

Dear Chaverim,

Let me wish you a Happy Chanukah and share with you a brief primer on how to light candles. As Chanukah has a few complexities of its own, below is a brief summary of its laws and customs.

Candle Lighting

1. **When:** Ideally one should light candles just after the stars come out, for Vancouver that is about 5:08 pm and the candles should last a minimum of 30 minutes thereafter, but preferably closer to an hour.
 - a. If one is delayed, one can light with a blessing anytime that people in the street or members of the household are still up and about.
 - b. If one is so delayed and finds all other household members asleep and the streets empty, then one should still light the menorah with a blessing.
 - c. If the candles go out. One is not required to relight, as the Mitzvah has already been accomplished. However, keeping the candles burning is always a good idea.
2. **Where:** One should light the menorah in a place where it projects its lights into the street or public space. Therefore, a window to the street, or a porch, doorway (if your menorah is in a wind proof case) is ideal.
3. **How Many Menorah(s):** If you are Sephardic, one menorah for the entire household. If you are Ashkenazic, one Menorah for each person in the household
4. **How Many Candles:** One the first night one, second night light two, third night three, etc. of course with an extra candle, known as the Shamash, serving as the utility candle.
5. **Candle Placement:** The candles are on the right, relative to the person lighting (and of course left justified relative to the viewer on the street), thus all the candles will be shifted to the right of your menorah, with empty slots on the left of the person lighting. On all subsequent nights the candles are lit starting with the newest addition from the left proceeding to the right.
6. **Blessings:** On the first night, three blessings are recited; and all other nights the first two blessing are recited
 1. *Lehadlik*, To Light the Chanukah lights . . .
 2. *She Asa Nissim*, Who Performed Miracles . .
 3. *Shehechyanu*, Who Has Preserved us . . .
 - ii. For audio and text please visit
<http://www.torahtots.com/holidays/chanuka/brachot.htm>
7. **Erev Shabbat (Dec. 3):** Chanukah Candles should be lit prior to Shabbat candles at approximately 3:45 pm and they should be long enough to last until about 5:40 pm (for this year). That is 30 minutes after stars are out.
8. **Motzaei Shabbat December 4:** Chanukah candles are lit after Havdalah (after 5:09 pm) candles.
9. **Greetings:** Believe it or not Chanukah is not a Chag in the technical sense. Thus the

custom is to say Chanukah *Sameach*, Happy Chanukah or a *Freilechin Chanukah* (Yiddish) .

10. **Food:** I have often wondered what is the most calorically challenging holiday, Chanukah or Pesach. Perhaps Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah, the Prophet) knows the answer; sadly, I am challenged by both. As I am sure you know Chanukah foods largely follow the tradition of remembering the miracle of oil. Thus fried donuts and *Latkes* dominate the menu. However, there is a very old tradition to remember the triumph of Yehudit over the general who she lulled to sleep with milk. As a result dairy foods are also traditional.
 - a. In the *Birkat Hamazon* / Grace after Meals one should insert the *Al Ha Nissim* paragraph. If forgotten the Birkat Hamazon is not repeated
11. **Prayers:** On Chanukah two additional prayers are said
 - a. The Hallel is recited in celebration of the miracles that took place. **Hallel is recited even when one is praying at home.**
 - b. The *Al Ha Nisim* blessing is inserted into the *Modim* or Thanksgiving blessing, which is the penultimate blessing of the silent devotion.
12. **Dreidel:** This one is actually more controversial than you think. There were Rabbis who strongly opposed the Dreidel because it was a tacit sanctioning of gambling. Others who embraced the idea, because its origins stem from a similar struggle of Jews against another cultural enemy, the Romans. It was the cover story for those who studied Torah, and used the Dreidel as the cover story to their defiant preservation of Torah culture.
13. We will end with the first law presented in the Shulchan Aruch or Jewish code of law in its presentation of Chanukah. Especially this year, we should try to make these days full of fun and joy. The light of Chanukah should brighten our darker days during this difficult time and year.

Happy Chanukah!!!