



RABBI AARON

GOLDSCHIEDER

Editor, Torah Tidbits

Why The Menorah?

Eight nights a year we light up our homes with the glowing flames of the Chanukah menorah.

This iconic symbol is arguably Judaism's most beloved.

But what does the multi-branched candelabra symbolize?

The beloved sage, mystic and poet, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, fervently believed that we are living at a time which is ripe to unify the nation of Israel. The multi-branches of the menorah, he said, represent the variety of communities and strengths that make up the Jewish people. (*Siddur Olat Reiyah*, commentary on the blessing for Chanukah)

What at first glance appears to be divergent viewpoints, are actually distinct and varied pathways that make up a majestic whole. All the branches of the Menorah are attached to a single stem. The Talmud teaches that each wick of the Temple's menorah faced the center light.

Rav Kook suggests that even the blessing that is recited on the numerous lights reflects oneness. When we light our

chanukah we recite *lehadlik ner*, "to light the candle," a single candle. Question: We light many lights each night, as many as eight, so why do we say in the blessing, "to light a single candle?" Rav Kook answers: The numerous lights are rays of a single light. The candles of the Menorah reflect, not uniformity, but the ideal vision of unity; one which incorporates and fuses together the diversity found among the Jewish nation.



At this time each year our hearts are awakened to the deep yearning for a rebuilt Jerusalem brimming with peace and brotherly love.

The above teaching adds another dimension of meaning to Rav Kook's famous dictum: "If we and the world around us became destroyed due to *sinat chinam* (a hate beyond reason); then we and the world around us will be rebuilt because of *ahavat chinam* (love beyond reason) (*Orot Hakodesh* 3, p. 344).

May we be *zoche* to the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash and the *Geulah Shleimah*. Amen. ■

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