

## RABBI'S MESSAGE

### Blending Separation with Unity

*Havdallah* has become my favorite ceremony. Ending Shabbat with wine, spices and a multi-wicked candle, we also use this beautiful service to complete Yom Kippur. The final blessing praises G-D for “separating the holy from the ordinary.” *Havdallah* comes from the Hebrew “*havdil*,” or separation, the same word that is used in the Genesis story of Creation, when G-d separates light from darkness and land from water. The whole world is about separation, but even separation includes closeness. Night ends and day begins gradually, not with the sudden flick of a switch. And even though Shabbat ends officially when three stars are visible in the sky, the symbols we use – wine, spices and fire – all have a lingering effect. Drink wine and you can feel the comfort of sacred tradition. Aromatic spices remain in the nostrils, and when the candle is extinguished, the puff of smoke and glow remain. The holiness of Shabbat (or Yom Kippur) blends into the following days, staying with us as long as we allow.

Try this: With a multi-wicked *havdallah* candle, separate one wick and light it on its own. The spark is small and individual, still quite beautiful. Hold the candle until the warmth catches on to another wick. Before long, all the wicks catch on and the flame is bright and strong.

In today's world, we find many reasons to separate ourselves from others. Religious practice and ideology, political philosophy, economic and cultural barriers all become blockades to closeness. It is as if individual wicks from a candle believe that THEIR flame is the most important spark.

Now try this: Get close enough to someone who has some very different ideas than you have. Try to feel the warmth of the soul, with no expectation of changing someone or being changed by their philosophy. Just try to understand the deep human quality that lies beneath the surface. Try not to define others by their labels and try not to be defined by your own. And on Yom Kippur, when the *havdallah* candle is extinguished, the Holy Day ends, and we break the fast, think about unity rather than separation. Think about blending the divine spark of your soul with other souls, offering the same kind of understanding and mercy that we hope our Holy Creator bestows upon us and our loved ones. Catching that extra little light from each other will make a truly beautiful flame for the New Year.

L'shalom,

*Rabbi Dan Gordon*