CHANUKA

INTRODUCTION TO CHANUKA

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Chanuka commemorates the miracle of God's saving the Jews during the time of the Greek empire. The Greeks wanted to destroy Judaism and Jewish practices and have the Jews follow the Greek culture and religion. A small group of Jews defeated the Greek army, which was the world's greatest military force at the time. Contrast *Chanuka* with *Purim* (on *Purim*, the Jews' physical lives were in danger while on *Chanuka*, their religion was being threatened).

CHANUKA: BACKGROUND

Chanuka: Main Miracle

The main miracle of *Chanuka* was in defeating the Greeks; the oil's burning for eight days was secondary.

Chanuka: Why Eight Days

Eight days were required for the people who had contact with dead people to become ritually pure in order to make new olive oil.

Chanuka: Why Asher Kidshanu

Chazal have the authority to make laws, so we say "Who sanctified us with His *mitzvot* and commanded us" (*asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu)* for *Chanuka* blessings and other purposes that *Chazal* instituted after the *Torah* was given.

CHANUKA: CUSTOMS

Chanuka: Customs: Foods

It is a non-binding custom to eat potato pancakes *(latkes)* on *Chanuka*; in Israel, it is also a non-binding custom to eat jelly-filled doughnuts *(sufganiot)*.

CHANUKA: CANDLES

CHANUKA CANDLES: MEANING

Chanuka: Candles: Meaning

The reason for lighting *Chanuka* candles is to publicize the *Chanuka* miracle (*pirsumei nisa*).

CHANUKA: CANDLES: WHAT TO LIGHT

Chanuka: Candles: What To Light: Menora Shape

All eight candle holders of a *chanuka menora* must be on the same level. The *menora* itself may be curved horizontally.

The *shamash* must be slightly raised or lowered or to the side of the *menora* or in the center, as long as it clearly is not part of the other eight candles.

NOTE You may put oil lights directly onto a windowsill or other level surface, but candles must be in or on some type of holder.

CHANUKA: CANDLES: HOW MANY TO LIGHT

Chanuka: Candles: One per House

The basic commandment is for one *Chanuka* candle to be lit per house per night. The extra candles (matching the number of days in *Chanuka*) and having every male light his own *menora* is an enhancement and a

custom.

NOTE Having every male in the family light his own *Chanuka* candles is a universally accepted but non-binding custom among *Ashkenazi* Jews.

Chanuka: Candles: One Shamash per Area

You only need one service (*shamash)* candle for any amount of *Chanuka* candles/oil lamps *(menorot)* in the same area.

CHANUKA: CANDLES: WHO SHOULD LIGHT

Chanuka: Candles: Who May Light

Anyone in the household who has reached *bar* or *bat mitzva* age can light *Chanuka* candles, thereby fulfilling the *halachic* requirement that one candle per household per night must be lit.

Chanuka: Candles: Light for Yourself

Light *Chanuka* candles for yourself, even if there are no other people around. If there are other people asleep in the house who have not fulfilled the *mitzva* of lighting *Chanuka* candles, you should wake them so they can see the candles. **Do not wake children below *gil chinuch.***

Chanuka: Candles: Obligation for Women To Light

Women, like men, are required to light *Chanuka* candles or have them lit for them.

NOTE It was not traditionally customary for women and girls to light when men were present. The custom is that in a house in which the husband lights *Chanuka* candles, the wife does not also light. However, a wife is required to light if her husband is not present, and girls (above 12 years old) are required to light if no men are present.

Chanuka: Candles: Wife May Light for Husband

A wife may light *Chanuka* candles for her husband if he is not home.

NOTE If your wife lit for you and you return late at night, you do not need to light for yourself.

CHANUKA: CANDLES: WHERE TO LIGHT

Chanuka: Candles: Light in Own Home, Except...

Light *Chanuka* candles in your own house, unless you are not in the city in which you live.

NOTE Even though the *menora* is for publicizing the miracle, *Chazal* set the observance to take place in each person's home (and not in groups at one home with several families together).

Chanuka: Candles: Place Anywhere

You may place *Chanuka* candles anywhere (but they should be lit wherever you are staying). Outside of *Eretz Yisrael*, it is customary to place them by a window, ideally facing the street.

NOTE Consult a *rabbi* as to whether candles should be lit inside an aquarium or other box as is sometimes done in Israel, since the candles should not be lit in a place where the wind would blow them out if not for the box around them.

CHANUKA: CANDLES: WHEN TO LIGHT

Chanuka: Candles: Light After Dark

Chanuka candles should be lit after dark (except on Fridays).

NOTE You may light *chanuka* candles as much as 1 ¼ hours before dark (not 1 ¼ hours before sunset!) but the ideal and proper time is after dark.

NOTE

Although eating a snack, working, and other activities are permitted before lighting the candles, nothing should be done that might make you forget to light the candles, and it is best to light the candles as soon as possible.

Chanuka: Candles: Latest Time To Light

Latest time to light *Chanuka* candles: 102 minutes before sunrise (so they will burn for 30 minutes before daybreak).

Chanuka: Candles: If You Fell Asleep before Lighting

Wake up sometime during the night and light the *Chanuka* candles if you fell asleep before dark.

CHANUKA: CANDLES: HOW LONG MUST BURN

Chanuka: Candles: Must Burn 30 Minutes

Chanuka candles must burn for at least 30 minutes after dark.

Chanuka: Candles: Relighting Candle That Burned Out

A *Chanuka* candle (or candles) that is expected to burn for at least 30 minutes does not need to be replaced or relit, even if it burns out in less than 30 minutes.

Chanuka: Candles: Relighting Candle that Blew Out

You do not need to relight *Chanuka* candles that blew out after having burned for less than 30 minutes after dark, if they had been lit in a place where they would not be expected to have blown out.
If they were lit in a windy or drafty place, you must relight them in a different place and say the blessings again.

CHANUKA: CANDLES: WHAT YOU MAY DO WHILE…

Chanuka: Candles: Do Not Use Light

You may not use light from *Chanuka* candles for any purpose (do not read by them; do not light other candles from them, except from the *shamash*).

Chanuka: Candles: No Work While Candles Burning

Do not do any “work” while the *Chanuka* candles are burning.

REASON In order to show that we are not using the candles for any other purpose.

NOTE “Work” may include some housework but usually means skilled labor done by professionals that may not be done on *chol ha'moed* and that requires light to do it.

CHANUKA: CANDLES: HOW TO LIGHT

Chanuka Candles: Light Left to Right; Add Right to Left

Light *Chanuka* candles from left to right, as you face it, not as it will be seen from outside the window. Add the new candle from right to left. For example, on the first night, put the candle on the extreme right of the *menora*.

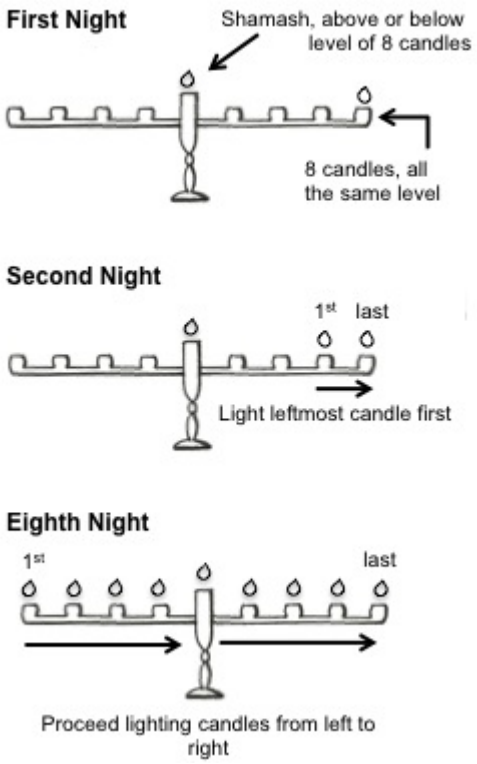
To set up and light *Chanuka* candles:

- Set up the candles starting from the right side of the *menora*.
- Light the *shamash* candle and hold it while you say the blessings:
    - *Lehadlik ner shel Chanuka*.
    - *She'asa nisim l'avoteinu ba'yamim ha'heim ba'zman ha'zeh*.
    - (And on the first night, add) *She'hecheyanu*.

- Light the left-most candle first and proceed to the next candle on the right, and so on.
- Once you have lit the first candle each night, say *ha'neirot hallalu* (this is a *halacha*).

NOTE Once the *menora* has been lit, you may not turn or move it, even to the window.

NOTE Saying *Ma'oz Tzur* is a widespread custom but is not required.



Chanukiah

Chanuka: Candles: Lighting on Friday

On Friday of *Chanuka*, light *Shabbat* candles after *Chanuka* candles; at least one *Chanuka* candle must burn until at least 30 minutes after dark.

If a *man* forgets to light the *Chanuka* candles, he may still light them until sunset or until he says *Mizmor shir l'yom haShabbat*, whichever comes earlier.

But women start *Shabbat* when they light the *Shabbat* candles and so they may not light *Chanuka* candles after lighting *Shabbat* candles.

Chanuka: Candles: SheHecheyanu on Later Days

Say *she'hecheyanu* the first time you light *Chanuka* candles each year:

- Even if your first time is the second or subsequent nights.
- Even if someone lit for you the previous night.

CHANUKA: SYNAGOGUE MENORA

Chanuka: Synagogue Menora: Where

A *Chanuka menora* in a *synagogue* should be set up at the front of the *synagogue*, oriented east-west, and lit while standing on the south side and facing north (the person lighting will be facing toward the inside of the *synagogue*).

Chanuka: Synagogue Menora: How Long To Burn

The *Chanuka* candles in *synagogue* do not need to burn for 30 minutes after dark or even for any 30-minute period but that is the ideal minimum duration for burning.

Chanuka: Synagogue Menora: SheHecheyanu in Synagogue

If you light the *Chanuka menora* in the *synagogue* on the first night of *Chanuka*, say *she'hecheyanu* in *synagogue*. When you go home, if you light only for yourself, do not say *she'hecheyanu* again. However, if you light for your wife or for any adults including children above the age of *bar* or *bat mitzva*, say *she'hecheyanu* again.

CHANUKA: HALLEL

Chanuka: Hallel on Rosh Chodesh

When *Chanuka* coincides with *Rosh Chodesh*, say full *hallel* (as is done on all days of *Chanuka*, instead of the "half-*hallel*" that is said on *Rosh Chodesh*).

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