

## The Laws of Chanukah

As with every other *Yom Tov* there are chapters in the *Shulchan Aruch*, the code of Jewish Law, which deal specifically with the laws relating to the ceremonies and rituals to be performed during that holiday. Following is an abbreviated version of those laws so that the reader will become acquainted with some of these laws. For further elucidation one can refer to the *Orach Chaim* chapters 670 - 685.

### Permitted and prohibited on Chanukah

*Chanukah*, celebrated for eight days, begins with the evening leading to the twenty fifth day of *Kislev*.

During these days one may neither recite a eulogy or the *El Moyal Rachamim* for the departed, nor may one fast on these days. All manner of work is permitted, except for the half hour while the candles are burning.

The sages did not specify that we prepare a festive meal for *Chanukah*. There are those who say we should have a festive meal in honor of the *Mishkan*, the Tabernacle, which was erected in the desert and completed on the twenty fifth of *Kislev*.

### Lighting the candles

PLEASE NOTE: Throughout the booklet, when we refer to the candles, it does not necessarily mean wax or paraffin candles. We are also talking about oil but the generic term is to light candles:

One should make every effort to light with oil even if that necessitates borrowing money.

All oils are permissible for the *Chanukiya*, the *Chanukah Menorah*, but olive oil is preferred. One may also light with candles.

On the first night we light one candle plus a *Shamash*, a server candle, by which we light the others. The *Shamash* is then placed on the side or higher so that it is not in the same line as the candles. Every consecutive night we add one candle to the amount of the previous night.

Many people place the candles on the right side of the *Chanukiya* as it faces the person, adding new candles each night, to the left on the *Chanukiya*. Following the *Berachos* we begin to light from the new one and continue backwards until they are all lit. Following the lighting the paragraph Hanairos Hallalu€is said, usually followed by singing *Maoz Tzur*.

There are various customs as to the placement of the *Chanukiya*. Some place it near the door on the left side so that we are surrounded by *Mitzvos*, the *Mezuzah* on the right and the *Chanukiya* on the left. Others place it near the window facing the street. Still others place the *Chanukiya* in a special glass covered box outside in the yard, where this is feasible.

The *Chanukiya* must be placed higher than three *Tefachim*, approximately twelve inches, from the floor, but not higher than twenty *Amos*, approximately forty feet. The preferred height is under ten *Tefachim*, approximately forty inches from the floor.

One who lives in a building which is more than forty feet from the street, may still light the *Chanukiya* in his window since it is not higher than forty feet from the floor of his apartment.

The candles should not be lit before the appearance of stars, though sometimes, they may be lit even one and a half hour before sunset. They may be lit as long as there are people walking in the street.

Whether lighting with candles or oil, one should be certain that they will continue to burn for at least one half hour after the stars appear. This is especially true when

lighting on Friday, the eve of *Shabbos*, since they are lit long before their required time.

Since the *Mitzvah* is performed only while lighting, all the necessary requirements must be in place at that time. If the *Chanukiya* was placed higher or lower than it should, or if there was only a little oil in it at the time, one has to light it again properly. The oil, wicks and candles should all be in place before reciting the *Berachos*, which are said before one begins to light the candles.

On the first night, three *Berachos* are recited. Asher Kidshanu B'Mitzvosav, Sheasa Nissim and SheHechyanu. On the other nights, only the first two *Berachos* are recited. If one did not recite the SheHechyanu on the first night, it may be said on any other night.

Where there are more than one person lighting *Chanukiyos*, they should be placed far away from each other so that it does not look like one *Chanukiya*.

One who is visiting during *Chanukah* or is in a hotel, and cannot light his own candles, should ask the one who lights that he be allowed to participate in the lighting by contributing to the cost.

On Friday, the *Chanukiyah* is lit before the *Shabbos* candles. On *Shabbos* night, in the *Shul* the *Chanukiya* is lit before reciting the *Havdallah*. At home, one may light the *Chanukiya* either before or after the *Havdallah*, based on one's custom.

Oil, wicks and wax that were in the *Chanukiyah* and were not consumed during *Chanukah*, should be gathered and burned.

Many *Shuls* have the custom of lighting a *Chanukiya* before the *Arvis* prayers, after reciting the *Berachos*. These candles are only for the purpose of *Pirsumay Nissa*, publicizing the miracle, and not for private use. Therefore, one cannot use these candles as having fulfilled his obligation of lighting the candles.

One may not enjoy the light emanating from the *Chanukiya* for any purpose.

#### **Prayers said or omitted**

Every day of *Chanukah*, one adds Al Hanissim in the *Amidah* and in the *Benching*, the grace after meals. If one forgot Al hanissiom and finished the *Amidah* and/or the *Benching*, he does not have to repeat them.

Every day, the complete *Hallel* is recited during *Shachris*.

Following *Hallel* a *Sefer Torah* is placed on the *Bima* and three people are called for an *Aliyah*. The part of the Torah which describes the presents and *Korbonos* the *Nesiim* brought to the dedication of the *Mishkan* (Bamidbar 7:1-89), is read. On *Shabbos*, an additional *Sefer* is prepared from which the *Chanukah Aliyah* is read following the usual reading of the weekly *Parsha*. If *Rosh Chodesh* falls on *Shabbos*, three *Sifrei Torah* are removed, one for the reading of *Rosh Chodesh*.

No *Tachnun*, penitential prayers, are said during *Shachris* or *Mincha*.