

Laws of Chanukah

- **Start and Duration:** Chanukah begins on the evening of the 25th of Kislev and lasts for eight days.

- **Festive Meals:** There is no obligation to have festive meals during Chanukah.

- **Minimum Obligation:** Every household must have at least one candle or light bulb burning each night of Chanukah. It is customary to light one candle on the first night and add one additional candle each night (1-8). Among Ashkenazim, it is common for every member of the household to light their own menorah.

- **Types of Lights:** Any type of oil or candle may be used, but olive oil or wax candles are preferred. Electric menorahs are acceptable because the mitzvah focuses on the light itself, not fire.

- **The Shamash:** There is no need for a Shamash (extra candle) if other lighting is present in the room. The Shamash ensures that the Menorah is not the sole source of light, which is rarely an issue today with electric lighting.

- **Placement of the Menorah:** Traditionally, the Menorah was placed outside the home, to the left of the entrance. Due to historical antisemitism, the Rabbis instructed lighting indoors. Today, it is generally better to light the Menorah inside, not necessarily near a window.

- **Menorah Placement in Public Spaces:** In yeshivot and seminaries, menorahs are often placed in dining rooms at windows facing public streets. In dormitories, hospitals, nursing homes, or hotel rooms, lighting open flames may pose a fire hazard and should be avoided. A single electric bulb, flashlight, or even a phone light can suffice for the mitzvah.

- **Air Travel:** If on an airplane, light a flashlight, phone light, or overhead light for 30 minutes.

- **Prohibition of Benefit:** It is forbidden to derive benefit from the Menorah's light, both to honor the Temple Menorah and to show that its purpose is for a mitzvah, not illumination.

- **Menorah Shape:** Candles are usually straight across. Candles may also be arranged in a semi-circle.

- **Timing of Lighting:** Customs vary: some light at sunset, others ten minutes after, half an hour after, or after the Maariv prayer. The essential requirement is to light after dark; no need to stress about precise timing. Ignore the noise.

- **Duration of Burning:** Candles/lights must burn for at least 30 minutes after nightfall (when three medium stars are visible).

- **Early Lighting:** If necessary, one may light as early as 1 ¼ hours before sunset, provided extra oil or longer candles are used. Appointing an agent to light at the correct time is preferable.

- **One Candle Per Household:** If one person lights on behalf of the household, the obligation is fulfilled, even if others are not present.

- **Blessings:** On the first night, three blessings are recited:

1. *Lehadlik ner shel Chanukah*
2. *She'asa Nissim*
3. *Shehecheyanu*

On subsequent nights, only the first two blessings are recited.

- **Order of Lighting:** Blessings should be recited before lighting. After lighting, it is customary to recite *Haneirot Halalu*. Place the first candle on the far right of the Menorah. Add a candle to the left each night, lighting the newest candle first and proceeding to the right.

- **Relighting:** If the candles were lit properly but extinguished, there is no obligation to relight them, though one may relight them without a blessing.

- **Shabbat Timing:** On Friday afternoon, light Chanukah candles before Shabbat candles. Mincha should ideally be recited first. Ensure the candles burn for at least 30 minutes after nightfall by using extra oil or larger candles.

- **Motzei Shabbat Lighting:** On Saturday night, Chanukah candles may be lit either before or after Havdalah. Ideally, say Havdalah first. Do not use the Menorah as the Havdalah candle. Also, don't forget that the Menorah candles should have only one wick, while the Havdalah candle has many.

- **Guests:** A guest staying at someone's home can contribute a small amount of money to share in the household's menorah lighting or light their own menorah. If he/she does not contribute, it is fine too.

- **Hallel and Prayers:** During morning prayers (*Shacharit*), the full *Hallel* is recited daily. The *Al Hanissim* paragraph is added in the *Shmoneh Esreh/Amida* (silent prayer) and Grace After Meals (*Birkat Hamazon*). If forgotten, one does not repeat the prayer.

- **Synagogue Menorah:** A Menorah is customarily lit in the synagogue every evening, placed on the southern wall to reflect the placement of the Temple Menorah.