



דִּינֵי חֲנוּכָּה



SOME DINNIM CONCERNING CHANNUKAH

INTRODUCTION

1. In the time of the second Beis HaMikdash, Eretz Yisroel was overrun by the Hellenist Syrians and they oppressed the Jewish People in an unbearable and terrible fashion. Things went from bad to worse until the Syrian occupiers were at last overthrown by Mattisyohu and his sons the Chashmono'im, and the Beis HaMikdash was rededicated after the defilement by the Syrian hordes. The Lights in the Mikdash were again kindled with the only oil that was found to be suitable, the only bottle which had the seal of the Kohen Ga'dol still intact, all the others having been smashed by the Syrian vandals. The oil found was ordinarily enough for only one day, but miraculously it lasted for eight days — enough time for more oil to be processed from olives which were fetched from a distance of four days' travelling. This miracle encouraged the Jewish people in their Teshuvah, for they earnestly wished to make amends for following the Greek way of life and neglecting the Torah and Mitzvos, and it showed them that הקדוש ברוך הוא was pleased with their efforts and had indeed accepted their repentance. The following year, the חכמים established that date, the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, as a semi-Yom Tov, to be observed every year for that period of eight days, and they instituted that the miracle of the oil be commemorated by the lighting of the Channukah Menorah in every Jewish household.
2. Work is allowed to be done on Channukah, but during the time that the lights are required to burn after kindling, that is, for the first half-hour, work should not be done, especially by the womenfolk. This is because the Syrian commander-in-chief was slain by Yehudis, the daughter of the Kohen Ga'dol, and since a main part of the victory over the Syrians was due to her great bravery, the womenfolk commemorate the part she played in the events of Channukah.
3. The Beis HaMikdash stood for another two hundred years after the event of Channukah until the Jewish people again forsook the Torah and הקדוש ברוך הוא since when we have been forced to roam in גלות from one place to another. But in the meantime, the Lights of Channukah are for us an annual reminder that even in the darkest גלות, if we but return to HaShem in sincerity and if we resolve to keep the Torah and Mitzvos despite any opposition, He will bless our efforts with success and that the light of Redemption will eventually shine forth to dispel the darkness, as it did then "in those days, in this season."

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4. As well as commemorating the rededication of the Beis HaMikdash, Channukah also marks the anniversary of the completion of the making of the Mishkan (the transportable forerunner of the Beis HaMikdash) which was made during our time in the Wilderness on our way out from Egypt to Eretz Yisroel. There are some authorities who say that because of all this it is a Mitzvah to celebrate Channukah with somewhat festive meals at which we sing songs of praise to הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא and also recount the miracles that occurred at Channukah time, which makes such a meal into a סְעוּדַת מִצְוָה.
5. It is a correct practice to increase one's Tzedokoh-giving during Channukah, and specifically to increase one's contributions to poor Torah-scholars and thus help to support them. This is in keeping with the history of Channukah: Channukah commemorates our rededication to our Torah-learning after defeating those that tried to extinguish the light of Torah and it is quite consistent that we should support those that take it upon themselves to learn Torah and teach Torah to others. The giving and receiving of presents and the exchange of gifts that have become the custom in certain places today, however, are not part of the celebration of Channukah ordained by our חֻמְּוֹת. This seems to be an idea taken from elsewhere — ironically, in imitation of our own original custom of contributions to poor Torah-scholars.

THE OIL AND WICKS

6. Since the miracle occurred with olive oil, ideally one should kindle with olive oil and fulfil the Mitzvah in the best way possible. However, all oils are suitable for the Mitzvah, on the condition that they burn clearly and cleanly. Candles are also suitable for that reason. Likewise, all wicks are suitable, but cotton-wool is best for the fulfilment of the Mitzvah. One should use a Menorah of metal — the best is silver — or of any material which will not be marked by the flames.

POSITIONING OF THE MENORAH

7. The Menorah should be placed where it is recognizable that the lights are for Channukah, not in a place where lights burn all the year round (for instance, not on the table on Friday night). Furthermore, where many people light, their Menoros should be placed in such a way that it can be clearly seen how many lights are kindled that night. (See further, Paragraph 16.)
8. Originally, the Menorah was lit outdoors, at the gate or front door facing on to the street, but nowadays, so as not to antagonize the גוֹיִם, we light indoors at the window facing the street. Where one lives on an upper storey, if it is not higher than about ten metres from street level, one should light at the window facing the street; if it is higher, one must light at the entrance to the living-room, on the left-hand side, opposite to the Mezuzah, if possible. If one does not light at the window facing on to the street, the Menorah should be lit at about table height, and in any case not lower than three *tfochim* (about thirty centimetres) nor higher than ten *tfochim* (about one metre) from the floor and so long as the lights are easily within the usual range of vision, one has

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fulfilled the Mitzvah. If, however, one kindled the Menorah higher than twenty *ammos* (approximately 40 feet, or 12 metres) then one has not fulfilled the Mitzvah at all. If one lit the Menorah in a place where it is not correct, then even if one afterwards placed it correctly, one has still not fulfilled the Mitzvah, because at the time of lighting it has to be correctly placed, not later. (That is, **הַדְּלָקָה עוֹשָׂה מִצְוָה**.)

THE MENORAH

9. The lights themselves must be level, not one higher and one lower, and ideally they should be in a straight line, not in a bow-shaped or zigzag formation and enough space must be left between the lights that it can be distinctly seen how many lights are kindled that night. (See Paragraph 16.) If one is using candles, even more space must be left between the lights to avoid their melting or bending.

TIME OF KINDLING

10. The Mitzvah of kindling comes immediately with nightfall, and from that time until one has kindled the Menorah one is not allowed to do anything, even to learn Torah, except to *davven* Maariv, which should be before the kindling. If, because of work (or school or college or some other commitment) one cannot light with nightfall, one should light as soon as possible after nightfall but even if one kindles later, as long as one's household is up one recites the Brochos. If one arrives home and there is no one up, one still lights the Menorah, but without the Brochos.
11. One must make sure that there is enough oil in the Menorah for the lights to burn for at least half-an-hour after kindling: if there was not enough at the time of lighting then one has not fulfilled the Mitzvah, this, even if one added oil while the lights were still burning (again, because **הַדְּלָקָה עוֹשָׂה מִצְוָה**). For the Friday-night kindling, one must make sure that they will burn for at least half-an-hour after nightfall, altogether about one-and-a-half hours after kindling. The same applies also if, because of unusual circumstances, one will not be able to light at nightfall nor at all later that evening (if one is travelling, for instance) in which case one may kindle the Menorah early, up to about one hour before nightfall (as we do on Friday evening) but again on condition that they will still be burning at least half-an-hour after nightfall. Therefore, if one uses a Menorah that burns the small "Channukah candles" (which have a burning time of almost exactly half-an-hour) and one is lighting the Menorah early (for example, on Friday evening) then at least one candle, preferably the newly added one, must be of the standard-sized candles, perhaps cut down a little, and securely smelted into the small candle-holder. This way, there is at least one light that will burn the required length of time.
12. On Friday night, obviously, we kindle the Menorah before Maariv (and before lighting the Shabbos candles). On Motzo'ei Shabbos, in Shule, the Channukah lights are kindled before Havdolloh. This is so as to help ensure that everyone will be there to see the kindling because Maariv on Motzo'ei Shabbos ends with Havdolloh and everyone is

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waiting to hear Havdolloh. At home, though, we first make Havdolloh and then straightaway light the Menorah.

13. On any night other than Friday night, if the lights went out through an unforeseen accident during the first half hour, one should re-light them, but without a Brochoh.

THE LIGHTING

14. Since the main factor of Channukah is to propagate and spread the remembrance of the miracle, therefore at the time of lighting the Menorah one should assemble all the family to watch the kindling and hear the Brochos.

15. On the first night, three Brochos are recited at the time of kindling. They are:

(1) בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנוּכָּה :

(2) בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבְרָהָם, בְּיָמֵינוּ, בְּיָמֵינוּ, בְּיָמֵינוּ :

and (3) בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחֲנִינֵנוּ, וְקִיַּמְנוּ, וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵנוּ :

If one forgot to make the Brochoh שֶׁהַחֲנִינֵנוּ on the first or subsequent nights, one can still make that Brochoh on the night when one *does* remember — even if it be the last night. Otherwise, on the other nights, only the first two Brochos are made. After the Brochos, one kindles one light, and, while lighting the others, one says the הַנְרוֹת הַלָלוּ. Then, מְעוֹז צוֹר יְשׁוּעָתִי is sung.

16. On the first night we kindle one light on the extreme right, and every night we add one to its left, always lighting the newest one first and proceeding to the original first. In other words, we add from right to left, and light from left to right.
17. No benefit may be had from the lights of the Menorah during the time that they are required to burn (that is, for the first half-hour or so). This is because the Menorah that we kindle on Channukah is indeed only for the Mitzvah, to spread the knowledge of the miracle, and not for any other purpose. For this reason, too, we have a “Shammas,” usually placed higher than the Menorah proper. The custom prevails that we do not use any of the Menorah lights for any purpose — even to kindle the other Menorah lights themselves is done using the “Shammas.”
18. Since women were very much involved in the miracle of Channukah (*see Paragraph 2, above*) and indeed because they particularly were relieved when the Syrian yoke was removed from the Jewish People, therefore women too are obligated to observe the Mitzvah of the Channukah lights (despite its being a גְּרָמָא שֶׁהִזְמַן גְּרָמָא). Therefore, if there is no man in the household to kindle the Menorah, or if she lives on her own, a woman is obliged to kindle the Menorah herself and make the Brochos. Indeed, if need be, a woman may make the Brochos and kindle the Menorah on behalf

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of her husband and family in much the same way that her husband's lighting the Menorah fulfils *her* obligation. Even though ordinarily a woman is considered as one with her husband and his lighting the Menorah fulfils her obligation, too (provided, that is, that she is present when he recites the Brochos and kindles the Menorah) nevertheless, if a woman wishes to do so, she can recite the Brochos and kindle her own Menorah (although this is not the generally accepted custom).

19. A boy who has reached the age of being trained in Mitzvos should fulfil the Mitzvah for himself, too. In some communities the custom prevails that a girl lights her own Menorah and makes the Brochos as does a boy. As in all such matters, one should take care to follow one's own traditional custom rather than adopt the customs of others just so as to reflect the fashions (or the politics) of the day.
20. If a person will not be home for the lighting of the Menorah, nor at all that night, he should instruct his wife or another person to light the Menorah on his behalf and in this way, given the unusual circumstances and that he cannot do any better, he is considered as having fulfilled his obligation. Nevertheless, it is of course preferable that he too should light where he is, if at all possible. If it is *not* possible (for instance, he is travelling) then he has no option but to rely on the lighting that is done on his behalf.
21. Guests in a hotel should light in their own rooms rather than in the communal dining room of the hotel, if this is at all possible. A permanent boarder, that is, one who eats regularly at someone else's table, is considered as a member of that household and is included in his host's kindling (if the guest doesn't light his own Menorah, that is). Nevertheless, if he can, he should light his own Menorah and make the Brochos himself, as does each individual in a regular family. If one is merely a temporary guest, one must either light on his own or, if this is not feasible, he must become a partner in his host's kindling (by paying something towards the oil and wicks, or the candles, each night).
22. In keeping with the general theme of the Mitzvah of kindling the Menorah, namely, to proclaim and make known the miracles that הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא wrought for us at Channukah time, the custom prevails almost universally that the Channukah Menorah is kindled in Shule each night (usually between Minchah and Maariv). Even though the Brochos are recited, nevertheless individuals do not fulfil their own obligation with this kindling and they must light at home. This includes also the one who lights the Menorah in Shule, but on the first night he does not repeat the Brochah שְׁהֵינִי at home unless it's for his family or household. (A mourner should not light the Menorah in Shule on the first night as it is not for him to say the Brochah שְׁהֵינִי in public.)

In many communities, the Menorah in Shule is lit at Shacharis, too, but no Brochos are said for this lighting.

“AL HANISSIM” AND HALLEL

23. All eight days of Channukah we say עַל הַנִּסִּים in the Amidah prayer (also called the שְׁמוֹנַת עָשָׂר). If one forgot, but reminded oneself before the שֵׁם of ה' אֱתָה בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' of

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על הנסים one goes back to say הטוב שמך ולך נאה להודות. But if one reminded oneself only after the שם, one finishes the שמונה עשרה and one is not allowed to correct oneself in the שמונה עשרה proper. If one had said ברוך אתה ה' and at that point — before at all starting the next Brochah — one reminded oneself of the omission, one adds the words "למדני חוקיך", inserts על הנסים there, then repeats the paragraph of "ועל פולם" and continues as usual to the end of the Amidah. The reason for this is because by adding the words "למדני חוקיך" to the phrase "ברוך אתה ה'", those three words ברוך אתה ה' then become the first part of a proper *Possuk* (it is *Possuk* 12 in Chapter 119 of Tehillim) and the phrase "ברוך אתה ה'" is not then considered as the Brochah's end. This then allows us to rectify the omission there and then, because it is considered as if the Brochah has not been ended, as it were. In fact, this device is the preferred solution to all such cases where a correction must be made before the Brochah has been ended and where one has said the words "ברוך אתה ה'" and at that point realized one's mistake.

24. Even in a case of not being able to correct one's omission of על הנסים in the Amidah itself, there is still another remedy and it is this: Before the פסוק of יהיו לרצון, after וכולה, ובוא, נצור לשוני מרע, וכולה, אלהי, נצור לשוני מרע, וכולה, he says the following (*the words in brackets are variant texts, according to different customs*): מודים אנחנו לך על הנסים [ועל הפורקן [ועל הגבורות ועל התשועות [ועל המלחמות [ועל הנחמות] שעשית לאבותינו בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול גדול בהם בימים ההם בזמן הזה, etc.. He then says the sentence יהיו לרצון, וכולה (again) and thus ends the שמונה עשרה.
25. In Birchas HaMazzon likewise (where על הנסים is inserted before ועל הכל) if one remembered before the שם of על הארץ ועל המזון, ברוך אתה ה' על הארץ ועל המזון, one goes back to על הנסים, but if one remembered only *after* the שם, one is not allowed to go back. Instead, immediately before הרחמן הוא יזבינו, one says the following: הרחמן הוא יעשה לנו נסים ונפלאות כמו שעשה לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה, etc., and ends the Birchas HaMazzon in the usual way after that. (But see the previous paragraph about how one can correct the omission as long as one has not yet started the next Brochah.)
26. Whole Hallel is said every day of Channukah, and there is a special Torah Reading each day, too, with a special Haftarah on Shabbos Channukah — all so as to spread the knowledge of the miracle that is the theme of Channukah.

