

to Agudath Israel by Dr. Stanley B. Burns, a New York ophthalmologist and director of the Burns Archive. (The Burns Archive is primarily known for its more than 15,000 vintage medical photographs, but it also includes many pictures relating to Jews and Judaism, African-American history, and folk art.)

In the summer of 1988, the personal papers of Rabbi Eliezer Silver, a renowned American Torah leader during the first half of this century, were donated to the archive by his son, Rabbi David Silver of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The donation includes Rabbi Silver's voluminous correspondence with Orthodox scholars in Israel, Europe, and even in small U.S. towns, such as Sheboygan, Wisconsin. One letter in the Silver collection illuminates many of the others, since it contains a code for the transfer of money that was used by Jews to rescue their brethren from the Nazis.

Among the newest additions to the archive are original copies of *ha-Levanon*, a Hebrew scholarly periodical that first began publication in 1863 and which was read by Orthodox Jews in Czarist Russia. Other new acquisitions are microfilmed issues of *Der Yud*, a Yiddish newspaper published in Warsaw between 1921 and 1929, and microfilms of *Mahazike ha-Dat*, "Organ des Vereines 'Machsike Hadas'," a nineteenth-century Yiddish and Hebrew periodical published in Cracow and Lemberg by Rabbi Shimon Sofer. The publication was undertaken with the specific goal of encouraging Jews to resist assimilation. Articles in it varied from current events to Torah discussions.

Just a little over a year after the fire, the National Orthodox Jewish Archives began receiving visitors. Rabbi Kolodny noted that one recent patron was "a professor from the University of Bern, researching the reaction of the Swiss Jewish Community to the children who escaped to Switzerland during World War II. He really was amazed at how much material he was able to find here on the subject."

Readers may contact Rabbi Moshe Kolodny at the National Orthodox Jewish Archives, c/o Agudath Israel of America, 84 William Street, New York, NY 10038.

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## The Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook Manuscripts Collection in Jerusalem: Survey of a Private Archival Collection

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### Introduction

Institutional records and personal papers are often stored in basements with inadequate flood protection, or in overheated attics. Everyday, collections either end up in the garbage, are terminally water-damaged by broken pipes, or are reduced to dust while baking under a hot roof. Employees with knowledge of the collections' existence and their contents eventually retire, and when the apartments and offices that house the materials are sold, valuable documents are destroyed as a result.

The work of the archivist is, first, to be aware of an endangered collection and to transfer it to a safe place. Then, once the collection is out of physical danger, the archivist can arrange it and make it available to researchers.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how an archivist evaluates a collection, establishes its importance, assesses its current status, and suggests long-term solutions for its preservation.

The papers of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, are not in immediate danger of disappearance, but they do require the professional attention of an archivist.

### Biographical Data

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935) was born in Greiva (Griva), Latvia, and was educated there and in Dvinsk. At age 15, he went to Luchi to study with R. Eliezer Dov Yehyeh, and then to Volozhin, to study with R. Hirsch Leib Berlin (the "Natsiv"). Rav Kook was appointed rabbi of Zimmel (Kovno region) in 1888, and moved to Bausk (Bauska, Courland, southern Latvia) in 1895. In 1904, he accepted the position of Rabbi in Jaffa. He traveled to Europe before World War I and spent the war in London. He served as Chief Rabbi (Ashkenazi) of the Yishuv from 1921 to his death.

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1982) was born in Zimmel, the only son of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. He studied in Yeshivat Ets Hayim in Jerusalem, and helped

his father with the administration of the Central Yeshiva. He succeeded his father upon the latter's death in 1935, and directed the Yeshiva until his own death.

Rabbi A.I. Kook was a prominent thinker of modern Judaism. His influence on halakhic development, Jewish mysticism, and religious Zionism is felt to this day; indeed, it seems to be growing with time.

Both religious and secular Israelis interested in modern Jewish thought study the writings of the late Chief Rabbi with much fervor.

After the birth of the State of Israel, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook served as the major mentor of Religious Zionism, through the generations of students trained by him at the "Merkaz Harav" Yeshiva. Among his disciples were leaders of the settlers in the territories conquered in 1967, especially in Judea and Samaria.

### Importance of the Collection

The writings of the first Chief Rabbi are, according to Rabbi Meir Berlin,

a trove of novellae in all shades and specialties of Biblical and Midrashic studies, with a depth of analysis and scholarship in so many fields: mysticism and esoterism, philosophy and poetry, religious guidance and clarification of opinions and concepts.

(quoted in Be'ery, 1968, p. 1)

The manuscripts of the late Chief Rabbi are significant. They include, in Rabbi Berlin's words,

some thirty volumes in rabbinical law and Midrashic study, in ethics and logic, scholarship and mysticism, lyric poetry and deep philosophy, which educate the public at large and address individual quests.

(Be'ery, 1968, p. 1)

The cited size of the collection was repeated in many later works, such as the biography of Rabbi A.I. Kook by Jacob B. Agus:

It is said that the manuscripts [Rabbi A.I. Kook] left behind will comprise 30 large volumes when they are fully edited and published.

(Agus, 1972, p. 124)

Agus also points to a significant problem in the editing and publication of Rabbi A.I. Kook's writings:

Kook was not a systematic thinker . . . We should not, therefore, expect to discover a complete system of philosophy in Kook, no matter how many more volumes of his stray jottings will ever be published . . . . When this material is rearranged, organized and analyzed, we may obtain a fairly complete picture of the religious consciousness of this outstanding leader of Orthodox Judaism.

(Agus, 1972, p. 159)

Kook's style of writing was to comment extensively on various topics in notebooks. He would jot down an elaborate, detailed excursus on a topic occupying his mind at the time. These notebooks are a kind of "spiritual diary" of the Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Kook took great care of these texts. In a letter to his daughter in 1918, he wrote,

I left the few of my writings in various places at home, but are they all there in their totality? . . . I hope you have known how to preserve them as something of value.

(Kook, vol. III (1965), p. 174)

This passage attests to the importance Rabbi A.I. Kook attached to his manuscripts. He made clear his intention to preserve his writings completely and he arranged them to that effect. Only a few notebooks were not part of his full scheme.

After the death of the Chief Rabbi in 1935, the task of preserving the manuscripts was left to his brother, Rabbi Saul Hone Kook (1879–1955), and to Rav A.I. Kook's son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, who acknowledged the work of his uncle in preserving many of the letters later published (Kook, vol. I (1961), Introduction, p. 9).

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda played a crucial role in the diffusion of his father's ideas. Since, as noted, Rabbi A.I. Kook did not write systematically, the books we usually attribute to him were in fact compilations and excerpts culled by his son from the notebooks. Already as a young man, Zvi Yehuda served as editor to his father, who gave him full authority and credit when deserved:

. . . regarding changing the name of the

article, I tell you, dear friend expressly, I did not give it a title, but rather my son—long may he live—who copied and arranged the article from the notebook.

(Kook, vol. II (1961), p. 12)

Although the authorship of the volumes published belongs without question to the father, the issue of possible editorial selection by the son needs to be addressed. With a thinker such as Rabbi Kook, the omission of certain passages could lead to distortion of the philosophy. One omitted passage could radically change the perspective of another one.

It is the contention of a researcher from Yeshiva University, Yehoshua Be'ery, who wrote a doctoral dissertation on Rav Kook's non-halakhic writings, that the son was mostly true to the letter and spirit of his father in all publications—save one, *orat kodesh*, in which Be'ery shows sentences were rearranged. Be'ery asks: "The bricks are from Rav Kook, but is the entire building so?" (Be'ery, 1968, p. 189).

It should be stressed, however, that Be'ery concludes that Rabbi Zvi Yehuda was "extremely true to his source; he paid attention to each word, to every letter literally." (Be'ery, 1968, p. 190a).

But Be'ery was unable to substantiate this point, because neither he nor Agus saw the manuscripts. During the last fifty years, access to the manuscripts was very selective. Rabbi Moshe Neria, author of an authorized biography of Rav Kook, was, however, allowed to

check in the archives of the house of the Rabbi [Kook] as much as I needed, and to copy and photocopy all that was needed for my sacred work.

(Neria, 1982/83, p. 304)

Only open access to the manuscripts to all bona fide researchers could put to final rest pervasive rumors that the published editions were not faithful to the original manuscripts. Such rumors have spread to the general public through articles in the press.

### Survey of the Manuscripts

I surveyed the manuscripts on Friday, October 14, 1988, at mid-day, and again on Wednesday evening, October 19, 1988. Rabbi Abraham Shapira, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, was present during my first visit. His son, Rabbi Ben-Zion Shapira graciously accommodated my request for a second visit.

Two professionals had been previously allowed to survey the archives. Dr. Moshe Moseq, acting Director of the Israeli National Archives, consulted on the preservation of the Kook Collection in May, 1988, and a representative of the State Comptroller checked on the status of the documents in 1988. (I wish to thank Rabbi Ben-Zion Shapira for this information.)

The manuscripts surveyed were located in an apartment in the Geula neighborhood of Jerusalem that was the last residence of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook.

The apartment had three rooms. One room was locked, and was not opened for me. I was told it contained personal belongings of a servant of the late Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook. The main room contained a table, an armoire with two drawers, a bed, and an extensive library. I would estimate the holdings of the library at between 1,500 and 2,000 volumes.

The ceiling of the main room had spots of humidity over the bed which had damaged the paint. I did not have use of a hygrometer, or even of a sling psychrometer, to record the humidity and temperature. It is my impression that the temperature in the apartment fluctuated with the outside temperature; such fluctuation is harmful over time. The relative humidity during both my visits seemed higher than average for Jerusalem, yielding a serious risk of mold growth. There was no excessive dust in the apartment, although it is currently unoccupied. The source of light in the storage room is fluorescent rods without protective shades or ultraviolet filtering devices.

The manuscripts are kept in two metal cabinets with two locks each. There are five shelves in each cabinet, but not every shelf is full. The maximum shelf capacity would be 7.7 linear meters (or 26 linear feet), the equivalent of about 62 archival document cases.

The material I surveyed would probably fill 40 to 60 document cases. Included were:

68 notebooks or bound volumes	50.75%
52 folders or envelopes (unprocessed)	38.80
9 looseleaf binders	6.70
5 printed Pentateuch with handwritten notes	3.75
134 items, total	100.00%

The materials held in the apartment do not differ in type from materials contained in other private collections. The handwritten documents and records are on paper.

Bound format is more frequent than single sheets. A few typewritten documents (mostly correspondence) are found in the nine loose-leaf binders. Some have handwritten notations. The notebooks or bound volumes contain reading notes and novellae on rabbinical literature. The folders or envelopes contain mostly manuscripts, typescripts, or galleys of published volumes.

I would also treat as part of the collection the black-and-white photographic prints, and memorabilia on the wall in the main room. I would recommend drawing up an inventory of the contents of the two drawers of the armoire, and also including these in the collection. It goes without saying that Rabbi Kook's library should also be included in the inventory, and not separated from the manuscripts.

### Preservation Status

The persons authorized to have access to the materials are dedicated scholars familiar with the significant intellectual content of the manuscripts. However, they are not professionals, aware of proper methods of handling manuscripts and archival material. The collection has no archival staff trained in basic conservation procedures; no emergency procedures have been established. According to Rabbi Ben-Zion Shapira, the only preservation measure taken was the preparation of a microfilm of the collection for an unnamed individual. I have not seen the microfilm, and cannot establish whether it was created according to archival standards.

The apartment, being part of a residential complex, is subject to potential leaks or flooding from neighboring apartments. The apartment has no smoke- or fire-detection devices; no fire extinguishers or water hoses were visible.

The storage space is not air-conditioned. There are no devices to record, monitor, or control the temperature or relative humidity. The air is not filtered. Dust and nitrogen dioxide from automobile exhaust and other atmospheric pollutants enter freely. I could not check the electrical system to establish its reliability.

Some of the documents are in fair condition; others are in poor condition. The notebooks or bound volumes are in fair condition overall. Bindings are often severely damaged; some leaves are loose, but the texts have not yet been damaged. Careful rebinding should contain the damage.

Folders, envelopes, and looseleaf binders

are in poor condition. Metal (pins, staples) is still found in the material. No processing has been done, and material is rapidly deteriorating because of poor storage conditions. The damage is increased by storage of the manuscripts in highly acidic folders and envelopes.

There is no shelflist, inventory, or any other type of finding aid available for the collection. It would be easy for material to be removed without the loss even being detected.

### Long-Term Preservation

I have spoken to many Israeli scholars who have studied Rav Kook's works, and would like to convey their views regarding the preservation needs of the Rav Kook Collection.

It would be desirable to have the collection transferred to a special room, or stored within the special collections department of a major academic institution. In this way, the cost of maintenance would be much reduced, and the professional staff would ensure preservation of the materials.

Such a solution would, however, diminish the specificity of the collection. Some scholars expressed the wish not to see all the manuscripts made accessible to all researchers, especially those dealing with the mystical experiences of Rav Kook. Restricted access to certain materials is not an uncommon demand, and archivists have been known to accept such peculiar conditions regarding access to collections that they preserve. In the case of the Kook Collection, however, I would urge that access be as free as possible—not limited to privileged individuals, but open to all qualified researchers (qualifications being those normally set by archival repositories). Should certain items be judged too sensitive to be made available to researchers now, a timetable of release should be written.

In order to make the philosophy of Rav Kook better known and understood by the public, I would favor a building devoted to the study of his oeuvre that would combine public, non-academic activities with a research and archives center. A re-creation of Rav Kook's study could be placed in the museum portion of the center, together with a permanent exhibit on Religious Zionism and his life. Blending research and public education, tradition and modern technology in such a cultural center would be a fitting memorial to a thinker and leader of Rav Kook's stature and continuing influence.

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