



BNEI AKIVA
OF THE US & CANADA

SNIF CHOVERET TWO



5 7 8 3

Shalom Madrichim,

This month we will be focusing on Bnei Akiva – the Tnua we all know and love. We will be exploring its history, ideology, and the practicalities of being a part of a Snif. Learning the lingo from “Amod Dom” to “Tilboshet”, finally getting down all the words to “Yad Achim” (perhaps even in sign language), and understanding a bit more what it means when we say Torah V’Avoda! So without further ado, and בברכת חברים לתורה ועבודה!

Batsheva Haber

WEEK ONE - BA HISTORY

This week we will look at the history of our Tnua and where it came from.

- Starting from the idea of Zionist youth movements.
- The significance of having a Religious Zionist youth group and the questions it raised.
- How the movement was founded
- How it grew around the world and specifically in North America

History of Bnei Akiva

The history of Bnei Akiva starts with the establishment of Zionist youth groups around the world. Beginning at the end of the 19th century, and throughout the beginning of the 20th century, many young Jews began to join the Zionist cause. They gathered in youth groups that would meet regularly, discuss Zionist ideas, learn and speak Hebrew, promote Aliyah, and work towards establishing a Jewish State.



In 1929 a religious Jew named Yechiel Eliash who was living in Yerushalayim had a dream. He dreamed of starting a Religious Zionist youth movement to promote the ideas of Torah and Avodah (we'll discuss more what this means next week). He gathered a group of friends from the Mizrahi movement (the main Religious Zionist movement) and together they began to design the Tnua (movement).

However, not everyone was a fan of the idea. The board of Mizrahi discussed the idea and consulted with a group of educators. They had seen other youth movements (including some religious ones) and had a few concerns. In the end they opposed the establishment of a Religious Zionist youth movement for three reasons:

- A fundamental part of youth movements is to rebel against the way things are. This is not the approach religion takes to the past. Do we want to encourage our youth to rebel?
- As the youth dedicate more time to their youth movement, they will spend less time learning Torah. Taking a step away from the religious lifestyle.
- Even if we did want to gather the religious youth, we need a strong educational figure to spearhead the movement, and we do not have someone able and willing to do so.



Rav Neria

Nevertheless, on the 24th of Adar, a group of 30 8th grade boys gathered in the first meeting of Bnei Akiva. A month later they received the blessing of Rav Kook who encouraged them and referred to the youth as the future and the hope of the Religious Zionist dream.

At first, Yechiel Eliash was the only Madrich for the entire Tnua, however by Lag BaOmer there were 80 regular chaverim (members), this date was chosen to mark the beginning of Bnei Akiva. Two years later Rav Neria joined the movement (with the blessing of his Rabbi, Rav Kook), and became the

spiritual leader of Bnei Akiva.

Over time Bnei Akiva spread around the world. The first Bnei Akiva branch in North America was established in Brooklyn In 1934 by Meir Golombek. Two years later the first “Moshava” – Bnei Akiva summer camp was established as well. Since then Bnei Akiva of North America has grown. Today there are almost 50 Snifim throughout the US and Canada, and multiple summer camps both sleepaway and day camps.

Note to Madrichim

It is worthwhile to look into the background of your own Snif. When was it established? What makes it special? Etc.

Discussion Points

Do you think youth movements are important? How are they different from movements made by / for adults?

- Do you agree with the arguments made by the Mizrahi movement? How would you address them?
- There were many youth movements on the rise at this time period. Do you think it is important to specifically have a Religious Zionist one? Why not join with one of the existing movements?
- If you were establishing Bnei Akiva, what would you think the Tnua should represent?

Ideas for Activities

- Follow the Leader: We learned about the importance of youth taking leadership. Let's play a leadership game! One chanich/a leaves the room. The madrich/a then will choose another chanich/a to be the leader. This chanich/a will start doing a hand motion. The rest of the group will copy the leader, as the leader changes the motion, the rest of the group follows. The chanich/a who left the room will have to observe the group and try and figure out who the leader is.
- Magic Carpet: Youth Movements are about youth working together to achieve their goals. When we work together we can accomplish a lot more than we can individually. For this activity have the chanichim stand on a large tarp or sheet (easier to do when it's a bigger "carpet"). The goal is to flip the carpet over without anyone stepping off the carpet. This requires the chanichim to work together towards a common goal.
- Stand Up: Youth Movements show us that you don't have to be an adult to care about issues or to do something about them. Let's take a look at what issues we find important. Read out a bunch of statements (about our community / schools / causes), ask the chanichim to stand up if it is something they care about. At each round as a chanich/a or two to share why they think it's important.

WEEK TWO - TORAH AND AVODA

This week we will take a deeper look into the ideology of Bnei Akiva.

- We will explore what the phrase “Torah V’Avoda” means and where the idea came from.
- We will take a look at how the ideology was adopted by Bnei Akiva.
- We will understand how Torah and Avoda is expressed in the Bnei Akiva symbol, name and slogan.

Bnei Akiva Ideology

Last week we looked at the history of BA. We saw that although there were many Zionist youth movements, Yechiel Eliash felt that it was important to establish a Religious Zionist movement that promoted the Mizrahi ideology. In order to understand why this was important, we need to understand the philosophy of the Tnua.

When creating the Tnua Eliash and his friends chose the motto “Torah V’Avoda” – Torah and Labor. To understand this idea we can look back to an argument in the Gemara (Brachot 35b).

R’ Yishmael states that one must set aside time to learn Torah, however, also spend time on work – as the pasuk says “וְאַסְפֹּת דָגְגֶךָ” – “And you shall gather your grain”. R’ Shimon Ben Yochai opposes this philosophy saying: “Is it possible that a person plows in the plowing season and sows in the sowing season and harvests in the harvest season and threshes in the threshing season and winnows in the windy season, what will become of Torah?” Meaning, if one focuses on labor, there will be no time left for them to focus on Torah. He argues that one should spend all their time focusing on Torah learning, and their labor will be provided by others. For when the Jewish people perform Hashem’s will, He promises that we will be taken care of.

The Gemara concludes with a statement from Abaye:

“הַרְבֵּה עָשׂוּ כְּרַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל, וְעָלְתָה בִּידָן. כְּרַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַי, וְלֹא עָלְתָה בִּידָן.”

“Many have acted in accordance with R’ Yishmael and were successful. Many have acted in accordance with R’ Shimon ben Yohai and were not successful.”



A Torah V’Avoda poster from the Mizrahi Movement

Believing in Torah and Avoda means upholding both the values of Torah and of labor, not as contradictory ideas – but as ones that complete each other. The Torah is our driving force and helps us direct our work, ensuring we are doing it in a way of Derech Eretz. This labor is valuable, and a part of living a Torah lifestyle.

Torah V'Avoda in Bnei Akiva

Torah and Avoda is more than just a motto to the Tnua, we can find the idea in many areas of the movement:

- **Ideology:** The Tnua was established to develop and advance both these goals. Enhancing Torah learning among the participants, and laboring towards building the Jewish State and Nation. This is done also by encouraging Aliyah and strengthening our connection to the State of Israel.
- **Name:** In one of the first meetings the founding members tried to think of a name for the movement. Avraham Kestenboim brought forth the idea of “Bnei Akiva” – the children of Akiva. This refers to R’ Akiva, a man who he felt embodied the ideas of Torah and Avoda – he was an activist, a shepherd by trade, a national fighter (as a supporter of the Bar Kochva Rebellion), and a Torah Scholar.
- **Symbol:** The Symbol of the Tnua also represents this idea. We see in the center the two “Luchot HaBrit” representing the “Torah”. On one side we see an olive branch and farming tools, and on the other side wheat – this represents the “Avoda”. On the Luchot we see the letters ת and ע – standing for Torah and Avoda.
- **Slogan:** Bnei Akiva is built around the idea of “עם ישראל, בארץ, על פי תורת ישראל” – Am Yisrael, in Eretz Yisrael, by the Torah of Yisrael. These three pillars are central to the Bnei Akiva philosophy and represent different aspects of Torah and Avoda – a focus on strengthening the Jewish Nation, establishing a strong homeland in the Land of Israel, all rooted in the Torah and the Jewish way of life.



Discussion Points

- What do you think about the argument between R’ Yishmael and R’ Shimon ben Yochai? Who do you agree with?
- Can one truly combine Torah and Avoda? How?
- If you were naming the Tnua, what name would you choose?

Ideas for Activities

- **Build a Tnua:** Divide the chanichim into groups. Tell them that they are now sitting in the founding meeting of the new Religious Zionist youth movement. Have them each design a movement. Make sure the movement has a slogan, a symbol and a name that represents their ideology. Ask the chanichim to share their movements and discuss the different ideas / vote on the best one.
- **See-Run-Build the Semel:** Before the activity build a model of the Bnei Akiva Semel (symbol) out of materials. Each group has a “see-er” a “runner” and a “builder”. The “see-er” will describe to the “runner” one part of what they see using one of the building materials (if it’s complicated to build, it can be prepared before Shabbat and photographed. The “see-er” will then be looking at the photo). The “runner” will then run and tell the “builder” what was seen. The builder will then start to build. Repeat this process until the whole Semel is built. Teams are judged both on speed and accuracy of their final product.
- **Torah vs. Avoda Races:** Divide the chanichim into two teams – Team Torah and Team Avoda. Have them compete against each other in different challenges. See which team wins!

WEEK THREE - SNIF 101

This week we will learn about our Snif and how Mifkad works. First let's get some terms down:

- **Snif** – literally means branch. We gather weekly at our Bnei Akiva branch – our Snif!
- **Galil** – A region that includes multiple Snifim of Bnei Akiva. Usually the Galil will be led by a Shaliach or Shlichim from Israel.
- **Shevet** – literal translation is “tribe”. Our Shevet is our age group. In 9th grade, each Shevet is given their own permanent name. This name continues with them for the rest of their BA journey!

Note to Madrichim: Share the name of your Shevet and what it means to you!

- **Tilboshet** – The Bnei Akiva “uniform” – this is worn by our madrichim when we gather at Snif. This Tilboshet matches the uniforms worn by many other Zionist youth movements – a blue shirt (and white on Shabbat), with a colored shoelace at the collar. It seems the shoelace was used instead of buttons because it was cheaper.
- **Mifkad** – literal translation is assembly. This is when the entire Snif gathers together.
- **Yad Achim** – The Bnei Akiva Anthem



How does Mifkad work?

The Mifkad is a central part of our BA experience. It is the time we gather together as a whole Snif, standing together in our joined mission!

- During Mifkad we stand by Shevet in the shape of the Hebrew letter **נ** – this is the way soldiers stand in the IDF as well. In this manner we are all standing equally and can all focus in on the center of the Mifkad.
- During the Mifkad you will be told to “**עָמוּד דָּוָם**” – “Amod Dom”. This means to stand at attention. You do this by standing with your feet together. You will then be told “**עָמוּד נוֹחַ**” – “Amod Noach”. This means to stand at ease. You do this by moving your feet apart.
- At the end of Mifkad we will sing Yad Achim (the Bnei Akiva Anthem) and HaTikva.
- The leader of Mifkad will ask the crowd – “**מִי אַנַּחְנוּ?**” – “Mi Anachnu?” (Who are we?). The crowd answers “Bnei Akiva!”. The leader will ask “**וְמָה חַיֵּינוּ?**” – “U’ma Chayenu?”



(And what is our lives?), to which we will respond “Torah V’Avoda”. The leader will ask “וְמָה סִסְמָאֲתֵינוּ?” “U’Ma Sismatenu?” (And what is our Slogan?) and the crowd responds: “עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַל פִּי תוֹרַת יִשְׂרָאֵל” – Am Yisrael, in Eretz Yisrael, by the Torah of Yisrael.

- Mifkad ends when the leader of Mifkad shares the blessing “ה’ עִמָּכֶם” – “Hashem Imachem” (Hashem is with you). At this point the entire Mifkad responds “יִבְרַכְךָ ה’” – “Yivarechecha Hashem” (may Hashem bless you).

Additional Resources

Guide to Mifkad:

<https://www.bneiakiva.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Mifkad-BANA.pdf>

(May be helpful to print out so chanichim can follow along with the Mifkad)

Discussion Points

- Why do you think we wait till highschool to give each Shevet a permanent name? Is this name important?
- What do you think the significance of Mifkad is?
- Why do we end Mifkad with the blessings “Hashem Imachem” and “Yivarechecha Hashem”?

Activity Ideas

- **Mifkad Freeze!** This game is like Dance Freeze. The chanichim run / dance around the room. When given a command from Mifkad – they must stop and do the correct action (“Amod Dom” – stand feet together, “Amod Noach” – stand feet apart, “Hashem Imachem” – yell “Yevarechecha Hashem”, “Kadima” – sing “Bnei Akiva”, etc.) If a chanich/a fails to do the correct action, they are out.
- **Mifkad Says** – Play like Simon Says but include the Mifkad instructions in the options of commands.
- **Yad Achim Unscramble** – bring the lines of the Himnon cut up. In groups, have the chanichim race to put them in the correct order.
- **Yad Achim Matching** – bring the lines of the Himnon in Hebrew and in English. Have the chanichim match the Hebrew to the English. Alternatively match the line of the song to a picture.
- **Yad Achim in Sign Language** – teach the chanichim to sing the Himnon with the sign language motions: [youtube.com/watch?v=iYLP2VvqFVY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYLP2VvqFVY)

Yad Achim

Yad Achim - English Translation

A brotherly hand is stretched
out to you,
O beloved youth:
Gather yourselves around our
flag.

The star of the Torah shall
shine for you,
Your path shall be one of
labour.

With a sturdy heart, with the
help of God,
we will go up

Forward, Bnei Akiva,
forward to the heights!

This homeland, the holy Land
of our fathers,
our heritage from the hand of
the Mighty One of Jacob.

Our minds are steeped in her
Torah,
Our hands are immersed in
her soil.

With a sturdy heart, with the
help of God, we will go up

Forward, Bnei Akiva,
forward to the heights!

Yad Achim - Transliteration

Yad Achim lachem shelucha
hano'ar he'chaviv
Al digleinu kulachem
chanu misaviv

Yazhir lachem kochav Torah
Dar'kechem sugah ba'Avodah
B'leiv amitz b'ezrat Hashem
aloh na'aleh

Kadimah Bnei Akiva
heidad b'ma'aleh!

Moledet zo eretz avot
artzeinu hak'doshah
Midei avir Ya'akov
lanu morasha

Rasheinu bi'imkei Toratah
Kapeinu bir'gvei admatah
B'leiv amitz b'ezrat Hashem
aloh na'aleh

Kadimah Bnei Akiva
heidad b'ma'aleh!

יָד אַחִים

יָד אַחִים לָכֶם שְׁלֹחָה
הַנוֹעַר הַחֲבִיב
עַל דִּגְלֵנוּ כָּלְכֶם
חָנוּ מִסָּבִיב

יִזְהִיר לָכֶם כּוֹכַב תּוֹרָה
דִּרְכְּכֶם סוּגָה בְּעִבּוּדָה
בְּלֵב אֲמִיץ וּבְעֶזְרַת ה'
עָלֶה נִעְלֶה

קְדִימָה בְּנֵי עֲקִיבָא
הִידָד בְּמַעְלָה!

מוֹלֶדֶת זֶה, אֶרֶץ אֲבוֹת
אֶרְצֵנוּ הַקְּדוֹשָׁה
מִיַּד אַבִּיר-יַעֲקֹב
לָנוּ מוֹרָשָׁה

רָאשֵׁינוּ בְּעִמְקֵי תּוֹרָתָהּ
כְּפִינוּ בְּרִגְבֵי אֲדָמָתָהּ
בְּלֵב אֲמִיץ וּבְעֶזְרַת ה'
עָלֶה נִעְלֶה

קְדִימָה בְּנֵי עֲקִיבָא
הִידָד בְּמַעְלָה!

WEEK FOUR – BNEI AKIVA TODAY

This week we will take a look at where Bnei Akiva is today, and where it is going.

- We will ask what Torah and Avodah means today.
- Take a look at the Core Values of BANA.
- Explore our personal connection to Bnei Akiva.
- Discuss what things we can do to advance Bnei Akiva's goals.

Bnei Akiva Today

This past month we learned about Bnei Akiva and Torah and Avoda. Almost 100 years after the Tnua was founded, it has grown to a worldwide movement, with Snifim in 22 countries, summer camps, gap year programs and so much more.

In many ways the Tnua is the same – with the vision of Torah and Avoda, strengthening Aliyah and commitment to Judaism and Israel, and supporting youth and their growth. However, the vision has also changed and evolved throughout the years.

BANA (Bnei Akiva of North America) has established the following as our Core Values:

- **Torah V'Avoda:** Infusing Torah into all aspects of our lives, ensuring that it guides our work and our daily activities.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Inspiring youth to take action and to make a difference in the world around them.
- **Manhigut** – Leadership.
- **Tzionut (Zionism):** Nurturing a love of Israel and a commitment to building a home for the Jewish people in the state of Israel.
- **Encouraging Aliyah**
- **Am Yisrael** – Jewish Solidarity: Embracing our responsibility for all Jews.
- **Kehilla (Community):** Forging strong communities that are committed to each other and to making the world a better place.
- **Chinuch (Education):** Learning Torah leads to derech erez and meaningful growth.
- **Manhigut V'Halachot (Jewish Tradition):** Approaching Judaism as a holistic way of life. Upholding Jewish law and traditions to guide our movement's growth.
- **Dugma Ishit (Role Model):** Channeling Jewish values in positive ways by , setting a good example for youth, community members, and the world.



Discussion Points

- What do you think the goals of Bnei Akiva are today? How have they changed from the past?
- What does it mean to you to be a “chaver” – a member of Bnei Akiva?
- What things can YOU do to further the goals of Bnei Akiva?
- What can we do as a Shevet / Snif? What are the things that are important to us?

Extra Resources for Madrichim

<https://youtu.be/WBR8UvI2JOg>

Activity Ideas

- **Human Scale:** Place a sign that says “agree” on one side of the room, and a sign that says “disagree” on the other side. The madrich/a will read out a statement about Bnei Akiva or where Bnei Akiva should be headed. Each chanich/a will place themselves along the scale of Agree-Disagree. Ask a few chanichim to share why they chose to stand where they did. Then read the next sentence.
- **I’m Going to Snif:** A variation of “I’m going to a party and bringing...”. Each chanich/a in turn will say “I’m going to snif and bringing _____.” They will complete the sentence using something they think that represents Bnei Akiva to them today. The next chanich/a will need to list the previous item before their item. Continue until all chanichim add an item. If a chanich/a forgets to list one of the previous items, they are out.
- **My Bnei Akiva:** Make cards of the different Core Values that BANA articulated. Ask the Chanichim to choose the value they relate to most / the value that represents Bnei Akiva to them. Ask them to share what they chose and why.
- **Bnei Akiva Trivia:** Put together a Trivia game based on everything we learned this month, the history and ideology of BA and fun facts about our own Snif. Play a Trivia game – Team Torah vs. Team Avoda.

