

Lesson Plan (50 minutes)

The Other Herzl: The Legacy of Rav Kook

Step 1: Start with the goals/questions

Goals: What are the goals of this lesson?

Affective – Students will appreciate Rav Kook as a role model who bridged the gap between religious and secular Jews.

Behavioral – Students will take steps to increase Jewish unity in their schools, classrooms, and/or communities.

Cognitive – Students should understand the challenges the State of Israel faces in catering to both the needs of its religious and secular Jewish residents.

Essential Questions/Big Ideas:

What deep questions and enduring understandings do we want students to be grappling with?

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| 1. How can the State of Israel balance the needs of both its religious and secular Jewish residents? | 1. Religion and secular society is a major issue that faces the modern State of Israel from its inception until today. |
| 2. Is there value in Jewish unity? | 2. Rav Kook provided a way to bridge the religious-secular divide in Israel |
| 3. How should religious Jews relate to Zionism? | |

Step 2: Learning Plan

Hook/Trigger: (5 minutes)

Will I use a UED video, question, scenario...

Scenario: Imagine the State of Israel split into two parts - one for secular Jews and one for religious Jews (this was the theme of an Israeli TV show called [Autonomies](#)). What would be the advantages and disadvantages of having two states for different types of Jews? Would this solve many of the religious-secular conflicts that currently exist in the State of Israel (public transportation on Shabbat, marriage and divorce, egalitarian prayers at the Kotel, serving in the army...) or lead to further divisions? What is gained by having Jews who disagree live together in the same country? How important is Jewish unity?

Learning Activity: (35 minutes)

What am I using from UED resources (video, discussion question, game, debate)? Do these materials fit the unit goals/essential questions?

1. **Video/Kahoot: (15 minutes)** Show the UED [video on Rav Kook](#) and play the [Kahoot](#)/review questions.
2. **Discussion: Choose 1 question (5 minutes)**
 - a. **Rav Kook and the secular kibbutz movement**

Why did Rav Kook feel so connected to the secular Jewish kibbutzniks? How was his reaction different from other rabbis of his time? Imagine a different timeline, where Rav Kook decided to take the more mainstream religious approach to oppose Zionism, or to not reach out to secular Jews. Would Israel look different today? (Educator note: See [here](#) for more on Rav Kook's worldview of secular Jews and the role of Zionism in redemption).
 - b. **Religious and secular Jews in Israel**

Rav Kook put in a lot of effort to bridge the gap between secular and religious Jews in Israel. Today, Israeli society is much more polarized. This [Jerusalem Post](#) article quotes a Gesher NGO study from 2015 which found that 45% of Haredim have no interaction at all with secular Jews and about one in five secular Jews have little contact with Haredim.

Are you bothered by the findings of this survey? How important is it for different segments of Israeli and Jewish society to interact? (Note: You can raise this question about Israelis and Palestinians as well).
3. **Learning activities: Choose 1 activity (15 minutes)**

a. **Building unity between different types of Jews**

Divide your students up into groups and have them look at the mission statements and websites for [Gesher](#) and [Tzohar](#). Have each group prepare answers to the following prompts:

- i. How are each of these organizations trying to continue Rav Kook's vision for unity amongst religious and secular Jews?
- ii. If you worked for these organizations, list two new initiatives you would start in order to increase tolerance and understanding between these two groups?
- iii. What can we do today as individuals in order to continue Rav Kook's work and bridge the gap between different types of Jews?
- iv.

b. **Secular or Holy?**

Rav Kook saw the intrinsic holiness in everything, including secular Zionism, and even irreligious kibbutzniks working the Land of Israel. There was no split in his eyes between secular and religious as every act had the potential to be holy (Educator note: See [here](#) for a greater explanation of Rav Kook's religious worldview).

Ask the students to make a list of everything they do on a normal day and to divide it between secular and meaningful/Jewish acts. Have the students share their list with a partner. Why did they put specific acts in the different lists? Could any of those acts go in opposite categories?

Reflection: (5 minutes)

How can I help students connect with the material on a deeper and personal level?

Choose 1 question:

1. Takeaways from Rav Kook's life

What is something that surprised you about Rav Kook? Are there any facts or stories that you found particularly meaningful or compelling? Why?

2. Zionism: yay or nay?

Put yourself in the shoes of a traditional/religious Jew living in Europe at the turn of the century. How would you react to the Zionist movement? What would be some of your objections and hesitations about Zionism? Ultimately, would you oppose it or support it? Would you view Rav Kook's approach as heretical or visionary?

3. Stuck in the middle

As a religious Jew, Rav Kook faced a lot of opposition from both sides of Israeli society. Religious Jews did not like his support for Zionism and the secular pioneers disagreed with his religious policies.

- Share a time that you felt torn between two sides of an issue or dilemma. How did you decide what to do?

- Did you feel like you had to choose a side or were you able to take a middle approach?
- Did you face pushback for your choice? How did you navigate the opposition?

Step 3: Assessment

Checking for Understanding: (5 minutes)

Were my learning goals met?

Have students choose a prompt to answer at the end of the class/activity:

- What can we do today as individuals in order to continue Rav Kook's work and bridge the gap between different types of Jews?
- Is it more important for Jews with opposing views to live separately or together?

Do religious Jews support or oppose Zionism?

What to think about when lesson planning:

- ☐ Is my lesson being driven by the goals/essential questions?
- ☐ Is the UED video the hook or the learning activity?
- ☐ Do I have to adjust for the age levels of my students (excerpts, simplify the questions...)?