Born in Lithuania in 1883, Moshe Avigdor Amiel was first taught by his father at the Telz Yeshiva before proceeding to Vilna to study under the two greatest Talmudic scholars of the time – Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky. He received his ordination at the age of 18 and in 1905 was appointed Rabbi of Swieciany, where he founded a large yeshiva. In 1913, he became Rabbi of Grajewo, on the border between Russia and Germany.

It was during this time that Rabbi Amiel was acknowledged as a great public preacher and his oratorical qualities were said to affect the most hardened hearts. He became one of the first Rabbis to publicly join the Mizrachi Movement and Zionist organizations, applying his speaking and writing abilities to the cause of Religious Zionism and national questions. In 1920, he was elected as one of the delegates to represent Mizrachi of Poland at the Mizrachi World Convention in Amsterdam. There he made such an impression upon the Jewish community that he was given the post of Rabbi of Antwerp, one of the largest and richest Jewish communities of the time. He set up a system of lower yeshivot for girls and boys by creating the Jewish Day School (as it came to be known in America), as well as religious institutes of higher learning.

Realizing that he must set an example and actively fulfill his Zionist ideals, Rabbi Amiel made aliyah in 1936 to serve as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. This area had the largest Jewish population in the Yishuv and presented many challenges for him. Particularly hard was the constant need to engender good relations between the religious and non-religious segments of the community. During his leadership he set up a yeshiva high school which taught religious subjects in the morning and secular subjects in the afternoon. This yeshiva, named Yeshivat Hayishuv HaChadash, was used as the pattern for the subsequent Bnei Akiva yeshivot. After his death, the yeshiva was renamed Yeshivat HaRav Amiel.

He also continued his work on behalf of Mizrachi in Eretz Yisrael, as well as running many Torah institutions in the country. He was an author of renown who produced many works in halacha, aggada, machshava, and sermons and articles on Religious Zionism.

Rabbi Amiel wrote: “Those same Jews whose hearts are filled with love for the Jewish people and the land – Eretz Yisrael – work with all their strength for the good (of the people). For them, nothing is too hard, and if they were impelled to jump into the sea and give up their lives (they would do so). Even though there exists in their hearts a great lacking of faith and they find it hard to accept that the splitting of the Reed Sea is something true and correct, and that they do not understand that all this is part of our belief, for everything is in the hands of heaven and ‘if G-d will not build a house all our work is for naught,’ still these Jews that will not return (to our religion) should not be pushed away with both hands but rather as the left repulses the right should draw them (to you). For there is hope in their future and in the end one is dependent upon another. For just as they have returned to their people, so shall come the time when they will return to their G-d...”

... Israel is not like other nations... our redemption cannot become manifest without the use of song! ... For not only is our Holy City destroyed and our Temple in ruins, but we live in exile, driven from our Land. We have been made to wander through the whole world and to be redeemed we must indeed create something from nothing. This has never occurred before and it cannot be brought about through diplomacy. It is true that all nations appoint their own diplomats – but diplomats cannot create a country. The salvation of Israel will not come through the use of diplomacy but rather through the use of songs that extol and praise Divine lovingkindness. Only through song will the ruins of our nation and people be saved. It is not for naught that every Pesach we read Shir HaShirim and the excerpt from the Torah of Az Yashir: This is to teach us that the future Pesach will arrive through song as well. For song and freedom are not two separate entities but rather cause and effect.”