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## *In the Grip of Contradiction*

### *Formative Influences and Sources*

Three years after Rav Kook's aliyah to Eretz Israel (in 1904) and settled in Jaffa as the rabbi of the New Yishuv, his son, Zvi Yehuda (later head of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) sent the author Y. H. Brenner a small book entitled *Ikve Hatzon*, written by Rav Kook. The book was accompanied by a letter that reveals an interesting aspect of the complicated relations between Rav Kook and his surroundings.<sup>1</sup> This letter describes the sources of his thought and the influences forming his personality, presents the prime motives of his writings and actions, and cites the essential force that guided the composition of *Ikve Hatzon*. It is a document of rare style in its description of the experience of Rav Kook's encounter with the reality of Eretz Israel, and its influence on him from the perspective of someone who knew him intimately.

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook writes to Brenner,

Not as the author's son, enamored of his father's ideas and eager to disseminate them, but rather as a youth of our generation and its ideals of the "camp that remains," who offers some delicacies to be enjoyed by his contemporary and friend (if I may) whom he recognizes from afar as one of his own and close to his soul, another idealistic youth of the "camp that remains."

The spiritual attachment and identification Rav Kook's son felt for this great writer of the Second Aliyah and representative of the radical

trend to reject traditional Judaism teaches us something about the spirit he absorbed in his father's house. He describes Rav Kook himself in the letter:

My father, may his light shine, is the author and one of the most devout rabbis. In addition to his learnedness in "Torah," he has been called a "*zaddik*"—he is also a scholar and free-thinking philosopher, impeded by nothing, in the full sense of the term. He has taken great care to search out and understand the philosophical teachings of the nations, to penetrate to the very foundations of our Torah, and to reach the inner chambers of the Kabbalah. And with a broken and seething heart he has regarded the shards of his beloved people, torn to shreds. He recognizes the source of all the misfortune in lack of understanding among brothers. . . . Until, for example: Judaism has become synonymous, for many, with hatred for life, idleness and worse, while enlightenment and knowledge and living aspirations have become synonymous, in the eyes of the elders [the ultraorthodox], with heresy and apostasy and contempt for the holy. The fissures made by such things have grown wider and wider leading to our situation today, unlike anything we have ever had before. Ever! He came to Eretz Israel—three years ago—and saw the degeneracy of these fissures. And he determined to enter public life, to work with all his strength for the benefit of his people. In his few books he publishes and reiterates his ideas, in varied aspects and perspectives (as long as his money lasts), and in his learned manner he is willing to speak and speak with whomever he finds worthy. He rises early and speaks, rises and writes. And despite the many disturbances—particularly from the older generation—he has already done a great deal—relatively speaking.

Indeed, Rav Zvi Yehuda aptly describes his father, on one hand, as one of the "most devout rabbis" and as a "free-thinking philosopher impeded by nothing," on the other. Anyone familiar with the state of Jewish society in those days can see the paradoxicality of that description. How can these characteristics be combined in a single personality? In what soil can such a rare and noble sort of leadership take root and flourish? We are compelled to devote some words to the question of Rav Kook's sources and the historical-cultural context in which his spiritual world was formed and his thought engendered. Research of Rav Kook's sources is particularly problematic. Rav Kook drew nourishment from various cultural and spiritual worlds, a fact

that has allowed many scholars to emphasize one source while ignoring another. Thus any attempt to present his complex thought as engendered in a single cultural realm leads to grave misunderstanding of his teaching.

Rav Kook's earliest education was in the Lithuanian scholarly tradition, his family linked both to the Mitnagged rabbinat and to Chabad Hassidism.<sup>2</sup> He was born on 15 Elul 5625 (1865) in the town of Griva in Latvia to Shlomo Zalman, an outstanding Torah scholar and strictly observant Jew, and Pearl Zlata, daughter of one of the first followers of the Hassidic rabbi "Tzemakh Tzedek" of Lyady (1790–1866). Until his bar mitzvah, late in 5638 (1878), he studied Torah in his parents' home, where he also gained a love for Eretz Israel and the Hebrew language. For the subsequent eight years he moved from place to place, absorbed in learning the many aspects of Jewish teaching. He became known as the "ga'on of Griva" and later as the "ga'on of Ponevezh" (after the city of his future father-in-law, Rabbi Eliyahu David Rabinovitz-Te'omim [ADeReT]). For approximately one-and-a-half years he learned in the famed yeshiva of Voloshin, where H. N. Bialik was also a student. During this period he was influenced by the Natziv, head of the yeshiva, and by his father-in-law, the Aderet.

Even in those days the young Rav Kook was troubled with the problems of his divided people; Hassidim and Mitnaggdim, Maskilim and Hovevei Zion. He was driven to action by the force of a "noble and powerful cause," as he put it, and strove to develop religious and rabbinic literature toward responsibility for the nation as a whole and care for its needs. In 5648 (1888) he began to publish a journal by the name of *Itur sofrim* with the aim of "building a home for rabbinic literature" and "unifying all dissent in the name of the nation's honor and renaissance."<sup>3</sup> The life of the journal was short, due to Rav Kook's inability to deal with organizational problems, yet it marked the beginning of his public action. Rav Kook was then invited to serve in the rabbinat of the town of Zaumel, and after seven years, in 5655 (1895) was called to serve as rabbi of the community of Bausk. His predecessor (until 5650, 1890) was Rabbi Mordechai Eliasberg, one of the earliest ideologues of religious Zionism; and in Bausk Rav Kook's national view began to crystallize. In the years 5661–5664 (1901–1904) he wrote a few articles, of clear publicistic nature, dealing with the question of nationalism and the polemics between the rabbis and the Maskilim and secular Zionists.

Rav Kook's profound absorption for so many years in the treasures of Jewish and traditional literature of all periods, particularly with kabbalistic teaching, clearly informs all his works. Yet in light of his traditional education, his bond to European contemporary philos-

ophy is most remarkable.<sup>4</sup> His interest in the writings of the great philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was, admittedly, that of a self-taught amateur, but their influence on him is not to be measured solely by his direct dealing with them. His reactions to various philosophers will be discussed in detail later, for they are of essential significance. Here, I would like to demonstrate that no less than his explicit reactions to certain philosophical theories, the whole of Rav Kook's thought comprehends the states of mind and trends, the *zeitgeist* prevalent in Europe of his period.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, Rav Kook unreservedly accepted neither the philosophical concepts nor the modes of thought of the *Mitnagged* rabbinite, nor the *Mussar* movement or *Hassidism*, nor the writers of the *Haskalah*. He borrowed tools from no one, rather creating his spiritual world by adapting, and vitally changing, values and meanings, intermingling domains in an original synthesis.

No thorough and encompassing study addressing the question of sources with any degree of conviction has yet been made. Some scholars have stressed Rav Kook's dependence on Lurianic mysticism and that of its followers, on the writings of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady or R. Hayyim of Volozhin,<sup>6</sup> and some have traced his sources to the *Hassidism of the Ba'al Shem Tov*.<sup>7</sup> In opposition to these views, the claim has been made that Rav Kook's thought is not to be seen as continuation and simple conclusion of Lurianic Kabbalah, but rather that he should be viewed as a "modern writer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the whole of his mood."<sup>8</sup>

These divided opinions are voiced in recent research as well, primarily in the manner of understanding Rav Kook's language and the place of kabbalistic symbolism in his writing. The claim has been made, on one hand, that the classical schema of kabbalistic symbolism serves as the basis on which his theological attitudes are formulated and is thus the key to their reconstruction;<sup>9</sup> another scholar, in contrast, claims Rav Kook's theological views are not anchored in Kabbalah and that he began "to clothe his ideas in kabbalistic garb" only later to win legitimacy "empowered by kabbalistic sources in the tradition." This scholar believes Rav Kook may have been impelled to look for *asmakhtaot* (scriptural proof-texts) in kabbalistic literature for want of support in classical Jewish sources.<sup>10</sup>

Both of these polarly opposed approaches seem to me slightly exaggerated. Each magnifies one aspect of Rav Kook's work and ignores, or at least minimalizes, all other aspects. One cannot lose sight for a moment of Rav Kook's vital connection to modern Western philosophy, on one hand, and to traditional Jewish literature as well as

Kabbalah, on the other. Scrutiny of his writings leaves no doubt of this double connection, and the previously mentioned letter of R. Zvi Yehuda to Brenner is definitive testimony. In the same letter, Rav Kook's son states that his father had "taken great care to search out and understand the philosophical teachings of the nations, . . . even reaching the inner chambers of the Kabbalah." Yet this general statement is not sufficient and, at the end of his letter, in his presentation of the contents of the book *Ikve Hatzon*, he does not hesitate to state his claim that the two essential essays of the book, "Knowledge of God" and "Service of God," are based on lectures given by Professor Hermann Cohen and published in the journal *Hashilo'ah*.<sup>11</sup>

The chronological dimension of Rav Kook's writings is very difficult to expose. His major works were not edited by his own hand, and the material they include is undated. There is a tendency to distinguish between his "early works" and "late works,"<sup>12</sup> the dividing line being his aliyah to Eretz Israel in 1904. This distinction, in and of itself, is indeed justified, although the facts do not necessarily lead to the conclusions often drawn from it.<sup>13</sup>

The years 1904–1906 were a turning point in Rav Kook's understanding of secularism and view of the *halutzim* (pioneers) of the Second Aliyah. His close contact with the members of the New Yishuv and their activities after his arrival in Israel induced him to alter the tactical attitude of tolerance toward the Maskilim and Hovevei Zion he had held in the Diaspora; once in Eretz Israel, he identified profoundly with the *halutzim* as he came to understand their motives. A fertile period of creativity then began, yet the foundations of his metaphysical outlook remained unchanged, and his attachment to Kabbalah never became a tactical matter or later trait in his thought. Even before his aliyah, Rav Kook studied Kabbalah regularly with R. Moshe Isaac Rabin, the *dayan* of Ponovitz,<sup>14</sup> and spoke of the subject with R. Mordechai Rosenblatt, rabbi of Ashmina, with R. Shlomo Elyashiv, author of the book *Leshem shevo ve-akhlama*, and with R. Pinkhas Lintop.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, formulations similar to his "early" writings are extant in the period after Rav Kook's aliyah to Eretz Israel as well.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for the purpose of study, the more fruitful distinction would not be between his "early" and "late" writings but rather between his writings of a publicist and contemporary nature, which were, on occasion, clearly polemic, due to the circumstances in which they were written, and his speculative, philosophical-mystical works, in diary form, spontaneously written and never intended for publication. The latter are a more authentic reflection of Rav Kook's views, for they were composed without relation to a concrete dispute and

without the burden of responsibility borne by a rabbi responding to letters or making a public statement, obliged, as always, to take an apologetic stand on current issues.<sup>17</sup>

Thus we see the building blocks of Rav Kook's thought—the major metaphysical structures and most of the formulations, terminology, and symbols—were quarried in the literature of Jewish tradition, particularly the Kabbalah. Nonetheless, this study makes evident that *theosophy is not the focus of his interest*. For Rav Kook it is a tool, a sort of ideological model whose main importance is as an object of morality, serving, perhaps, as a moral foment and stimulant. He is bound to no single metaphysical paradigm as the true and exclusive description of reality. As we will show, he himself explains this fact both through epistemological and phenomenological considerations. The fundamental spiritual and intellectual interests spurring his writing are quite far from the horizon of thought and concerns of the medieval or Kabbalist thinkers<sup>18</sup> and cannot be understood by ignoring the non-Jewish cultural climate to which Rav Kook was so attentive. He adopts the basic dialectical model of Lurianic Kabbalah, yet as we said, theosophy is not his object and his discussion extends beyond that domain. The metaphysical structures borrowed from Lurianic doctrine serves the needs of ethical mysticism, born of Rav Kook's reactions, as mystic and Jewish theologian, to the problems posed by modern European culture and philosophy.

It is interesting, in this context, to note the surprising resemblance between Rav Kook's reaction to European cogitation and that of another philosopher and theologian of his time, propelled as well by profound religious and moral motives, whose theological formation was also greatly influenced by nineteenth century philosophy. The man in question is Albert Schweitzer, whose thought is also characterized as "ethical mysticism" and in it a concept of self-perfection is central as well.<sup>19</sup>

The similarity, in other aspects, between Rav Kook and Leonhard Ragaz<sup>20</sup> and Teilhard de Chardin<sup>21</sup> has already been pointed out. For Schweitzer and Ragaz, as for Rav Kook, the interest of freedom is primordial. In Ragaz's view, the church and theology would like to imprison God within the narrow confines of ecclesiastical thought, while the holy spirit in fact finds true expression out in the wide world. The kingdom of heaven, which is in effect the kingdom of justice, freedom, and social equality, comes into being wherever God's will is realized in human freedom.<sup>22</sup> As our discussion progresses, we become more and more aware just how closely these views resemble those expressed by Rav Kook. He addressed the subject directly in one of his letters: "We would not regret it if some



quality of cultural justice could be built without any spark or mention of God, for we know that the very aspiration to justice, in any light, is itself the more luminous divine influence."<sup>23</sup> (*Igrot Rayah*, vol. 1, p. 45).

This most interesting phenomenon captures our attention: the works of an entire group of religious thinkers, priests, or theologians, whose works exemplify a special type of thought originating in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>24</sup> They are thinkers and mystics who were not prominent in their own time, yet who created a new theology by confronting contemporary ideological trends.

This tumultuous period was heady with "isms," and their influence was decisive: rationalism and idealism here, Darwinism and Vitalism there, and in between existentialism, materialism, and nihilism. All were marked by the indelible stamp of the period—the striving for freedom.

This aspiration, the underlying impetus of the French Revolution, not only set in motion the wheels of national and civil liberation movements<sup>25</sup> but was the spirit and philosophy that "sprouted and burst forth everywhere, audible from every mouth, expressed in the verses of poets and the words of practical men no less than in philosophical formulations on the subject."<sup>26</sup> Even the scientific determinists of the rationalistic eighteenth century held that understanding of necessity is liberating, and no less than they, Herder, Hegel, and Marx, who replaced obsolete, mechanical models of life with vitalistic ones, believed that understanding the world is liberation.<sup>27</sup> The idea of freedom roams, in the history of modern philosophy, from rationalistic theories to nonrational or mystical approaches.

As for Rav Kook, some of the concepts prevalent in the intellectual atmosphere of the times influenced him only indirectly. But other circles and methods undeniably received his attention in one way or another, positively influencing some of his views. This is especially true of philosophers whom he mentions by name, such as Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Bergson.

In any case, in this book I have tended away from any excessive comparative investigation, as I am skeptical of its relevance and contribution to an understanding of Rav Kook's conception. In many cases, the attempt to isolate his sources definitively remains in the domain of speculation, as his writings are rich with associations to the whole treasure house of Jewish creativity, and the direct provenance of ideas from an earlier source usually cannot be traced through any quotation, paraphrase, or use of a particular term. Rav Kook's writing was spontaneous, with an awareness of his originality and novelty, and his sources are assimilated in his spiritual world, evading the scholar's attempt to isolate them. Success in the search for the origins

of terms, citations, and paraphrases does not imply success in locating ideological sources, for the two are not identical. His use of terms and symbols is completely free. Similarity between various systems of thought, after all, does not necessarily testify to a formal link between them.

Of interest, on this point, the account by R. David Cohen ("Hanazir"), editor of *Orot Hakodesh* (Lights of Holiness), of a conversation he held with Rav Kook on the concept of completeness in the latter's teaching:

Yesterday evening, when the Rav, may he live long and happily, showed me the article by Rimon, which cites the lack of philosophical concentration in Rav Kook's writings . . . he also set the fundamentals of his method before me: God's completeness is absolute, for He contains no deficiency (this is a great philosophical rule). Yet on the other hand, the exaltation and ascent ever higher in holiness—this is also completeness. And if there is no transcendence there will be no completeness. For he said, like R. Azriel: that the boundary of Ein Sof (infinity), the final level which lacks nothing, is completeness. And when I remarked that the essential difference in R. Azriel's system is movement, he agreed, saying it is surely so and the similarity is merely external. Just as, in completeness, there is completeness from deficiency so there is completeness from transcendence. This, then, is the fundament of his entire method: exultation in the human spirit, development leading to perfection through the generations, *tikkun*, all is by grace of the highest holiness, and movement is there, in the idea of transcendence.<sup>28</sup>

Interestingly, one could assume the sources of Rav Kook's concept of divine completeness are found in Lurianic Kabbalah,<sup>29</sup> and Rav Kook himself who, in citing his point of origin on the issue, chose to mention R. Azriel from Gerona and, when challenged by the differences between them, retracted his claim. This conversation seems to prove quite clearly that Rav Kook was not conscious of his sources. In his highly original thought, ideological elements originating in many sources are reformulated, and it is difficult to speak of conscious need for specific sources.<sup>30</sup>

I must stress that I do not claim the question of sources is completely fruitless, and in the source of our discussion we will consider Rav Kook's relation to the mystical and philosophical literature preceding it. Revelation of the sources for quotations, terms, expres-



sions, paraphrases, and symbols Rav Kook uses does often illuminate and enrich our understanding of his words. Yet scientific responsibility does not allow us to treat such sources with more seriousness and precision than they deserve; and, as we have said, we must take care not to upset the balance between comparative study and penetrating discussion of his theoretical teaching itself and its essential tendencies.

### *The "Old Yishuv" and the "New Yishuv"—Unbridgeable Distance*

The social and religious reality Rav Kook encountered in Eretz Israel upon his arrival in 1904 was no less complex and intricate than that which he had left in Russia. In essence, the roots of the situation in Eretz Israel can be traced to processes and changes experienced by European Jewry throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> In that period, the Jewish population of Eretz Israel was divided into two separate societies, whose differences were substantial both in mode of life and world-view and its characteristic ideology. One society, called the *Old Yishuv*,<sup>32</sup> was an Orthodox group whose motives for aliyah had been religious and spiritual; that is, to study Torah and pray in the Holy Land. According to this population's conception, it had no responsibility for the country's physical, economic existence; full responsibility was borne by Jews of the Diaspora. They maintained that their Torah study and prayer in the Holy Land enabled Diaspora Jewry to exist; those Jews in the *galut* thus had the duty to provide for the Jews living in the Holy Land, and their support was demanded not as an act of mercy but as a lawful obligation.<sup>33</sup> This view was even formulated as halacha by R. Moses Sofer (the Hatam Sofer), who wrote: "It is up to us to maintain the habitation of Eretz Israel, not to aid [those settled there] but in order, ourselves, to perpetuate the Torah, for were it not for the Jews there, Torah itself would disappear, Heaven forbid."<sup>34</sup>

The other society, called the *New Yishuv*, came into being with the First Aliyah (of 1882) and was based on an ideology diametrically opposed to that of the Old Yishuv. Whereas the Old Yishuv saw the anomaly in its economic structure as a positive phenomenon, justified by the divine values of its faith, the New Yishuv could justify its existence only by successfully creating a society with a "normal" economic structure, operating self-sufficiently and supporting itself by its own labor. The economic support received from the Diaspora was considered, as a matter of principle by the New Yishuv, no more than

temporary; its purpose was to help found an active society, living by the fruits of its labor, whereas the Old Yishuv regarded the "haluka," its economic support, a permanent situation by definition.

The economic dependence of the Old Yishuv upon the Jews of the Diaspora not only caused unhealthy relationships between "the position of the receivers" and "the position of the benefactors" but engendered ideological dependence of that population upon the rabbinic authority of the Diaspora, thus transferring the schism and disagreements of the Diaspora to public life in Eretz Israel.

One of the major bones of contention with the Orthodox community was naturally the problem of education and general knowledge. Every attempt to introduce changes or reforms in the arrangement of educational institutions was considered heresy, even if the initiators were accepted figures in the Orthodox community or supported by eminent rabbis. The majority of the public was usually swept along by the fanatic element, which did not refrain from using means of terror and violence.<sup>35</sup>

When Baron Rothschild proposed, in 1843, to provide the children of Jerusalem with the opportunity to learn some secular subjects, his suggestion was met with outrage.<sup>36</sup> The question of education reached a crisis stage some years later. In 1856, the Jewish Austrian poet, Ludwig August Frankel, arrived in Jerusalem with the intent of establishing a school there in the name of the aristocrat Lemel, where general subjects would be studied in addition to religious. The Sephardi head rabbi, R. Hayyim Nissim Abulafia, gave his approval and determined that nothing in the institution was in contradiction with the Jewish faith. The Ashkenazi community, however, violently rejected the idea, expressed vehement opposition, and even imposed the most radical measure of *herem* (ban); the announcement was written and signed by the rabbis of the Ashkenazi community.<sup>37</sup> It was applied to all of Eretz Israel and to anyone who would ever be there, forevermore, and was impossible to lift or nullify.<sup>38</sup>

Thus it can easily be argued it was the extremists who determined the public atmosphere in the Old Yishuv<sup>39</sup> rather than the rabbinic body, who for practical reasons were more moderate in their relationship to the Maskilim. This situation laid bare the leadership of the Old Yishuv in all of its weakness, for they essentially upheld the extremist position and thus, even when practical considerations made this group's actions objectionable, the rabbinic body could not stand firm and restrain them from their extremist ways. A prime example of the weakness of leadership can be found in the arrest of Eliezer ben Yehuda in November 1893. Ben Yehuda was an ardent antagonist of the Old Yishuv, and the Orthodox establishment tried to get rid of

him by denouncing him as guilty of high treason. The strident criticism of the entire Jewish world and opposition to this act, however, forced its instigators to retract their accusation and to disavow what they had done.<sup>40</sup>

In fact, there was an additional cause for the tension between the Old Yishuv and the New. At the time of the First Aliyah (1882), the Old Yishuv was embroiled in a crisis in its relationship to the Diaspora communities. The development of the New Yishuv, which was of a mostly traditional nature, harbored within it a potential alternative to the aid sent by Diaspora Jews and received in Israel.<sup>41</sup> But the Old Yishuv feared their income from the "haluka" of Diaspora Jewry would be harmed, an event that could endanger their very existence in its traditional state. Non-observant Zionists were a minority in the Jewish community at that time, and the sharp disagreements thus occurred, for the most part, between Hungarian extremists and the Orthodox of German origin.

The situation began to change when the Zionist Organization was founded in 1897, and even more drastically in the period of the Second Aliyah (1905–1914), with its socialistic orientation and actively antireligious approach.<sup>42</sup> For the Old Yishuv, this aliyah symbolized the image of the secular Jewish settlement that was growing in Eretz Israel. The *halutz* (pioneer), a heroic figure in the eyes of secular Zionism and emblem of the modern Jew building Eretz Israel, was in the eyes of the Old Yishuv a symbol of all the dangerous evil of Zionism, the idol of a goddess set up in the king's palace.

The New Yishuv, for their part, viewed the Old Yishuv in the most negative light imaginable. Zionism, which sought to create a "normal" Jewish society in Eretz Israel, living from its own labors, whose sons would engage in creative occupations such as agriculture, crafts and industry, saw the Old Yishuv as a degenerate and corrupt society.

The question of the Second Aliyah's attitude to religion and tradition is a complicated one.<sup>43</sup> Its members had already been caught up in the process of secularization that had swept over Europe as a whole and over European Jewry in particular. They wished to find their Jewish identity in Jewish *nationalism*, which they saw as an appropriate substitute for religion. The close affinity between the religious and national aspect of Judaism gave the Jews of the Second Aliyah the impression of cultural continuity and a sense of Jewish identity, which also encouraged them to adopt an attitude of hostility or undisguised indifference and denigration toward religion.<sup>44</sup>

This fact made imperative a distinction between the concept of "religion" and the concept of "tradition." Although the opponents of

religion were adamant, many were uncertain in their view of tradition, and there were those who saw it as a key to the preservation of historical continuity.<sup>45</sup> Just the same, the keeping of Jewish traditions also went through a process of secularization, initiating changes in behavioral norms and modes of living. As a result, Shabbat eve became a "cultural activity," festivals were the occasion for excursions or days of leisure, and there were even attempts to create new holidays—the First of May, Herzl Day, and so on.<sup>46</sup>

Even the Hebrew language itself underwent a process of secularization, and concepts with clear traditional significance such as *geula*, *kedusha*, *mitzvah*, *Torah*, *brit*, and *korban* (sacrifice) acquired new meaning in keeping with the new world-view. Thus "geula" (redemption) was understood as human liberation from supreme powers and from religion, and the festival of redemption was the First of May.<sup>47</sup> Use of the term *kedusha* (holiness) became at times a paraphrase of the traditional Kiddush and the Kaddish, from which the name of God was deleted and replaced by "the Jewish People" or "the *halutzim*." The Passover Haggadah composed by the *kibbutzim* are characteristic of these changes. One such Haggadah contains the following Kiddush for Passover: "The sixth day. And the creation of heaven and earth was complete. . . . Let us sanctify and bless . . . the *halutzim* of our people and their *aliyot*, who planted the fields of our birth-place . . . and may we celebrate more joyous holidays . . . and the pioneer effort be sanctified, for its creation of a society of equality and unity . . . which encouraged us and brought us proudly to our Land, preserved us and caused us to reach this time. . . ." <sup>48</sup> In the Haggadah of Kibbutz Na'an of 1944, the following Kaddish appears: "Yitgadal veyitkadash ha'adam ha'ivri" ("Glorified and sanctified be [God's great Name] the Hebrew man").<sup>49</sup>

The *mitzvot* were conceived by socialistic Zionism according to the same principle, and at the founding meeting of "The Council of Teachers for the Jewish National Fund" that took place in 1927, the "614th Commandment" was invented: every boy and girl from the nine years and older was obligated by the commandment of nationalism to contribute regularly, on a monthly basis, to the Jewish National Fund.<sup>50</sup>

Alongside this tendency there arose another, more radical trend, which Buber and Bergman called a *process of collective assimilation*. Its nature was lucidly expressed by Joseph Hayyim Brenner, one of the great authors of the Second Aliyah: "We want their [non-Jewish] culture in our own streets, on our own land, within our people, and what we would do were we intermingled with them we are prepared to do amongst ourselves in our own way."<sup>51</sup> Above all we

want to be vital and alive, without the yoke of Torah and mitzvot and without the lies of faith and religion . . . ”<sup>52</sup> In any case, common to all members of the Second Aliyah was the aspiration to liberation from the burden of Diaspora existence, escape from the religious commandments, and intellectual and creative freedom.

Paradoxically, despite the great social and spiritual disparity between the Old Yishuv and the Second Aliyah, confrontations between them were few. The arena of life and its struggles for the Jews of the Second Aliyah was principally on farms in the regions of Judea and the Galilee, and the geographical distance separating them from the extremists of Jerusalem certainly also contributed to the minimum of conflicts. Even in 1910, six years after the beginning of the Second Aliyah, David Ben Gurion wrote:

The two parts of the Jewish population of Eretz Israel are separated by a yawning chasm, the small part being the New Yishuv, and the larger part the Old Yishuv . . . gangs of public robbers, commonly called *memunnim*, Gabbais, heads of kollels . . . who exploit the power they gain from the *haluka* to prevail over the public and enslave it, to annihilate every free idea and crush every attempt for liberation. . . . This sector is dead and buried, a population of obscurantists and schnorrers . . . <sup>53</sup>

No arguments were conducted with the New Yishuv. The *halutzim* simply recoiled from them. On veteran settlements, in contrast, differences of opinion and conflicts began to erupt between the original members, who were observant for the most part, and the newer arrivals of the Second Aliyah. This friction stemmed mainly from the markedly different style of life of the new workers as opposed to that of the veterans and from the observant Jews' suspicions their children would be influenced by the life-style of the "free ones." This suspicion had a legitimate basis, although the new workers did not try actively to demonstrate their "atheism" and arouse the rage of the veteran members.<sup>54</sup>

### *The Problem of Education—Tradition versus Innovation*

Parallel to this development, disagreements within the Orthodox camp, between Jerusalem extremists and German immigrants, continued to escalate, reaching a climax in the early 1930s with the German Orthodox Aliyah to Eretz Israel. The members of Agudat Israel who immigrated to Israel did not wish to send their sons and

daughters to the educational institutions controlled by the Orthodox Agudah population of Jerusalem. Moshe Blau, one of the heads of Agudat Israel in Jerusalem, visited Germany and wrote to M. Porush, also a head of Agudat Israel in Jerusalem, of the intent of R. Samson Breur "to immigrate and settle in Eretz Israel." "He is by profession an outstanding educator, distinguished Torah scholar, God fearing, and plans to open a school there that will include, to a certain extent, general studies. The priority, of course, will continue to be religious studies."<sup>55</sup> M. Porush responded: "Even if the learned rabbis of the High Court of Justice (may they live long and happily) were to agree to such a thing, would it be possible to contain Amram Blau or Asher Zelig Margolioth, and prevent them from making a scandal?!" And in another letter: "Our extremists have revived. They suspect the Germans [members of Agudat Israel of German origin] will introduce innovations in Agudah . . . and they are meeting in groups trying to strengthen their position."<sup>56</sup>

But without waiting for the approval of Agudat Israel of Jerusalem, the school Horev opened in Jerusalem in January 1934, designated for the children of German immigrants. The school offered its pupils a broad general education. Moreover, in the younger classes boys and girls studied together. The older children learned in separate groups, but classes were conducted in the same building and the playground was shared by both sexes.<sup>57</sup>

The school's opening occasioned renewed outbreaks of controversy, and the following statement appeared on an announcement board:

How can we express our shame and disgrace? . . . Our brothers, the people of Agudat Israel, have opened in Jerusalem, the Holy City, a school called "Horev" which threatens the world's destruction. Boys and girls, young men and women learn there together in mixed classes, a thing unknown even in the schools of the Maskilim. Yet another mixture takes place there—the teachers are both male and female, with no assurance against forbidden acts of closeness and *yihud*, may G-d protect us, woe to our ears etc. The place has all the impure signs of a school: writing on blackboards, ringing of bells as in a church, learning from Landkarten, called maps . . . and the herem was violated by no other than Agudat Israel, who permitted itself what has been forbidden for eternity.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout his life and in his world-view, Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook acted as an intermediary between the struggling



camps. He was a conservative rabbi of the old style, but at the same time the horizons of his thinking were no less broad than those of the Maskilim of his generation. His position found expression both on the essential theological level and in a practical sense. He phrased his view of the ultraorthodox approach in no uncertain terms:

The enslavement of the intelligence and its stupefaction result from certain influences, and the more holy the influences, the greater the damage done, amounting to the corruption of the world, and resembling more and more the villainy of false prophecy in God's name, actions of wickedness and impurity, idol worship and abomination. Thus when the attempt to stupefy the intelligence is presented in the name of faith, of fear of Heaven, or diligence in Torah and fulfilling of mitzvot, it becomes a terrible lie and a filthy impurity. Then the holy ones of the Most High, God's pure servants, must go forth to redeem the world and Israel, the Torah, and all that is holy to the Lord from these destroyers. Let them be who they may: liars who want only to cheat their fellows or fur-cloaked deceivers, weak of spirit and small of mind, whose own intellectual light has been obstructed, their feelings dulled, and their imagination coarsened, who purposefully and thoroughly trample down the reality before them, their own faith enrooted in mere fables of faith. . . . And thus souls stumble and fall, and human beings live the lives of beasts, degradation without knowledge or understanding, without human honor, that most basic element in recognizing the honour of Heaven that fills the world, that gives life to all, and animates spirit and soul.<sup>59</sup>

Although Rav Kook's principles regarding general culture and the Haskala did find expression in the practical issues currently being confronted, they were formulated with much less freedom than that expressed on the theoretical level. He wrote explicitly that the *herem* prohibiting general studies was very harmful, and that "it was impossible to exist and to endure the new conditions of life without language and science. All of those who have thrown off the yoke of Torah and *mitzvot* educate their children in schools and prepare them to the utmost for the battle of life, while the children whose parents are bound to the holiness of Torah and faith lag behind them, exhausted, on the paths of life."<sup>60</sup>

At the time of his aliyah to Eretz Israel, Rav Kook had already reached the conclusion that "we must pave a new way to the revival of Judaism,"<sup>61</sup> necessitating a new approach to education, which

would include study of history and philosophy, criticism and poetry, so that these academic domains do not remain the control of "those who desire the very destruction of the Torah and of faith in the Lord."<sup>62</sup> Yet Rav Kook refrained from public opposition to the *herem* and revealed his opinion only to a choice few that pupils must be trained "for the battle of life with the most essential languages and sciences."<sup>63</sup>

When Rav Kook was requested to relate to the possibility of establishing institutions where general subjects would also be studied, he responded by expressing his fear of open confrontation with the rabbis of Eretz Israel: "Certainly I will not be able to participate formally in such an establishment. I cannot distance myself too much from the boundary drawn by earlier rabbis limiting general education, especially in Eretz Israel. But the bitter truth that appeals to every heart compels me at the very least to take an interest in that holy institution."<sup>64</sup> In a distressed letter to Israel he explained:

As one of the rabbis of Eretz Israel I cannot very well take formal part in this issue [the founding of a religious gymnasium], despite my belief in its holiness, due to the line of thought that reigns among the rabbis of Eretz Israel, imposed by previous generations, to stand in strict opposition to the influence of the Enlightenment, even when its ends seem to be elevated. True, emulated rabbis of our generation outside of Israel have recognized the situation, and many of them will gladly support it as a last resort.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, Rav Kook was convinced that had the rabbis of the previous generation who had imposed the *herem* been familiar with the present situation, they would surely have been in favor of the establishment of the new schools.<sup>66</sup>

Political and sectarian pressures and the fear of a violent clash with the rabbis of Eretz Israel sometimes caused Rav Kook to phrase his words with great caution and even obscurity, in a tone that could be understood as a withdrawal from his positive attitude toward general education.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, his activity in favor of the establishment of new institutions in which general subjects would be studied, as in the schools in Germany of Rabbis Hirsch and Hildesheimer,<sup>68</sup> reflected his basic position, although this activity came only after much hesitation, difficult deliberation, and prolonged postponements.<sup>69</sup> The situation of Eretz Israel, in Rav Kook's eyes, held many latent dangers. The country's orthodox Jews continued to ignore the modern way of life and new developments, thus bringing on its own degeneration, whereas the Zionist *halutzim* had become willing cap-

tives of a foreign culture, attempting to clothe it in Jewish garb and unaware, in his eyes, that the soul of Israel could not be thus redeemed. An unprecedented rescue operation was therefore imperative, necessitating the establishment of new educational institutions, whose program of study would include all the disciplines demanded for the creation of a modern, improved society.<sup>70</sup>

Rav Kook thus supported the new school "Tahkemoni" of Jaffa, both in principle and in fact, and supervised it with consistency and rigor.<sup>71</sup> To his deep sorrow, the school did not fulfill the hopes invested in it, and his relation to Tahkemoni changed only a few years after it was founded. He did continue to support it as the "least of possible evils" and even agreed to allow the study of German as a foreign language, but no longer saw it as a institution from which the future spiritual leadership of the Jewish people would emerge.

In the polemics related to his support of Tahkemoni, opposing the *herem* on secular studies imposed by the rabbis of Jerusalem, Rav Kook made an effort to take a defensive stand in order not to agitate the controversy. In a letter to Rabbi Jehiel Michel Tykocinski (of blessed memory), Rav Kook wrote:

I have never considered actively breaching the limits imposed by our predecessors in Eretz Israel to arrange the foundation of schools in which secular subjects and foreign languages would be taught even in the most pure holiness, and even by God-fearing and complete teachers, for discretion is the better part of valor. . . . Only when I saw honorable people acting for altruistic ideals had come to found such an institution . . . did I decide that we must proceed cautiously so as not to prohibit their doing so . . .<sup>72</sup>

This statement, like many similar statements voiced by Rav Kook, may testify not only to his apprehensions about causing controversy but also to the indecisiveness of his position, to his ambivalence regarding the new institutions. Nevertheless, his awareness of the deep crisis oppressing Judaism did not allow Rav Kook to stop his vigorous activity on behalf of education in the new style. The crown of his labors in Jaffa was the foundation of an advanced yeshiva of a new type, with unique educational goals, in which general subjects would also be studied.<sup>73</sup> Rav Kook hoped that the yeshiva would impart its spirit to the New Yishuv, the general nonobservant public, and would also influence the old-style yeshivot.

In 1907, approximately two years after his aliyah to Israel, Rav Kook began actions preparing the establishment of the yeshiva. In letters sent to rabbis, leaders, intellectuals, and educators, he pre-

sented his plan and submitted a long list of reasons justifying the establishment of the yeshiva and clarifying its aims. Following are some of his basic reasons:

A. It is appropriate that, parallel to the material development experienced by the population of Eretz Israel, a spiritual renewal also take place that will influence the image of the New Yishuv now being fashioned.

B. The spiritual leadership of the New Yishuv will blossom within the walls of the yeshiva.

C. The students of the yeshiva, who will occupy themselves, among other things, with the search for solutions to contemporary halachic problems, will consolidate a body of scholars, men of action, cultured and well-mannered, in Eretz Israel.

D. The yeshiva will provide the nation with all that it lacks spiritually, including literature and poetry, so that people with literary gifts will not be restricted to the circles of those who have rebelled against Judaism.

E. The yeshiva will emphasize the spirit of nationalism, and this will prove that even Orthodox yeshiva students of Eretz Israel do not lack nationalistic feelings.<sup>74</sup>

According to Rav Kook's plans, the yeshiva was to have been divided in two parts. The lower division was to serve as a sort of seminary for teachers and the upper division would be devoted to Torah for its own sake, rather than for practical ends. The program of studies of the lower division was to include religious studies in addition to general academic disciplines. General studies would include foreign languages, "Western and Eastern."<sup>75</sup> Rav Kook saw a practical advantage in the knowledge of Arabic and Turkish, for educated Torah scholars who also mastered those languages were likely to receive certain high government positions and could thus help improve the situation of the Jewish people in Eretz Israel. He did not feel graduates of the yeshiva were obligated to become rabbis. On the contrary, studies at the yeshiva would prepare them to work in all realms of life. In the upper division, the program of studies would include, in addition to traditional Jewish studies, subjects such as Jewish philosophy, Kabbalah, Aggadah, Midrash, ethics, and "all aspects of historical investigation." Another difference between this yeshiva and others was in its aesthetics. All the yeshiva's external arrangements, from its construction to the students' dress and manners "must be in good taste."<sup>76</sup>

Rav Kook feared sharp opposition to the yeshiva from the Old Yishuv, and preferred not to establish it in Jerusalem. He tried to summon the widest possible support of rabbis and leaders both in Israel and the Diaspora. In this battle, as always, Rav Kook struggled alone. He describes the situation in one of his letters: "It is very difficult for me to reach a compromise with my learned contemporaries, may God preserve them. . . . I am attacked right and left . . . but whom shall I speak with, and who will agree with me; who is willing to forsake his honor for the honour of God and his Torah and the sanctity of his beloved land?" (*Igrot Rayah*, vol. 1, pp. 310–311). Yet he did not flinch from the anticipated opposition, explaining even to those against his plans that the yeshivot that rely only on "*pilpul* (Talmudic dialectics) and excessive expertise will not be able to withstand the destroying stream."<sup>77</sup>

### *From "Zion" to "Jerusalem"*

The revolution Rav Kook wished to initiate in the domain of education was aimed both at content and style. The particular emphasis on the aesthetic side of the yeshiva's arrangement and management emerges from an understanding of the repulsion and aversion aroused in the *halutzim* by the ghetto-like image of members of the Old Yishuv. Rav Kook's description, in one of his letters, leaves no doubt of where his sympathy lay. He writes:

The spirit of the New Yishuv cannot bear the attitude, the style and the characteristics of the students of the Old Yishuv. This is true not only of rebels who have thrown off Torah and *mitzvot* but also of a large portion of reasonable people, learned and God fearing. The vital movement of the New Yishuv, the *joie de vivre* and courage of heart, broadening of knowledge, and national pride imbuing it cannot bear to see the hunched back, the drawn and melancholy face that summons fear and faintness of heart, the vague eyes and the despair and hatred of life behind them. The alien Eastern garb [= the Hassidic garment of Eastern-European Jews], combined with the depression of poverty, strikes terror and contempt in anyone accustomed to European life . . . <sup>78</sup>

Rav Kook's positive relation to the *halutzim* did not keep him from fierce struggles with them over issues he thought important, but his criticism never amounted to unconditional rejection of an activity

or movement. Even his style reflected his basic relation, as he said: "I raise my voice about impurity whenever necessary, but I say what I must calmly and collectedly." This fact made continual dialogue possible with the leadership of the people of the Second Aliyah. He had a learning connection with Eliezer ben Yehuda, who, despite his ideological polarity to Rav Kook, would seek his advice on linguistic matters;<sup>79</sup> and with Hayyim Nahman Bialik<sup>80</sup> as well, who sent Rav Kook his commentary on the Mishna for his opinion of it. Rav Kook, for his part, was always interested in having his writings appear and read by the *halutzim* public,<sup>81</sup> and indeed, the writers of the Second Aliyah did not regard his essays with indifference. They valued his moderation and benevolence though they could not identify with his religious and mystical conception. Some expressed their respect for Rav Kook unequivocally, like Berl Katznelson, who said: "Two great Jews live in our midst here in Eretz Israel: Rav Kook and Yosef Hayyim Brenner."<sup>82</sup> Yet there were others who poured their fury and scorn upon him. When the subject of election of women to the Temporary Council Committee was under discussion, the newspaper *Hapo'el Hatza'ir* reacted in an article about the "meeting of the rabbis of Eretz Israel" in the following manner:

If the holy Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook, servant of holy worship in the Holy Land, etc. would like, in his great humility, to be the leader and Light of the Exile, no less,—why shouldn't he be; who is stopping him? . . . As far as we are concerned, he can occupy himself with philosophy and prayer too, and he'll always find a band of loafers who will lick their fingers with joy over his wisdom and profundity; but he'd better not dare bring that wisdom and profundity of his into our lives, to our harm and the impediment of the Hebrew Yishuv . . . <sup>83</sup>

Yosef Hayyim Brenner himself was ambivalent in his relation to Rav Kook and used to review his writings in *Hanir*, of which he was editor. In the end, Brenner reached the conclusion there was no sense or call for mockery. Something was happening in Rav Kook's circle. He found that "orthodoxy and enlightenment are being combined, and the holy stockings on the heels of the hypocrisy of necessity have been placed in European sandals; with his writers [of Rav Kook's circle], and especially in some famous lines of Rav Kook himself, we even feel our dialogue is with a thinking man, indeed with stormy and yearning souls."<sup>84</sup>

The reserved respect Brenner felt toward Rav Kook did not moderate his criticism. He rejected Rav Kook's religious-national view as