

## *Chanukah Frequently Asked Questions*

### *What time should we light up?*

The normal time for lighting the Chanukah candles is right after it gets dark. They should burn for at least a half hour after it is dark outside.

But remember, on Friday evening before Shabbos – light your Chanukah candle before it gets dark. The Chanukah candles should be lit before the Shabbat candles, ie in 2015 before around 4:15

When Shabbos ends, the candles are lit after Havdalah, ie. after the sky is dark enough to see three stars (in 2015 around 5:15) and Shabbos is OVER.

### *Where should the candles be lit?*

The place for lighting is based on the principle of spreading the light. We spread the light of the miracle of Chanukah to others by putting the menorah in one of three places:

**Window** You can put your menorah in the window so that others in the street may see it. But if you live on a high floor of a building, it is better to place the menorah on the dining room table.

**Table** Put your menorah on the table so that you, friends and family may see it.

**Door** Put your menorah outside by your door opposite the mezzuah so that others may see it as they walk by.

### *How are the candles lit? This is the most prevalent custom:*

The first night, the first candle is lit. It is the candle on the extreme right of the menorah. On the second night, the second candle (the new one) is lit first and then the one which was lit the previous night is lit. The same is true for the successive nights, the new candle is given preference over the candles that have been lit, just like you should give preference to a new guest who is visiting you over a guest who has been by you many times before.

## What is the Shamash?

The *shamash* is the candle which is used to light the other candles. It is not one of the Chanukah candles, yet it is not blown out but set in a place elevated above the Chanukah candles. The light of this candle may be used for lighting other candles, whereas the flame of the other candles may not be used for lighting other Chanukah candles. Why is the *shamash* set higher? It is a spiritual teaching: one who serves is elevated.

## Who should light the candles?

In most traditional contexts, women generally light the Shabbat candles, men generally light the Chanukah candles. But hey, go for any version you like!

## What are the brachas, the blessings?

Before you light the candles, make the appropriate blessings. Try this website to see and hear the brachas. Or google "chanukah brachas" A special Chanukah melody is a favorite for the candle-lighting brachas, and on Shabbat of Chanukah this melody is used for Shabbat candles too.

## What if the candle goes out?

The Chanukah candle is supposed to burn for at least a half hour. If it went out before the half hour has past, re-light it. If the half hour has elapsed, then you decide if you want to re-light it or not. On Friday night, if the candle goes out and it is already Shabbos, don't re-light it.

