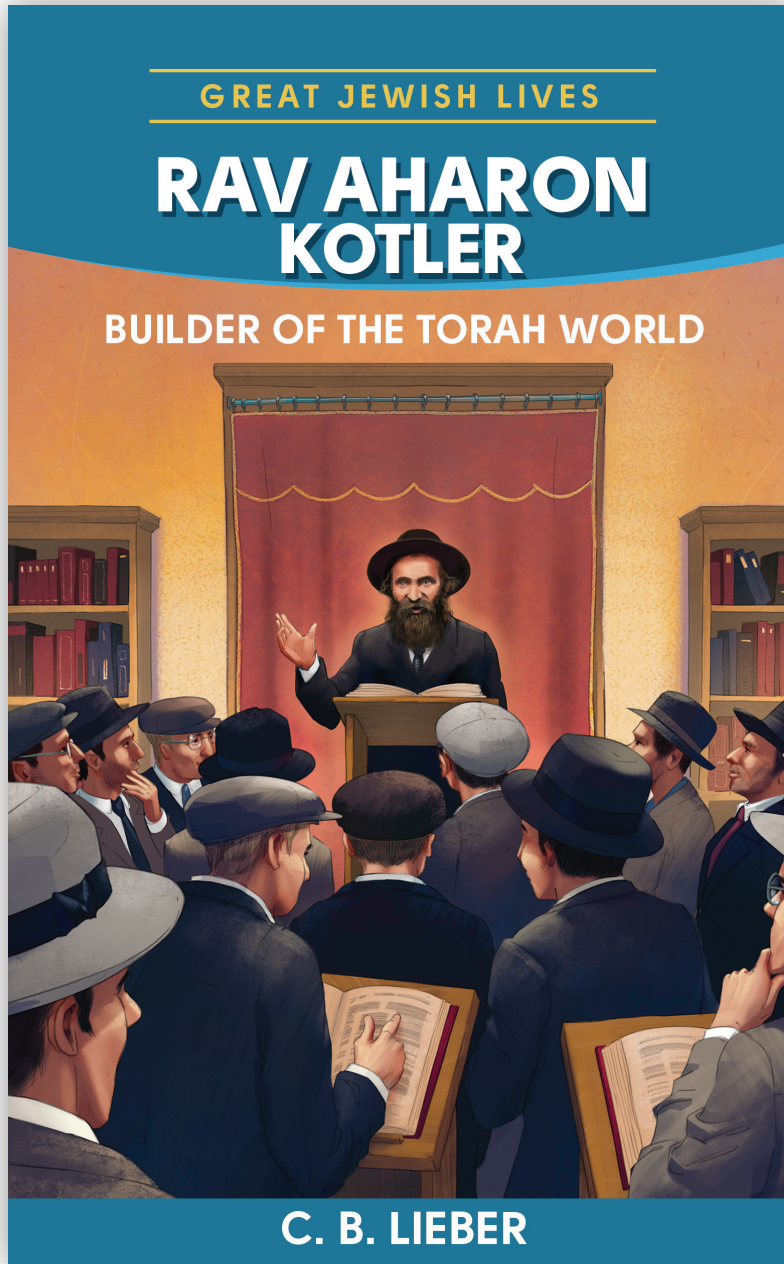


Educator's Guide



1235 38th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11218 • www.menuchaclassrooms.com



CONTENTS

For the Teacher	3
Pre-Reading Activities.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1: The Boy Who Wanted to Learn.....	5
Chapter 2: "I'm Ready".....	6
Chapter 3: A World War and a New Home.....	7
Chapter 4: A Building for the Yeshivah.....	8
Chapter 5: Traveling for Torah.....	9
Chapter 6: Leaving Kletzk.....	10
Chapter 7: Escape from Europe.....	11
Chapter 8: "We Must Act Now!".....	12
Chapter 9: Rebuilding Torah.....	13
Chapter 10: "Save the Children!".....	14
Chapter 11: The Voice of Truth.....	15
Chapter 12: The Yeshivah Grows.....	16
Chapter 13: In Good Hands.....	17
Supplementary Activities.....	18
Who Was Rav Aharon Kotler?.....	19
Biography Sketch.....	20

FOR THE TEACHER

This guide consists of lessons to assist you in using *Rav Aharon Kotler: Builder of the Torah World* in your classroom. The guide is written in a chapter-by-chapter format and includes a synopsis, pre-reading activities, and comprehension questions, as well as supplementary activities to be used at the end of the book.

The book and its accompanying guide can be used in a number of ways. Students reading at the same level might participate in a small-group guided reading of the book, returning to it over several weeks as they read and discuss it with the teacher. The entire class might read the book and discuss it in small groups using literature circles or reciprocal teaching. The teacher can then use the suggested questions to guide students in their discussions. Comprehension questions can be answered orally or in writing. Students should be encouraged to support their answers with evidence from the text. Students might keep a notebook of their responses throughout the year, which can then be used for progress monitoring and assessment purposes.

This teacher's guide includes many document-based questions. These questions focus on utilizing critical-thinking skills. Students are also asked to make comparisons, draw analogies, and apply historic analysis using primary and secondary sources from this time period. Source material for questions include photographs and documents. The questions can be used to teach students how to analyze source documents and deepen their understanding of the life and times of the person featured in this biography.

Using this guide can help you as a teacher create more active readers. Students who are encouraged to think about their reading, make inferences, compare and contrast events and characters, and notice authors' language will read more closely and carefully. They will become more thoughtful readers, and their reading comprehension will improve. Working on this in the context of authentic literature helps to inspire a motivation and love for reading.

SYNOPSIS Rav Aharon Kotler founded the Lakewood yeshivah with just a handful of students. Over time, his yeshivah grew and was a foundation for the rebuilding of Torah in America.

Pre-Reading Activities

Use one or more of the following activities to introduce the book.

1. **Predictions:** Preview the book by reading the title, the author, and looking at the illustration on the cover. Have you read any other books in this series? What clues can you gather about the book from the phrase “Builder of the Torah World”? In what way can someone build the Torah world?
2. **Building Background:** Rav Aharon founded Beth Medrash Govoha, the Lakewood yeshivah. What do students already know about Lakewood? As a class, compile a list of everyone the students know who learns — or learned — there. When students see how long that list is, explain that Lakewood was not always this big. This biography will introduce them to its beginnings.
3. **Building Background:** Read the author’s note at the back of the book. What motivated the author to write this book? What questions do you now have after reading this note?
4. **Genre Focus:** *Rav Aharon Kotler: Builder of the Torah World* is a biography. This means that it tells the true story of a person or person’s life. As students read this book, have them complete the graphic organizer at the end of this packet to describe the character traits of Rav Aharon, his life, and accomplishments.



INTRODUCTION

1. Why did the listeners feel a new energy after listening to Rav Aharon?
2. What were Rav Aharon’s two goals, and how did he work on them simultaneously?
3. **Document-based question:** Study the photograph of Rav Aharon on page VIII. What do you notice about the picture, particularly about Rav Aharon’s eyes?

CHAPTER 1: THE BOY WHO WANTED TO LEARN

SYNOPSIS Aharon Kotler is orphaned at a young age and raised by his uncle. When he gets a bit older, he learns in the Slabodka yeshivah.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about Aharon's childhood.

Guided Questions

1. Describe some of the pressures faced by young Arkeh and his friends to leave the world of Torah learning.
2. List some of the influences on Arkeh when he was a young boy.
3. Why do you think Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein did not immediately accept the two boys to his yeshivah and instead had them wait several days?
4. This chapter is titled "The Boy Who Wanted to Learn." Explain this title, using details from the story.

CHAPTER 2: "I'M READY"

SYNOPSIS Arkeh is recognized as a Torah scholar and marries the daughter of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about how Arkeh grows in Torah.

Guided Questions


1. In what ways was the Slabodka yeshivah different from other yeshivos at that time?
2. In what ways did Arkeh stand out in each of the two Slabodka yeshivos?
3. When the Alter saw Arkeh sleeping over the Gemara, he said, "A living sefer Torah, a living sefer Torah." Explain what he meant by that.
4. Describe the Alter's personality, using evidence from this chapter.

CHAPTER 3: A WORLD WAR AND A NEW HOME

SYNOPSIS Rav Aharon joins his father-in-law as rosh yeshivah. When Rav Isser Zalman moves to Eretz Yisrael, Rav Aharon becomes the sole rosh yeshivah.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about how Rav Aharon joins his father-in-law and grows in Torah learning.

Guided Questions


1. Describe how the *talmidim's* feelings changed about their young rosh yeshivah, Rav Aharon.
2. Explain what Rav Isser Zalman meant when he said about World War I, "The war destroyed the yeshivah."
3. Why did Rav Aharon move the yeshivah from Slutzk to Kletzk?
4. Describe Rav Aharon's complete devotion to learning. Use examples from the text in your answer.
5. Describe Rav Aharon's devotion to his students. Use examples from the text in your answer.
6.  **Creative writing:** Imagine you are a *talmid* in the yeshivah of Kletzk. Write a diary entry that includes your thoughts, feelings, and impressions of the rosh yeshivah.

CHAPTER 4: A BUILDING FOR THE YESHIVAH

SYNOPSIS The yeshivah grows, and a new building is built.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about the split of the Kletzk yeshivah and Rav Aharon's travel to America.

Guided Questions

1. What were some of the ways the people of Kletzk took part in building the new yeshivah?
2. Describe some of the ways this yeshivah was different from others of its time.
-  3. **Creative writing:** Design an advertisement inviting people to the groundbreaking of the Kletzk yeshivah. Include details from the text, such as who will be there and what the program will include.

CHAPTER 5: TRAVELING FOR TORAH

SYNOPSIS Rav Aharon travels to many countries to raise money for the yeshivah in Kletzk and is recognized as a great Torah leader.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about Rav Aharon's travels to support his yeshivah.

Guided Questions


1. When Rav Aharon was asked why he stayed up so late learning in the Abramsky home, how did he answer? What did he mean?
2. List some of the places Rav Aharon traveled to in collecting for his yeshivah.
3. What are some of the character traits of Rav Aharon that can be inferred from this chapter? Bring evidence from the text to support your ideas.

CHAPTER 6: LEAVING KLETZK

SYNOPSIS World War II breaks out, and the yeshivah flees to Vilna.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out what happens to Rav Aharon's yeshivah when World War II breaks out.

Guided Questions


1. Why did "a feeling of relief" fill the yeshivah when France and England joined World War II?
2. Explain how Rav Aharon understood that even though the news reports sounded positive, the situation was really very dangerous.
3. Why might Vilna have been a safe place for thousands of yeshivah students?
4.  **Document-based question:** Refer to the map on page 37. Describe the borders you notice and explain the unique position of the city of Vilna.

CHAPTER 7: ESCAPE FROM EUROPE

SYNOPSIS Rav Aharon escapes from Europe to America and sends Rav Shneur and a few other students to Rav Isser Zalman in the Land of Israel.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Rav Aharon escapes from Europe.

Guided Questions

1. The text says, “The yeshivah students had nowhere to go.” Explain why.
2. Why was Rav Aharon more worried once the Soviet Union took control of Lithuania?
3. Describe the courage of Rav Aharon as he stood up to the officers of the NKVD.
4. Why did Rav Aharon decide he had to leave Europe immediately?
5.  **Document-based question:** Study the document on page 45. What details do you notice?

CHAPTER 8: "WE MUST ACT NOW!"

SYNOPSIS Rav Aharon settles in America and spearheads rescue efforts for those trapped in Europe.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Rav Aharon tries to help the Jews of Europe.

Guided Questions



1. Describe some of the ways Rav Aharon tried to get the Jews of America to help those trapped in Europe.
2. What did Rav Aharon mean when he said, "When it comes to saving lives, we are a family"?
3. Explain why many of the Kletzk yeshivah students were sent to Siberia.
4. How did Rav Aharon continue to care for his students, even from far away?
5. How did Rav Aharon and his wife show their care for the Jews trapped in Europe?
6. Identify each of the following people, and describe the role they played in rescuing European Jews:
 - a. Rabbi Eliezer Silver
 - b. Mr. Irving Bunim
 - c. Mr. Henry Morgenthau Jr.

CHAPTER 9: REBUILDING TORAH

SYNOPSIS Rav Aharon joins the White Plains yeshivah and moves it to Lakewood, New Jersey, with dreams of reestablishing a yeshivah like the one in Kletzk.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Rav Aharon begins to rebuild Torah in America.

Guided Questions

1. What were some of the differences between European and American yeshivah life at this time?
2. Why did people laugh and tell Rav Aharon that he would never succeed in building a yeshivah in America?
3. How did Rav Aharon try to make things as comfortable as possible for the students of Lakewood?
-  4. **Document-based question:** Study the photograph on page 62. Compare and contrast the view in the picture to the town of Lakewood today.
-  5. **Document-based question:** Study the document on page 65 and find the mention of the draft board. What might this mean?

CHAPTER 10: "SAVE THE CHILDREN!"

SYNOPSIS Rav Aharon works hard to make sure Jewish children in America and Israel learn Torah as well.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out how Rav Aharon is concerned that all Jewish children learn Torah, not only those in his yeshivah.

Guided Questions

1. According to Reb Shraga Feivel, what was the goal of Torah Umesorah?
2. How did Rav Aharon help yeshivos and schools besides his own?
3. Compare Rav Aharon's responsibility for Chinuch Atzmai to his responsibility for Torah Umesorah. In what ways were the two organizations similar?

CHAPTER 11: THE VOICE OF TRUTH

SYNOPSIS Even as his communal responsibilities grow, Rav Aharon's focus on his yeshivah and on learning Torah remains the same.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about Rav Aharon's devotion to his students and to his learning.

Guided Questions

1. Describe some of the ways Rav Aharon maintained a heavy schedule of learning even with all of his communal responsibilities.
2. What were some of the ways Rav Aharon showed concern for his students, even outside the regular hours of learning?
3. Why do you think Amos Bunim succeeded in convincing the judge, even when he had no prior experience with courts or judges?
4. The text says, "Rav Aharon had an effect on people without even speaking to them directly." Why do you think this was the case?

CHAPTER 12: THE YESHIVAH GROWS

SYNOPSIS The Lakewood yeshivah begins to grow, and Rav Aharon continues to uphold the honor of Torah.

➔ **Prompt:** Read to find out about the growth of Rav Aharon’s yeshivah in Lakewood.

Guided Questions


1. Explain what Rav Aharon meant when he told his student, “You would be right if I came for Aharon Kotler. But I came to raise funds for the yeshivah.” What does this show about his character?
2. What lesson did Rav Aharon learn from the wealthy man who would only give him a fifty-dollar donation?
3. What were some ways Rav Aharon showed his students how privileged they were to be studying Torah?

CHAPTER 13: IN GOOD HANDS

SYNOPSIS Rav Aharon passes away at seventy years old and continues teaching lessons until his final moments.

→ **Prompt:** Read to find out about Rav Aharon's passing.

Guided Questions

1. What were some of the ways Rav Aharon continued to learn Torah — and to make sure others could learn — even when he was very sick?
2. Explain what the doctor meant when he said about Reb Aharon, "I don't think he's existing on anything but spiritual energy."
3. What were some of Rav Aharon's final messages and lessons before he passed away?
4. Explain what is meant by this sentence: "Even after his passing, he was still working on behalf of his people."
5.  **Document-based question:** Study the photograph on page 101. What details do you notice in the picture?

SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

Use one or more of the following activities to conclude the book.

Interview

Suppose you had a chance to interview Rav Aharon. What ten questions would you ask him? What would he answer?

Focus on Biography

Consider another biography in this series, such as *Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld* or *Mrs. Recha Sternbuch*. Compare and contrast the life and experiences of Rav Aharon to those of the subject in the selected biography. Answer the following:

- In what ways were their times similar? In what ways were their times different?
- In what ways were their rescue missions similar? In what ways were they different?
- What were some of the challenges faced by each hero that were unique to his or her time period?

Further Reading

For more information about rescue efforts during World War II, students can read *Mrs. Recha Sternbuch: Rescuer of Refugees* (Menucha Publishers, 2021) or *Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld: Hero of the Kindertransport* (Menucha Publishers, 2018).

Who Was Rav Aharon Kotler?

★ FACTS ★

Year of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Parents' Names: _____

Year of Death: _____



Rav Aharon Kotler

His major accomplishments were:



Some of his outstanding character traits were:



Biography Sketch

Physical Description

Actions

Name

His Thoughts and Feelings

What Others Say and Think about Him
