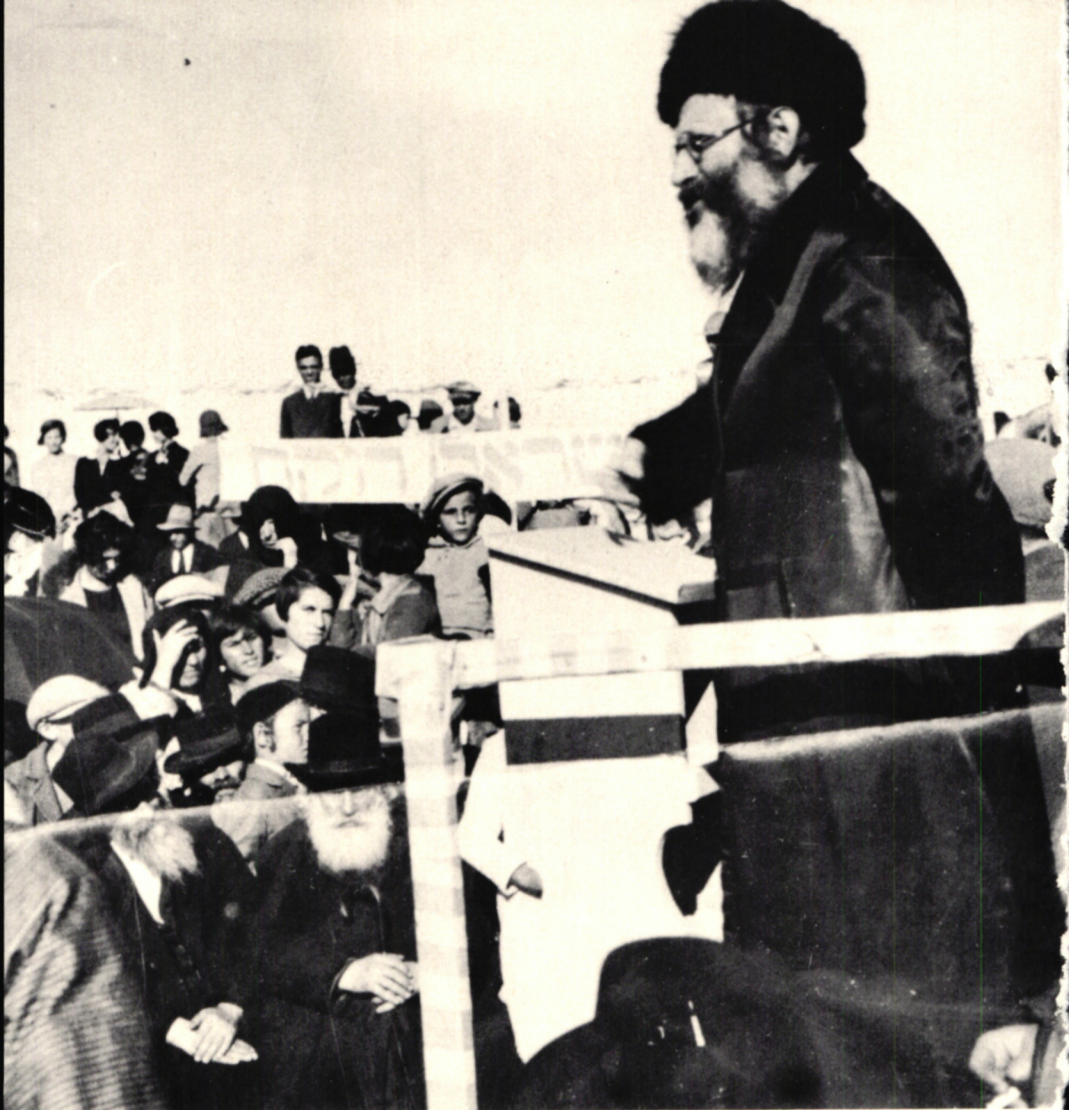


RAV KOOK

Man of Faith and Vision





At the Cornerstone Laying Celebration of a new neighborhood in Jaffa.

VOL. VI

From the Series: ZIONIST PERSONALITIES— **אִישִׁים בְּצִיּוֹנִית**

RAV KOOK

Man of Faith and Vision

by

NORMAN LAMM

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Like God, a Zionist

Towards the end of his life, wasted away by a fatal cancer and suffering from severe and unrelenting pains, Chief Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook was visited by a delegation of the leaders of the Jewish National Fund. As soon as they saw him, the distinguished visitors realized that this would be the last time they would see him alive.

Rav Kook began the discussion by asking Menahem Usishkin, the leader of the group, "Have any new areas been redeemed lately?"

Usishkin, who knew full well that the query was much more than a casual opening for a conversation, replied, "We bought a small plot

in Emek Hefer, but we are beset by grave problems. As soon as we are ready to buy, the Mufti applies pressure on the sellers, threatens them—and the sale is called off abruptly. We need considerable amounts of money simply to buy off all kinds of people interested in causing us needless trouble.”

“And what,” asked the Rav, “is your financial condition at present?”

“As usual,” Usishkin sighed, “the income doesn’t begin to cover the expenses.”

“In that case,” said the Rav, whose eyes suddenly had regained their old sparkle despite his desperate illness, “I shall immediately address a special open letter to the Jews of Poland, asking their enthusiastic support for the J.N.F.”

“That would certainly help,” said Usishkin. “The Rabbi’s letter two years ago to Lithuanian Jewry produced excellent results.”

When the J.N.F. leaders left the sick-room, Rav Kook called in his secretary and dictated to him a moving appeal to Polish Jewry on behalf of the J.N.F. The secretary hazarded the comment that by his unqualified support of the J.N.F. he might incur the wrath of his rightist critics, the zealots who were unalterably opposed to the New Yishuv. Rav Kook, usually modest to a fault, replied impatiently, “So what? What can they say about me?”

The secretary answered, smiling, “they will accuse the Rabbi of being a Zionist.”

“Is it at all possible,” exclaimed Rav Kook with a twinkle in his eye, “for a Jew not to be a Zionist? After all, God Himself ‘chose Zion’ and is thus a Zionist; and we are commanded to imitate God and walk in His ways . . . Now if you will be kind enough to take the following letter . . .”

Integration

Such was the mettle of this most remarkable man who combined in his personality such apparently contradictory qualities as: profound piety, with a polite but unbending resistance to the zealot extremists; boundless love for the people of Israel and the Holy Land, with a

critical awareness of significant faults where he found them; a towering intellect, with a sweet simplicity; Kabbalism and authentic mystic experiences, with a genuine respect for the vigorous intellectual disciplines of science and philosophy in which he was quite knowledgeable: a sacred, soaring soul completely within the Jewish tradition of Torah, who nevertheless found some good in almost every human being, no matter how remote from his own outlook.

Rav Kook readily conceded that it was difficult to reconcile such apparently clashing qualities. And yet his whole life and all his thinking was dedicated to overcoming such conflicts and achieving an integrated, harmonious personality. In July 1919 he entered the following in his diary:

Whoever it was who said about me that my soul is split was right. Of course it is split. It is impossible to imagine anyone whose soul is not fragmented. Only the inorganic world is whole; man is possessed by conflicting aspirations. There is a war always raging within him. Yet the whole (purpose) of man's service is to resolve these conflicts in his soul by means of a general idea, through the greatness and loftiness of which everything is included and arrives at a complete harmony. It is understood that this is only an ideal for which we strive, unattainable by mere man born of woman; but through our efforts we can come closer and closer to it. This is what the Kabbalists call *yihudim* ("unifications").

*A street
in Grieve
where the Rav
was born.*



*Rabbi Shlomo Zalman,
the Rav's father.*



Beginnings

These remarkable personality traits, which were to make him one of the most influential and beloved figures in the modern history of the Holy Land (the bibliography on Rav Kook contains almost a thousand items, from essays to books), were already evident in him in his earliest youth. Born in the early Fall of 1865 in the Latvian town of Grieve to a family distinguished by piety and a love of learning, Rav Kook early learned to appreciate the natural goodness and devoutness that exist in every Jewish soul, a principle enunciated in the *Habad* school of Hasidism. It is told that on the occasion of his *Berit Hilah* (circumcision), he was given two special gifts that symbolized his later affinity to these teachings of the *Habad* school: the *kipah* (cap) and a button from the frock of Rabbi Menahem Mendel, the third in the distinguished line of *Habad* teachers. The child grew up treasuring these gifts — even as later in maturity his whole religious philosophy drew upon so many elements of this warm, optimistic, God-intoxicated outlook.

From the very beginning there were apparent in him two qualities

which were to characterize his later development: a love of Torah, supported by a keen intellect; and an unbounded love for the Holy Land. When he was but three or four years old, he heard his mother reading aloud from the devotional work treasured by generations of Jewish women, the *Tzenah Urenah*, about the Patriarchs traveling to the Holy Land. Whereupon the child grabbed a walking-stick lying nearby and began to march. When his mother asked where he was going, he replied, "to the land flowing with milk and honey!"



His mother.

The Boy Scholar

At the age of nine, the youngster was already so advanced in his studies as to be able to dispense with the services of a teacher, and he was allowed to study by himself in the local *Beth Hamidrash*. He had already won the coveted title of *iluy*, granted to young students of brilliant attainments in Talmud. At fifteen, in keeping with the custom of the times, he was sent to another town, Lutzin, there to continue his studies. A contemporary, who was his friend tells of his astounding diligence in studies: "If he failed to learn Torah even for a short period of time, he would experience genuine sorrow — real physical pain." The same writer relates the following illuminating incident:

On the three nights preceding Tisha B'av, Abraham Isaac would close the books of the Talmud at midnight, we would go down from the *bimah* in the synagogue where we studied, sit down on the floor by the side of the big stove, remove our shoes, and recite the *hatzot* prayers. Abraham Isaac would cry with bitter tears as he recited the lamentations over the destruction of Jerusalem . . . Unusual were his love for *Eretz Yisrael* and his longing for the rebuilding of the Holy Temple and the coming of the Messiah. I remember that I asked him once in my childish naiveté, "Why do you cry so much during your *hatzot* prayers? I, too, love *Eretz Yisrael* and I too want to go up to this beloved land, and my father — my father surely longs for the Holy Land and awaits the coming of the Messiah and he . . ." Abraham Isaac interrupted me suddenly with such simplicity that I remained speechless: "Neither you nor your father are priests. But I am a *Kohen* (priest, who used to minister in the Temple)."

When he was nineteen years old, he was sent to the great Yeshivah in Volozhin, then headed by the renowned "Netziv," Rabbi Naftali Tzevi Yehudah Berlin. A spirit of national re-awakening and love of Zion was evident amongst many of the over 400 students in this great academy of Talmudic learning. Here his love of the Holy Land was kindled to even greater intensity. He dreamed of it, prayed for it, thought of it. When his famed teacher asked him, "are you enjoying your stay in Volozhin?," Kook answered, "Oh yes, certainly. I am happy here, *almost as if I were in Eretz Israel*."

Young Kook was something of a paradox at Volozhin. Those who were opposed to the secret Zionist societies on religious grounds looked

askance at the young student who insisted upon speaking Hebrew while others spoke Yiddish. And the Zionistically-inclined could not understand this Hebrew-speaking young man whose piety was so genuine and extraordinary. Already then Rav Kook failed to fit neatly into the comfortable pigeon-holes by which most of us judge our fellow men.

The Reluctant Rabbi

Rav Kook married the daughter of the Rabbi of Ponovezh, and then moved to that Lithuanian town. His father-in-law implored him to accept the calling of the Rabbinate, but Rav Kook refused. Instead, he decided upon a business career which, Jewish history must be thankful, failed. At the same time, he met, at the home of his father-in-law, one of the most saintly of all Rabbis of that generation — Rabbi Israel Meir Cohen, known by the name he gave to one of his major works, the *Hafetz Hayyim*. Since both were *Kohanim*, descended from the priestly family of Aaron, they studied together those portions of the Talmud which deal with the Temple Service, for both had great faith in the imminent coming of the Messiah and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. Their friendship deepened and ripened, and the *Hafetz Hayyim* persuaded Kook to accept the calling of the Rabbinate.

It is interesting to note the genuine piety of this very young Rabbi. The Sages of the Talmud taught that everyone ought not only to observe the Sabbath itself, but also to prepare for it personally on Friday. Therefore, they said, even the husband ought to involve himself in the Sabbath preparations, either by buying the food or cooking it. Rav Kook did the latter; every Friday he assisted his wife in her cooking and baking.

When he had been convinced by the *Hafetz Hayyim* and his father-in-law to make himself available to a call to the Rabbinate, such a call came from the famed city of great Jewish scholars, Vilna. He was invited to become *Maggid* (preacher) in that capital city of Lithuania. First, however, he was asked to spend a Sabbath in the community, where he would preach, teach, and meet the people who would decide

*The head of the Volozhin Yeshiva,
the Naziv, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Berlin.*



on his candidacy. On Friday morning Rav Kook came to the hotel where he was to be lodged and promptly went to the kitchen to help in the cooking, as was his custom. When some of the leading laymen observed their rabbinic "candidate" engaged in such a "menial" activity, and not appreciating his authentic piety and spirituality, they immediately rejected him even without hearing him!

Never was a community more sorry for its impetuous and foolish behavior. Some years later, the *Hafetz Hayyim* urged Rav Kook to write a scholarly work on the Laws of Temple Service, and Rav Kook agreed on condition that his older colleague consent to his leaving the Rabbinate in order to do so. The *Hafetz Hayyim* refused, saying, "I never came across any one more fit than you to occupy a Rabbinic post."

Rav Kook then accepted a rabbinic position in Zoiemel, where he stayed for six years and dived into the mystical intricacies of the

Kabbalah. From Zoimel he went to Boisk, where he began his life-long career of writing and publishing, and started to achieve world renown as a leading ideologist of Orthodox Judaism. His ideas were refreshingly distinctive, his Hebrew was flawless, graceful, and poetic, and he never feared — as the title of a recent Hebrew biography of Rav Kook asserts — to be “a man against the stream.”

To Jaffa, with Love

In 1904 his great dream of settling in the Holy Land came true; he was invited to assume the Rabbinate of Jaffa, which is today part of Tel Aviv. Rav Kook was delighted beyond words at the prospect of seeing his great vision realized. According to a popular anecdote, when he first set foot on the holy soil, he saw a cow, and exclaimed in a refreshing and sweet naiveté, “Look — a Jewish cow!”

In Jaffa his fame spread quickly. He was widely beloved by all sections of the population — by scholars and ordinary folk, Hasidim and Maskilim, the kaftaned members of the Old Yishuv and the young pioneers, *halutzim*, of the New Yishuv. Here he wrote prolifically. His most exalting mystical experiences came to him in Jaffa. His love of Israel and the Land of Israel grew even greater. Instead of signing his letters, as would have been customary, with the well-earned and richly deserved title, “Rabbi and Head of the Beth Din (Religious Court) of Jaffa,” he referred to himself modestly as “Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, servant to the Holy People in the Holy Land, residing in the Holy City of Jaffa and environs.”

Jaffa fell in love with its Rabbi, as surely as he fell in love with it. His appearance was completely that of an Old World Rabbi, and he donned the *Tallit* and *Tefillin* throughout the day. His face was kindly and warm, and one could readily sense that here was a man of holiness whose heart and mind were absorbed in saintly thoughts and sacred studies. Yet he was part of his people, aware of their problems, their aspirations, their frustrations. His special concern was for the highly

idealistic but religiously non-observant working youth. He refused to abandon them, he refused to give up hope for their eventual return to the faith of Israel. To a heart-broken father of one such young man he wrote, "There is hope for their future. The inner soul of the holiness of Israel is concealed within their hearts in the form . . . of goodness and love." He advised his correspondent to "inspire them not to abandon the love of their people, and not to imagine that they will attain honor by assimilating to non-Jews . . . Just as they left our fold because of what they considered intellectual reasons, so will they return because of the intellect . . . We therefore have great hope for all our children, and let us strengthen them and not leave them."

This "servant to a Holy People" did not stand on his dignity, but went out to seek his brethren in the Kibbutzim and the Moshavot, on the farms and the meadows. He spoke to them in modern Hebrew — the language they adored and for the sake of which they had torn themselves away from their homes to settle this land neglected for centuries. They sensed his sympathy for their toil and their dreams. He was gradually becoming for them, as he later would for all *Eretz*



The Rav in Jaffa, 1898.

Yisrael, a father. During one such trip, with a number of his rabbinic colleagues, he recorded in his diary some of his impressions. In December 1913, he visited a small Moshavah called Poriah, consisting of about forty people, many of whom hailed from St. Louis, Mo. The following excerpt from his diary at that time gives us some indication of how he always saw the good in people, even those whose religious failings pained him deeply:

The Moshavah *Poriah* was founded two years ago. It covers an area of 4,000 dunam. Here they are planting olive trees, almond tress, grape vines. Also building beautiful homes. We are told that the young people eat *Terefah* in their kitchen, desecrate the Sabbath, and do all kinds of domestic work, such as laundering, etc., on the Sabbath. As we came here we heard shots. Immediately the workers ran to the place of the shooting and captured an Arab who was stealing a sheep from the flock. The workers grabbed the thief and imprisoned him until the next day when they will bring him to the government court. It was wonderful to witness the lovely, polite conduct of the workers even towards the contemptible thief who was now in their hands. They gave him a decent place to sleep, food, and drink. Here we saw a ray of light from the natural righteousness of the Jewish heart, sparkling as it was revealed. "Jacob shall not now be ashamed . . . as he seeth his children . . . as they sanctify My Name" . . .

Rav Kook was concerned not only with the spiritual welfare of the Halutzim, but with their economic progress as well. He therefore pleaded with Jewish communities throughout the world to purchase *Eretz Yisrael* wine and *etrogim* (citrons, for holiday use).

Stranded in Europe

In 1914 he was invited to attend a conference in Europe, and was undecided whether to accept or not. On the one hand, he wanted to impress his distinguished rabbinic colleagues with the need for understanding the youth of Palestine, and the importance of creating new settlements of religious Jews in the Holy Land. On the other hand, he loved the land so intensely that he hesitated leaving the beloved soil



In St. Gallen, 1916.

even for a short time. But his wife's physicians advised him that her illness required her to travel to a health-resort in Switzerland. And so Rav Kook left for what he thought was a short trip. But World War I broke out and, despite all his attempts to return to Jaffa, he was stranded in Europe. For a while he remained as a private individual and then as a Rabbi of the community of St. Gallen in Switzerland.

In 1916 he accepted a call to a rabbinic post in London — but merely on a temporary basis, until he could return to the Holy Land. London was the scene of feverish Zionist activity in those days just before, during, and immediately after the Balfour Declaration. Rav

Kook was called upon to lend his strength and encouragement to the leaders of the Zionist movement during this critical period. He counselled Chaim Weizmann and his colleagues not to falter. He advised them to press their case proudly, not as if they were begging for favors.

During all this time he fervently preached to the Jewish masses to return to Torah and to devote themselves to the love of Israel — the people and the land. When Anglo-Jewish leaders, fearful lest they be accused of “dual loyalties,” agitated in public and even in Parliament against the Zionist credo and program, and declared that Jews were only a religious denomination and not a nation, Rav Kook issued a stinging manifesto “against those who stab the Jewish soul with daggers.”

“A bitter mockery is this dispute,” wrote the Rav, “as to whether our national or religious dimensions constitute the content of our lives. The wholeness of ‘Thou art One and Thy Name is One, and who is like unto Thy people Israel, one nation upon the earth,’ cannot be separated or broken up . . . We demand full restitution for that which has been robbed from us. The crime which cries out unto Heaven must be completely atoned for. Our precious, holy land; our pride, our human rights, and human dignity; our national and individual rights in all countries — must be returned to us completely, without compromise, without hypocrisy . . .”

So effective was this public protest of Rav Kook, that the anti-Zionist leaders retreated in disgrace. In Parliament itself, Rav Kook was quoted as authority for the nationhood of Israel. When Lord Montagu, the anti-Zionist Jewish leader, branded the Balfour Declaration as being contrary to the Jewish religion, a member of Parliament arose and cried out, “Whom shall we accept as a greater authority on Judaism, Lord Montagu or Rabbi Kook?” Weizmann, Sokolow, and Nordau, who had been depressed to the point of despair, were thrilled at the sudden turn of events initiated by Rav Kook’s letter. Now the English Government knew that the broad masses of the Jewish people dissociated themselves from the assimilationist doctrines of their official representatives.

The Balfour Declaration was thus in no small way prepared for by the fearless activity of this saintly Rabbi stranded in London. And

when it was finally issued by the British government, Rav Kook's reaction was most distinctive and characteristic: "I did not come," he said to a gathering in Albert Hall in London called to celebrate the event, "to thank the English people for the Declaration that it gave us; I came rather to congratulate it with the blessing of *Mazal Tov* on its great merit in being the one nation to grant us the Declaration . . . It is the unique pride and glory of your nation to have lent aid and support to the people of the Torah."



*London. Lord Balfour
and Chaim Weizman.*

The Rav in Jerusalem, 1925.



To Jerusalem

In 1919 Rav Kook returned to Eretz Israel. At the train station, two delegations, hostile to each other, awaited him: one consisted of the leaders of his community in Jaffa who insisted that their Rabbi return to them. The other group, composed of the leaders of Jerusalem Jewry, wanted him to come to them as the Chief Rabbi of the Holy City. Emotionally, Rav Kook longed for his beloved Jaffa. He knew, too, that the zealots and conflicting parties of all sorts in Jerusalem would give him no peace. Yet he sensed that destiny awaited him in Jerusalem, and there he went.

In Jerusalem his stature grew immensely. His fame spread throughout the world. He held himself above all parties, and saw the good in each of them, though he was spiritually closest to the Mizrachi, the religious Zionists. He made every conceivable effort to establish peace and mollify his zealous critics who confounded cooperation with the non-observant as approval of their deviations from Jewish law. Yet with all his peacefulness, with all his love for his people, he did not hesitate to voice his protest and his indignation wherever he recognized injustice and the desecration of God's Name. When a prominent Zionist



In Jerusalem.

editor and linguist declared in the name of all Palestinian settlers that they turn their backs on the Jewish past, Rav Kook castigated him in no uncertain terms. What one believes personally is his own business, said Rav Kook, but to articulate such abominations in the name of the whole New Yishuv is an act of effrontery which demands immediate condemnation, lest silence imply consent.

The Chief Rabbinate

Rav Kook had long dreamt of bringing new order and life into the Rabbinate of the Holy Land. Now his ideas, as he had formulated them over the past several years, received the sanction of the Mandatory Government through the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, whom Rav Kook insisted upon addressing by his Hebrew name, Eliezer ben Menahem. The convocation that was assembled by the Government and the Rabbis was marked by deep dissensions and wrestling with many difficult issues. Finally, under the expert guidance of Rav Kook, the meetings came to a successful and peaceful conclusion. Rabbi Yaakov Meir was elected the Sephardic Chief Rabbi (the British had insisted upon a system of two Chief Rabbis), and the assembly unanimously acclaimed Rav Kook as the first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land. From 1921, the year of his election, until his death in 1935, Rav Kook guided the spiritual destinies of what was to become the State of Israel. Under this stewardship the Yishuv grew from ninety to 400,000 Jews. Though the Jerusalem zealots refused to acknowledge his office, Rav Kook was widely regarded as the spiritual leader of his generation throughout the world.

During this time, as the Yishuv expanded at an unprecedented rate, new and difficult problems presented themselves to the Chief Rabbi. To all of them he brought his magnanimous heart, his brilliant insights, his towering intellect. His love of his people, and their reciprocal love and respect for him, grew with each day. And yet he did not hesitate to alienate whole sections of the population when the need arose to save one innocent man from an unjust death.

The Stavsky Affair

When the brilliant young diplomat and executive of the Jewish Agency, Dr. Chayim Arlazarov, was murdered, and a man by the name of Stavsky was accused of the murder for political reasons, public opinion was sharply divided, with the majority sentiment raised to a feverish pitch against Stavsky. Rav Kook, however, felt that the man was innocent. Acting in accordance with the dictates of his conscience, he risked undoing a lifetime of friendship with the young, non-observant workers whom he had so assiduously cultivated. Indeed, many of his old friends and followers turned against him; yet he would neither abandon his conviction that it was not a Jew who had murdered

Dedication of the Rav's house and yeshiva, Jerusalem. Right from the Rav—High Commissioner, Herbert Samuel and next to him, Rabbi Yaakov Meir, "Rishon L'Zion", Chief Rabbi of the Sepharadic Community.



Arlazarov, nor answer his detractors and critics in kind. He wrote, "Only truth in its purity . . . leads me to attempt to save him who was condemned to death with no grounds whatsoever for the accusation . . . It is clear to me that no Jewish individual or group had anything to do with this murder . . . In every party and every group there are certainly things I cannot agree with, but this cannot possibly lead me to lessen my flaming love for our sacred nation and for every one of its parts . . . or to distribute it unevenly between those who revere me and those who despise me. I love them all with a love that knows no bounds." Rav Kook's faith was vindicated when, on appeal, Stavsky was unanimously declared innocent.

The Burning Bush

In his last days, Rav Kook showed a courage and heroism that were an inspiration to his generation. A specialist flown to his bedside from Paris marvelled at his stamina and tenacity, and left the room muttering the verse, "and behold the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed."

A short time later the Rav heard that a group was being organized in Tel Aviv to further Sabbath observance. He told the leader of the group, "if you will arrange a public meeting for Sabbath observance in Tel Aviv, I shall be glad to address it." When he noticed the expression of amazement and concern on the face of the man, he said, "Do not worry. The desecration of the Sabbath in Tel Aviv hurts me much more than my physical pains, and if I can help avoid even some *hillul Shabbat*, it will be a better medicine for me than anything my doctors can prescribe!" A week later the meeting was held and, despite all the pleading of his family and admirers, Rav Kook attended. Before he rose to address the assembly, it was announced by the City Fathers that Rav Kook had been designated an Honorary Citizen of the largest Jewish city in the world. The audience indicated its wholehearted approval, and then listened in rapt attention to the words of Rav Kook, powerful and warm words expressed in a weak and halting



The Rav's funeral procession.

voice, for they knew that this would be the last public address of the revered Rabbi — as indeed it was.

On the third of Ellul, 1935, Rav Kook died with the words of the *Shema* on his lips. His luminous personality and his profound and poetic teachings remain immortal and unforgotten as a beacon of courage and brotherly love for all Israel.

The Love of Israel

Rav Kook raised *ahavat Yisrael*, the love of fellow-Jews, to a major principle. He was emotionally committed to loving even a remiss Jew — not by overlooking his faults, certainly not by approving them, but by searching for the good in him and trusting that the evil would vanish in time. Many of the anecdotes and *bon mots* about and by the Rav in connection with his love of Israel have become part of the classical national folklore of our people. To quote but a few:

When a pious Jew inquired of him how he could approve of irreligious *halutzim* in the Holy Land, he replied with a reference to the Holy Temple: only the High Priest was permitted to enter the inner chamber of the Sanctuary, and then only on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, after purifying himself extensively. Yet if the chamber was in disrepair, ordinary workmen were asked to come in, with their boots and tools, to fix whatever needed repair, and their religious credentials were not questioned. So with the Holy Land — it had been in a state of disrepair for centuries, and these young pioneers and workers were building it up again.

When a devout Jew from Denver visited the Rabbi in Jerusalem and complained about the widespread laxity in the observance of Judaism, he said: "I understand you come from Denver. Tell me something about it." The man offered an exhilarating picture of Denver, its climate, and so on. "But I was told," said the Rav, "that it is a city full of sick, consumptive people." "Oh no, Rabbi," the man protested, "those are merely patients who visit our beautiful city because of its magnificent climate which helps heal them." "So it is with Eretz Israel," said the Rabbi. "Our spiritual climate heals, and that is why we attract so many of the spiritually ill to our land."

On one occasion he was asked how he could cooperate with "the Left," and he reminded his questioner that we are commanded to lay the *Tefillin* on the left hand. And to a Hasidic Rabbi who wondered why the Chief Rabbi even extended his hand to greet a sinner, Rav Kook maintained that he was merely following God's example, for in our Neilah service on Yom Kippur we say, *ata noten yad le-posh'im*, "Thou extendest Thy hand to sinners . . ."

Baring the Jewish Soul

Yet it would be a mistake to interpret this position, consistently followed by Rav Kook throughout his whole lifetime, as primarily an emotional, romantic bias. Love of Israel for Rav Kook was based on carefully formulated philosophic principles. Recently a book was published devoted solely to the "defense" of Jews in the thought of Rav Kook, and demonstrating that this advocacy was for him a "service," a complex yet systematic approach to a social problem from a profoundly religious point of view.

Indeed, this significant aspect of the thinking of Rav Kook cannot be divorced from the rest of his fundamental thought. Ultimately it is based on his faith in man's inherent goodness. Rav Kook completely took over and greatly developed the Hasidic idea that the love of God pre-exists in every Jewish soul—in other words, that every Jew, whether or not he is conscious of the fact, is born naturally devout. Hence our human task is not to implant religious fervor where none existed before, but to uncover what already exists in the Jewish soul, to arouse the religious instincts that form a natural part of the Jew's constitution. Thus Rav Kook considered that the soul is in a constant state of prayer, it turns at all times to the Rock from which it was hewn. The conscious act of prayer, then, consists merely of letting the mind and heart be aware of the prayer of the soul.

Thus, we are led to an optimistic conclusion regarding the religiousness of our people. Their lack of piety is only apparent; or, preferably, it is only outward and superficial, and hence temporary, for there is deep within them a spark of divinity, a hidden reservoir of goodness and love of God. It is this which we must treasure in every person and strive to help him reveal in his conscious life. This inner goodness and devoutness cannot be forced out; it must be attracted into life by kindness and love. Rav Kook was fond of quoting the Hasidic master, R. Zusya, who said, "would that I could love the greatest *Zaddik* as much as God loves even the most wicked sinner!"

But this natural piety can indeed be destroyed, Kook felt. When the Jew completely cuts himself off from any connection not only with his God and his Torah, but also his people and nation, when he totally



At the Cornerstone Ceremony of a Synagogue.

assimilates into his non-Jewish environment, then he effectively banishes from his soul whatever good can otherwise be salvaged from it. When an otherwise irreligious Jew, however, exhibits a flaming idealism and self-sacrifice for the people and land of Israel, he keeps alive that hidden spark of holiness within him, and this individual is therefore deserving of *ahavat Yisrael*, of love and friendship. The "love of Israel" is thus organically related to the native "love of God" within Israel.

Religious Nationalism

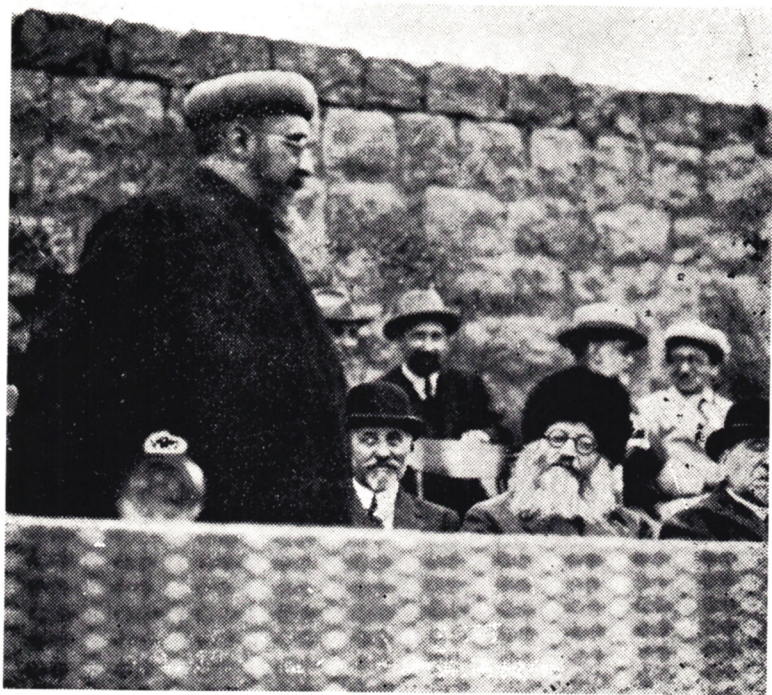
Rav Kook was one of the leading ideologists of the Religious Zionist Movement. His belief in the inherent piety of the Jew was wedded to yet another idea, which forms the bedrock of the Mizrahi principle of cooperation with secular Zionism though it totally rejects its negative view of religion. Rav Kook begins with the Kabbalah's principle of the mystical unity of God, Israel, and Torah. Communion, or being with God, can be approached through Torah and through Israel — religion and nationalism, preferably both. But even if one is delinquent in the observance of Torah, when he grasps the ideal of "Israel," when he devotes his life and energy to his people, he in effect enters into the sacred unity of God-Torah-Israel, and before long he — the entire generation — must come to recognize God consciously and observe His Torah in love and with loyalty.

Religion and nationalism in Israel, according to Rav Kook, therefore form an indivisible unity. When they are separated, only tragedy can result. Religion by itself soon loses contact with the life of man whom it must guide. And nationalism alone degenerates into national self-worship, releasing from the people the dark and sinister forces of profane jingoism. The Unity of God in Judaism requires the joining of Torah and Israel.

"What these nationalists really want," he wrote about the irreligious (or, as one should call them if he accepts Rav Kook's basic

*Chatting with
Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan.*





The Rav listening to the Sepharadic Chief Rabbi Ben Zion Uziel.

Visiting the Bikur Holim Hospital in Jerusalem.



principle: the non-observant) Zionists, "they themselves do not know. So powerfully united is the spirit of Israel to the Spirit of God, that even the one who says he has nothing to do with the Spirit of God, the moment he admits that he desires to share in the spirit of Israel, then the divine Spirit enters into the inwardness of his aspiration even despite himself . . . Therefore all the possessions that are dear to the nation on account of the national spirit are suffused with the immanent Spirit of God: its land, its language, its history, its customs."

Our Generation

This evaluation of the nature of the Jew, combined with his observation of the heroism and self-sacrifice of the young pioneers who redeemed the Land of Israel, led Rav Kook to a high evaluation of his own generation. Holiness is cumulative, every generation adds to the ones that preceded it; none of it is lost. Therefore, although our generation may seem spiritually impoverished, "the totality of the nation in its inwardness possesses more divine light now than in the past." He was enchanted by the dedicated *halutzim* and considered their deviations from Judaism to be misguided rather than evil. He could write:

Our present generation is a wonderful one, altogether amazing. It is difficult to find another like it in all history. It consists of many opposites, light and dark coexisting in it. It is lowly and despicable, yet elevated and lofty; altogether guilty — and altogether innocent! It is a strange generation: mischievous and wild, yet exalted and noble . . . You find, on the one hand, increasing arrogance . . . youngsters insulting their elders; and on the other hand, charity, decency, justice, and compassion gaining strength, idealistic and intellectual power breaking out and rising. A generation of this kind, ready to meet death bravely because of goals it considers worthy, often solely on account of inner feelings of righteousness and justice, cannot be considered lowly even if its goals are all wrong.

The Jew devoted to his people, to his land, thus carries out the will of God, though he be unconscious of it. No human can fathom the

*Visiting Boston; greeted by
the Mayor of the city;
accompanied by
Rabbis A. D. Shapiro,
famous Rabbi of Kovna.*



*The Rav with the
founders of B'nai Brak.*



*With friends in
Switzerland, 1925.*



Divine Mind. No one can say for sure whom the Lord has chosen, and whom not, to execute the plans of Providence. As long, therefore, as the Jew retains some active connection with his people, there is hope that he will return completely and totally to the bosom of his faith as well as folk, to Torah as well as Zion.

For Rav Kook, then, "tolerance" was neither the mark of lack of conviction, as it is with so many who are "tolerant" of other opinions because they have none of their own, nor was it a kind of condescension. It was, rather, a positive concept, rooted in Torah and Jewish mysticism. And it was, above all, a powerful source of optimism as to the development of the nation and its sons and daughters in the future.

The Future

The goal of the future was, for Rav Kook, the complete unification of the people of Israel, and through them of all of mankind, in accepting the Kingdom of God. All distinctions, separations, differences between peoples, institutions, and ideals were but temporary manifestations of a fragmented world. The whole burden of Rav Kook's writings — and they are quite considerable, only a fraction of them have been published so far — is the Unity theme. God is One and truth is unitary; hence all divisions and divisiveness are a mark of imperfection.

There is therefore no reason, for example, for the believing Jew to feel that natural science is hostile to his faith. One need not, of course, accept every latest theory of the scientists as the final word. Yet in essence, truth being one, science in no way contradicts the truth of Scripture — which must be understood in its deepest sense; there is a world of symbol and mystery beyond the plain literal meaning of the verses of the Torah.

The people of Israel, through the Torah of Israel and on the Land of Israel, are the instruments for that final unification of all mankind, all ideals, aspirations. Without the Land, Rav Kook asserted, Israel must remain fragmented, mankind unredeemed, and the great vision of unity dimmed and distant.

The J.N.F.

It was this appreciation of the Land that led Rav Kook to support the sacred efforts of the Jewish National Fund. We mentioned, at the outset, the devotion of Rav Kook to the Keren Kayemeth, which inspired him to solicit support for its program even during the trying days of his last illness. It seems fitting that we close with an excerpt from a private letter which he wrote in 1912, when he was Rabbi of Jaffa:

. . . I am pleased to inform you that the Fund is attempting in all seriousness to improve the position of the workers. In general, things are developing well, bringing joy to the hearts of all Jews who love their people and their land. But despite all this, our funds are insufficient for our purposes, and many are those who must leave the Land because they cannot make an adequate living — some of them, unfortunately for us, quite capable of work.

Certainly there is a holy obligation upon everyone who can, to help expand the capabilities of the National Fund so that it may increase its worthy work, both in quantity and in quality.

In the hearts of all lovers of Zion, Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, first Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, occupies a hallowed place. The story of this saintly figure is an inspiring demonstration of "spirit in action."

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