



MENORAH 101

(Abridged)

A Basic Summary of Holiday Laws
In a Clear and Simple Style

❖	FINDING THE RIGHT MENORAH	1
	FUEL	1
❖	SETTING UP	2
	PROPER MENORAH LOCATION	2
	PREPARING THE INDIVIDUAL LIGHTS	2
	SHAMASH	2
❖	LIGHTING PROCEDURE	2
❖	LIGHTING TIMES	3
	EXTINGUISHING THE LIGHTS	3
❖	SHABBOS	3
	FRIDAY	3
	SATURDAY NIGHT	3

By Rabbi Yochanan Schnall

Basic

Detailed

❖ Finding the Right Menorah

- It is a mitzvah to use as beautiful a menorah as one can afford¹. However, a menorah is only as beautiful as it is functional and a proper menorah² should have all eight lights clearly independent from each other, positioned at the same height and in a straight row.³
- The shamash (see ❖ **Setting Up**, below), must be distinctly positioned from the other lights.⁴ Some have a custom that the shamash be taller or placed higher than the other lights.⁵
- Technically speaking, it is not necessary to use a menorah-candelabra to fulfill the mitzvah. Independent candles or glasses of oil can also be lined up in the above manner⁶.

Fuel

- It is best to use a fuel that produces a consistent, clear flame. Today, the custom is to use olive oil or wax candles⁷.

- Using a gas or electric powered menorah does not fulfill the mitzvah⁸.
- The candles must be long enough and the oil reservoirs must contain enough fuel for the lights to burn through the required time⁹. (See ❖ **Lighting Times** below.)

❖ Setting Up

The menorah should be set up ahead of time whenever possible. This way, it can be lit as soon as the proper lighting time arrives.¹⁰

Proper Menorah Location

- The ideal location to place the menorah is in front of a public-facing window¹¹.
- If this is impractical, the menorah can be placed in any prominent area of the home¹² as long as candles are not usually lit there during the year.¹³ (For example, this might exclude the dining room table.)
- The menorah may not be placed in a drafty area which could cause the flames to be extinguished.¹⁴
- When two or more menorahs are lit they must be separated far enough that an observer would not mistake their flames as belonging to the same menorah¹⁵.
- Once the menorah is lit, it should not be moved until after it has burned through the required timeframe¹⁶ (See ❖ **Lighting Times**, below) Take care to set up the menorah where it can remain burning until then.

Preparing the Individual Lights

- On the first night of Chanukah, only one light is lit (besides the shamash)¹⁷. It is placed in the far right position of the menorah¹⁸ - when standing inside the home and facing the menorah.
- On each successive night, an additional light is added to the immediate left of what was lit the previous night¹⁹. For example, on the third night the three lights are in the three places furthest to the right of the menorah.

Shamash

It is forbidden to derive benefit from the lights of the menorah. Therefore, an additional flame is customarily lit to serve as an alternate light source.²⁰ This additional flame is called a shamash.

- One menorah light cannot be used to kindle another²¹ and it is necessary to use an independent "service-candle" to light the menorah. Many customarily leave the independent "service-candle" burning to serve as the shamash as well²².

❖ Lighting Procedure

1. Have all the members of the home present.²³
 - Unless you plan on saying the blessings by heart, it might be wise to first find them in your siddur and prop the siddur open. This will facilitate reading from it while holding a lit shamash.
2. Stand before the menorah with your back to the general home area.
3. Light the candle that will be used for lighting the menorah.
4. Recite the two blessings that conclude with: "*I'hadlik ner shel Chanukah*" and "*she'asah nissim la'avoseinu...*"²⁴.
 - If it is the first time you are lighting this year, recite the blessing of "*Shehechyanu*" as well²⁵.
5. After reciting the blessings, no unnecessary speech or activity is allowed until after all the lights are lit.²⁶
6. When there is more than one light, light the newest one first (the one furthest to the left). Continue lighting towards the right²⁷.

Two traditional songs of thanksgiving are found in the siddur after the blessings for the menorah lighting: "Haneiros Halalu" and "Maoz Tzur".

7. Some begin singing "Haneiros Halalu" immediately after kindling the first light and continue singing it through lighting the rest of the lights.²⁸ Others wait until after all the lights are lit before singing it.
8. "Maoz Tzur" is customarily sung after the menorah is completely lit.

❖ Lighting Times

- To fulfill the mitzvah the lights have to be able to burn for at least half an hour during the "nighttime"²⁹.
 - In this context, "nighttime" begins forty minutes after sunset³⁰.
For example, if sunset is at 4:00, "nighttime" begins at 4:40. The minimum half-hour for the lights to burn must take place at anytime after 4:40.

Extinguishing the Lights

- After the lights have burned for the required minimum time, they may be extinguished.³¹
 - If extinguishing them is anticipated, it is preferable to verbalize this intent before lighting³².
- Lights sometimes blow out or are accidentally extinguished before burning through the required time.
 - If they initially had a reasonable chance of remaining lit through the required time, it is proper - but not obligatory - to relight them.³³
 - If they did not initially have a reasonable chance of remaining lit (such as because of a drafty location or insufficient fuel), they must be relit – this time in a manner that would promote burning properly for an entire half-hour of nighttime.³⁴
 - A blessing is never recited when relighting.³⁵
- The lights may never be lit or deliberately extinguished on Friday evening - after Shabbos has begun.

❖ Shabbos

Friday

- On Friday afternoon, the menorah is lit before the Shabbos candles³⁶.
 - Let's do some math:
18 The menorah is lit before the Shabbos candles which are lit eighteen minutes before sunset.
40 Regarding Chanukah, "nighttime" begins forty minutes after sunset.
+ 30 The menorah must contain enough fuel to remain lit through a half-hour of "nighttime".
88 The menorah must contain enough fuel to remain lit for more than 88 minutes!³⁷
- **Regular Chanukah candles do not last for 88 minutes and using them does not fulfill the mitzvah!** Some practical alternatives are:
 1. Extra-long candles; 2. an oil menorah with sufficient reservoirs; 3. Instead of a menorah, line up tea lights or Shabbos candles in accordance to the rules described above in ❖ **Setting Up- Menorah Styles.**

Saturday Night

Shabbos concludes no earlier than fifty minutes after sunset. Since it is forbidden to ignite a flame during Shabbos,³⁸ the Chanukah lights cannot be lit before this time³⁹.

- There are varying opinions whether the lighting of the menorah is before or after havdalah. One should follow his or her family custom⁴⁰.
 - Families without a specific custom should recite havdalah first⁴¹.

❖ Importance of the Mitzvah

- We do not ignite a flame from any of the eight Chanukah lights even if it is for the other lights in the menorah⁴².
- Leftover wicks or fuel from the eight lights may be reused another night for the eight lights but not for the shamash (or any other purpose)⁴³.
 - After Chanukah, all leftover fuel and wicks is to be destroyed or thrown away in a respectable fashion so that they are not mistakenly used.⁴⁴
 - Leftover fuel or wicks that were not actually used in the menorah are always permitted for benefit⁴⁵.

אשריה לדי' כי גמל עלי

I am indebted to my wife for all the patience and support she continues to have for me.

Thank you my dear reader, for without your interest this pamphlet would not exist.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to be a quick review of some pertinent laws relevant to this time of year.

It was formulated for those who do not have the opportunity or resources to study the laws in detail.

Many of these laws and sources have been adapted from the seforim:

Halachos of Chanukah by Rabbi Shimon D. Eider בהג' ר' Moshe Mordechai Karp שליט"א

and קונטרס שיעורי הלכה מתוך שיעורים של רב שמואל פעלדער

Please share your feedback with me at TimelyTorah@gmail.com.

Feel welcome to make copies of this pamphlet for free distribution

Kisleiv 5775

¹ Mishna Berura 673:28

² See Rema 671:4 and Biur Halacha "Umutar"

³ Rema 671:4

⁴ Shulchan Aruch 673:1

⁵ Rema 673:1

⁶ Mishna Berura 671:18; Kaf Hachayim 673:3, 671:32

⁷ Rema 673:1

⁸ Halachos of Chanukah chapter II note 62

⁹ Shulchan Aruch 675:2

¹⁰ Mishna Berura 672:1

¹¹ Mishna Berura 671:38

¹² Since the main publicizing is for the members of the home See Rema 671

¹³ Rema 671:7

¹⁴ Mishna Berura 680:1

¹⁵ Rema 671:2

¹⁶ Mishna Berura 675:6

¹⁷ Shulchan Aruch 671:2

¹⁸ Shulchan Aruch 676:5

¹⁹ Shulchan Aruch 676:5

²⁰ Shulchan Aruch 673:1

²¹ Rema 674:1

²² See Rema 673:1

²³ Mishna Berura 672:10

²⁴ Shulchan Aruch, Rema 676:2

²⁵ Shulchan Aruch 676:2

²⁶ Shulchan Aruch 432:1

²⁷ Shulchan Aruch 676:5

²⁸ Mishna Berura 676:8

²⁹ Shulchan Aruch 672:2, Mishna Berura 672:5

³⁰ Igros Moshe Orach Chayim IV 101:6

³¹ Shulchan Aruch 672:2

³² Mishna Berura 672:7

³³ Shulchan Aruch, Rema 673:3; Mishna Berura 673:27

³⁴ Mishna Berura 673:25

³⁵ Mishna Berura 673:25

³⁶ Shulchan Aruch 679:1

³⁷ Mishna Berura 679:2, see Igros Moshe Orach Chayim IV 101:6

³⁸ Shemos 35:3

³⁹ Igros Moshe Volume 4 #62 (page 94)

⁴⁰ Mishna Berura 681:3

⁴¹ See Aruch Hashulchan 681:2

⁴² Rema 674:1

⁴³ Shulchan Aruch 677:4, Mishna Berura 677:17

⁴⁴ Shulchan Aruch 677:4, Mishna Berura 677:19

⁴⁵ Biur Halacha 677 "Hatzarich"