

Teaching, Prophecy, and the Student Caught Between Them—On the Philosophy of Education of Rav Kook

Avinoam Rosenak

Abstract: This article demonstrates parallels between Rav Kook's thought and the Platonic position. We meet two different types of students depicted by Rabbi Kook and see the different ways in which he recommends dealing with their problems and the different types of curricular materials that should be offered to them. Understanding Rav Kook's attitude toward these two types of students must be based on a deep and wide-ranging inquiry in the areas of *aggadah*, prophecy, and *halakhab* that have implications that extend to many matters beyond education.

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I

To what extent can the educational process shape a pupil's personality? Is the pupil's soul a "blank slate" that absorbs the messages transmitted by educators?¹ Or might the pupil's character be a given, in which case education need only adapt curricular materials to the student?

This widely known issue of educational theory has been raised in connection with the thought of Rabbi Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook,² and further light is shed on it by some of his original writings that have only recently been published. In those texts, he considers epistemological issues related to the nature of understanding and forgetting as well as Plato's doctrine of anamnesia,³ writing as follows:

Understanding, when of a high caliber, activates the memory. Intellectual elevation overcomes time and, accordingly, triumphs over forgetting as well, since forgetting is nothing more than the operation of time as it reigns supreme.

The Platonic premise that all learning is simply a matter of remembering comes quite close to the way of faith.⁴ [*Hi b'emet qerovah l'orha d'mibiminuta.*"]

In other words: the problem of forgetting does not apply to understanding, which activates the memory. Through the true act of learning, a person returns to what was placed within him from the very beginning, and that learning accordingly is not at risk of being forgotten; the risk applies to what is written on the "slate."

In this article, I want to take this argument a step further and note the parallels between Rabbi Kook's thought and the Platonic position. We will meet two different types of students depicted by Rabbi Kook and see the different ways in which he advises us to deal with their problems and needs and the different types of curricular materials to be offered to them. I will show as well that this distinction between types of student grows out of a much broader argument, tied to the familiar tension between "*aggadah*" and "*halakhab*," and to Rabbi Kook's educational objective, which, in turn, is profoundly tied to the connection he sees between the worlds of *aggadah* and *halakhab* as abstract concepts. In other words, an understanding Rabbi Kook's attitude toward these two types of students must be based on a deep and wide-ranging inquiry (in the areas of *aggadah*, prophecy, and *halakhab*) having implications extending to many other matters beyond

*Translated from the Hebrew by Joel Linsider

¹ This theory of learning, which stands in contrast to the Platonic theory, is represented by Aristotle, John Locke, David Hume, and John Stuart Mill.

² A. Goldman, "Secular Zionism, Israel's Destiny, and the Purpose of the Torah" (Hebrew), *Da'at* 11(1983), p. 122.

³ Plato, *Meno*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett (New York, 1949). Among those who shared this position were Descartes and Spinoza.

⁴ R. Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook, *Eight Files* (Jerusalem, 1999), File 1 [1904-1914], sec. 294, p. 106 (from ms.). The passage continues: "And anyone who knows the name of M.B. [*vide* B.T. *Qiddushin* 71a] and preserves it in purity, retains his learning. And through this intellectual exaltation, the quality of dominance appears in the soul, and all stand in awe of him."

⁵ R. Kook's position is one of those that adopt a constructivist orientation with respect to the nature of students. The analysis that follows takes no position with regard to that orientation and recognizes the philosophical dispute pertaining to it. For a contrary point of view, see Robert Maynard Hutchins, *The Conflict of Education in a Democratic Society* (New York, 1953), chap. 4. Hutchins takes the view that a classical education ("the Great Books") is a necessary condition for every person and that only

education.⁵

II

Halakhah and Aggadab

The links and tensions between the worlds of *halakhah* and of *aggadab* are well-known. One of the most forceful statements of that tension can be found in the poet Hayyim Nahman Bialik's article "*Halakhah and Aggadab*,"⁶ which is simply a poetic reflection of an age-old debate.

Also familiar is the stance that distinguishes between the skills needed to engage in the two areas. Some who draw that distinction regard *aggadab* as simple, non-binding folk literature, drawing on the imagination and suited to reading in one's free time or by non-scholars who may find it appealing. Halakhic literature, in contrast, is characterized by strict and rigorous intellectual analysis.⁷

R. Kook attacked that distinction, which diminishes the standing of *aggadab* and portrays it as a literary genre beneath the abstract legal analysis of *halakhah*. He emphasized the importance of both dimensions and even reversed the accepted relationship between them. And yet, his description of the differences between them

gives the impression that he is speaking of two inherently different intellectual frameworks sharing no points of contact.

In his account, *halakhah* and *aggadab* differ on the practical level as well as with respect to the cognitive levels at which they operate. The power of *halakhah* lies in its intellectual, analytic dimension.⁸ *Halakhah* formulates rules, boundaries, and norms that limit and order the spirit's grand aspirations.⁹ It is concrete,¹⁰ practical, and detailed; and it concerns itself with the "detailed specifics of the practice." This picture is the opposite of the abstract, flexible, and dynamic world inhabited by the man of reflection and *aggadab*. The latter senses, in R. Kook's portrayal, that *halakhah* can serve him as firm soil on which he can sink his roots.¹¹

"Aggadab is concerned not with detailed halakhic instruction but with perfecting one's attributes and clarifying the foundations of the faith."

Clearly, the *halakhah's* intellectual probing is ill-suited to the aggadic spirit as R. Kook depicts it. *Halakhah* is limiting and normative; in contrast, *aggadab* deals with the abstract and "universal," with ideas. *Aggadab* has the capacity to reflect on

thereafter can one find one's own professional, personal, and individual way. In contrast, William James stresses the importance of constructivism in education; see William James, *Pragmatism* (New York, 1914).

⁶ Bialik writes as follows: "*Halakhah* scowls; *aggadab* smiles. The former is severe, strict, hard as iron—the attribute of justice; the latter is indulgent, lenient, gentler than oil—the attribute of mercy....Here, we find petrified piety, obligation, enslavement; there—constant renewal, liberty, freedom....Here, desiccated prose, a fixed, rigid style, grey, monochromatic language—the dominance of the intellect; there, the freshness of poetry, a flowing, engaging style, colorful language—the dominance of feeling." (H. N. Bialik, "*Halakhah and Aggadab*" in *Collected Writings of H. N. Bialik* (Hebrew) (1935), p. 207.

⁷ On the connection between halakhic sages and aggadic sages, see Yonah Frankel, *The Ways of Aggadab and Midrash* (Hebrew), vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 492-495. See also Louis Ginsburg, a stalwart representative of this approach: "The force that prevails in the study house (*bet midrash*) is the intellect, while the force that prevails among the people is that of the imagination...one should not be surprised that the sages of the study-house (who spawned midrashic *aggadab*) were opposed to popular *aggadab*." ("Truncated *Aggadot*," in *On Halakhah and Aggadab* (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv, 1960), pp. 220 et seq. (first printed in *Ha-Goren* (1913). See also the comments Julius Guttmann on the attitudes of Leopold Zunz and Nahman Krochmal toward *aggadab*: "Together with Zunz, [Krochmal] assumes that the *aggadab* developed from sermon which were intended to inspire the masses, teaching them piety and morality." (Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism* [trans. from the Hebrew edition by David W. Silverman] [New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, 1964], p. 341.

⁸ "*Halakhah* and its analyses of opinions can come only from the logical intellect..." (Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Letters*, vol. 1 [Jerusalem, 1981], p. 124 [Jaffa, 1908].)

⁹ Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Olat Re'ayah* 1 (Jerusalem, 1989), p. 21, sec. 4

¹⁰ Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Ayin Ayeah, Berakhot*, 1 (Jerusalem, 1987), Introduction, p. 14.

¹¹ R. Reuben Margalioth recounted having been told by R. Kook that he (i.e., R. Kook), as a man of reflection, saw *halakhah* as the ground on which he could be firmly rooted (Abraham Zoref, *The Life of Rabbi Kook* [Hebrew] [Jerusalem, 1948], p. 139); Hayyim Lifschitz, *In Praise of Rabbi Kook [Shivhei ha-Re'ayah]* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 297-298; *Eight Files*, vol. 3. file 8 [London, 1916-1919], sec. 24, pp. 249-266.

the details of life and on the culture from a loftier viewpoint that reveals their hidden essence.¹² It has the power to explain the laws' details, to bring the actions and restrictions "within the tent" of universal ideas.¹³ If *halakhab* can be likened to a tree's branches, *aggadah* can be compared to the trunk.¹⁴ *Aggadab*, in R. Kook's formulation, is "the original spiritual program of splendor and holiness,"¹⁵ the "inner thought," the abstract world of the spirit, "the speculative wisdom of the heart."¹⁶ *Aggadab* is concerned not with detailed halakhic instruction but with perfecting one's attributes and clarifying the foundations of the faith.¹⁷ These two areas—*halakhab* and *aggadah*—even make for dissimilar types of students, differing in their inspirations, scholarly aspirations, and educational tendencies.

The Torah of Babylonia and the Torah of the Land of Israel

R. Kook expanded on this distinction in greater detail. The spirit of *aggadah*, in his opinion, can be compared to the modes of thought in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (or the Torah of the ancient Land of Israel); the spirit of the *halakhab*, in contrast, follows the thought processes of the *Talmud Bavli* (the Babylonian Talmud, or the Torah of the Diaspora). The scope of this article does not allow for a full, precise description of these two Torahs,¹⁸ and I will confine myself to noting their bearing on the distinction between *halakhab* and *aggadah*. But we cannot do that without first clarifying the nature of the "Torah of the Land of Israel" and what distinguishes it from the Torah of

the Diaspora.

Allow me to suggest some possible clarifications of the point:

1. It may be argued that the distinctiveness of "the Torah of the Land of Israel" lies in its cognitive level and in the method of study acquired by its students in the Land of Israel.
2. The distinctiveness may be tied to technical halakhic matters, for a number of the commandments—"commandments contingent on the Land"—do not apply to anyone situated outside the Land of Israel.
3. The distinction may have historical significance, treating "the Land of Israel" as a synonym for "the time of redemption."

Points 2 and 3 are not substantive and do not pertain to the realm of ideas; in any event, it appears that they do not correspond to R. Kook's position. Not so the first point, which pertains to the cognitive aspect of Torah study; and statements tending to support this position can be found in sources that indicate how the Torah and its students in the Land of Israel differ from those outside the Land. We find, for example, that "the atmosphere of the Land of Israel makes one wise"¹⁹ and that God's presence (*shekhinah*) rests on those who engage in the study of Torah in the Land of Israel. It is said of them that they are pleasant to one another in [disagreements over] *halakhab*, while the scholars in Babylonia "attack

¹² R. A. I. Kook, *Ma'amarei ha-Re'ayah*, 1 (Jerusalem, 1984), p. 208; *Ayin Ayeh, Berakhot* 1, Introduction, pp. 14, 17. See also R. Moshe Zuriel, "The Holy, the Concealed, and the *Aggadab* in the Thought of Rabbi A.I. Kook, of blessed memory," in *By His Light* (Hebrew), ed. H. Y. Hamiel (Jerusalem, 1986), p. 250; R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin, *Personalities and Doctrines* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1957), p. 235.

¹³ *Ayin Ayeh, Berakhot* 1, Introduction, p. 17; id., *Eder ha-Yoqer, "Iqvei ha-Zo'n"* (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 140. On the role of natural morality *vis à vis* religious morality as corresponding to the relationship between *aggadah* and *halakhab*, see Menahem Klein, "Fundamentals of Rabbi A. I. Kook's Concept of *Halakhab*, in *By His Light* (Hebrew), p. 158.

¹⁴ See Rabbi A. I. Kook, *The Vision of Redemption—On the Revival of the Jewish Nation and the Building of the Land* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1941), p. 116.

¹⁵ Id. See also id., pp. 112 et seq.

¹⁶ *Letters*, 1, p. 123 (Jaffa 1908). See also Zevi Yaron, *Rabbi Kook's Teachings* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 48-49, n. 13.

¹⁷ *Ayin Ayeh, Berakhot* 1, Introduction, p. 19, s.v., "*Ha-or ha-zaru' a'al divrei hazal...*" See the broader treatment id.

¹⁸ Avinoam Rosenak, *Philosophy of Halakhab in the Teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook* (Hebrew), doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998 (hereafter: my dissertation), chap. 2, parts VI-VII; R. Yuval Sherlo, *The Torah of the Land of Israel in Light of the Teachings of Rabbi A. I. Kook* (Hebrew) (Hisfin, 1998).

¹⁹ T. B. *Bava Batra* 158b.

²⁰ *Yalqut Shim'on*, Zechariah, *Remez* 578; T.B. *Sanhedrin* 24a.

one another in [disagreements over] *halakhab*.”²⁰ The distinction is amplified by the medieval writers who argue for the metaphysical profundity of the Land of Israel itself, and R. Kook takes them as the basis for his views. A clear example of this position, which sees the Land of Israel as God’s dwelling place, appears in the teachings of R. Judah ha-Levi. In his opinion, the Land of Israel has an immanent distinctiveness, for it is “the land of prophecy” and the “gate of heaven”;²¹ it possesses “divine meaning,”²² and only there can one attain union (with God) and prophecy. Accordingly, as ha-Levi explains (following the Sages) that anyone who dwells there “is as one who has God,” and “anyone who walks four cubits within it is assured a place in the world to come.”²³ Similar arguments can be found even more forcefully in the *Zohar*,²⁴ which states that “[in the Land of Israel] alone is it fit for the *shekhinah* to dwell.”²⁵ Here, however, the comment grows out of a general metaphysical stance: in kabbalistic thought, the Land of Israel is taken to be the *sefirah* of *malkhut* (sovereignty), the ultimate stage of the divine *sefirot*,²⁶ and even as the *sefirah* of *binah* (understanding), which is above it.²⁷

“The Land of Israel the Land of Israel is the locus of the holy spirit and prophecy.”

In contrast, others take the view that the Land of Israel lacks any immanent distinctiveness or sanctity. The author of *Meshekh Hokhmah*, for example, formulates that view as follows:

And all the holy [places]—the Land of

Israel, Jerusalem, etc.—are merely details and branches of the Torah and were sanctified by the holiness of the Torah. Accordingly, there are no distinctions of time and place with respect to matters in the Torah, and no difference between the Land of Israel and the Diaspora (except for those commandments that are contingent on the Land).²⁸

On this view, the Land of Israel is sanctified only through the actions of human beings who observe God’s commandments within it. The Land itself has no immanent characteristic that distinguishes it independent of human action, which depends on halakhic norms. It follows that “the Torah of the Land of Israel” is simply the group of commandments that we are obligated to observe only in the Land (such as priestly gifts and tithes); they are the means by which we sanctify the world, and the Land of Israel within it.

How do these sources contribute to our understanding of the place occupied by “the Torah of the Land of Israel” in R. Kook’s thinking? In his concept, the Land of Israel is the locus of the holy spirit and prophecy.²⁹ That spiritual wellspring has been situated there forever, *per se* (i.e., as an immanent characteristic inherent in it, independent of the people of Israel fulfilling the Torah within it).³⁰

According to R. Kook, prophecy, which is unique to the Land of Israel and its residents, is connected

²¹ *Ha-Kuzari* 4:14.

²² *Id.*, 1:95

²³ *Id.*, 2:22.

²⁴ *Zohar*, *Yitro*, 79b

²⁵ *Id.*, *Vayyishlah*, 166a.

²⁶ See Eliezer Schweid, *Homeland and Land of Destiny* (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv, 1979), pp. 85-90.

²⁷ Nahmanides on Lev. 18:25. See, more broadly, Aviezer Ravitzky, “‘Set Up for Yourself Markers’ for Zion: The Evolution of an Idea” (Hebrew), in *Al Da’at ha-Maqom* (Jerusalem, 1991), pp. 34-73. See also Nahmanides’ *Sermon for the New Year*, p. 249. See also Michael Nehorai, “The Land of Israel in the Teachings of Maimonides and Nahmanides” (Hebrew), in M. Halamish and A. Ravitzky, eds., *The Land of Israel in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Jerusalem, 1991) pp. 123-137, esp. p. 125.

²⁸ *Meshekh Hokhmah* on Ex. 32:19. Elsewhere he similarly writes: “for all the holy places are grounded not in the religion but in the nation and its roots there...in the religion it states only ‘the place that God chooses’...Jerusalem and the entire Land of Israel...are constructed on their relationship to our patriarchs, the roots of the nation, and the nation’s unity with its roots, for all the emotions should be directed to the unity of the nation” (*Meshekh Hokhmah*, *Bo*, p. 53).

²⁹ “The holy wisdom shines only in the Land of Israel” (Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Orot ha-Qodesh*, 1 (Jerusalem, 1985), p. 133. See also, Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah—New Perspectives* (New Haven, 1988), p.

³⁰ “The spiritual well of the interior of the sacred overpowers on its own” (*Orot ha-Qodesh*, 1, p. 134).

to *aggadah*:

“The atmosphere of the Land of Israel makes one wise,”³¹ and the Talmud of Babylonia is a burden [when one comes to the Land of Israel to learn its Talmud].³² And the wisdom of prophecy, which is the basis for the wisdom of *aggadah*—the inner aspect of the Torah’s foundations—operates in the Land of Israel much more than in Babylonia, which is not worthy of prophecy, as is said in *Mo`ed Qatan* (25a): “Our teacher [R. Huna, who was being eulogized] was worthy of having the *shekhinah* alight on him, but [his being in] Babylonia caused it [not to happen].”³³

This passage raises the distinction between “the Talmud of the Land of Israel” (i.e., the *Yerushalmi*), which encompasses the wisdom of prophecy and *aggadah*, and “the Talmud of Babylonia” (i.e., the

Bavli), which lacks those functionalities.

This sharp distinction between the two Talmuds recurs as a motif throughout R. Kook’s writings. From a scholarly point of view, to be sure, the distinction lacks any basis: scholarly inquiry regularly notes the gap between the Land of Israel’s aggadic wealth and the relative dearth of Babylonian *aggadah*—but nothing more than that.³⁴ Still, R. Kook’s views had precedent not only in the classical literature but also in contemporary writings. We are familiar with the varied comments by the Talmudic sages³⁵ and by the *rishonim* (rabbinic writers from the eleventh century through the fifteenth century)³⁶ regarding the distinction between the Torah of the Land of Israel and its sages (the Jerusalemites) and the Babylonian Torah and its sages (the Babylonians). And, like R. Kook, other writers of his time noted the differences between the two Talmuds.³⁷ Only a few echoes of that distinction can be heard in

³¹ T. B. *Bava Batra* 158b.

³² T. B. *Bava Mezi`a* 85a.

³³ *Iggerot*, 1, p. 123; see also *Orah Mishpat* (Jerusalem, 1985), supplements, pp. 254-255. Elsewhere he writes to similar effect: “with respect to what [has been] noted...regarding the distinction between the Babylonian Talmud and the *Talmud Yerushalmi* resulting from the influence [on the latter] of the light of prophecy, which always appears to some degree in the Land of Israel—it applies to the principles of *halakhah* and their logic and underlying reasoning and, even more so, to the *aggadot*. This follows from the textual variation with regard to the early pious ones, who would spend three hours on each statutory prayer. The Babylonian Talmud (*Berakhot* 32b) states that ‘their Torah [study] protects them,’ but the *Talmud Yerushalmi* states ‘a blessing is placed upon their Torah [study] [as corrected by R. Kook’s editor, the text should be ‘their Torah (study) is blessed’]. And so things are.” (*Ozrot ha-Re`ayah*, 4, Collected Sayings, ed. M. Y. Zuriel [Tel-Aviv, 1988], p. 186 [Jerusalem, 1927].)

³⁴ In his poem “To the *Aggadab*,” Hayyim Nahman Bialik considered *aggadah* to be Babylonian. Zacarias Frankel drew no distinction between the *aggadot* of the Land of Israel and those of Babylonia (Zacarias Frankel, *Mevo ha-Yerushalmi* [Breslau, 1870--Jerusalem, 1967], pp. 49-53). In contrast, a clear distinction between the (halakhic) *Bavli* and the (aggadic) *Yerushalmi* is drawn by Isaac Hirsch Weiss, *Dor Dor ve-Doreshev*, vol. 3, (Vilna, 1893), chap. 4, pp. 26-38; Benjamin Ze`ev Bekher, *Tannaitic Aggadab* (Hebrew)(Tel-Aviv, 1922); id., *Amoraic Aggadab in the Land of Israel* (Hebrew)(Tel-Aviv, 1925); E.E. Urbach, *The Halakhah: Its Sources and Development* (Hebrew) (Givatayim, 1984), p. 226. The *Yerushalmi*’s importance as a source of aggadic literature figures as well in a study by Aviad Ha-Kohen, “The *Aggadot* of the Jerusalem Talmud” (Hebrew), *Mahanayim* 7 (1994), pp. 39-48. Another approach appears in the work of Elimelech Levy, *Gates of Aggadab—On the Nature of Aggadab, Its Forms, Methods, Goals, and Connections to the Culture of Its Time* (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv, 1964), p. 310.

³⁵ T. B. *Hagigah* 10a, s.v. “*ve-layozei ve-lavo ein shalom?*”; T. B. *Sanbedrin* 24a, s.v. “*afilu yozei?*”; T. B. *Bava Mezi`a* 85a, s.v. “*R. Zerd?*”; T. B. *Ketubbot* 75a, s.v. “*de-ha Rabbi Yirmiyah?*”; T. B. *Yoma* 57a, s.v. “*de-Rabbi Yirmiyah?*”

³⁶ Rashi on T.B. *Hagigah* 10a, s.v. *afilu mi-sbas*; Rabbenu Hanan`el, id., s.v. “*afilu yozei?*”; Rashi on T.B. *Sanbedrin* 24a, s.v. “*ba-mahashakim hoshivani.*” One consequence of these statements was the claim that the *Bavli* ought to be interpreted in light of the *Yerushalmi*. See the extensive bibliography in my dissertation, p. 106, n. 188.

³⁷ It is worth noting the correspondence between Aḥad Ha-Am’s view and R. Kook’s. Cf. Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Orot, Ma`amar ha-Dor*, pp. 108-117 with Aḥad Ha-Am, “*Torah she-ba-Lev*,” [1894], in *Al Parashat Derakhim*, 1 (Tel-Aviv, 1965), pp. 81-91; “*Basar va-Ruah?*” [1904], id., 2, pp. 181-194. On the implied connection between R. Kook and the world of scholarship in his time and for additional bibliography, see my dissertation, p. 106, n. 189.

³⁸ Joseph Heinemann (*Aggadot and Their History* [Hebrew], pp. 163-179) has studied the thought processes of the sages of the Land of Israel (characterized by a certain non-coercive gracefulness) in comparison to the formal thought of the Babylonian sages. See also Isaac Heinemann, *The Ways of the Aggadab* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 187, 191. R. Abraham Joshua Heschel likewise classified tannaitic and amoraic literature in light of a distinction between an aggadic principle on the one

today's scholarship;³⁸ still, R. Saul Lieberman has noted the tendency of exegetes dealing with Kabbalah to interpret the *Yerushalmi*³⁹ (generally ignored as a subject of exegesis) and to immigrate to the Land of Israel,⁴⁰ as well as the connection between kabbalistic teachings and efforts to find mystical leanings in the *Yerushalmi*.⁴¹

"This sharp distinction between the two Talmuds recurs as a motif throughout R. Kook's writings."

What does R. Kook do with this distinction, and what are its educational implications? According to R. Kook, the sharp dichotomy between *aggadah* and *halakhab* is associated with the Babylonian way of thinking, while the effort to intertwine them fits the spiritual-halakhic world of the sages of the Land of Israel.⁴² He takes the view that these two positions represent two jumbled aspects—Babylonian and Jerusalemite—of halakhic thought: the former emphasizes boundaries, while the latter emphasizes linkages and interconnections. One imposes limits and measurements; the other blurs

boundaries and leaps fences. Neither is negated by the other; on the contrary, each depends on the other. At times they oppose and displace each other; at times they draw near to and complement each other.

R. Kook opposed the position (prominently advocated by the author of *Shenei Lubot ha-Berit*⁴³) that Israel's return to its land would warrant abandoning the exilic Torah of the Diaspora and returning to the Jerusalemite Torah of the Land of Israel. In his view, there is a need to bridge the differing temperaments that gain expression in the two Talmuds. He calls for a dialectical stance that permits realizing the full spiritual potential of both:

I do not see the vision of perfection except by combining all the components of the good that flow to us from all the various sides, from earliest times until the most recent generation.

The sacred work of clearing the path and bridging the profound divisions—that is

hand and a normative-formal principle on the other. See his *Theology of Ancient Judaism* (Hebrew, *Torah min ha-Shamayim be-Aspaqlariyah shel ha-Dorot*) (London and New York 1962), vol. 1, pp. xvi-xx ("the Babylonian version and the Land of Israel version"). A jurisprudential comparison appears in a study by Hanina Ben-Menahem, "The *Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli* on a Judge Who Strays From the Law" (Hebrew), *Jewish Law Annual*, 8 (1981), pp. 113-134. For a broader consideration of the subject, see my dissertation, pp. 106-107, n. 190.

³⁹ See Jacob Zussman's comments on Lieberman's study of the *Yerushalmi* in "Traditions of Method and Text With Respect to the *Talmud Yerushalmi*" (Hebrew), in *Studies in Talmudic Literature* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 13-14. And see Saul Lieberman, *Tashlum Tosefta* (Jerusalem, 1970), p. 65.

⁴⁰ See also Judah Liebes, "The *Zohar's* Link to the Land of Israel" (Hebrew) (unpublished), p. 2. My warm thanks to Prof. Liebes for making this ms. available to me.

⁴¹ I am not referring here to the phenomenon of quotations in the mystical literature that appear in "*Yerushalmi*" garb, though there is no doubt that that the origin of this phenomenon is indirectly tied to our subject. In this context see also Ha-Kohen, *Mahanayim* 6 (1994), pp. 58-61 and bibliography id. On the subject of mystical tendencies in Talmudic literature, see D. J. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven, 1980); id., *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen, 1988); Itamar Greenwald, "On the Study of the Sages' Use of Mysticism" (Hebrew), in A. Oppenheimer, Y. Gafni, and M. Stern, eds, *Jews and Judaism in the Time of the Second Temple, the Mishnah, and the Talmud* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1993), pp. 297-315. Connections between a wider range of Talmudic material and the world of Kabbalah are drawn in I. Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* (Berlin and New York, 1982).

⁴² This is so despite the relatively limited treatment of aggadic matters in the *Yerushalmi* and their more extensive treatment in the *Bavli*. On this paradox, see Adin Steinsaltz, *Talmud for All* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 44.

⁴³ According to Isaiah ben Abraham ha-Levi Horowitz (author of *Shenei Lubot ha-Berit* and known, after the acronym for that work, as "*Shelab*"), we should repudiate the Torah of Babylonia (attained through casuistic argument) and affirm the Torah of the Land of Israel (which is closer to the source of Torah). The former is the result of sin; it is a translation of the source and it devastates its students within the house of Torah. The latter is nearer to the divine light, warming its students. See *Shelab*, *Shenei Lubot ha-Berit*, *Masekhet Pesahim Mazzah Ashirah*, Discourse 3 for *Shabbat ha-Gadol* coinciding with *Parashat Mezora* (16a). See also G. Blidstein, "The Torah of the Land of Israel and the Torah of Babylonia in the Teachings of the Neziv of Volozhin" (Hebrew), in A. Ravitzky, ed., *The Land of Israel in Modern Jewish Thought* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1998), pp. 476-477. See also Neriya Gotel, "The Torah of the Land of Israel—The *Talmud Yerushalmi* in Rabbi Kook's Thought" (Hebrew), in A. Wahrhaftig, ed., *Yeshu'ot Uzzro—Issues of Redemption and Messiah*, Memorial Volume for R. Uzi Kolehheim, of blessed memory (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 390-412.

the work that I would like to see beloved of all who deal with the soul of the Torah, as it is beloved of me.⁴⁴

III

The Sages of the Land of Israel *vis à vis* the Sages of Babylonia

As noted, the distinction between the *Bavli* and the *Yerushalmi* reflects or parallels the distinction between dissimilar spiritual-intellectual types. R. Kook portrays the type of student that develops at the knees of each of the two types of Torah.

To his thinking, the Torah of the Land of Israel is not only a function of place; it is a function of a personality construct and of distinctive educational and intellectual patterns. A person who can discern specifics by deducing them from the general rule differs from a person who considers only the specifics themselves in their particularity:

It is understood that specifying the details of the laws on the basis of the Torah's overall spirit requires a very wise decisor, able to deal with the great concepts on which the principles of the Torah are based. One who has not attained that level will be able only to rule on specific laws on the basis of those matters that can be considered solely in their specificity.⁴⁵

The Diaspora sages are limited by their dependence on thinking that reasons from “particular item to particular item;”⁴⁶ in contrast, the sages of the Land of Israel can think in a

manner that penetrates “the profundities of exalted sanctity”⁴⁷ or that manages to combine the varied specifics into one splendid whole. Speaking of himself, for whom these distinctions are an existential reality, R. Kook says:

The sort of light and delicacy of holiness that is available in the Land of Israel for Torah scholars seeking God is not at all available outside the Land of Israel. And I myself know and bear witness to that, to the extent allowed by my limitations.⁴⁸

These comments, too, prove vulnerable to challenge. Some of R. Kook's wording conveys the sense of an overlap between “place” and manner of cognition. But if that is so, his remarks are theoretical only (that is, they describe the cognitive ontology of the people of the Land of Israel), and they do not offer a pedagogic theory applicable to the complex reality that must be confronted. Moreover, these remarks would lead us to expect that “the students of the Land of Israel,” with their distinctive cognitive qualities, would be those dwelling in the Land and, conversely, that students dwelling outside the Land would lack those qualities.

But that does not appear to be the case. In many instances, R. Kook speaks in praise of sages who applied these “Jerusalemite” cognitive qualities while still living and working in the Diaspora;⁴⁹ in many others, he describes yeshiva students in the Land of Israel who have purely halakhic orientations. His comments on his own experiences are problematic as well, though the

⁴⁴ “And in recent times, how nice it is to combine the discourse of the Vilna Ga'on's disciples and that of the Besht's disciples, though they in their time were so much at odds with each other” (*Iggerot*, 1, p. 304 [Jaffa, 1910]). See also *Orot ha-Qodesh*, 1, p. 23: “This generation must be armed with might, with giants of Torah learning, masters of tradition, masters of Torah and *halakhab*, accustomed to *aggadah*, suffused with the holy spirit, and the spirit of prophecy will not be lacking in them. And they will intensify Israel's power, preparing it for redemption and exalting the Torah through prophecy and the holy spirit, and the *halakhab*, its practice, and its study through *aggadah* and logical morality.” In light of that vision, R. Kook provides a historiosophical account of the qualities of the generation of the redemption. See also *Orot*, pp. 116-117, referred to above.

⁴⁵ *Ayin Ayeh, Berakbot*, 1, Introduction, p. 16.

⁴⁶ *Iggerot*, 1, p. 113 (Jaffa 1908): “In the Diaspora one must glean in the dark...conceiving of matters only item by item. But the core of the matter, grounded in the profoundness of exalted sanctity, cannot be apprehended.”

⁴⁷ The qualities of “wisdom grounded in awe, faith, and service, the breadth of morality, and the wisdom of life” are available to them (*id.*).

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ Explicit statements of this sort can be found with reference to two figures whose complex thought blended *halakhab* and

scope of this article does not allow for full consideration of that matter.⁵⁰ In any event, it is difficult to tell for certain whether R. Kook is speaking as a theorist of education (in which case his comments would be applicable to various types of people at all times and all places) or as an observer of the ontological-cognitive differences between the students he encountered in the Land of Israel and those he found outside the Land.⁵¹ It may be most accurate to say that at times he spoke in one mode and at times in the other.

“The Torah of the Land of Israel is a function of a personality construct and of distinctive educational and intellectual patterns.”

R. Kook envisioned a novel intertwining of the cognitive structure of both *Torot*; but before that novel step could be taken, he believed, it was first necessary to recognize their differences. Similarly, the halakhic and aggadic spheres cannot be blended without first recognizing the differences between them. In other words, blending the two realms requires discrimination and measurement, and they cannot be successfully synthesized unless their boundaries are first delineated:

The mode of discourse for each [i.e., for *aggadah* and prophecy on the one hand and *halakhab* on the other] must be in accord with its distinctive spirit and [only thereafter—A.R.] be moved as well by the spirit of its counterpart in accord with proper blending and union.⁵²

And even though the conduits are certainly

different, the one leading to prophetic contemplation and the other to contemplation of reasoned wisdom, they are nevertheless connected; and the prophetic components and the wisdom components merge as one.⁵³

The same dynamic can be found in R. Kook’s educational and psychological teachings. In his view, a student can be harmed by concentrating on the study of a subject ill-suited to his spirit. A student inclined by nature to *aggadah* should no more be taught *halakhab* than one inclined by nature to *halakhab* should be taught *aggadah*. This sort of mismatch, in his view, accounts for what he saw as the depressed spiritual state of students in the Land of Israel *vis à vis* those in the Diaspora:

The [Land of Israel’s students’] limited self-esteem, resulting from the mistress’s subjugation to her handmaiden [i.e., the students in Babylonia], is garbed in the mantel of fear of Heaven...⁵⁴ In this way, the honor of the cherished Land, the place of God’s footstool, is trampled underfoot.... And the students in the Land of Israel become crushed and lowly, abandon their prowess, and think that they are nothing more than underlings to the sages of the Diaspora, imitating [the latter’s] unenlightened, low-level casuistry. As a result, the sages of the Land of Israel are truly enfeebled, though they are [created] for greater things. But when they take their position on their exalted platform, they produce everything...in a

thought: Nahmanides (a Sefardi) and R. Elijah the Ga’on of Vilna (an Ashkenazi). See R. Kook’s consideration of these figures in *Ozrot ha-Re’ayah*, 4, p. 116; *Ma’amarei ha-Re’ayah*, 1, p. 50. These personalities became central figures in R. Kook’s teachings. See Ha-Kohen, *Alon Shevut*-Boogerim, 7, p. 115, nn. 8-9; Gotel, *Yeshu’ot Uzzu*, p. 392 and n. 7; Sharlo, *Torat Erez Yisra’el*, pp. 148-149, 152, 183; Ish-Shalom, *Rabbi Kook* (Hebrew), pp. 18-19. See also his close link to the Neziv (R. Moses Zevi Neriyah, *Sihot ha-Re’ayah* [Benei Beraq, 1993]. P. 99; *Ma’amarei ha-Re’ayah*, 1, pp. 123-126); and to R. Israel Meir of Rodin (Ha-Hed [1935], *Ma’amarei ha-Re’ayah*, 1, pp. 131-133).

⁵⁰ See my dissertation, pp. 115-116.

⁵¹ I am deeply grateful to my father and teacher Michael Rosenak for calling this important distinction to my attention.

⁵² *Orot ha-Qodesh*, 1, p. 24 et passim.

⁵³ *Id.*, p. 272.

⁵⁴ The subject of “fear of heaven” and its problems are extensively treated in R. Kook’s writings. He sees it as one of the factors likely to impede the service of God in his time. See *Orot ha-Qodesh*, 3, pp. 20, 23, 26, preface; *Eight Files*, File 1 [1904-1914], sec. 260, 267, 269-270, pp. 97-100; *id.*, sec. 274, p. 101; *id.*, sec. 283, p. 104, etc.

⁵⁵ *Iggerot*, 1, p. 113 (Jaffa, 1908). This contraction generates an “inauthentic life.” (Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Orot ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1985), chap. 13, par. 7.)

truly majestic way.⁵⁵

The student's lack of self-awareness, and his adoption of an outward appearance unsuited to the construct of his soul, prevent the spirit of the Land of Israel's students from being revealed and its potential from being realized.⁵⁶

And so we see that the distinction between the *Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli*—between “the Torah of the Land of Israel” and “the Torah of the Diaspora”—like that between students of *halakhah* and students of *aggadah*, produces a sensitivity to the different types of students, each of whom requires personal guidance suited to his nature. This certainty does not constitute an educational breakthrough; the model is familiar from the teachings of R. Hayyim of Volozhin and the position of the Maharal.⁵⁷ What I have done here is show how this position fits into R. Kook's overall teaching.

IV

Tailoring Education to the Child

Having reached the foregoing conclusion, R. Kook addresses himself to the question of proper pedagogy. Instruction must be suited to the child's age and abilities,⁵⁸ a premise not without early precedent.⁵⁹ We must prepare the child to confront and master the basic building blocks of *halakhah* and *aggadah*. The two poles must be

acquired as a spiritual and cultural foundation, along with a desire to synthesize and build bridges between the two areas. But the student will attain mastery in accord with his own learning style and level, taking account of his own inclinations and personal qualities.⁶⁰

“A student inclined by nature to aggadah should no more be taught halakhah than one inclined by nature to halakhah should be taught aggadah.”

“Tailor the education to the child” [lit., “Teach the child in accord with His way”; Prov. 23:6]—that brief statement holds the entire secret of education. It teaches us that even a child just attaining the age of education already has his own special way. And if he has his own special way, there can be no doubt that we adults, who have already drawn distant from the child's way...are obligated, when we come to educate our children, to contemplate the child's soul and understand his way so we can tailor the education to it. Only then will we be certain that the outcome will be the one we long for, that even when he grows old, he will not veer from what he has been taught.⁶¹

The various disciplines require drawing distinctions among types of students. “Everyone must engage in his own area of activity...and not abandon whatever it is that particularly suits his spirit.”⁶² Those who are not at all attracted to *aggadah* in any

⁵⁵ R. Kook's students tell that when he immigrated to the Land of Israel after World War I, established a Jerusalemite study group. See R. Moshe Zevi Neriyah, *Life of Rabbi Kook* (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv, 1993), p. 113.

⁵⁷ That being so, it is of interest to compare R. Kook's educational approach with that of R. Hayyim, who also stresses the need to take account of the individual dimension, and with the Maharal's individualistic educational method. (On R. Hayyim, see R. Hayyim of Volozhin, *Hanhagot ve-Eizot*, part 1, sec. 6, 61, 115, 127; id., part 2, 15 *she'elot*, sec. 68; Immanuel Etkes, *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image* [trans. from the Hebrew by Jeffrey M. Green] [Berkeley, 2002], chap. 5. On Maharal, see Maharal, *Gur Aryeh* [Jerusalem, 1994], *Parashat Vaethanan*, 6, 5, pp. 123-124; id., *Sefer Be'er ha-Golah*, First *Be'er*, p. 20; P. Aaron Kleinberg, *The Pedagogic Thought of Maharal of Prague* [Jerusalem, 1962], pp. 54-57, 128, and chap. 9.)

⁵⁸ *Olat Re'ayah*, 2, pp. 181-182. This is the distinction between “*gedolim*” and “*beinonim*”; see *Orot ha-Torah*, chap. 9, sub-par. 3.

⁵⁹ The practice of grading the material to be studied in accordance with the students' nature is attested in the yeshiva world as early as the sixteenth century. See Alexander Marx, “R. Joseph of Orly as Teacher and Head of the Yeshiva in Siena,” (Hebrew), in S. Lieberman, S. Z. Zeitlin, S. Spiegel, and A. Marx, eds., *Louis Ginsburg Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1946), Hebrew section, p. 289, n. 41. See also *Sefer Hasidim* (Jerusalem, 1957), sec. 308.

⁶⁰ “Everyone who has some distinct strength must perfect it to the extent he can” (Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Musar Avikha* [Jerusalem, 1985], chap. 4, sub-par. 4, p. 49).

⁶¹ *Ozrot ha-Re'ayah*, 4, p. 109 (Jerusalem, 1933).

⁶² *Orot ha-Torah*, chap. 9, sub-par. 1; *Musar Avikha*, id. “One should always study Torah at the place his heart desires” (*Be-`iqvei ha-Zon*, p. 118); *Eight Files*, File 1, sec. 430, p. 141. Of interest in this context is R. Simḥah Yerushalmi's account of educational practices in the yeshiva: “Each one studied on his own...the young men who came here were steeped [in learning]...they could not submit to the discipline of a [fixed] form of study...each already had his own form and method, having come from

form “should not undermine the sacred [by attempting to study it].”⁶³ R. Kook saw danger in attempting to study material unsuited to one’s distinctive personal qualities:

Some fell into bad ways [i.e., left the fold] because their manner of study and of striving toward spiritual perfection was untrue to their distinctive personal qualities. If one well suited to aggadic materials, who finds halakhic matters inconsistent with his character, nevertheless regularly deals with them, devoting himself to halakhic matters because he does not recognize the value of his particular [aggadah-related] talent—as is the usual practice—he will sense within his soul opposition to the material he is working with, because his devotion to it is not in accord with the nature of his individual talent.

But if he finds his role and fulfills it, dealing regularly with the material in the Torah that is suited to the characteristics of his soul, he will recognize immediately that the sense of opposition he feels when he deals with halakhic matters arises not from any shortcoming in those sacred and essential studies, but from the fact that his soul craves some other subject for regular

Torah study.⁶⁴

It follows that learning must be conducted in a manner consistent with the needs of the individual student.⁶⁵ One “whose mind [lit., heart] is sharp should certainly devote much time to in-depth casuistic analysis of the *gemara*, Rashi’s commentary, *Tosafot*, and the decisors; but one suited to deal with concepts and Kabbalah...should devote his principal learning to coming to know his Creator.”⁶⁶ In R. Kook’s view, engaging in conceptual thought in general and Kabbalah in particular requires erudition, analysis, and diligence, “exactly like the diligence [needed for] the Talmud and halakhic decisors.” But, as noted, not everyone has the qualities that make him prepared to do so.”⁶⁷ A clear statement of all this can be found in the response of a R. to one who had complained to him that his son “had no great desire to learn.” The rabbi said, “I, too, in my youth had no great desire to learn *halakhab*. My heart was drawn to the study of *aggadah*, and through the study of *aggadah*, I came to learn *halakhab*. I advise you to teach your son *aggadah*, through which he will come to study *halakhab*.”⁶⁸ This response fits well, in form, content, and pedagogy, with R. Kook’s overall teaching:

1. As a matter of form, we see the structure of R. Kook’s dialectical “doctrine of the unity of opposites.”⁶⁹ This doctrine permits R. Kook to

[backgrounds involving] different methods. And in the yeshiva, democracy prevailed; each was allowed to continue in his own way...there was no [fixed] form, and they were pleased by this freedom, democracy, and lack of discipline....This was the essence of [R. Kook’s] method—it was necessary to allow each person to develop in accordance with his own abilities. For example, a young man who excelled at writing conceptual articles for a certain religious newspaper was not regarded as thereby lacking [full-time devotion to Torah study], for R. Kook said we need Torah scholars but also writers and thinkers—of course, in strict observance of the holy. (From an interview with R. Simḥah Yerushalmi, Rabbi Kook House, pp. 5-6.

⁶³ *Orot ha-Torah*, chap. 9, sub-par. 12.

⁶⁴ *Id.*, sub-par. 6. A sharper statement consistent with this one has only recently been published from manuscript in *Eight Files*: “There are creatures that grow in the sea, and there are creatures that grow on land. If the sea-creatures come up to land, they die immediately, and if the land-creatures go down to the sea, they die immediately. So, too, there are souls who can live only by immersion in a particular spiritual circle, and when they leave that circle, they die of spiritual strangulation or some similar process of desiccation...” (*Eight Files*, File 3 [Jaffa, through 1914], sec. 142, pp. 61-62.) That passage was written in a different context, however, and it requires separate consideration in view of R. Kook’s thought overall.

⁶⁵ *Ma’amarei ha-Re’ayah*, 1, p. 65.

⁶⁶ *Iggerot*, 1, pp. 41-42 (Jaffa, 1907). “And his knowledge will reach that point” (*Orot ha-Torah*, chap. 9, sub-par. 12; see also *id.*, sub-par. 3).

⁶⁷ *Iggerot*, 1, pp. 41 (Jaffa, 1907).

⁶⁸ Lifschitz, *Shinhei ha-Re’ayah*, p. 180.

⁶⁹ Avinoam Rosenak, “*Halakhab*, *Aggadab*, and Prophecy in the Torah of the Land of Israel in Light of the ‘Unity of Opposites’ in Rabbi Kook’s Teachings,” forthcoming in a collection of studies on religious Zionism edited by Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz.

argue that phenomena that appear contradictory (such as the world of *halakhab* on the one hand and that of *aggadah* and prophecy on the other) flow from different sides of the same overall source and constitute expressions of that source. The fragmentation we perceive is only superficial, reflecting different openings to the same unified goal.

2. As a matter of content, the suggestion conveys the desirable links between *halakhab* and *aggadah* and between the *Bavli* and the *Yerushalmi*.

3. And, as a matter of pedagogy and cognition theory, R. Kook's remark here meshes nicely with his "doctrine of will" and his "doctrine of the person,"⁷⁰ regarding to the educational process through which a child should pass in the course of his studies. In his words:

The will is the source of life. A person's will, in truth, is the foundation for his perfection and existence. And so this will requires development and constraint more than all other forces. In human childhood, a person's natural will requires training that entails submission, breaking, and reversal.

As a person proceeds toward perfection, [however,] his personal will proceeds toward the good, and breaking that will [now] entails the loss of much good....⁷¹

In other words: although the educational process begins by breaking the savage will, the more the will ripens and matures, the more it is necessary to treat the child's unfolding character cautiously and direct it within the framework of the good inclinations he is developing from within himself.

As noted, this caution does not simply ensure that the soul will not be crushed by the educational practice; it also implies hope for the future. Through it, R. Kook hopes, the child will progress from the conceptual-aggadic or halakhic-detailed world in which he began toward an interest in the cognitive element that had previously been alien to

him.

"The sense of opposition he feels when he deals with halakhic matters arises from the fact that his soul craves some other subject for regular Torah study."

A close reading R. Kook's writings, however, shows that something more is afoot here, and that his treatment of the present subject opens the door to one much more comprehensive, on both the abstract and the practical-halakhic planes. The future intertwining envisioned by R. Kook between "men of [practical] *halakhab*" and "men of [broad] *aggadah*" represents, as a practical matter, a particular version of the future "men of prophecy." And we are not dealing here not with simple prophecy but with prophecy at the level attained by Moses:

Just as the practical people, skilled in practical matters and their wisdom, are not equipped for clear apprehension of spiritual matters, and their spiritual contemplation is defective, intermingled with obscure judgments from the world of practicality to which they are tied, so, too, the spiritual people, positioned at the most elevated point in the world, are not equipped for full practical contemplation, and their practical knowledge and their desire to complete it are simply a shadow emanating from the higher spiritual matters.

The higher spiritual quality, to be sure, has a great ability to encompass everything; but that is only by means of the attribute of revelation through a clear glass [as to Moses]. Accordingly Moses said of himself "And there was a king in Jeshurun [Deut. 33:5]"; but at the level of the later generations, the king and the prophet were separate....⁷²

That being so, this area of R. Kook's teachings

⁷⁰ See Daniel Hamiel, *A Model of Personality in the Teachings of Rabbi Kook* (Hebrew), doctoral dissertation, Jerusalem, 1993.

⁷¹ *Orot ha-Qodesh*, 3, 76; *Eight Files*, File 1, sec. 191, p. 77.

⁷² *Orot ha-Qodesh*, 1, 276; *Eight Files*, id., sec. 192, p. 77.

pertains not only to education, but also to the spiritual nature of the prophet and the nature of his integrated Torah, which blends *aggadah* and *halakhab*. Perhaps it is best stated as follows: The intellectual level required for a teacher to be able to mediate between students of *halakhab* and students

of *aggadah* is identical to the intellectual preparation required of the prophet who is capable of blending the two domains.