



RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS
RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL
BAKA, JERUSALEM

Rav Kook's Chanukah Vision - Eight Teachings For Eight Nights



1. RAV KOOK'S CHANUKAH MAXIM

In 1916, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook composed a motto for each month of the Hebrew calendar. For the month of Kislev and the festival of Chanukah, he wrote:

“The Divine bolt upon the heart of the Chashmonaim splintered into sparks. When they are gathered into a single torch, they will once again be revealed.”

Like all poetry, these words lend themselves to multiple interpretations. Yet it is clear that Rav Kook is pointing toward a future vision in which the “sparks” ignited by the Chashmonaim will be regathered and will once again radiate great light.

The Chashmonaim were unique among Jewish leaders. They were Kohanim—spiritual servants of God in the Beit HaMikdash—who simultaneously took up arms and led the nation

in battle. They embodied a rare synthesis of spiritual devotion and national responsibility.

Rav Kook envisioned the reemergence of these same qualities in the rebuilding of the Jewish people: Jews sanctified both through devotion to mitzvot and through active participation in defending and rebuilding the Land of Israel. A striking contemporary expression of this ideal can be found in the Hesder Yeshiva movement, which integrates Torah study with military service and views this synthesis as an ideal fulfillment of God's will (Mo'adei HaRa'ayah, ed. Neria, p. 159).



2. A TORAH WRITTEN FOR RAV KOOK

On the evening of Rosh Chodesh Tevet—the seventh night of Chanukah in 1932—a unique gathering took place in Rav Kook's beit midrash.

A small congregation in Poland had chosen to name itself *Beit Knesset Beit Avraham* in Rav Kook's honor (his given name being Avraham). They saw themselves as disciples of Rav Kook, modeling their worldview on his teachings. In effect, they regarded themselves as chassidim of their revered Rebbe.

As a tribute, they sent the first parchment of a new Sefer Torah to Jerusalem, asking Rav Kook to write the opening letters of *Bereishit*. The parchment would then be returned to Poland to be completed by a scribe.

NEW NOTE PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS
A NEW MUSICAL FOR WOMEN

 **DAVID**
THE
SERVANT KING

Get your early bird tickets at
DavidServantKing.com

After the gathering ended and everyone had departed, Rav Kook turned to his close friend and disciple, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, and confided that although he was deeply moved by the gesture, he did not wish to be the rebbe of any particular group:

“I want to be connected to all of *Klal Yisrael*. I never want to be severed from the nation as a whole.” (ibid., pp. 169–170)



3. A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

The Chanukah menorah is lit in a way that fulfills the principle of *pirsumei nisa*—publicizing the miracle. The lights are meant to be seen by others, whether placed in a window or at the doorway.

What is unique about Chanukah that led the Sages to emphasize public display so strongly?

Rav Kook explains that the Jewish people bear a message for all of humanity: a vision of peace, righteousness, kindness, and truth. During the long years of exile, circumstances forced the menorah indoors, limiting its radiance to the family and immediate community. With the return of the Jewish people to their Land, however, the light of Torah can once again shine outward.

Thus, on Chanukah—the festival that celebrates Israel’s revitalization and the rededication of the Beit HaMikdash—the Sages embedded within the mitzvah of lighting the menorah the Jewish mission to illuminate the world with the redemptive values of Torah (Mo’adei HaRa’ayah, pp. 161–162).



4. PURE OIL WITHIN EVERY JEW

Rav Kook taught that every Jew carries within their soul an aspect of priesthood. This is reflected in the Torah’s description of the Jewish people as “*a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*.”



077-2050015
052-2678749
golanechasim@gmail.com



Meir Golan

ARNONA: 5 room apartment, 125m, new and upgraded, great view, 4,250,000 NIS

OLD KATAMON: 4-room garden apartment, 96m, high ceilings large garden, bright, 5,800,000 NIS

REHAVIA: 4 room apartment large terraces (Suka), great views, elevator, bright, parking, 5,600,000 NIS

The flask of oil that contained enough to burn for only one night, yet miraculously lasted eight, symbolizes the innate purity embedded within every Jewish soul. Each Jew possesses a wellspring of sanctity and spiritual potential far greater than we often imagine (ibid., p. 166).

Rav Kook’s beloved student and colleague, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, added that when we approach the menorah to light its flames, we are reminded that every Jew possesses kohen-like qualities—royalty, dignity, and spiritual elevation. No enemy or foreign influence can ever blemish the pure and exalted *neshama* of a Jew (ibid.).



5. A MITZVAH OF THE HOME

The mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah is defined as a household obligation: “*One candle for a man and his household*”



(Rambam, Hilchot Chanukah). Its prescribed placement—at the entrance of the home, facing outward—further underscores this focus.

Why does Chanukah place such emphasis on the home?

Rav Kook explains that the Greek decrees sought to uproot the Jewish way of life, whose foundation is Torah, modesty, and purity—particularly within the family unit (*Ein Ayah*, Shabbat 23a). The Greeks targeted the sanctity of the Jewish home in an effort to dismantle the moral core of the nation.

Midrashic sources describe harsh decrees aimed at humiliating Jewish families and eroding their purity, including prohibitions against *mikveh* observance and violations of marital sanctity (Ma’aseh Chanukah, Otzar Midrashim).

Against this backdrop, the Sages’ decision to anchor the mitzvah of the menorah in the home becomes deeply meaningful. The Chanukah lights proclaim that the sanctity of the Jewish home endures eternally. The unique *shalom bayit* that characterizes Jewish family life stands as one of the most beautiful expressions of our people’s spiritual distinctiveness.



6. THE HOLIDAY THAT LOOKS FORWARD

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik often observed

that Jewish festivals are typically celebrated by reenacting the past. On Pesach we eat matzah to taste the bread of slavery; on Shavuot we stand for the reading of the Ten Commandments to relive the revelation at Sinai; on Sukkot we dwell in huts reminiscent of those used in the wilderness.

Rav Kook suggested that Chanukah is different. While rooted in history, its primary emphasis is forward-looking. Lighting the menorah in our homes offers a living vision of the rebuilt Beit HaMikdash and the golden Menorah once again aflame.

Chanukah calls upon us to direct our gaze toward national renewal: a return to the Land of Israel, restored sovereignty, the rededication of the altar (*chanukat haMizbeach*), and ultimately the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.



7. WHY MULTIPLE LEVELS?

The mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah is unique in that the Sages established multiple tiers of fulfillment. At its most basic level, one fulfills the obligation by lighting a single candle each night. Beyond this are the higher standards of *mehadrin* (beautifying the mitzvah) and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* (the most complete beautification). Why did the Sages choose to structure this mitzvah in such a layered fashion?

Rav Kook explains that these multiple levels mirror the historical reality of the Chanukah redemption itself. The Jewish people were not unified by a single motivation. Some joined the revolt against the Syrian Greeks out of a national aspiration—to reclaim political independence and restore Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. Others, led by the Chashmonaim, were driven by a deeper spiritual calling: to restore the sanctity

DO YOU SUFFER FROM JOINT PAIN?

“Stem Cells”

An in-office mini-liposuction can provide the cells to treat this condition naturally



FOR INFO: KNEE@SZMC.ORG.IL
WWW.DOCTORZINGER.COM/ARTHRITIS

of Torah, the Temple, and the inner spiritual life of the nation.

Because the longing for redemption expressed itself on different planes, the Sages embedded this diversity into the mitzvah itself. Each level of lighting gives expression to a legitimate yearning within the people. In doing so, the Sages affirmed that even aspirations that fall short of the highest spiritual ideal still possess value and contribute to the unfolding redemption.

Rav Kook clearly saw this principle as essential for understanding the modern return of the Jewish people to their land. Not every movement or individual may be motivated by the most refined spiritual vision, yet all who act *מתוך אהבת האומה*—out of love for the Jewish people—participate in the redemptive process. While we strive toward *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, the most perfected expression of light, we must also recognize and honor the light generated by others who, each in their own way, seek the rebuilding of the Land and the renewal of Jewish life within it.



8. A FINAL WORD: RAV KOOK AND ELIEZER BEN-YEHUDA

On the second day of Chanukah in 1922, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda—father of modern Hebrew—visited Rav Kook. Ben-Yehuda often consulted Rav Kook on the roots and deeper meanings of Hebrew words, and on that day the two discussed a particular term at length, drawing on both the revealed and hidden dimensions of Torah.

As Ben-Yehuda rose to leave, Rav Kook gently said:

“Mr. Ben-Yehuda, perhaps you would consider drawing closer to a life of commitment and engaging in *teshuvah*?”

SINCE 1974

Zimuki

JERUSALEM REAL ESTATE

****SALE!**

NEW LISTING – Old Katamon, Nili St.
 Elegant 3BR / 127 sqm apartment on a quiet, prestigious street.
 Includes parking, storage and elevator.
 Asking price: NIS 5,900,000

****SALE!**

NEW LISTING- Old Katamon – HaGdud Haivri St. GARDEN APT
 One-of-a-kind architectural design!
 Luxury garden apartment – 150 sqm + 50 sqm private garden.
 4 bedrooms + study, 3 full bathrooms, private entrance and parking.
 Pricing upon request.

****SALE!**

ARNONA, SHOFET CHAIM COHEN St.
 Beautiful 2-bedroom, 90 sqm apartment with two Sukkah balconies totaling 35 sqm.
 Includes Shabbat elevator, private parking, and a luxurious modern building.
 Asking price: NIS 3,150,000

*****FOR RENT!**

– RECHAVIA – Ben Maimon St.
 This luxury 2-bedroom, 90 sqm apartment in a new building is beautifully renovated and truly stands out.
 Fully furnished and equipped, with Sukkah balcony and private parking.
 Available from December for long-term rental.
 Asking price: NIS 13,000 / month

Ruth Abrahami - 054-8070677
02-6638221

Ben-Yehuda replied simply, “*Ulai*”—“perhaps.”

That evening, only hours after this encounter, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda passed away at the age of sixty-four.

Rav Yitzchak Arieli, who was present during the visit, later noted together with Rav Kook that the Talmud teaches that even saying “perhaps I will repent” is considered akin to actual repentance (Kiddushin 49b). Thus, Ben-Yehuda’s final word may itself have constituted *teshuvah* on the day of his death (Simcha Raz, *Angel Among Men*). ■



Rabbi Goldscheider’s most recent OU Press Publication, “Torah United” on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.