

SAMCHAINU GUIDE TO THE HALACHOS OF CHANUKAH

A SELECTION OF LAWS & CUSTOMS WITH A FOCUS ON SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES

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The של"ה הקדוש writes that learning and properly observing the Halachos of a חג infuse the Yom Tov with tremendous Bracha. Please note that the Halachos and Minhagim contained in this article follow the custom of בני אשכנז.

The משל in פסוק says "כי נר מצוה ותורה אור": the מצוות and תורה are compared, respectively, to a candle and light. The גמרא tells us "הרגיל בנר היוין לו בנים תלמידי חכמים", being careful with the מצוה of נרות Chanukah and Shabbos is a זכות to increase הצלחה in your children's Torah learning. This demonstrates the great power of the מצוה of נר חנוכה, and the extent to which it can impact ourselves and our children. ספרים teach us that the time that the נרות are lit is a tremendous עת רצון. Many צדיקים would utilize this time for תפילה.

Some opinions hold that it is a מצוה to make סעודות on חנוכה. All agree that if the theme of the סעודה is thanking Hashem and commemorating the ניסים, it is a סעודת מצוה.

חייב מצות נר חנוכה

The letter of the law requires that only one primary member of the household light just one candle on each night of חנוכה. Since מצות נר חנוכה is חביבה עד מאוד (very beloved), we observe this מצוה in a manner of מנהדרין מן המהדרין, in the best way possible. This includes the מנהג that each male member of the household over the age of בר מצוה (and over the age of חינוך) light his own מנורה, as well as lighting one new candle for each night of חנוכה.

Someone who is a guest at another's home and will be sharing meals with the host is considered part of the household for the time being and is included in the הדלקה of the household. However, it is best for guests to light their own מנורה or be משתתף in the host's הדלקה by contributing monetarily.

A WOMAN WHO IS THE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

As stated above, every house requires one נר to be lit by the head of household which מעיקר הדין is מוציא all members of the home. A woman who is the head of house may light מנורה and be מוציא all members of her family. (Though it is ideal for sons over בר מצוה and above the age of חינוך to light their own.) However, if she prefers that her son (over בר מצוה) light for the house, she may instruct him to do so.

חייב נשים במצות נר חנוכה

Although women are generally exempt from מצות עשה שהזמן גרמה (time-bound positive מצוות), women are obligated in the מצוה of הדלקת נר חנוכה, for two reasons. Firstly, women were also included in the decrees of the יונים, and therefore must commemorate the ישועה. Additionally, women are obligated because the נס that led to our victory over the יונים came about through a woman, יהודית בת יוחנן כהן גדול.

Because of the unique role that women had in the נס, women are נהג not to do מלאכה for half an hour after the הדלקה. The מנהג to refrain from מלאכה only applies to heavy household work such as washing clothing by hand, sewing, etc.

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Lighter housework, such as cooking and sweeping, is not considered "מלאכה" for the purpose of this מנהג.

דרך ההדלקה

The best way to be מקיים the מצוה is with שמן זית זך (pure olive oil) and cotton wicks. Candles may also be used. Any candles or oil used must be sufficient to burn for at least half an hour after צאת הכוכבים.

Candles are placed on the right side of the מנורה, and are lit from left to right. On each night of חנוכה, we add one new candle to the left of the previous candles, and begin lighting with the new candle on the left.

It is אסור to have any benefit from the נרות. To avoid inadvertently benefitting from the light of the מנורה, an extra candle, the שמש, should be placed in the מנורה. One should take care not to use an already lit נר חנוכה to light remaining candles; the שמש or other candle should be used.

Leftover oil, candles, or wicks (that have been placed in the מנורה but have not completely burned out) should not be used for any other purpose, but should be either burned or disposed of in a respectful manner (i.e. placed inside a bag within the garbage).

Before lighting the menorah, the following 2 ברכות are said:

1. אשר קדשנו... להדליק נר של חנוכה.
2. שעשה ניסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

On the first night of Chanukah, the ברכה of שהחיינו is added.

זמן ההדלקה

There are different opinions regarding when to light the מנורה. Rav Moshe Feinstein holds that the זמן of הדלקה begins 10 minutes after שקיעה. There are opinions to light at שקיעה, other Poskim hold that one should light 20 minute after שקיעה, and still others hold one should light at צאת הכוכבים. Each person should follow their own מנהג.

It is universally accepted that no matter what time you are נוהג to light, the candles must remain lit for at least half an hour after צאת הכוכבים. After that time one may put out the candles if necessary.

מקום ההדלקה

An important part of the מצוה of נר חנוכה is "פרסומי ניסא", publicizing the ניסא by lighting the מנורה in a location where it will be noticed. Traditionally, the main פרסומי ניסא was for the purpose of the passersby outside. Therefore, the מנורה was lit outdoors, where it could be seen prominently outside the home. In those days, the מנורה could only be lit עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק (until people were still outside in the streets), which is a half hour after צאת הכוכבים. However, due to the dangers in גלות, Chazal were מתקן that the פרסומי ניסא should be primarily for the residents of the home, and the מנורה should be lit indoors. Today, in order to achieve פרסומי ניסא both among the home's residents and the passersby outside, most in חוץ לארץ light indoors, but at a window, so that the lights are visible outdoors as well. It is preferable to light within the timeframe of עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק. However, if you missed this זמן, you can rely on פרסומי ניסא within your own home, and subsequently may light throughout the night with a ברכה, as long as there are people in the house who are awake. Even a קטן or קטנה (before מצוה) can count towards פרסומי ניסא, as long as he or she is of the age to understand.

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Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that even if the **זמן** of **מן השוק** (half hour after **צאת**) passed and no one is awake at home, one may still light with a **ברכה**.

If the only window at home facing the street is in a room that the family does not usually enter, it is better to light the **מנורה** in a prominent location within the home, to ensure there is **פרסומי ניסא** among the members of the home. Some say to light the **מנורה** by the front door, on the left side, with the **מזוזה** on the right of the door, in order to surround oneself in **מצוות**.

Someone who lives in an apartment that has windows higher than 20 **אמות** (30 feet) from the ground cannot achieve **פרסומי ניסא** from the outside street. In such a household, the **מנורה** should be lit in a prominent location within the home (some say on the left side of the front door,) to maximize the **פרסומי ניסא** inside. If, however, the windows of the apartment are the same height as the windows in neighboring apartment buildings, **פרסומי ניסא** to the outside is possible, and one should light at the window.

The **מנורה** should be placed at least 3 **טפחים** (12 inches) from the floor. It should be no higher than 10 **טפחים** (40 inches).

שבת חנוכה

On **שבת**, the **מנורה** is lit first, followed by the **נרות שבת**. If the **נרות שבת** were accidentally lit before the **שבת חנוכה**, you may not light the **מנורה** since you would have already been **מקבל שבת**. In such a situation, ask someone else to light **מנורה** and be **מוציא** you with the **ברכה** of **להדליק נר**, and then you can make the **ברכה** of **ניסים** **שעשה**.

On **שבת**, the **מנורה** is lit significantly earlier than the normal **זמן** of **הדלקה**. Therefore, it is important to take extra care on **שבת** to ensure that the candles or oil will burn for at least half an hour until after **צאת הכוכבים**, a span of more than an hour and a half from when the candles will be lit.

On **שבת** following **שבת חנוכה**, there are different opinions regarding whether to first make the **הבדלה** or to first light **מנורה** **מוציא שבת**. Each person should follow their own **מנהג**.

There are different opinions among the **פוסקים** regarding someone who is a guest for **שבת חנוכה** and will be leaving **שבת** to return home. Some opinions hold that one should light immediately after **שבת** at one's host, while some say to wait and light later at home. Either of these options can be relied on.

תפילות נוספות

On **שבת חנוכה**, we say **על הניסים** and **בימי מתתיהו** in **ברכת המזון** and in **עשרה**.

If one omitted it in **עשרה**, he need not repeat it. However if he remembered before mentioning the name of Hashem in the **ברכה** of **"הטוב שמך"**, he should go back and recite it in the proper place. If he became aware of his mistake at a later point, before he concluded **עשרה**, he should add in **על הניסים** before saying **"יהיו לרצון"** in **אלוקי נצור**.

If one omitted it from **ברכת המזון**, he does not have to **בentch** again. In this case as well, if he remembered before mentioning the name of Hashem in the **ברכה** of **"על הארץ ועל המזון"**, he should go back and recite it in the proper place. If he only realized his error prior to completing **ברכת המזון**, he should insert an additional **"הרחמן"** after **"במרום ילמדו"**, followed by **בימי מתתיהו**. The nussach is as follows: **"הרחמן יעשה לנו נסים ונפלאות כשם שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה"**

הלל שלם is said all eight days of **שבת חנוכה**. Some are of the opinion that women have a **חיוב** of **הלל** on **שבת חנוכה**.