

ANTI-SEMITISM FROM A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
A STUDY IN THE THOUGHT OF RABBI AVRAHAM ITZHAK HACOHN KOOK
AND HIS FOLLOWERS

by Uriel Barak

One of the great riddles of Jewish history and, in fact, of the history of Western culture is the persistence of anti-Semitism. The present article illuminates the attitude of Rabbi Avraham Itzhak HaCohen Kook and his circle (particularly his son Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook and his outstanding disciple Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Harlap) toward the problem of anti-Semitism throughout history and the profound connection between its underpinnings and the fate and destiny of the Jewish people. I analyze the way that Rabbi A. I. Kook and his circle addressed this burning issue. In doing so, I show how the disciples developed and expanded upon the views of their master, giving his metaphysical theology lucid expression while exposing certain ramifications of his ideas. I also propose a preliminary typology for conceptualizing the differences in approach of these thinkers.

Throughout this essay I utilize and argue for the importance of the integrated methodology that I conceived and developed in my doctoral dissertation for the study of the thought of Rabbi A. I. Kook and his circle. The present discussion makes it clear that the influence of the master on his students was even greater than hitherto thought by scholars. I also show that when studying this circle, it is necessary to pay special attention to its intellectual and spiritual milieu, and to consider these men as a distinct mystical-philosophical circle.