continue to learn, teach and pray for a victory. On the contrary, he actively encouraged all of his students to participate in the revolt, claiming that Bar Kochba was the Mashiach and that we must try to win a military victory over the Romans and then rebuild the Beit Hamikdash.



***A coin from the time of the Bar Kochba revolt which shows the symbol of a rebuilt Beit Hamikdash.***

The outcome of the revolt may have been unsuccessful, but the approach has remarkable parallels with how Bnei Akiva and Religious Zionists view the State of Israel in our times. We have not just learned and prayed and expected our battles to be fought by others or to be won through miracles that do not require us to contribute. Rather we have acted as partners with Hashem in the establishment and the subsequent protection of the State of Israel, combining our dedication to Torat Yisrael with a passion for Eretz Yisrael and a devotion to Am Yisrael.



## **Am Yisrael**

This leads us on nicely to the third and final pillar of Bnei Akiva's ideology – Am Yisrael. Perhaps even more than Torat Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael, the idea that we must remain committed to Am Yisrael through all its trials and tribulations is one that we can and must learn from Rabbi Akiva.

Rabbi Akiva's involvement in the Bar Kochba rebellion was much more than that of an individual with a passion for Eretz Yisrael; it was that of a leader with a sense of duty towards Am Yisrael. He recognised the need of the people and did everything within his power to mobilise them for that cause.

On Seder night we read of 5 Rabbis who were sitting discussing the exodus from Egypt in Bnei Brak – the home of Rabbi Akiva – when their students came to tell them it was time to say Shema. In reality, those Rabbis were most likely debating whether to rebel against the Romans, and their students were coming to find out the verdict of the debate. That night, Rabbi Akiva went from spiritual leader to military tactician, his students from learners to soldiers, as he put the critical need of Am Yisrael ahead of everything else.



Rabbi Akiva's devotion to Am Yisrael is also evident from his most famous teaching of all:

‘ואהבת לרעך כמוך: רבי עקיבה אומר זהו כלל גדול בתורה’  
‘Love your neighbour as yourself: Rabbi Akiva says this is a fundamental principal of the Torah.’  
*(Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim 30b)*

While it's fantastic to have lofty ideals about Torat Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael, it's worth very little if we don't get the basics right and enable harmony in Am Yisrael. We know that the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed through Sinat Chinam (baseless hatred) and therefore to merit it being rebuilt we must first have Ahavat Chinam (baseless love).

This teaching of the importance of loving others and treating others as we would have them treat us fits perfectly with everything else that Rabbi Akiva was trying to achieve, including his lofty ideal of hastening the ultimate redemption in his own lifetime. The fact that he calls this teaching – rather than any of his other pursuits or endeavours – the fundamental principal of the Torah shows us that everything begins with how we treat each other.

This may seem like a very small message from a Rabbi who taught us so many great things through both his words and his actions. However, we all know from our experience how profound this message really is. In addition, it is also the easiest message to take to heart, and the easiest to relate to for ourselves and for our Chanichim.

Not everyone will fully understand all of the intricacies of Bnei Akiva's three-fold ideology of Torat Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Am Yisrael, but everyone can take something from the teaching of Rabbi Akiva that the greatest principal of the Torah is to love other people, help other people, and treat other people with respect.

## Peulah Planning

While it is essential to make sure that Sviva is full of fun and games, it is also important to make sure that your Chanichim learn something. Therefore this section of the Choveret contains both GAMES and DISCUSSION POINTS, to help you plan meetings that ensure that your Chanichim get the most out of Sviva, both in terms of enjoyment and in terms of knowledge.

### **GAMES**

- 'I went to Bnei Akiva and I played...': Let them reminisce about happy Bnei Akiva memories and then play some of their favourite games!
- Song Game: Sing all their favourite Bnei Akiva songs and maybe teach them some more or get them to make up some new ones.
- Love your neighbour: Because it's really very important.
- Mafia: An old classic which can be linked to the challenges faced under Roman rule and the challenges faced by Israel since Bnei Akiva began.

(Remember that your Sviva has two excellent games booklets with tons more suggestions and also that not every game has to be linked to the weekly theme.)

### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

- Have an explanatory Mifkad where you teach your Chanichim the actual words of Yad Achim and their meaning and teach them about the different aspects of our ideology and why they are all important.
- Get each group to make an advert for a new youth movement with a different role model inspiring each one (e.g. Bnei Avraham, Bnei Noach, Bnei Beckham, etc.). Lead into a discussion about why we chose to be Bnei Akiva and how Rabbi Akiva embodies our ideology.
- Ask them why they think Rabbi Akiva chose loving your neighbour as yourself as his main principle of the Torah and lead into a discussion about how this is fundamental to being a good person and a good Jew.

## Parasha in Pictures!

### Terumah

'They shall make a  for Me and I will dwell among them.

Ch. 25: Commandment to build a Mishkan, details for ark, cover, table, Menorah.

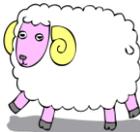
Ch. 26: Details for covers, walls and partition of the Mishkan.

Ch. 27: Details for altar and courtyard of the Mishkan.



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### Tetzaveh

'You shall offer the one  in the  and the second



you shall offer in the **PM** .

Ch. 27: Olive oil to light the Menorah.

Ch. 28: Kohanim vestments: Ephod, settings, breastplate, robe, headplate, tunic.

Ch. 29: Inauguration ritual with one bull and two rams, daily sacrifice.

Ch. 30: Altar for incense.



# Coming soon at Bnei Akiva!

## Great speakers every Monday in January and February at London Limmud!!!

24<sup>th</sup> January: Rabbi Jonny Solomon, Hasmonean Girls & LSJS

31<sup>st</sup> January: Avi Gillis, UJIA & Ex-Mazkirut

7<sup>th</sup> February: Rabbi Menachem Leibtag, Yeshivat Har Etzion (17.45)

14<sup>th</sup> February: Rabbi Daniel Roselaar, Alei Tzion

21<sup>st</sup> February: Mike Freer, MP for Finchley & Golders Green

28<sup>th</sup> February: Chief Rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks (20.00)

Limmud begins at 19:30 with Chavruta learning at the Bayit on Hallswelle Rd.  
All speakers are at 20:30 unless otherwise stated.

*For more information or to arrange a Chavruta email Alan at [chinuch@bauk.org](mailto:chinuch@bauk.org)*

Limmud in **Birmingham** continues on Mondays at 18:00 at the standard location.

Limmud in **Manchester** continues on Tuesdays at 19:30 at the Bayit on Singleton Rd.

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