



Congregation Beth El-Atereth Israel

Chanukah Guide



The Holiday of Chanukah evokes feelings of pride and joy as we remember how the Maccabees overcame the powerful Syrian/Greek armies, asserting the right of every Jew to practice his faith. We hope this guide will prove helpful in observing the central mitzvah of the day - the lighting of the menorah.

THE MENORAH

The menorah can be lit with candles or with oil. Olive oil is preferred, as this type of oil was used in the Beit Hamikdash. One should use a menorah which has the eight branches arranged in a straight level line, not in a circle, zig zag, or diagonal.

On each menorah, you will note a ninth branch above and in the center of the others. Known as the shamash, servant, this candle should be lit, whereupon it is then used to light the others.

LOCATION OF THE MENORAH

In order to publicize the miracle of Chanukah, the menorah should be placed in a window facing the street and should be higher than one foot off the floor and lower than 30 feet from the floor.

THE LIGHTING CEREMONY

On the first evening of Chanukah, one candle is lit. It is placed on the far right side of the menorah as you face it. On each succeeding evening, in addition to replenishing the candle(s) lit the previous evening, another candle is added to the left. Using the lit shamash, the candles are always lit from left to right after the recitation of the following blessings:

BA-RUCH A-TAH ADO-SHEM ELOKAY-NU ME-LECH HA-OLOM A-SHEER KI-DESHA-NU BE-MITZVOTAV VE-TZI-VA-NUH LE-HAD-LIKNER SHEL CHANUKAH.

“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by His commandments and has commanded us to kindle the Chanukah lights.”

Immediately following this blessing, the second blessing is recited.

BA-RUCH A-TAH ADO-SHEM ELOKAY-NU ME-LECH HA-OLOM SHEHASA NISIM LA-AVO-TEY-NU BA-YAMIM HA-HEYM BA-Z'MAN HA-ZEH.

“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our G-d, King of the Universe, who performed miracles for our Fathers in days of old at this season.”

The following blessing is said on the first evening only.

BA-RUCH A-TAH ADO-SHEM ELOKAY-NU ME-LECH HA-OLOM SHEHE-CHIYA-NU VE-KI-MO-NU VEHI-GI-A-NU LAZ-MAN HA-ZEH.

“Blessed art Thou O Lord, our G-d, King of the Universe, who has kept us in life, and has preserved us and enabled us to reach this season.” After these blessings are recited, the candles are lit. It is then customary to sing or recite “Haneyrot-Halolu,” and “Maoz Tzur” (Rock of Ages).

THE LIT CANDLES

It is prohibited to derive any personal benefit from the Chanukah lights. For example one may not use the lights for reading, lighting cigarettes, etc. This restriction is reflective of the principle that the Chanukah lights are to be used solely for the purpose of publicizing the miracle of Chanukah. However, the service candle (shamus) may be used for one’s personal benefit.

There is a custom mentioned in the Shulchan Aruch that women refrain from doing work while the Chanukah

candles are burning, thereby enhancing for them that part of the celebration. The types of restricted work are those that are prohibited on Chol Hamoed. This restriction is set aside when a financial loss is involved. Cooking is not included in this restriction and is permissible while the candles are burning. The reason why this custom developed specifically for women was in recognition of the special role Yehudit had in bringing about the miracle of victory and also because the victory put an end to particular abuses of women perpetrated by the Syrian Greeks.

TIME OF LIGHTING

Weekdays – December 25, 26, 29, 30 and 31, 2024, January 1, 2025. The Chanukah candles should be lit shortly after nightfall at approximately 4:55 PM and should burn for at least a half hour.

Erev Shabbat – Friday, Dec. 27, 2024

The Chanukah candles should be lit *before* the Shabbat candles (before 4:00 PM) and should burn for at least one and a half hours. Shabbat candles are often used in the Menorah for Friday night since the regular colored Chanukah candles do not burn long enough.

Motzei Shabbat – Saturday Evening, Dec. 28, 2024.

The Chanukah candles should be lit *after* Havdallah (5:04 PM) and should burn for at least a half hour.

Congregation Beth El-Atereth Israel wishes everyone a Chanukah Sameach!

