

## Laws of Chanukah

Chanukah is here at last and we are delighted to present a brief summary of the laws of the holiday.

### *The Menorah, oil and wicks*

Since the wicks that we light are used for a mitzvah, one may not disgrace them by simply throwing them into the bin. One should wrap them in a bag before discarding them.

### *Who is Obligated to Light a Menorah*

According to the basic law, it is sufficient to light one menorah per household. However, the Ashkenazi custom is to beautify the mitzvah by each male member of the family lighting a separate menorah. Many women and girls also light the menorah. The custom is to educate boys and girls to light their own menorah from the age of six or seven. If the husband is out of town during Chanukah, either the wife or a son over Bar Mitzvah should light the menorah on behalf of the family.

### *Where to Light*

One should light by a window. One should choose the window that enables the maximum number of people to see the menorah since publicising the miracle is an important part of the mitzvah. One should place the menorah on the right hand side of the window as one faces it.

### *When to Light*

The optimum time to light is at nightfall (about 4:55). If a person is unable to light at this time, he should try to light within the ensuing half an hour. However, if this is not possible, he may light at any time during the evening. In extenuating circumstances, one may light the menorah from as early as 3:10. However, in such a case, it is important that the candles or oil are capable of burning until about 5:25. Similarly, if one lights at nightfall, the candles and oil should be capable of lasting for half an hour. However, if sufficient oil and candles were put in the menorah, the mitzvah is fulfilled even if the candles go out before the required time.

### *Lighting the Menorah*

One should begin at the right end of the menorah as one faces it. On each subsequent night, an additional light is placed next to those of the previous night. The main custom is to light the newest light first, i.e. the leftmost one and proceed to light from left to right.

The main Ashkenazi custom is to light the shamash (the additional candle used to light the others) at the start before the blessings are recited. After reciting the blessings, the shamash is used for kindling the Chanukah lights and is then placed in the menorah. The main Sephardi custom is to use a different candle for lighting both the Chanukah lights and the shamash. According to this method, the shamash is placed on the menorah beforehand but only lit after the main lights. The candle used for lighting the menorah is then extinguished.

The lights should be kindled after all the blessings have been recited. One should try not to speak during the lighting of the candles.

### *Lighting Away from Home*

If permission is given, a hotel guest should light in his room since this is considered his home. If the hotel insists that he light in the communal dining room, he may fulfil his obligation there.

### *Lighting in Shul*

The menorah is lit in shul in order to publicise the miracle. However, no one fulfils their obligation through this lighting.

### *Friday*

On Friday, the menorah should be lit before kindling the Shabbat lights.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Chanukah!

**Rabbi Anthony Knopf**