



How to Celebrate Chanukah:



General Laws and Customs:

1. There is no requirement to have a festive meal on Chanukah. According to some opinions, there is a Mitzvah to have festive meals to celebrate the rededication of the Temple. In order for such a meal to be considered a *Seudas Mitzvah* [Mitzvah meal], one should sing songs and praises to Hashem and talk about the great miracles.
2. It is customary to eat foods fried in oil such as *latkes* and doughnuts. It is also customary to eat dairy foods.
3. The blessing on eating *Latkes* depends on how they were prepared. If they are made from potato flour, the blessing is *Shehakol*. If they are made from grated potatoes and you can recognize pieces of potato, the blessing is "*Borei Pri Hoadama*." The blessing for doughnuts is *Borei Minei Mezonos*."
4. It is forbidden to fast on Chanukah, even if one has a *Yahrtzeit* for a parent.
5. It is customary not to visit graves of relatives on Chanukah. We do not say the "*E-l Molei Rachamim*" prayer for the deceased. It is permitted to visit graves of Tzaddikim.
6. It is customary for everyone to play with a *Dreidel*.
7. There is a special Mitzvah to give charity on Chanukah, and in particular to support needy Torah students. This is where the widespread custom of giving Chanukah *Gelt* to children came from.
8. ***There is no Jewish source that discusses a concept of "gift giving" on Chanukah.***
9. There is a Mitzvah to devote extra time to Torah study on Chanukah.
10. All forms of work are permitted on Chanukah. Women have a custom to refrain from work every evening for the first ½ hour while the Menorah is lit. The main custom is for women to refrain from heavy household chores such as laundering, house cleaning, ironing, and sewing.

Prayers on Chanukah:

1. The whole *Hallel* is said every day of Chanukah.
2. *Tachanun* and *Lamnatzeach* are omitted.
3. The *Al Hanisim* prayer is added to the Amida during the blessing of *Modim*. It is also inserted to the Birchas Hamazon in the second blessing. If one totally forgets to say this prayer, one is not required to repeat the Amida or Birchas Hamazon.
4. There is no special prayer added to the blessing of *Al Mamichya*."

The Menorah, Oil, and Wicks:

1. There is a concept of "*Hidur Mitzvah*" [beautifying the Mitzvah] on Chanukah. Therefore, one should try to obtain as beautiful a Menorah as possible, according to one's means. The order of preference for materials of a Menorah is silver, copper, other metals, glass, wood, and china.
2. One may not use eggshells or hollowed out materials to make the Menorah, since this disgraces the Mitzvah.
3. The Menorah lights should stand in a straight line and all at the same height. Therefore, one should not buy a Menorah whose branches are in a staggered position or of differing heights.

4. One may light without the use of a Menorah, since the Menorah enhances the Mitzvah, but is not essential for its fulfillment. A person could light with oil using several cups placed in a straight line. If candles are being used, they may be fixed in a row onto a tray or similar surface.
5. A Menorah does not need to be taken to the Mikveh.
6. It is preferable to use oil when performing the Mitzvah of lighting, since the miracle in the Temple happened with oil. Olive oil is the most preferred type of oil since the miracle happened with olive oil. Other oils or paraffin are acceptable if they burn with a clear flame. Solidified oil is considered equally good as regular oil, since it melts as it burns. One is also permitted to light with candles.
7. Although the oil is only being burned and not eaten, one should use only kosher oil. 100% virgin oil is acceptable even without a kosher certification.
8. One should not light with a mixture of oil and candles. All the lights should be either oil or candles. However, you may use oil on one night and candles on another night.
9. All wicks may be used, but the most ideal are cotton, wool, or linen.
10. According to the basic law, it is not necessary to replace the wicks every night. However, there are different customs regarding if one should use new wicks every night.
11. One may not disgrace used wicks by throwing them away in the garbage. One should wrap them in a bag before discarding them.
12. Electric lights are not valid for the Mitzvah of the Menorah.

Who Lights the Menorah? :

1. According to the basic law, it is sufficient to light one Menorah per household, irrespective of the number of family members. However, the *Ashkenazic* custom is to beautify the Mitzvah by having each male member of the family light a separate Menorah. A woman living on her own is required to light a Menorah.
2. Although the custom is not to do so, daughters may light their own Menorah in addition to the father's lighting. The wife should not light since she is considered one unit with her husband.
3. The custom is to educate boys to light their own menorahs from the age of six or seven. In families where daughters also light, girls of six or seven may light their own Menorah, although they have no obligation to do so. Children should be given oil or candles that will stay lit for the required length of time.
4. If the husband is out of town, either the wife or a son over Bar Mitzvah should light the Menorah on behalf of the family.

Where to Light? :

1. There is a concept of "*Pirsumei Nisa*" [publicizing the miracle] of Chanukah. Therefore, the most ideal place to light the Menorah is outside the door of the house that faces the street. When lighting outside, the Menorah should be placed in a protective glass case.
2. The Menorah should be placed on the left side of the entrance [opposite the Mezuzah]. Ideally, the Menorah should be placed in the space of the doorway, or at least within approximately 10 cm. of the doorpost. [If there is no Mezuzah on the entrance, the Menorah should be placed on the right side.]
3. Ideally, the Menorah should be placed so that the flame is above 30 cm. from the ground and lower than one meter from the ground. This demonstrates that the Menorah has been lit for the Mitzvah.
4. If the Menorah will not be seen from the street if it is placed next to the door, then it should be lit inside the house by a window that can be seen from the street.

5. When many people are lighting, you only require one Menorah to be lit by the outside entrance. Others should light by the window facing the street.
6. If a person has neither a door nor a window that can be seen from the street, then the Menorah should be placed on the left side of the doorway leading into the room that is most used during the evening.
7. Several people may light by the same window, but effort should be made to space the Menorahs apart, so that one can easily see the number of lights in each Menorah. If several suitable windows are available, it is preferable for each person to light by a different window.
8. In case of fire hazards or if there are little children and it is dangerous to light in the above mentioned places, one should light on a table that is safe and out of reach of the little children.

When to Light? :

1. There are two main customs about when is the correct time to light: a) sunset, b) at nightfall. ***For this year of 5781, that means that sunset is between 4:40- 4:41 PM during Chanukah, and nightfall is between 5:30 - 5:31 PM during Chanuka.*** Some opinions suggest a compromise and recommend lighting ten to twenty minutes after sunset. ***However, on the second night of Chanuka, which is on Saturday night, one must light after nightfall.***
2. If at all possible, a person should attempt to light within ½ hour after nightfall. If this is not possible, he may light any time during the evening until Halachik dawn. Working parents may light later upon arriving at home when the whole family is present.
3. If you or your family leave the house, before Plag Hamincha, for the evening, you should light at home upon your return.
4. If your family will be sleeping over somewhere else, you must light in that place or become a partner in the host's lighting, by paying for a portion of the Chanuka lights
5. If the entire night passed without lighting, the Mitzvah has been lost and it cannot be made up. On the next night, he should light the same number as anyone else, even though he missed a night.
6. If one lights at nightfall or later, the lights must be able to burn for at least ½ hour. If one lights before nightfall, they must be able to burn until ½ hour after nightfall.
7. It is customary to leave the lights burn themselves out. However, if it is necessary [e.g. everyone is leaving and there could be risk of fire] one may extinguish the lights after the required ½ hour.
8. If sufficient oil or candles were placed in the Menorah when it was lit, the Mitzvah has been fulfilled, even if the lights went out within the required time. Although one is not obligated to rekindle the lights, it is correct to do so. (except on Shabbos) The blessings should not be repeated when relighting the Menorah.

Lighting the Menorah:

1. According to the basic requirement, it is sufficient to kindle one light each night. However, the universally accepted custom is to beautify the Mitzvah by kindling one light on the first night and adding an additional light each night, until eight lights are kindled on the eighth night.
2. One should begin on the first night by lighting from the right end of the Menorah as one faces it. This applies whether the Menorah is placed next to the doorway, inside the doorway, or by a window.
3. Each night, an additional light is placed next to those of the previous night, ***gradually filling up the Menorah towards the left. When lighting the Menorah, one kindles the newest light first, i.e. the left-most one and proceed to light from left to right.***
4. When lighting, one should stand close to the newest light which is kindled first, slightly to the left of the lights. When lighting in this fashion, one does not pass over the lights before kindling the left-most first.

5. One is required to light a *Shamash* [additional light], since the lights of the Menorah are holy and one may not derive any personal benefit from them.
6. The Ashkenazic custom is to light the *Shamash* before the blessings are recited. After reciting the blessings, the *Shamash* is used for kindling the Chanukah lights and is then placed in the Menorah.
7. It is customary to use a candle for the *Shamash*. However, oil is also acceptable for the *Shamash*.
8. The *Shamash* should be placed away from the other lights, to distinguish it from them. If the *Shamash* is close to the other lights it should be placed higher than the rest. If this is difficult, it may be placed lower. If candles are being used, one may use a longer candle for the *Shamash*.
9. If several Menorahs are lit, each one still requires a *Shamash*.
10. Before beginning to light, the head of the household should call together all the members of the family to watch the lighting.
11. On the first night of Chanukah, three blessings are recited. See Artsroll Siddur pg. 782. On the following nights, only the first two blessings are recited.
- 12. *The lights should only be kindled after all the blessings have been recited.***
13. One should not speak until all the lights have been kindled unless the conversation concerns the Mitzvah.
14. After lighting, one should not remove the flame of the *Shamash* from the wick until most of it [which extends above the oil] is lit.
15. After the first light has been kindled, it is customary to sing “*Haneros Hallalu,*” while kindling the remaining lights.
16. After “*Haneros Hallalu,*” the custom is to sing “*Maoz Tzur.*”
17. After the Menorah has been lit, it should not be moved to another location, unless a sudden fire hazard has developed.
18. Strictly speaking it is not necessary to remain by the lights for the first ½ hour, since the Mitzvah is fulfilled at the moment of lighting. However, some have the custom to remain by the lights whenever possible. It is a great spiritual benefit to gaze at the Chanuka lights.
19. It is forbidden to have any personal benefit from the lights, such as: a) reading by their light, b) eating a meal by their light, and 3) lighting a candle from their flames. One may not even eat a Mitzvah meal or learn Torah by their light. *Only if another light is lit in the room are such activities permitted.*
20. One should not kindle one Chanukah light [or the *Shamash*] from another one, for the same Menorah or a different one. The *Shamash* is the light designated for kindling or re-kindling all the other lights.
21. Oil that remains in the Menorah at the end of the night may be reused the next evening. Any remaining oil in the Menorah after the eighth day may not be used for anything else. [It is even forbidden to use such oil for another Mitzvah e.g. Shabbos lights.] It should be burned. The same is true for the used wicks at the end of Chanukah.
22. Leftover oil in the bottle that has not been designated for the Mitzvah of lighting may be used for any purpose.

Shabbos Issues:

1. Since kindling the Chanukah lights take up time, and Friday winter afternoons are short, one should be extra careful to leave work earlier than usual in order to fulfill all the Mitzvos properly before Shabbos.
2. On Friday afternoon, one should preferably daven Mincha before lighting the Menorah. If this is not possible, one may daven Mincha after lighting the Menorah.
3. The Chanukah Menorah should be lit before the Shabbos lights.

4. Ideally, the wife should light the Shabbos lights only after the Chanukah lights have been lit. However, if time is short she may kindle the Shabbos lights as soon as her husband has kindled one Chanukah light. She also need not wait for other Menorahs to be lit, if time is short.
5. If the husband is not ready to light the Menorah and time is short, the wife may light the Shabbos lights first, and the husband may still light the Menorah afterwards, provided it is still before sunset.
6. The optimal time is to light the Shabbos lights 18 minutes before sunset; and to complete all the Chanukah lighting before the Shabbos lights. The earliest time to light Chanukah or Shabbos lights is 1 ¼ Halachik hours before sunset. ***It is forbidden to light Chanukah or Shabbos lights after sunset.***
7. The Chanukah lights must be capable of burning until ½ hour after nightfall. **This year in 5781, sunset on Friday is at 4:40 PM. And nightfall is at 5:30 PM. Shabbos candles must be lit by 4:22 PM, and the Chanukah candles must be lit before that. The Chanukah candles must burn from before 4:22 PM until at least 6:00 PM. Therefore, on Friday afternoon one must be especially careful to use sufficient oil or long candles for at least 1½ hours. It is strictly forbidden to kindle on Friday afternoon the standard small candles or small quantities of oil which only light for ½ hour.**
8. Young children, who light on Friday afternoon, should preferably light with candles or oil that will burn for 1 1/2 hours as well.
9. On Saturday night, the main custom at home is to recite *Havdalah* before lighting the Menorah. Some have the custom to light the Menorah first.
10. A person who lights the Menorah first may not use the lights for *Havdalah* since it is forbidden to benefit from the Chanukah lights, even for another Mitzvah.

There are three Brachos (blessings) which are recited when the Chanukah candles are lit.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.**

1. "Baruch ata Ado-nai, Elo-heinu Melech ha'olam, Asher kid'shanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah"

Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us to Kindle the Chanukah light.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים
לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ, בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֵמַן הַזֶּה.**

2. "Baruch ata Ado-nai, Elo-heinu Melech ha'olam, She'asah nisim la'avoseinu, bayamim ha'hem baz'man hazeh"

Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, King of the universe, Who has wrought miracles for our forefathers, in those days at this season.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהִחַיֵּנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ
וְהִגַּעְנוּ לְזֵמַן הַזֶּה.**

3. **Recited on the first night only**

"Baruch ata Ado-nai, Elo-heinu Melech ha'olam, She'hecheyanu, vekiyemanu vehigi'anu laz'man hazeh"

Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

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