

Since Chanukah is almost upon us, this will address some of the key issues that arise every year. As with everything in Judaism, there are multiple opinions on each of these issues. This short note will address: What is the right time to light? Who is supposed to light? Where do I light? What is the order of lighting?

When to Light:

The ideal time to light is from shekia (sunset). The problem is there is a machloket (dispute) on which point during shekia. The three main opinions of ideal lighting times are – The Vilna Gaon (GR'A) it is at astronomical sunset, R. Moshe Feinstein holds it should be ten minutes after sunset, and R. Aharon Kotler 25-30 minutes after sunset.

All of them are in agreement that the candles/oil need to be large enough to stay lit for at least 30 minutes, but if a candle goes out, there is no need to relight.

For one who has a chance to light before Maariv, that is permitted, but if one is able to say Maariv and then light (on time), that is preferred (Aruch haShulchan, Haya Adam).

R. Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbuch and Rav Ovadia Yosef all permit lighting with a beracha until dawn, with preference still being at the start of the night.

Shabbat Chanukah:

One needs to light the Chanukah prior to Shabbat candles. Because Shabbat is accepted earlier than shekia, it is customary to use Chanukah candles that will stay lit at least 50 minutes to accommodate being lit for 30 minutes at night.

On Motzei Shabbat, the GR'A (based on the Rema) was makpid on lighting Chanukah candles first and then doing Havdalah. The Aruch HaShulchan (based on the Taz) believes we should do a full havdallah and then light Chanukah candles.

Who Should Light?

Sefardi custom is to follow the literal meaning of *Ner Ish u'Veto* – and have only the male head of house light one set of candles for the household.

Asheknazi sources see three possibilities play out. The head of house lights sufficient candles for each member of the household (Rema via Rambam/Ritva), all the male members of the house light (Rema via Tosafot), every member of the house lights for themselves (R. YD Soloveitchik via R. Hershel Schachter).

Where Should One Light?

The Gemara talks about lighting outside, at one's door. This is still the custom in Israel. For Diaspora Jews, our custom is to light indoors and we are encouraged to light in a window that faces out to the street. Although the Shulchan Aruch disqualifies candles lit above 20 amot, many Achronim permit lighting in the windows of an apartment building.

Guests:

Definition of a guest is staying over the night. Most opinions hold that a guest should buy into their hosts candles. The Mishnah Berurah agrees, but because the policy around Chanukah candles follows

mehadrin min-hamehadrin (this is the rule behind lighting increasing numbers of candles each night), if possible, the guest should light their own.

If one is staying in a hotel, when permitted one should light in their hotel room (unless someone is lighting in their house, then there is no additional need to light). If the hotel has a no-candle policy, it is permitted to light in the lobby by the front door, as this qualifies as the entrance to one's courtyard (Rav YZ Rimon).

How to Light?

The most common question is based on which side does one start lighting candles? This was a major dispute between Western Ashkenaz and Eastern Ashkenaz. Now the custom is to follow the Eastern Ashkenazic tradition and start from the right side, and on subsequent nights, start on the left and move right.

R. YD Soloveithik states that *Haneirot Halalu* is not just a liturgical poem, but rather it is the textual component of *pirsumei nisa* – similar to the megillah of Purim and the Haggadah of Pesach. The Mishnah Berurah prefers saying the two (or on the first night, three) blessings on the candles, lighting the first candle and then saying *Haneirot Halalu* while lighting the remaining candles. The Pri Megadim (18c. Galicia) would recite it after lighting all the candles.

If a candle does go out, one may rekindle for the sake of the mitzvah (but is not required to). If one is going to relight, the preference is to use an external flame (shamash, new match, etc). If they are not available, one may use another candle directly. If the candles have already been burning for the minimum amount of time (30 minutes), one is allowed to relight directly from another candle.

Chanukah Sameach!