

# Sefer HAMINHAGIM

*The Book of Chabad-Lubavitch Customs*



Chanukah



---

---

## Chanukah

Cf. *Siddur*, p. 339

---

---

Boys begin lighting the Chanukah lights some time before their *bar-mitzvah*.<sup>1</sup>

Girls do not light separately. A married woman fulfills her obligation through her husband's kindling.<sup>2</sup>

Olive oil is used for the actual lights, and beeswax for the *shamash*.<sup>3</sup>

The *menorah* is placed against the doorpost of the entrance to the room.<sup>4</sup> We do not make a point of placing it in either a north-south or east-west direction.<sup>5</sup> It is placed on

- 
1. See *sichah* of the Rebbe Rayatz, *Shabbos Chanukah* 5706, in the supplement to the *maamar* beginning *Baruch SheAsah Nissim*, p. 20, sec. 8. [The footnotes to this section were compiled by the Rebbe *Sblita*.]
  2. The question has been asked as to why only men and not women light separately; the answer has been proposed that one's wife is virtually identical with oneself (אשתו כגופו דמיא [*Menachos* 93b]), and it would not be proper for a daughter to light a *menorah* when her mother does not. I find this reasoning highly improbable. More plausible is the observation in *Mishmeres Shalom* 48:2, that since many women are unable to recite the blessings, it became the custom that women in general fulfill this obligation through others. (Cf. the *Acharonim* at the end of sec. 675 and sec. 677 of the *Shulchan Aruch*.) *Machatzis HaShekel* 677:8 cites the view of *Shiltei HaGibborim*: "The custom of *mehadrin* (i.e., the best way to fulfill the *mitzvah*) is that each individual, man and woman, lights his own lamp...." See also sec. 7 of the above-mentioned *sichah*, p. 20.
  3. This could be simply explained in the light of the statement in the beginning of sec. 673 in the *Shulchan Aruch*, that beeswax is the next priority after olive oil. (See *Darchoi Moshe* there.) Olive oil is however not used for the *shamash* because oil and a wick are less convenient to handle than is a candle. Besides, the above usage provides an additional distinction between the *shamash* and the actual Chanukah lights. See also *Kehillas Yaakov*, s.v. *shaavah*.
  4. [In the original, בְּעַרְבֵי הַמְּצוּיָה בְּחֵלֶל פֶּתַח הַדֹּר, — lit., "against the width of the doorpost, in the space of the doorway of the room."] This is the wording of the Alter Rebbe's *Siddur*. See also *Shaar HaKollel* there. [For the significance of this particular location as explained by *Chassidus*, see the English translation of the *maamar* by the Rebbe Rashab, entitled *Tanu Rabbanan: Ner Chanukah* (Sichos In English, N.Y., 1990).]
  5. In *shul*, by contrast, we make the lights correspond to the orientation of the *Menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* (*Rama*, sec. 671:7; [viz., along an east-west

a chair, not necessarily higher than seven *tefachim* [seven handsbreadths, viz., 56 cm.]<sup>6</sup> nor necessarily approximating a height of three *tefachim* [viz., 24 cm.]<sup>7</sup>

A *gartl* is worn for the lighting, but otherwise one wears one's usual [weekday] hat and clothes.<sup>8</sup>

The lights are kindled between *Minchah* and *Maariv*.<sup>9</sup>

There was no *minyán* present at the kindling of the lights in the household of the [Previous] Rebbe, nor was an effort made to kindle in the presence of the largest possible number of people.<sup>10</sup>

The first *berachah* ends with the words, להדליק נר חנוכה.<sup>11</sup>

One begins to light after having recited all the blessings.<sup>12</sup>

On the first night we kindle the wick at the extreme right. On the second night and thereafter one lights additional wicks to its left, kindling from left to right.<sup>13</sup>

axis]). It remains to be explained why this is not the preferred practice at home likewise, if it is possible to arrange.

6. This practice differs from the view of *Tur Barekes*. See *Shaarei Teshuvah* 671:8.

7. This is the view of *Shomer Emunim*, Responsa 65.

8. Others, by contrast, are accustomed to wear *Shabbos* clothes or a *Shabbos* hat for the kindling of the lights, or even throughout the days of Chanukah. (These customs are cited in *Darhei Chayim VeShalom* 812; *Likkutei Maharich*, Vol. III; *Likkutei Meir: Inyanei Chanukah*, sec. 66.)

9. For the various opinions on this, see *Tur Shulchan Aruch* 672 and its commentaries.

10. Why this case should differ from the publicity (פרסומי ניסא) given to the reading of *Megillas Esther* requires explanation. One possible answer is that since each individual lights at his own doorway, the Sages did not require people to assemble at this time. Further elucidation is still needed.

In contrast, it will be noted that [R. Chayim of Zanz,] the author of *Divrei Chayim*, and several of the *tzaddikim* of Poland and other lands, used to light a little later than usual in order to be able to do so in the presence of a large multitude. (This custom is cited in *Nimukei Orach Chayim*, sec. 672, and in *Mishmeres Shalom*.)

11. This is the wording in the Alter Rebbe's *Siddur*. This too is the wording of: the *Rokeiach*; *Shulchan Aruch*, beginning of sec. 676; the *AriZal* in *Shaar HaKavanos* and *Pri Etz Chayim*; the *Siddur* of the *AriZal*; *Siddur Yaavetz*; *Birchei Yosef*; and the author of *Shnei Luchoš HaBris* — as he writes in the section entitled *Torah Or* on Chanukah (p. 259a), as opposed to the wording proposed by his father, (cited in the section entitled *Ner Mitzvah*), in which the final word חנוכה is replaced by שְׁלֵחַנוּכָה pronounced as one word. See also *Sdei Chemed, Aseifas Dinim: Chanukah*, sec. 120.

12. The Alter Rebbe's *Siddur*, based on the *Maharil* as cited in *Rama* 676:2.

The *shamash* is placed higher than the Chanukah lights proper.<sup>14</sup>

The *menorah* once had to be moved a *tefach* or two closer to the [Previous] Rebbe so that he would be able to light it, and it was then replaced in its position. Nevertheless the Rebbe recited the blessing and lit the lights.<sup>15</sup>

*HaNeiros Hallalu* (*Siddur*, p. 339) is said [or sung] only after all the lights have been kindled.<sup>16</sup>

The text for *HaNeiros Hallalu* and *Al HaNissim* (*ibid.*, p. 59) is as printed in the Alter Rebbe's *Siddur*.<sup>17</sup>

One makes a point of having the lights burn for at least fifty minutes.<sup>18</sup>

One remains close to the lights for about half an hour (except for *erev Shabbos*).

There are those who replace the wicks every day,<sup>19</sup> while others hold that this is not necessary,<sup>20</sup> since used wicks are in fact easier to kindle.<sup>21</sup> To date I have not been able to determine the preferred custom of the [Previous] Rebbe.

13. The Alter Rebbe's *Siddur*. See also *Shulchan Aruch*, end of sec. 676 and its commentaries; the Responsa of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, *Orach Chayim*, sec. 67; and *Shaar HaKollel*, *loc. cit.*

14. The *Maharil*; *Kav HaYashar*, sec. 96; *Acharonim*, end of 673:1.

15. This practice differs from the view cited on the authority of the Responsa entitled *Lev Chayim*, Vol. III, sec. 146, that in such a case it is preferable for someone else to light.

16. See *Pri Megadim*, sec. 676: *Mishbetzos Zahav*, para. 5; sec. 672: *Eshel Avraham*, para. 3. So too the *Siddur* of the Alter Rebbe specifies: "...after one has kindled the lights."

17. On the precise wording of the text see *Shaar HaKollel*, end of sec. 46. Various other texts are cited in *Keser Shem Tov* by R. Shem-Tov Ganin, pp. 527-9, and in *Siddur Otzar HaTefillos*. On the words *הם קודש* see *Sdei Chemed*, *Aseifas Dinim*: Chanukah, sec. 9.

18. See *Pri Megadim*, sec. 672: *Eshel Avraham*, para. 3.

19. *Kol-Bo* and *Aburaham* (cited in *Darchoi Moshe*, end of sec. 673); the author of *Mishmeres Shalom* records (end of sec. 48) that this was the custom of his revered forebears; so too was it the custom of the author of *Darchoi Teshuvah* and of his son, the author of *Minchas Elazar*.

20. *Shulchan Aruch*, end of sec. 673; *Pri Chadash*; *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 139:4; *Siddur Yaavetz*; and other sources.

21. *Levush*. Moreover, *Mishmeres Shalom* (*loc. cit.*) writes that when one takes "used wicks it appears to me that one should make a point of choosing one of yesterday's wicks for the newly-added light which will be lit first today." See the second recension of this work.

A light that went out before its required time should be relit.<sup>22</sup>

After the *menorah* has been alight for the required time, it may be moved even if the lights are still aflame.<sup>23</sup>

After this period of time one may perform all manner of work, though not in full view of the burning lights.<sup>24</sup> This applies even to the first and last nights of Chanukah.<sup>25</sup>

On *erev Shabbos* the order of events is as follows: *Minchah* (*Siddur*, p. 96),<sup>26</sup> Chanukah lights (p. 339), *Shabbos* lights (p. 127). At the conclusion of *Shabbos* the order is: *Havdalah* (p. 234), Chanukah lights (p. 339), *VeYiten Lecha* (p. 235). In the synagogue the order is: Chanukah lights, followed by *Havdalah*.<sup>27</sup>

A mourner may lead the services on Chanukah, except for the reading of *Hallel*.<sup>28</sup> On Rosh Chodesh, however, and likewise on any day on which *Mussaf* is said, he does not lead the services, even at *Minchah* or *Maariv*.<sup>29</sup>

The Torah is read daily according to the order set out in the *Siddur* of R. Avraham David Lavut [and reprinted in *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 368ff.]. On *Shabbos*, and likewise on Rosh Chodesh [Teves], the additional reading for Chanukah

22. *Acharonim* 673:2.

23. This practice accords with the way in which *Haggabos Maimunios* [in sec. 4 of his commentary on *Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah* 4:4] interprets Tractate *Sofrim* [20:3]. It differs from the view of the *Bach*, sec. 672.

24. With regard to doing work in the presence of the lights, I have not been able to establish whether the [Previous] Rebbe's household followed the view of the *Shulchan Aruch* (672:2) or of the *Rashal*.

25. See *Acharonim*, beginning of sec. 670.

26. *Minchah* here precedes the Chanukah lights, just as in the *Beis HaMikdash* the offering of the *Korban Tamid* [which *Minchah* today parallels] always preceded the lighting of the *Menorah*. Moreover, this order precludes an anomalous sequence of events [since the time for *Minchah* ends at sunset, while the Chanukah lights properly belong to the forthcoming evening].

27. For the varying opinions on this subject see: *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 681, and its commentaries; *Sdei Chemed, Aseifas Dinim*: Chanukah, sec. 19.

28. For the varying opinions see: *Acharonim, Orach Chayim*, sec. 131, 660, 581, 582 and 671; *Yoreh Deah*, end of sec. 376, and elsewhere.

29. See *Pri Megadim* on *Orach Chayim*, sec. 671: *Mishbetzos Zahav*, para. 8.

consists of only one of the paragraphs describing the princely offerings (in *Bamidbar*, ch. 7, known as “the *nesi'im*”).<sup>30</sup>

The [Previous] Rebbe would distribute coins for “Chanukah *gelt*” (gifts of pocket money) on the fourth or fifth night of Chanukah.<sup>31</sup>

One should not omit ועל הנסים (*Siddur*, p. 59) in order to complete the *Shemoneh Esreh* in time to join in the congregational responses of *Kedushah* (p. 52) and *Modim* (p. 58) during its repetition.<sup>32</sup>

The eighth day of Chanukah is called *Zos Chanukah*.<sup>33</sup>

Some people are accustomed to give more charity than usual during Chanukah.<sup>34</sup>

30. Responsa of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, *Orach Chayim*, sec. 68.

31. [At the *farbrengen* of *Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5734, the Rebbe *Shlita* pointed out that though it has no known source, this custom has become established throughout the ages. Indeed, the Rebbeim would give “Chanukah *gelt*” even to their married children.]

32. Responsa of the *Tzemach Tzedek*, *Shaar HaMiluim*, sec. 11.

33. [Cf. the first two words of this day’s Torah reading.] See the *maamar* beginning *Baruch SheAsah Nissim*, end of ch. 4.

34. *Magen Avraham*, beginning of *Hilchos Chanukah*, cited by *Divrei Nechemiah* in the Appendix to the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, end of sec. 670.

However, this still requires further clarification, for I never saw any hint of this in the practice of my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe. It is true that “not having seen is no proof” [*Zevachim* 103b] — particularly with charity, which is best when undetected. Nevertheless, it is surely significant that (except for an allusion to *tzedakah* [...] in the *maamar* in *Torah Or* beginning *BeChaf-Hei BeKislev*, further discussed in *Shaarei Orach* and *Or HaTorah*), no *maamar*, *sichah* or letter of any one of our Rebbeim (as far as I have seen to date) has occasion to mention any particular emphasis on *tzedakah* during Chanukah. This is particularly striking when so very many aspects of Chanukah are discussed and expounded there in detail. Moreover, this subject does find a place in the chassidic literature of Poland and other regions. (Anyone finding a mention of this subject in the writings of our Rebbeim will no doubt inform me, and I hereby offer my wholehearted thanks in advance.)

It will be noted that the compiler of *Siddur Maharid* (though perhaps this passage was written by the *Tzemach Tzedek*) writes that on Chanukah “money is distributed to the paupers who go about from door to door — ‘in the doorway, facing outward’ [i.e., in the location of the Chanukah lights; *Shabbos* 21b] — and thus one fulfills the teaching of the Sages, that בכל מאדך (‘with all your might’; *Devarim* 6:5) implies בכל ממוןך (‘with all your money’; *Berachos* 9:5).” (From a letter of the Rebbe *Shlita* [published in honor of Chanukah 5725 (1966), and reprinted in *Teshuvos U’Biurim*, p. 235].)

---

---

## Gimmel DeChanukah

---

---

On the third day of Chanukah, in the year 5561 (תקס"א; 1800) the Alter Rebbe was released from his second imprisonment.

This was a victory for the teachings and spiritual lifestyle of *Chassidus*, far more so than the liberation [on *Yud-Tes Kislev*] two years earlier. For the libel of 5559 (תקנ"ט; 1798) had been aimed primarily against the Alter Rebbe; in 5561 the main libel was directed against the teachings of *Chassidus* and against the chassidic way of life.<sup>35</sup>

---

35. *HaYom Yom*, entry for 27 Kislev. See at length *On Learning Chassidus*, ch. 6.

