

Dearest Congregant,

With the onset of Chanukah Sunday evening (12/22), and the opportunity to participate in the mitzvah of Nerot Chanukah, which Rambam described as extremely precious and deserving of the highest degree of care, we must remember to perform this mitzvah, in all of its beauty, with an eye towards fire safety.

Chanukah candles, under no circumstances, should be left unattended, nor should they be lit in a place with drapes, curtains, or at a height at which young children can easily contact them.

We should all be cognizant that once the Chanukah candles have burned for thirty minutes *past nightfall*, they may be extinguished, and if one needs to leave the home, they *must* be extinguished so as to avoid creating a danger. On Shabbat, when extinguishing the candles is not possible, it is especially imperative not to leave the flames unattended.

While the optimal time for lighting Chanukah candles is, according to some, immediately with sunset (4:32 PM on Sunday night), and according to others, approximately fifteen-twenty minutes thereafter, the candles must burn for at least one half hour following nightfall (until approximately 5:45 PM).

On Friday night, we light the Chanukah candles just prior to lighting the Shabbat candles¹. As Shabbat candles must be lit at 4:17 pm, we must light Chanukah candles that are sufficient to last for approximately ninety minutes, so as to burn for thirty minutes past nightfall.

It is entirely appropriate, and in my view, desirable, to wait until for one's spouse to arrive home so as to maximize both the elements of *pirsumei nisa* as well as *shalom bayit* that are potentiated by the presence of the entire family together. In situations where this will lead to an extreme delay in lighting the Chanukah candles, one spouse may simply light at the optimal time on behalf of the other spouse.

In this spirit, we are participating in a community wide initiative to put aside technology during the period of time when the candles are lit, to better appreciate the special sanctity of this precious and beloved mitzvah.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with any questions.

Wishing each and every one of you a happy Chanukah, a time of praise and thanksgiving, *yemei hallel vi-boda'ah*, for all the blessings which the Almighty has bestowed upon us.

Sincerely,
Daniel Fridman
Rabbi, Jewish Center of Teaneck

¹ This is the common practice, even though major authorities disagreed over this topic. Were we to have to choose between these two mitzvot, Shabbat candles are privileged over Chanukah candles, as they represent peace in the home).