TORAT ERETZ YISRAEL

And

THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF

HARAV AVRAHAM YITZCHAK HAKOHEN KOOK zt"l

Rav Kook visiting the United States in '26.

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What is Torat Eretz Yisrael

“If a man is outside the Land of Israel, he has a soul of lesser celestial forces. If he merits to enter the Land of Israel, a soul from a newly created source comes to him, and clothes itself with his old soul. The first night he sleeps in Eretz Yisrael, both souls depart from him and rise to worlds above, and in the morning, only the new soul returns.” Chesed L’Avraham, The Third Spring, Spring of the Land, River 12.

Orot HaTorah of HaRav Kook, 13:2
"And the gold of that land was good, there is no Torah like the Torah of the Land of Israel" (Midrash Rabba). In every generation we are required to crave the Torah of the Land of Israel. And this is even more necessary in our generation, a generation of death and rebirth, the child of a period of darkness of light, of forgetfulness and heroism. For its sake we require a portion of life specifically from the Torah of the Land of Israel. We need to demonstrate to [this generation] the truth and clarity in our divine storehouse, with its ideas and thoughts of truthful Torah, as well as the beautiful and elevated, the pleasantness and glory in its practical commandments; and in describing the pathways of life in the entirety of life, how deeply it is the Torah of truth and the Torah of life at once - for this we are required to taste and give others to taste the taste of Israel from its depth and foundation. And this is only possible to sense, to grasp and feel, in the Land of Israel.

HaRav Tzvi Yehuda Kook:

“Israel’s wholeness appears only in Eretz Yisrael. The Divine value of this great nation appears only when it is situated in its own Land, in all of its health and stature. The revelation of Hashem’s honor in the world comes about through this nation in this Land. This is the order of creation. that There is no G-d in all of the earth, except in Israel.” When this portion of mankind is situated in this particular Land, the Torah is revealed in all of its truth.”

SOME KEY POINTS ABOUT TORAT ERETZ YISRAEL:

1- The centrality and uniqueness of Eretz Yisrael
2- The importance of learning of this centrality (including the mitzvot that can only be observed in Eretz Yisrael).
3- Every Jew has the potential of individual holiness as well as the reality of national holiness.
4- The necessity to build ourselves both as individuals and as a nation (Therefore, it’s not all about me….It’s about Klal Yisrael.)
5- The destiny of Am Yisrael can only be fulfilled as a sovereign and united nation in Eretz Yisrael.
6- The goal is to truly be the light to the nations, showing the world how a just and holy society can be achieved.
7- All of this has practical implications in our personal and national lives.
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>5625 (1865)</td>
<td>Born on the 16th of Elul, 5625 (Sep. 7, 1865) in Greive (now Griva), a suburb of Dvinsk in Latvia.</td>
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<td>5645 (1884)</td>
<td>At age 18, he studied for a year and a half at the famed Volozhin yeshiva. The head of the Volozhin yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin (the &quot;Netziv&quot;), held the &quot;ilui [prodigy] from Griva&quot; in high esteem.</td>
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<td>5646 (1886)</td>
<td>Married Batsheva, the daughter of Rabbi Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim (1843-1905) (known by his initials, the Aderet), then rabbi of Ponevezh, and later chief rabbi of Jerusalem.</td>
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<td>5648 (1888)</td>
<td>Appointed rabbi of Zeimel (Zeimelis) in Lithuania at age 22.</td>
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<td>5649 (1889)</td>
<td>During his stay in Zeimel, Rav Kook's first wife died. (Their daughter Frayda Chana was a year and a half at the time.) His father-in-law the Aderet convinced him to marry Raiza-Rivka Rabinowitz, daughter of the Aderet's twin brother. Raiza-Rivka was the mother of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, Esther Ya'el Kook, and Batya-Miriam Ra'anan…Studied with the great Kabbalist, Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv (1839-1926), author of Leshem Shevo Ve-Achlamah.</td>
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<td>5654-5656 (1894-1896)</td>
<td>Collected 38 sermons in the book Midbar Shur. The manuscript, however, was stolen, and the book was only published a century later, in 1999.</td>
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<td>5656 (1896)</td>
<td>Became rabbi of Boisk (now Bauska), Latvia….Wrote Musar Avicha, a treatise on moral reflections (published posthumously in 1946).</td>
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<td>5664 (1904)</td>
<td>Arrived in Eretz Yisrael on the 28th of Iyar, 5664. He served as rabbi of Jaffa and the surrounding settlements for the next ten years.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>5665 (1905)</td>
<td>Published the first chapters of <em>Orot HaTeshuvah</em>, Rav Kook’s original thoughts on the topic of repentance, as well as <em>Eder HaYakar</em> and <em>Ikvei HaTzon</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5670 (1910)</td>
<td>Sabbatical year. Published the Halachic work, <em>Shabbat Ha’Aretz</em>, in defense of the heter mechinah.</td>
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| 5674 (1913) | Lead a mission of rabbis to settlements in the north to encourage them and strengthen religious observance. This was the first of many missions.  
Gershon Gafner, a prominent member of the cooperative, recorded his memories of the rabbis’ visit in his memoir, *My Path to Merhavya*:  
We were informed of the arrival date for the visit of Rabbis Kook and Zonnenfeld, of blessed memory, and Rabbi Yadler. In honor of these esteemed guests, we hired a “diligence” [a French stagecoach] from Nazareth to bring them from the Afula station to Merhavya. The visit, however, was postponed repeatedly. Since it was expensive to retain the diligence coach, we had to return this elegant and modern (for those days) form of transportation.  
One day we were surprised to receive an urgent message from Afula. The rabbis had arrived and were waiting for us at the station! We were to come at once and bring them to Merhavya. Lacking a better option, we quickly “renovated” one of the carts which we used to transport manure. We cleaned it up, “upholstered” it with straw and sacks, and made our way to Afula. In this fashion, we brought our honored guests to Merhavya....  
We expressed our regret that we did not have the opportunity on such short notice — from when we learned of their arrival — to prepare a more suitable form of transportation for them. In response to this apology, Rav Kook delivered an impassioned speech. His fiery address lasted nearly an hour.  
Rav Kook expressed his great joy that, for the first time in his life, he was privileged to travel in a wagon of Jewish laborers in the Land of the Patriarchs. His speech probed the depths of Jewish history. He praised the importance of working the land and recalled the sacred history of the Jezreel valley, which we pioneers were the first to redeem after centuries of desolation. With tremendous excitement, he noted that our fathers’ fathers had lived in this place, creating Jewish life with dedication and self-sacrifice. And now, he noted, the descendants of those ancient Hebrews have arisen and continued their Jewish tradition. He concluded his words with a heartfelt blessing that we should merit to see, with our own eyes, the entire Land of Israel redeemed and flourishing through the labor of the children of the Eternal Nation. Rav Kook’s words made a deep impression on us. We felt, with great admiration, that he was truly worthy of the crown of Torah that he wore.  
The rabbinical delegation stayed with us several days. During one of the nights, the rabbis were witness to an attack on Merhavya. We explained to them that the Arabs primarily chose to attack us on Friday nights [on the assumption that few or no Jewish guards would be on duty]. Therefore we are forced to go out on the Sabbath to protect our property and our lives. We asked the rabbis to provide a clear answer if we are acting properly according to Jewish law. Rav Kook responded calmly and with full understanding of the situation. If, he explained, we are certain that it is a life-threatening situation, then it is our obligation to defend the place, even if this will lead to violation of the Sabbath laws. This is in accordance with the well-known Halakhic principle, “Danger to human life overrides the laws of the Sabbath.” |
| 5674 (1914) | Traveled to Europe for *Agudat Yisrael* convention in Germany. Unable to return to *Eretz Yisrael* due to the sudden outbreak of World War I, Rav Kook spent a year and a half in St. Gallen, Switzerland. |
| 5676 (1916) | Served as rabbi of *Machzikei HaDat* congregation in London for three years during the war. Published the mystical treatise *Rosh Milin*. |
| 5679 (1919) | Returned to *Eretz Yisrael*...In Tevet 5680, he accepted the position of Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. Two months earlier, his twelve-year-old daughter Esther Ya’el died tragically after falling down a flight |
Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook edited some of his father's writings, publishing them in the book *Orot* - Rav Kook's most famous work.

Established **Chief Rabbinate** of pre-state Israel, becoming Chief Rabbi together with Sephardic Chief Rabbi Yaakov Meir.

Established the **Mercaz HaRav** yeshivah in Jerusalem, unique among the yeshivot at that time in its religious philosophy and positive attitude towards Zionism.

Rav Kook passed away in Jerusalem on the third of Elul, 5695, two weeks before his 70th birthday.

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**SOME KEY ELEMENTS OF THE THOUGHT AND WORK OF HARAV KOOK:**

*The Jewish People is the only Holy Nation in the world. Every Jew is connected to this national holiness (whether or not they are aware of this).
*There is an absolute obligation to love every Jew— even Jews with whom we disagree.
*Though Rav Kook was clearly concerned with building individuals, he was also very concerned with building the nation—physically and spiritually.
*All of Eretz Yisrael is intrinsically Holy (not just as a means to fulfill some of the mitzvot).
*Building a Jewish State, with Jewish self government, in Eretz Yisrael is Holy. He was willing to work even with those who were not religious to strengthen the Jewish community in the Land, increase aliyah (even when the British forbade it) and to make this dream a reality. At the same time, he fought tirelessly for observance of Torah and Mitzvot (particularly in public areas).

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(left) with HaRav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld zt"l, (right) speaking at the laying of the “cornerstone” of Hebrew University.
RAVKOOK’S LOVE OF ERETZ YISRAEL

Note: Throughout this source packet, I have underlined key passages. The underlines are not part of the original texts; but rather my attempt to help focus on key statements to help us understand Rav Kook’s often challenging writings.

Text #1: The Land of Israel- Orot Yisrael 1:1

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

As a result, it is impossible to comprehend the essence of the inner Segula of the Kedusha (holiness) of Eretz Yisrael, and to reveal the depths of its love, through any form of human conceptualization; but only through the Spirit of Hashem which acts on the nation as a whole.

This Ruach Hashem on the nation, the natural spiritual formulation of Israel's soul, sends its rays in natural colors in all paths of sensitivity. It shines its exalted rays in direct accordance with the exalted Ruach HaKodesh which fills with life and exalted joy the hearts of the holy thinkers and those who are involved in the deep contemplations of Israel.

The thought regarding Eretz Yisrael that it has merely a peripheral value to facilitate the subsistence of the unified nation; even when it comes to fortify the concept of Judaism in the Diaspora, in order to preserve its form, and to strengthen the belief and fear of Hashem, and to strengthen the performance of the commandments in a proper fashion - this orientation toward Eretz Yisrael is not worthy of lasting fruition, for its foundation is rickety in light of the towering, unshakable Kedusha of Eretz Yisrael.

The concept of Judaism in the Diaspora will only find true strength through the depth of its involvement in Eretz Yisrael. Only through its longing for Eretz Yisrael will Diaspora Judaism consistently receive its inherent qualities. The yearning for Salvation gives the Judaism of the Diaspora its power of stamina; whereas the Judaism of Eretz Yisrael is the Salvation itself.

Questions: 1) What is the difference between Eretz Yisrael being “peripheral” or “external” and “independent” as a result of segula (specialness)? 2) For Rav Kook, why would we- both as individuals and as a nation- want to live in Eretz Yisrael?

Text #2: Our Love for the Beloved Land Moadei Harayah, pp. 419-20

We have a great obligation to awaken the ancient love of Zion: a love that is eternal and burns in a flame of holy fire within the hearts of the Jewish people wherever they may be.

We must fight with all our strength against any hatred of our holy land—which has begun to affect some of us. With a mighty arm of the spirit and with the eternal holiness of the beloved
land, we must destroy the contamination of the spies, a contamination which began to spread at the very point of the possible redemption.

“‘The word of our God will stand forever.’

The holiness of the land and its loveliness has never changed and will never change. All the bitter circumstances, physical and spiritual, which have affected the Holy Land will not overcome it.

Just as no physical destruction can destroy our love for the beloved land, so can no spiritual desolation reduce our holy and profound love of that land of life.

The deep connection between the soul of the Jew and Zion, with all that takes place there, stands firm forever. And the light of that love will increase seven-fold.

It will enflame every heart and exalt every spirit, sanctifying and encouraging everyone.

**Questions:** 1) Why does Rav Kook say we must awaken the love for Eretz Yisrael? 2) Why is there a deep connection between the soul of the Jew and Zion? What is the result?

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**Text #4: The Sense of Being a Stranger**

There is a sense of being a stranger that you may feel outside the land of Israel. That sense connects the entire inner desire of your spirit ever more strongly to the land of Israel and its holiness.

Your hope to see it grows. The impression, the inner image, of the holy structure of that land upon which God always gazes grows increasingly deeper.

There is a depth of holy yearning for beloved Zion, a recollection of that entirely desirable land. When that grows in even a single soul, the wellspring flows for everyone: for tens of thousands of souls connected to that soul.

*Eretz Cheifetz* (quoting *Orot*), p. 48

**Question:** Why might one feel as a stranger outside of Eretz Yisrael?

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**Text #5: The Gold of That Land Was Good** (*Chevyon Oz*, in *Moadei Harayah*, pp.157-8)

“‘And the gold of that land was good’—this teaches that there is no Torah like the Torah of the land of Israel” (Bereisheet Rabbah 16:7).

In every generation, it is fitting to have great love for the Torah of the land of Israel. This is particularly true now. We must give our generation the life-giving medicine of the Torah of the land of Israel. We must show this generation the greatness of truth and clarity found within our Godly treasure, in the ideas and insights of the true Torah, in the beauty and exalted nature of its mitzvot, and in its overall view of life. This can be achieved only via the light of the Torah of the land of Israel, via its depth and breadth. Only that connects all one’s awareness and ideas so that one can completely experience it and, more, transfer that experience to others. All of this is possible only via the light of the Torah of the land of Israel.

Our generation is ready. It must be influenced by ideas that have a fresh life and greatness. Shriveled, small matters can no longer capture its heart. Its communal nature has grown exceedingly. We must give everything to this generation in an inclusive fashion: a stream of the flow of life of the entire nation.

This brings us to the essential difference between the Torah of the land of Israel and the
Torah of *chutz la’aretz* (outside the land of Israel). Whatever is small and individual (whether in the general context of spiritual ideas or, more particularly, of those ideas that deal with the great breadth of Torah and faith) when viewed from the perspective of the Torah of *chutz la’aretz* becomes great and inclusive as soon as it draws to itself the atmosphere of the land of Israel.

The Torah of *chutz la’aretz* is only aware of how to care for the individual, for his spiritual and physical completion, his temporal as well as eternal condition. But the Torah of the Land of Israel is concerned with the totality, with the nation: with its soul and energy, its body and spirit, its total present, its total future, and the living imprint of its past—simultaneously. All details enter it and are subsumed in its exalted state. This is the inner renewal, deep and broad, of the Torah of the land of Israel. It declares that all individual thoughts and ideas proceeding in an impoverished and scattered state—the atmosphere of the land of other nations—must form one bundle, must clothe themselves in one general intent related to the life of the entire nation, under the influence of the land of Israel.

**Text #6: Concerned for the Individual (Orot Hatorah 13:3)**

Everything to which we are accustomed in regard to Torah outside the Holy Land relates to the particular. But the worth of the Torah of the land of Israel ascends to universality.

Outside the land, the Torah works on rectifying the individual spirit. It is concerned for an individual’s physicality and spirituality, his purification and elevation, in this temporary life and in the eternal life—only within the framework of that individual spirit.

How different is the Torah of the Land of Israel! It is always concerned for the universal, for the totality of the soul of the entire nation.

The individual details enter within her inclusiveness. They rise when she rises; they are crowned when she is crowned: “a crown of beauty to those borne from the belly, who will in the future be renewed like her and praise their Maker for the name of the glory of His kingdom.”

And also, the elevation from the individual to the universal that takes place across the entire breadth of Torah—in particular, regarding the breadth of the concepts of faith and true fear of heaven—is an uplifted and elevated innovation of the Torah of the land of Israel.

**Questions:** 1) For Rav Kook, what is the difference between the “Torah of Outside the Land of Israel” and the “Torah of Eretz Yisrael”? 2) Does one encompass the other? 3) Can one have the “Torah of Eretz Yisrael” outside of Israel? 4) Why is this so important for our generation?

**Text #7: The Future Redemption (Orot HaTechiya 26)**

The entire nation believes that there will be no further exile after the redemption that is beginning to unfold in front of us. This deep faith itself ensures its existence. The secret of Hashem is revealed in the course of history.

*Note: Rav Kook spelled *history* היסטוריה- with a "ת" instead of a "ט"- to teach that the היטו- "hidden presence of Hashem"- is in history!*

**Questions:** 1) How does Rav Kook know that the Jewish People believe there will be no further exile? 2) How does this teaching fit into his understanding of what is/was happening in the Land of Israel?
There are two main things that together build the holiness of Israel and the Divine connection with them (the Jewish People). The first is *segula* (specialness/treasure), meaning the nature of the holiness that is in the soul of Israel as a legacy from our Patriarchs, as the verses say, “Not for your righteousness,” (Devarim 9:5) “only in your forefathers did G-d find pleasure to love them, and he chose their descendants after them.” (Devarim 10:5). “You shall be my *segula* (special treasure) from among all the nations.” (Shemot 19:5). This *segula* is an inner holy power which G-d’s will was to imbide in the nature of the soul, and it, like the nature of everything, cannot be changed…

The second is the aspect of free will which is dependent on good deeds and Torah study. The aspect of *segula* is incomparably greater and holier than the aspect of free will…

Sometimes the power of free will becomes stronger and the power of *segula* is hidden…and sometimes the power of *segula* is stronger and the power of free will is hidden. The whole essence of the Brit (covenant) of the Patriarchs, which does not cease even after the merit of the Patriarchs isn’t present*, stems from the power of *segula*, and in the approaching footsteps of the Mashiach, the power of *segula* is greatly strengthened…

In our generation there are many souls who, although lowly in the area of free choice, and therefore have done many evil acts and had bad thoughts (May G-d protect us) are still illuminated with the light of *segula*, and therefore deeply love the Nation of Israel and have a passion for the Land of Israel, and their souls are distinguished by some good and precious qualities that stem from Israel’s *segula*…

*Explanation: The Rabbis teach that while the “merit of the Patriarchs” depends on our deeds (meaning- do we act in the way Hashem commanded us, the children of the Patriarchs to live), the Brit (covenant) of the Patriarchs is eternal since it comes from Hashem. Whenever the Torah says “Brit,” it is Hashem’s declaration and promise to us- regardless of what we choose.

**Questions:** 1) What are the two sources of holiness? 2) Why is *segula* the stronger source? 3) How does Rav Kook view Zionists who don’t follow the Torah? 4) What can this passage teach us about righteous non-Jews?

**Text #2: Orot haKodesh 3:423-424**

"ואם נחרנו ונחרב העולם עמנו על ידי שנאת חינם נשוב ולהבנות ועולם יבנה על ידי אהבת חינם.

We will return and be built, and the world will be built, by means of groundless love.

**Questions:** 1) How do we define groundless hate? 2) How do we define groundless love? 3) Why do you think Rav Kook makes this powerful statement?
Text #3: Orot haTechiya 20
How should the Jewish people be guided?
Wildness has grown rampant, and the banner of lawlessness has been raised with an outstretched hand.

Perhaps the nation should be split, so that the good and kosher people, those who bear the banner of God’s name, should not associate with sinners who have cast off the yoke.

Or perhaps the value of general peace should be the deciding factor.

The cause of this disagreement is a universal state of degradation. The character of the nation, from the aspect of the superficial aspect of its spirit, has not yet been completely purified.

These points of view are like the argument of the two prostitutes who came to Solomon, each claiming a new-born baby as her own.

Solomon commanded: “Bring a sword.”
That command is a test from God’s wisdom for the kingdom of Israel.

The woman dismissed is the one who demands, “Divide the child in two!” Her bitterness exposes the true resentment in her heart. Her only thought is: “Neither you nor I will have it.”

The compassionate mother, the true mother, says, “Give her the living child. Surely do not kill him!”

And God’s holy spirit cries out: “Give that one the living child, for she is his mother!”

There is no end to the evils, physical and spiritual, that would devolve from the division of the nation. Such a total separation, desired by those who would cruelly tear it in half, is impossible, and never will occur. It is literally an idolatrous idea that will never come about: “You say: Let us be like the nations, like the families of the earth, serving wood and stone. By My life, says the Lord God, with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, with poured forth wrath shall I rule over you!” (Ezekiel 20).

Like any thought of idolatry, this idea is destructive and dismaying, even when it has not come about in actuality.

The stance of the righteous in every generation is supported even by the wicked. As long as they, despite their wickedness, cling in their hearts to all the nation, then “your people are entirely righteous” (Isaiah 60). Their superficial wickedness strengthens the righteous, like the lees in wine (Zohar Naso 128).

But attempted division burrows under the foundation of all holiness, like the work of Amalek, who cut off the weak, those who had been ejected by the cloud of glory.

“He sent his hand against God’s perfect ones. He desecrated His covenant”

Text #4: Arpilei Tohar pp. 27-8
על-כן הצדיקים הטהורים אינם קובלים על החושך, אלא מוסיפים אור; אינם קובלים על הרשעה, אלא מוסיפים צדק; אינם קובלים על הכפירה, אלא מוסיפים אמונה; אינם קובלים על הבערות, אלא מוסיפים חכמה.

The pure righteous do not complain of the dark, but increase the light; they do not complain of evil, but increase justice; they do not complain of heresy, but increase faith; they do not complain of ignorance, but increase wisdom.

Text #5: from Dvar newspaper, 29 Nissan 5683 (1923) after a Rav Kook-led mission to Moshavim and Kibbutzim
The reporters asked questions (at the press conference) and the rabbis answered them. Rav Kook said that there is often exaggeration regarding the poor religious state. There is a lot to fix and the rabbis are working to fix things. But there are not “heretics of anger” or objections. The situation will be improved via unpleasantness but rather by the people who know how to value
the pioneers and their self sacrifice to establish the Jewish Nation and know how to bring them closer to religiosity.

**At the press conference Rav Kook told a story of a mission prior to World War I:**

We found (in the moshav) a non kosher kitchen and expressed our sorrow at it being not kosher. In a discussion that was polite and as among friends we recognized the great important of their work and their self sacrifice for the national ideal, which were truly words that came from the heart. But at the same time we expressed our great pain over their disconnection from our people’s holy foundations. The set before us a special table with foods with strict kosher supervision. After we ate we shared with them our great pain in the split they were causing in the nation, and the separation the are causing among their brothers who believe in the rebirth and building in the land of our fathers due to their neglect of Kashrut.

I said to them, “My brothers…you are making it possible for us to eat together at one table, as if we were, Heaven forbid, not from the same nation. This causes great pain. We ask you, beloved brothers, return. Make Kosher your kitchen and have your table be a table of Israel in its fullest sense. Let our brotherhood be complete in order that we all build as one the nation in the Land of Israel.”

These words were effective and after the members met, they all agreed to make kosher their kitchen…Only with pleasant words, fully under the influence of love, recognition and honor, together with assistance in the foundations of building the nation…can we repair (religious issues) in the Jewish community of Eretz Yisrael…

**Questions:**
1) What are the various ways to relate to people who have left Torah? 2) What does Rav Kook advocate? 3) How does this impact how he worked with non-Orthodox Jews in Zionist activities?

**Text #6: The Ideal State of Israel: from Orot Yisrael 6:7**

The state is not man’s highest joy. This applies when one is speaking of a regular state, whose value is not greater than a huge insurance company…But this doesn’t apply to a state built upon idealistic foundations, whose laws are based upon great ideals, which truly can be the great joy of the individual. This state is truly at the highest rung of the ladder of happiness- and this state is our state, the State of Israel, the foundation of Hashem’s Throne in this world, that its entire desire is that Hashem shall be One and His Name shall be one, which is truly the greatest joy.”

Some video/stills of Rav Kook: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkYPBUphWP0&t=8s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkYPBUphWP0&t=8s)

**Questions:**
1) How does the ideal State of Israel combine Rav Kook’s loves of Eretz Yisrael and Am Yisrael? 2) How does Rav Kook explain his love of Jews? 3) How does this extend to the rest of the world?
RAV KOOK’S LOVE OF HASHEM: TESHUVA (individual and national)

Text #1: Introduction to Orot haTeshuva

It is some time that I have been waging an internal war, that a strong spirit forces me to speak about teshuvah, repentance. All of my thoughts are centered only on that. Teshuva takes the greatest part of Torah and life, upon it are built all individual and communal hopes, it is a mitzvah that is on the one hand the easiest of all (a thought of repentance is already repentance) and on the other hand is the most difficult of all, for it has not yet been achieved in the world and in life.

I find myself tending to speak and think constantly only about it. Many have written—Torah, Prophets, sages—about it; but to our generation the words are still occluded.

The new literature, which roams in all corners where song and life are found, has not at all penetrated into this wondrous treasure house of life, the treasure house of repentance. It has not even begun to take an interest in it, to know its character and its worth—even from its poetic aspect, which inspires beyond measure, and how much more has it not even touched upon its active side, in particular in connection with the conditions of our new life.

I am compelled from my inner being to speak about this matter of repentance, and I step back when I think: Am I worthy of speaking about repentance? The great men of the previous generations have written about repentance, the prophets and the purest sages, the greatest pietists. How can I stand in their company? But no weakness in the world can absolve me of my inner responsibility. I must speak about repentance, and particularly regarding its literary and active aspect, so that its character may be understood in our generation, and that it may be realized in life—in the life of the individual and in the life of the community.

Question: Why does Rav Kook feel compelled to write about teshuva?

Text 2: Orot haTeshuva Chapter 1 (Levels)

Teshuva (return) exists on three levels- natural teshuva, teshuva according to faith, and teshuva according to reason.

Within natural teshuva there are two parts- the physical and the spiritual. The physical encompasses all the sins against the laws of nature, ethics and the Torah that are related to natural law. In the end, all bad behavior leads to illness and suffering- both for the individual and society. And after one clarifies the matter and realizes that they have themselves have caused this through their negative actions- that they have caused their own distress- they pay attention and repair the matter in order to return to the laws of life and observe the natural laws of ethics and the Torah in order to return and live life with all its joy...

Spiritual teshuva is more inward. It is what is called “reprimands of the conscience.” The natural human condition is the desire to go in the straight/upright path. When one veers from this path and falls into sin, if his soul is gentle and not totally changed- this desire for the upright troubles his heart and pains him, and he is encouraged to return and correct his errors and is then comforted. ...

After natural teshuva comes teshuva from faith- its source is the world of tradition and religion, which frequently occupies itself with teshuva. The Torah promises forgiveness to those who
return from sins- the sins of the individual and the community are wiped away through teshuva. The words of the prophets are filled with words of teshuva. In general all of the rebukes in the Torah are based upon the teshuva of faith…

Teshuva according to reason comes after there has already been natural teshuva and teshuva from faith, and brings us to the highest level. It comes not just from physical, spiritual or emotional pain; and not just from the influence of tradition and religion- whether from the fear of punishment or of the influence of the law….but rather from the clear realization that comes from a total outlook on life, that raises upward the role of nature and faith. This teshuva, which includes all the prior levels, is filled with an infinite life and transforms all of the sins into merits. It turns all errors into learning opportunities and all falls into inspiration to climb higher. This is the highest teshuva to which we all must aspire and to which we will all arrive.

**Questions:** 1) What are the levels of teshuva? 2) Why do you think these are levels, as opposed to just types?

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**Text #3: Orot HaTeshuva Chapter 2 (Types of Teshuva-Time)**

Regarding time, teshuva is divided into two types: sudden teshuva and gradual teshuva.

Sudden teshuva comes about from a spiritual lighting blast that enters the soul. All at once one recognizes the bad and ugliness of sin and is transformed to a new person and already feels inner transformation for the good. This teshuva comes from an inner segula (specialness) by means of a great soulful influence…

Gradual teshuva comes about not from a sudden, deep inner flash that turns the evil into good, rather one feels the need to progress and improve their way and the course of their life, desires and thoughts. This path progress and slowly, slowly takes one to the path of the upright, refines character, improves deeds and gradually becomes a better person until attaining the heights of purity and goodness.

Higher teshuva comes from the flash of recognition of the greater good, of the Divine good that illuminates the entire world, the light of the Eternal Everlasting… and from this recognition, that is the true recognition of G-d, comes teshuva from love both in the life of the individual and the community.

**Questions:** 1) What’s the difference between sudden and gradual teshuva? 2) What is teshuva from love? 3) Do you think teshuva from love and teshuva from fear/awe mutually exclusive?

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**Text #4: HaYesod (1934)**

Teshuva is the great key to redemption. Many things inhibit teshuva.

Teshuvah is the great key to redemption. Many things inhibit teshuva, but the major obstacle, particularly to collective teshuva, is the misconception of teshuva as atrophy of the soul, as the enfeebling and debilitation of life. This false image also impairs the teshuvah of the individual. But more than anything, it hinders collective teshuva, the teshuva of the nation.

We must disclose the secret that the genuine teshuva of the entire nation of Israel is a mighty, powerful vision that provides reserves of might and strength, imbuing all of our spiritual and
pragmatic values with a lofty spirit of vigorous, surging creative energy from the power of the Rock of Israel. This living teshuva flows not from isolated, fragmented souls, but from the treasury of the nation’s collective soul, Knesset Yisrael .... In this way, the united soul of Israel is prepared to return to its former strength, as in days of old.”

**Questions:** 1) What is the role of “thoughts of teshuva”? 2) What is national teshuva? Why is it important?

**Text #6: Rosh HaShanah Drasha: The Great Shofar**

Rav Kook delivered the following sermon in Jerusalem’s Old City on Rosh Hashanah 1933. It was a time of mixed tidings. On the one hand, ominous news of Hitler’s reign in Germany became more troubling with each passing day. On the other hand, the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael was flourishing. Immigration from central Europe was increasing, bringing educated immigrants with needed skills and financial means. It seemed that the footsteps of redemption could be heard.

We say in our daily prayers, “Sound the great shofar for our freedom, and raise the banner to bring our exiles together.”

What is the significance of this “great shofar”?

**Three Shofars**

There are three types of shofars that may be blown on Rosh Hashanah. The optimal shofar is the horn of a ram. If a ram’s horn is not available, then the horn of any kosher animal other than a cow may be used. And if a kosher shofar is not available, then one may blow on the horn of any animal, even one which is not kosher. When using a horn from a non-kosher animal, however, no blessing is recited.

These three shofars of Rosh Hashanah correspond to three “Shofars of Redemption,” three Divine calls summoning the Jewish people to be redeemed and to redeem their land.

The preferred Shofar of Redemption is the Divine call that awakens and inspires the people with holy motivations, through faith in God and the unique mission of the people of Israel. This elevated awakening corresponds to the ram’s horn, a horn that recalls Abraham’s supreme love of God and dedication in Akeidat Yitzchak, the Binding of Isaac. It was the call of this shofar, with its holy vision of heavenly Jerusalem united with earthly Jerusalem, that inspired Nachmanides, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevy, Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura, the students of the Vilna Gaon, and the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov to ascend to Eretz Yisrael. It is for this ‘great shofar,’ an awakening of spiritual greatness and idealism, that we fervently pray.

There exists a second Shofar of Redemption, a less optimal form of awakening. This shofar calls out to the Jewish people to return to their homeland, to the land where our ancestors, our prophets and our kings, once lived. It beckons us to live as a free people, to raise our families in a Jewish country and a Jewish culture. This is a kosher shofar, albeit not a great shofar like the first type of awakening. We may still recite a brachah over this shofar.

There is, however, a third type of shofar. (At this point in the sermon, Rav Kook burst out in tears.) The least desirable shofar comes from the horn of an unclean animal. This shofar
corresponds to the wake-up call that comes from the persecutions of anti-Semitic nations, warning the Jews to escape while they still can and flee to their own land. Enemies force the Jewish people to be redeemed, blasting the trumpets of war, bombarding them with deafening threats of harassment and torment, giving them no respite. The shofar of unclean beasts is thus transformed into a Shofar of Redemption.

Whoever failed to hear the calls of the first two shofars will be forced to listen to the call of this last shofar. Over this shofar, however, no blessing is recited. “One does not recite a blessing over a cup of affliction” (Berachot 51b).

We pray that we will be redeemed by the “great shofar.” We do not wish to be awakened by the calamitous call of the shofar of persecution, nor by the mediocre shofar of ordinary national aspirations. We yearn for the shofar that is suitable for a holy nation, the shofar of spiritual greatness and true freedom. We await the shofar blasts of complete redemption, the sacred call inspiring the Jewish people with the holy ideals of Jerusalem and Mount Moriah:

“On that day a great shofar will be blown, and the lost from the land of Assyria and the dispersed from the land of Egypt will come and bow down to God in the holy mountain in Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 27:13)

**Questions:**
1) What kinds of teshuva is Rav Kook discussing? 2) How does this Drasha relate not just to our shiur on “Love of Hashem: Teshuva” but also to our shiurim on Love of Eretz Yisrael and Love of Am Yisrael?

**HELPFUL SITES**

**ONLINE:**
- www.ravkook.net (lots of translations of Rav Kook’s writings, some are in this packet)
- www.ravkooktorah.org (lots of Divrei Torah and stories)

**BOOKS IN ENGLISH:**
- *Lights on Orot* series (Rabbis David Samson and Tzvi Fishman)
- *Gold From the Land of Israel* (also Silver, and Sapphire) (Rabbi Chanan Morrison)

http://www.ravkooktorah.org/RAV-KOOK-IN-AMERICA.htm (Rav Kook’s visit to America)
HARAV TZVI YEHUDA KOOK

Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook (Leil Seder 1891- Shushan Purim 1982), the only son of Rav Kook, was his spiritual heir. He edited and published almost all of his father’s writings. He served as Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz haRav Kook. He was also considered to primary rabbi of those who went to settle the lands liberated during the Six Day War. (For a brief biography, see https://mercazharav.org.il/en/our-leaders/rabbi-tzvi-yehuda-kook/)

Unlike his father, Rav Tzvi Yehuda lived in the era of the establishment and strengthening of the State of Israel. This means that his teachings in Torat Eretz Yisrael built on those of his father and were viewed as practical and timely.

A few essential points that build upon the foundations of Torat Eretz Yisrael.

1) We must recognize that Hashem is actively involved in our history. He has performed numerous miracles in our era. He has given us sovereignty in much of Eretz Yisrael. He has made the State of Israel strong. He has brought home the exiles of our people.
2) The State of Israel is both holy and needs us to actively improve it.
3) All of Eretz Yisrael is holy and a gift from Hashem to every Jew—past, present and future. Thus we must build all of it up, and not relinquish any of it to other nations.

The passages below are from the book Torat Eretz Yisrael, by Rabbis David Sampson and Tzvi Fischman. Much of the book is translations of discussions Rav Tzvi Yehuda gave that were transcribed and edited by Rabbi Shlomo Aviner.

The full text of the book is at: http://www.israel613.com/books/ERETZ_TORAT_ERETZ_YISRAEL-ENG.CV.pdf
THE UNIQUENESS OF AM YISRAEL AND ERETZ YISRAEL:

“The Kuzari explains that our unique essence is as a community, and not as individuals.\textsuperscript{29} The Maharal also makes clear that our specialness is as a Clal.\textsuperscript{30} There are individual Tzaddikim among the gentile nations of the world; saintly men, and sages, and people of spiritual insight and belief.\textsuperscript{31} But herein lies the basic difference between Am Yisrael and the nations of the world – our creation is unique, Divine. We are a nation brought into existence by the Creator of heaven and earth. Our whole nation is Kadosh, as Isaiah says, \textit{Thy people shall ALL be righteous}.\textsuperscript{32} All of our meaning and value is as a nation, a community, a Clal.”

“And the specifically designated place on this planet for this segment of mankind is here in the Land of Israel. \textit{And who is like Israel, one nation in the Land}.\textsuperscript{33} The Zohar states: \textit{In Israel, they are one nation},\textsuperscript{34} and not outside of it.”
Here, *Kedusha* is natural. Here, Divine Providence is natural.

"Israel’s wholeness appears only in Eretz Yisrael. The Divine value of this great nation appears only when it is situated in its own Land, in all of its health and stature. The revelation of Hashem’s honor in the world comes about through this nation in this Land. This is the order of creation, that *There is no G-d in all of the earth, except in Israel.* When this portion of mankind is situated in this particular Land, the Torah is revealed in all of its truth."

"In contrast to the *Galut,*" Rav Tzvi Yehuda said, "*Eretz Yisrael* is our natural, normal, healthy place. The principal manifestation of Hashem’s Presence is in *Eretz Yisrael.* The principle place of prophecy is *Eretz Yisrael.* The principle place of Torah is *Eretz Yisrael.* The Chofetz Chaim stated in his practical way, that the value of a commandment which a Jew performs in the Land of Israel, like putting on Tefillin, is twenty times greater than the performance of the same precept outside of the Land. In Israel, the performance of a commandment is natural to our lives. Even song is possible only in *Eretz Yisrael,* as it says, *How can we sing the Lord’s song on foreign soil?*"
HASHEM IS ACTING IN OUR HISTORY

“The Geula,” he said, “stands in contrast to the Galut, our exile from the Land of Israel. Geula is the opposite of Galut. What is Galut? An aberration. For instance, in our normal state, we need to be here, the entire nation of Israel, in the Land of Israel. And all of Eretz Yisrael needs to be in our hands. Thank G-d, Hashem’s light is now shining upon us, and increasing, little by little, in gradual stages. How different things were before the establishment of the State of Israel, when we were outside the Land, and the gentiles were in it, and the possibility for a Jew to enter Eretz Yisrael rested in foreign hands. This was a time of Galut. We’ve progressed a bit since then and are returning to a normal condition: Eretz Yisrael is now in our hands! Jerusalem is now in our hands! And we are now independent! This process unfolds in stages.⁷ Just as Hashem can bring the redemption through miracles, He can do it without miracles, in a simpler way, through a natural process, via the conquest and settlement of Eretz Yisrael.”

“The redemption which is unfolding before us appears in stages – not all at once,” Rav Tzvi Yehuda said.
“The end of the Galut has come!” Rav Tzvi Yehuda said. “Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones of all the House of Israel is crystallizing in front of our eyes, in the ingathering of our dry, scattered bones to national life in Israel\textsuperscript{21}: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and I shall put My spirit in you, and you shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then you shall know that I the Lord have spoken, and performed it, says the Lord.\textsuperscript{22} In these recent times, we have witnessed the spirit of Hashem upon us. And the first step of Israel’s revival is seen in our coming home.”\textsuperscript{23}

“The ingathering of the exiles, and the rebirth of the Land, are two sides of the historic, Divine prophecy which is unfolding now, in our very midst, and through our actions.”

“We need to open our eyes,” Rav Tzvi Yehuda said. “We have to see, Eye to eye, with our vision in line with the Divine perspective, in order to see what Hashem is doing in the world. For they shall see eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion.\textsuperscript{33} If we don’t accustom ourselves to recognize what Hashem is revealing, or to see His management of all our affairs, then the world is viewed myopically, in segmented pieces, instead of seeing the truthful, all-encompassing whole.”

“Today, we are moving forward, overcoming the obstacles and errors along the way, progressing and coming closer to A new light on Zion.\textsuperscript{34} The desecration of Hashem’s Name caused by the Galut, and its terrible disgrace, will disappear, and, more and more, we will merit to sanctify the Name of the Lord in our midst.”
ENTIRELY OUR LAND

“The Ramban clearly establishes that this Land, which Hashem promised our forefathers, must be kept under our control, and not under the control of any other nation. This is clearly meant in a national sense, for everyone understands that ruling a land means the establishment of a state in that land. The establishment of Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel is a fundamental precept of the Torah. To ensure that the Land does not remain desolate, we must actively promote the development and settlement of the Land, in every sphere possible.”

“We have absolutely no right to relinquish control over any piece of Eretz Yisrael,” Rav Tzvi Yehuda said. “And we are not allowed to make a tiny, mini-state with the name of Eretz Yisrael, G-d forbid. We cannot do this, because we are not the only owners of the Land. We are the emissaries of millions of Jews, not only the Jews of today, but the Jews who will come after us as well. A short while ago, an important Zionist activist told me that an old Russian woman approached him in Vienna and told him, ‘Hold onto all parts of Eretz Yisrael for us. Don’t relinquish a meter. Soon we will be coming.’”
“There isn’t any man who is permitted to make territorial concessions on this Land. Are these kilometers ours? Is someone the owner of them? These kilometers belong to the millions of Jews in Russia and America and throughout the world, no less than they belong to us. We are here as the representatives of the nation of Israel; we are not its owners without them. How can a person not feel ashamed by the thought of making do with a truncated state? No one has the right to relinquish lands which belong to the millions of Jews of all generations.

“It is imperative to know that we are not obligated to give the Arabs any sovereignty over this land. As individuals, they can remain here as a minority. If they do not cause us trouble, and do not rebel against our rule, but accept our sovereignty over this Land, then we won’t trouble them. It is important to speak with them, to explain, to convince, and to endeavor to lessen the animosity between Arabs and Jews; to increase friendly and closer relations; and to eliminate all discrimination – but, first, it must be clear that this is our Land, from the beginning of time to the end! On this point, there is nothing to discuss!”
“Behold, I said. We announce to all of Israel, and to all of the world, that by a Divine command, we have returned to our home, to our holy city. From this day forth, we shall never budge from here! We have come home!”

For footage of Rav Tzvi Yehuda before and after the Six Day War see:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_rJvuqvQlk&list=PLe1bwf950MaZp2l8gZ3v6zVq7iXkzM59p&index=98