

HALOCHOS OF CHANUKAH

- Chanukah begins on the evening of the 25th of Kislev and continues for eight days.
- For the entire eight days of Chanukah it is forbidden to fast or to eulogize.
- It is permitted to work; however it is customary for women not to work for at least the first half hour of the candles' burning, and some have the custom not to work for the entire time of burning. The types of activities that are forbidden are things like sewing and laundry etc. (Cooking is permitted.)
- There is no obligation to have festive meals; however it is customary to celebrate by eating special meals anyway, because of the fact that the dedication of the Beis Hamikdosh and Mizbeiach took place during Chanukah.
- It is customary to sing during the meals songs that thank and praise Hashem. To sing and speak about Torah makes the meal into a *seudas mitzvah*, a meal of religious significance.
- It is customary to eat milk foods because Yehudis, daughter of Yochanan the kohen Godol, was taken to be defiled by the Greek ruler Holofernes. She fed him cheese (to make him thirsty) and wine (to quench his thirst); and after getting him drunk she killed him. This was one of the events that sparked the Maccabean uprising. Food fried in oil is also eaten to commemorate the miracle of the Menorah. Latkes and donuts are the most common foods.
- One should not fast during Chanukah, even on the occasion of a parent's *yarhzeit* (anniversary of death).



- The festivities of Chanukah should be combined with study of Torah. Although many people have a custom to play card games on Chanukah, the Mishna Berurah states that, "He who cares for his soul should not involve himself in card games."
- It is obligatory to light candles, and one should even borrow money to fulfil this mitzvah. If a poor person needs money for Chanukah candles the community is obligated to provide for him.
- The minimum obligation is that every household should have one candle burning every night. It is customary to be scrupulous regarding this *mitzvah*: to have one candle on the first night and an additional candle every night (1-8), and for everyone in the house as well.
- Any type of oil is acceptable for use in the *menorah*, however, it is best to use olive oil. The oil should not be made of a forbidden substance, nor should it be something from which it is forbidden to derive benefit.
- The *menorah* should be similar to the *Menorah* in the Temple and hence most authorities forbid using electric lights or gas lamps.

- The light should be clear, and the wicks should not flicker
- Wax candles are also acceptable, providing they have a single wick.
- All wicks are acceptable, but it is best to use cotton. The same wicks may be used over and over again.
- It is correct to have a *Menorah* of glass or metal if one is lighting with oil, since other substances such as clay become disgusting after one use. If one can afford it, it is correct to buy a beautiful *Menorah*.
- If one is using candles a *Menorah* is not necessary.
- If a number of people are lighting in one household they should make a slight separation between their *menorahs* so that there is no confusion to the observer as to the number of candles.
- Ideally, the *Menorah* should be placed outside the house to the left of the entrance. Since anti-Semitism was so common throughout Jewish history it became customary among many communities to place the *Menorah* inside the house, near the entrance or on the table. In many families it is the custom to place the *menorah* in a window facing the public, especially where many people share one entrance (e.g., apartment building). In Israel it is customary to light outside in a special box that prevents the flames from blowing out.
- The *menorah* should be no lower than three *tfachim* from the floor (approx. 10.5 inches or 27cm) and should be no higher than 20 *amos* from ground level (35.5 ft or 10.8 m). Ideally, it should be about 10 *tfachim* high (35 inches or 90 cm).
- The *Menorah* should have all the candle or wicks on the same level, none higher or lower than the others.
- It is customary to have an additional candle (the *shamash*) with which to light the other candles and in order to use its light. The *shamash* should be placed in a way that shows that it is not one of the Chanukah candles.
- It is forbidden to derive benefit from the light of the *Menorah* just as it was forbidden to derive benefit from the *Menorah* in the Beis Hamikdosh, and also in order to show that its purpose of the *Menorah* is for a *Mitzvah*, not just for illumination.
- It is preferable to have the candles in a straight line, and not in a semi-circle, however it is permitted to have them in a semi-circle providing each candle is clearly separated from the others.
- It is prohibited to light the *shamash* from the Chanukah candles.
- Left over wicks and oils should be destroyed after Chanukah (except for unused oil left in bottle) since they may not be used for anything else. One should not store the

used wicks and oil for the next year, since there is a probability that it will be used for profane purposes by accident.

- There are different customs as to the lighting of the *Menorah*. Some light at sunset (shkiya). Some light about ten minutes after sunset and some light 1/2 hour after. Some specifically light after the evening service is recited (*Maariv*). Ideally a person should follow the custom of his father. If this is not known or is inapplicable for any reason, one should follow the custom of the local community.
- It is obligatory to put in enough oil, or a long enough candle to burn for at least 1/2 hour after nightfall (i.e. the appearance of three medium size stars).
- In exceptional circumstances one may light 1 ¼ hours before sunset with a blessing. (However one should be careful to put in more oil or to use longer candles). If possible it is better to appoint an agent to light candles at the correct time, than to light early.
- If one forgot or was not able to light at the correct time, one may light as long as people are still awake in the house in which one is lighting.
- One should prepare the wicks and candles etc. before *Maariv* (if you light after) or well before the time of lighting in order to light the *Menorah* at the correct time.
- It is best to light in the presence of many people in order to publicise the miracle.
- On the first night three *brachos*, blessings are recited. "*Lehadlik ner shel Chanukah*", "*She asa nissim*" and "*Shehecheyanu*". .
- On the other nights only the first two blessings are said.
- All the blessings should be recited before actually lighting the candles. First light the *Shamash* before the blessings to avoid delay. It is forbidden to speak between the recitation of the blessings and the completion of candle lighting.
- "*Haneiros Halalu*" is recited either during or after the lighting of the additional candles.
- "*Maoz tsur yeshuasy*" then sung.
- Place first candle on the extreme right of the *Menorah*. On the second night add a candle on the left. Light the newest candle first and proceed to the right.
- There are different customs regarding the placement of the candles, some follow the right and left of the observer from outside, some follow the right and left of the person lighting inside.
- Do not remove the *Shamash* from the wick until the flame catches on most of the wick.
- One does not add candles if they forgot to light on any night.



- The *Menorah* should not be moved after it has been lit.
- If the *Menorah* was lit in accordance with the requirements of Jewish law and it was extinguished, one is not obligated to relight it, but one may relight it without reciting a blessing.
- If the *Menorah* was not lit properly in the first place, or was lit in a windy place and blew out then one is obligated to relight if it went out within 1/2 hour after nightfall.
- On Friday afternoon, the Chanukah candles should be lit before the Shabbat candle-lighting time (if one accepted Shabbat early, it is forbidden to light Chanukah candles). *Mincha* should be said before lighting, if possible.
- Remember to put in more oil or bigger candles on Friday, so that they burn 1/2 hour after nightfall. Try to light just before the Shabbos candles, (without of course delaying the lighting of the Shabbos candles)
- When lighting on Saturday night, some authorities say that one should light Chanukah candles before *Havdalah*, others say after *Havdalah*. One should follow their family custom in this. (Mishna Berurah 681:2 and Aruch HaShulchan 681:2). One may not use the *Menorah* as the candle for *Havdalah*.
- If one is a guest at someone's house (and staying there), one should give the owner a small amount of money to buy a portion in their candles and one may fulfil the obligation through the owner. Alternatively the guest may light his own *Menorah*.
- If one is eating out then one should light the *Menorah* at their place of residence.
- During morning prayers, *Shacharis*, one should recite the full *Hallel* every day.
- "*Al hanissim*" the special paragraph of prayers for Chanukah is added in the silent prayers, *Shmoneh Esreh* and also in Bentching. If one forgot to say this addition, one should not repeat either *Shmoneh Esreh* or Bentching.
- It is customary to light a *Menorah* in the Shul every evening. It is placed at the southern wall of the Shul, in imitation of the *Menorah* in the Beis Hamikdosh.