



2 KISLEV - RABBI AHARON KOTLER (1891-1962)

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R' Aharon Kotler was born in Svislovitz (Śvisłač, Belarus) in 1891. He was orphaned at the age of 10 and adopted by his uncle, R' Yitzchak Pinnes, a Dayan in Minsk. He studied in the Slabodka yeshiva in Lithuania under the "Alter of Slabodka", R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel, and R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein. After learning there, he joined his father-in-law, R' Isser Zalman Meltzer, to run the yeshiva of Slutsk.

With the outbreak of World War II, Rav Kotler and the yeshivah relocated to Vilna. Most of his students were murdered by the Nazis. He came to America in 1941 and settled in New York City's Upper West Side, and in 1949, he moved to the Borough Park neighborhood of Brooklyn.

In 1943, R' Kotler founded Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey, with 15 students. By the time of R' Kotler's death in 1962, the yeshiva had grown to 250 students. He was succeeded by his son, R' Shneur Kotler, as rosh yeshiva. By 2007 the yeshiva had grown into the largest institution of its kind in America with 5,000 students. As of 2011, Beth Medrash Govoha is run by his grandson, R' Malkiel Kotler.

Rav Kotler helped establish Chinuch Atzmai, the independent religious school system in Israel, and was the chairman of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of Agudath Israel. He chaired the Rabbinical administration board of Torah Umesorah, and was on the presidium of the Agudas HaRabbonim of the U.S. and Canada. Upon the death of his father-in-law, R' Isser Zalman Meltzer, he inherited his father-in-law's position as head of the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

Rav Kotler passed away in New York City on November 29, 1962. His funeral drew 25,000 mourners, with 200 officers from the New York City Police Department assigned to the event. Eulogies were delivered by R' Moshe Feinstein and by the Satmar rebbe, R' Yoel Teitelbaum, among others. Following the funeral, Rav Kotler's body was flown to Israel and buried on Har Hamenuchot in Jerusalem.

Provided by Shimon Lebowitz [@Jewish_History_87](#)