

THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF RAV KOOK

INTRODUCTION

מדרשת רחל וחיה

1. Why is Rav Kook so important to learn?

- A key 20C Jewish thinker - one of the few who engages the world of modernity (science, academia, philosophy) and grapples with its implications for today's Jews and Judaism.
- The undisputed spiritual and intellectual founder and leader of one of the most important streams of today's Orthodox world - Religious Zionism.
- To gain an appreciation and understanding of some fundamental hashkafic concepts eg kedusha.
- To see Torah from a perspective that you have never heard of or seen before.
- To develop a perspective on the religious significance of one of the most significant world events of the last 2000 years - the return of millions of Jews to Eretz Yisrael and the foundation of the State of Israel - and to anticipate its implications for the future.
- To understand the concept of Mashiach and 'Geulah' in a much more nuanced manner.
- To grow an appreciation for a world of depth, quality and complexity - of thought and writing.

2. Why is Rav Kook so difficult to learn?

- His Hebrew - vocabulary, syntax, style - is very complex and poetic - difficult even for Israelis! Much of his language is *sui generis* and predates modern Hebrew. He also writes in a very 19C style with long, complex sentences. Most printed versions of his work are without vowels and old print.
- He constantly brings allusions and quotations from across Tanach. If you don't know Nach well, you will miss a lot of what is going on.
- He also quotes broadly from the world of Midrash and Aggada, which is often a 'road less travelled'.
- His sources are often deeply kabbalistic, drawing on Zohar, the Ariz'l and especially Ramchal. Lack of familiarity with central kabbalistic concepts will make it impossible to really understand some passages.
- Many of his ideas spark off the central philosophical thought and themes of the late 19C. A deeper understanding of those ideas will enhance an appreciation of Rav Kook.
- Almost everything written about him, and analyzing his work and thought, is in Hebrew (see below).
- Most of Rav Kook's thought is totally unknown outside Israel. It is not taught in schools or learnt in Yeshivot other than in the Religious Zionist school and yeshiva system (which is very big in Israel but largely absent outside). This is partly due to language and cultural barriers, but also due to how controversial Rav Kook was (and still is) in the Charedi world at large, which still regards Rav Kook's thought with suspicion at best and sometimes direct hostility.
- However, the Modern Orthodox world is more open to Rav Kook's thought, and in the last 5 years there has been a significant increase in the amount of material available in English - see below.

3. Where can you learn Rav Kook?

- There are now hundreds of sefarim in Hebrew on the thought of Rav Kook. Many of these are written for a more beginner audience in fairly straightforward Hebrew.

The following material is all in English

Books

- Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution
<http://www.amazon.com/Rav-Kook-Mystic-Revolution-Jewish/dp/0300164246>
- Angel Among Men
http://www.amazon.com/Angel-Among-Men-Impressions-Yitzchak/dp/9657108535/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1437054771&sr=1-1&keywords=an+angel+among+men+raz
- The Philosophy of Rav Kook, Zvi Yaron
- Rav Bezalel Naor (contemp) has translated into English and written commentary on many works of Rav Kook¹
- Ben Zion Bokser (d 1984) also translated many of Rav Kook's writings in English
- Rav Kook's work on teshuva - Orot HaTeshuva - has been translated and explained by Rav Moshe Weinberger from YU in a new series 'Song of Teshuva'
- Lights on Orot - Rabbi David Samson
- The Rav Kook Siddur - see <http://orot.com/rav-kook-siddur-book-launch/>
- Religious Zionism of Rav Kook, Pinchas Polonsky
- Silver/Gold/Platinum from the Land of Israel - 3 books of R. Kook on parasha/chagim, R. Chanan Morrison
- A 155 source book on the Philosophy of Rav Kook by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein.
https://www.yu.edu/sites/default/files/legacy//uploadedFiles/Academics/Torah_Studies/IBC/Curriculum/The%20Philosophy%20of%20Rav%20Kook%20-%20IBC%20-%20JTH%202481H%20-%20yosef%20bronstein.pdf. (Download it asap while the link is live!!!)

Video/Movie

- Movie about Rav Kook - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AkOC6k-nTk>²
- Rare film footage of Rav Kook - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=11&v=vkYPBUpHWP0>
- An illustrated video shiur by R. Pini Dunner - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2t8wHOMINnE>
- An illustrated video shiur by R. Dr. Henry Abramson - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P-7u1u24Mo>

Websites

- www.ravkook.net
- www.ravkooktorah.org
- orot.com
- <http://www.atid.org/resources/art/ravkook.asp>

1. See https://www.amazon.com/s?k=bezalel+naor&i=stripbooks&crd=27BAH749V5WVQ&srefix=bezalel+%2Cstripbooks%2C279&ref=nb_sb_ss_sc_1_9
2. Or Google 'Rav Kook Incredible Rabbi'

On-line learning

- Hundreds of shiurim in English from Gush Etzion:

<https://etzion.org.il/en/search?mainSearch=rav%20Kook&subjects=6097&from=24&size=12>

- yutorah.org have 100+ audio shiurim on Rav Kook³

- Machon Meir have hundreds of video shiur on the thought of Rav Kook:

<https://meirtv.com/en/the-teachings-of-rav-kook--88c>

- Courses from YU Torah - see

[https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/977533/rabbi-dr-yosef-bronstein/introduction-to-the-thought-of-rav-kook-1-who-was-rav-kook-and-why-is-he-so-hard-to-understand-/](https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/977533/rabbi-dr-yosef-bronstein/introduction-to-the-thought-of-rav-kook-1-who-was-rav-kook-and-why-is-he-so-hard-to-understand/)

- <https://tikvahfund.org/library/rav-kooks-economic-thought/>

- <https://www.thelehrhaus.com/scholarship/rav-kook-on-culture-and-history/>

- <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-vegetarian-teachings-of-rav-kook>

- <https://en.yhb.org.il/the-secret-of-rabbi-kooks-greatness/>

- https://en-law.tau.ac.il/sites/law-english.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/Law/faculty%20members/Edrei_Arve/23%20from%20Orthodoxy%20to%20religious%20zionism.pdf (academic source)

3. In particular, see

https://www.yu.edu/sites/default/files/legacy//uploadedFiles/Academics/Torah_Studies/IBC/Curriculum/The%20Philosophy%20of%20Rav%20Kook%20-%20IBC%20-%20JTH%202481H%20-%20yosef%20bronstein.pdf