



December 14-22, 2025 ב"ה בקל"ו - ג' טבת תשפ"ו



• The Calendar • חֲנֻכָּה דְיוֹקָא

The goal of Hanukkah candles is פְּרִסְמוּי נִסָּא (pirsumei nisa, publicizing the miracle). When God does a miracle for us, one way to show gratitude is to tell everyone about it!

This impacts WHEN we light the candles:

Talmud Bavli Shabbat 21b

The mitzvah is from sunset until traffic in the marketplace ends.

תלמוד בבלי שבת כא:

מִצְוַתָּה מְשֻׁתָּקֶע הַחֲמָה
עַד שֶׁתִּכְלֶה רֶגֶל מִן הַשּׁוּק.

By lighting when people are still outside, perhaps walking home from work, we have an audience to see our act of pirsumei nisa.

Pirsumei nisa also impacts WHERE we light:

If your house opened up to a public street, you used to place your Hanukkah lights outside your door on the left side of your entrance (Shulhan Arukh OH 671:5-7). Nowadays, many people light by a window inside their home (Kaf HaHayyim, 671:39).

- ♦ Why is publicizing the miracle so important? What does that teach us about the purpose of celebrating this holiday?

- ♦ What can we learn from this to remember during the rest of the year?





הלכה • Halakhah

The requirement for Hanukkah lights is one candle per household on each night of the holiday.



Talmud Bavli Shabbat 21b

Our Sages taught: The basic mitzvah of Hanukkah is one light per household.

תלמוד בבלי שבת כא:

תנו רבנן: מצות חנוכה, נר איש וביתו.

- Why do you think this is the minimum way to fulfil the mitzvah?

But the Gemara says that there is a more beautiful way to do the mitzvah, called מהדרין (mehadrin):

והמהדרין, נר לכל אחד ואחד.

The mehadrin practice is one light for each person in the household.

- How does a candle for every person make a Hanukkah celebration more beautiful?



And, the Gemara adds, it's possible to perform the mitzvah in an **even more** beautiful way:



The mehadrin of the mehadrin practice: Beit Shammai say to start with eight lights on the first night and then decrease one light per night. Beit Hillel say to start with one light on the first night and then increase one light per night.

והמהדרין מן המהדרין, בית שמאי אומרים: יום ראשון מדליק שמנה, מכאן ואילך פוחת והולך. ובית הלל אומרים: יום ראשון מדליק אחת, מכאן ואילך מוסיף והולך.

- What's extra beautiful about lighting a different number of candles on each night of Hanukkah?



R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin explains that the disagreement between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel has to do with whether this mitzvah should focus on **fire** or on **light**.



Fire burns things up, and it has the ability to destroy evil. During the time of the Hanukkah story, the army of the Hashmonaim (aka Makkabim) fought back against the Yevanim (Greeks). Their battle is represented by fire.



Light and especially the light of Torah, fills and elevates and illuminates each individual person and also the whole entire world. After the Hashmonaim beat the Yevanim, they kindled the light of Torah in the בית המקדש (Beit HaMikdash, Temple) and it shone far and wide.

R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin (Eastern Europe and Israel, 75 years ago)

Beit Shammai, in their view, say: We remember (through our Hanukkah candles) the fire—the destruction of evil and the elimination of impurity.

Beit Hillel, following their path, believe: We remember the light. Certainly, at the time, war was necessary—and if it was necessary, then we fought it. But we do not turn that into a symbol or a ritual. The temporary means does not become an ultimate goal. That is not the lasting lesson. The lasting lesson is the light.

And now you can understand:

If the most important part is the burning and destruction of evil, then the more the fire burns, the less evil remains (and it makes sense to go from eight candles down to one to show that decrease)...

But if we want to remember the light, then the more it burns, the more it illuminates (and it makes sense to go from one candle up to eight to show that increase).

לתורה ולמועדים

בית שמאי לשיטתם, אומרים:
הזכרון הוא לאש, לבעור הרע
וכלין הטמא.

ובית הלל, לדרכם, סוברים:
הזכרון הוא לאור. ודאי,
בשעתה המלחמה הייתה נחוצה,
ואם נחוצה הייתה—עשינו
אותה, אבל אין עושין מזה סמל
ופלח, אין האמצעי הזמני
הנפוץ למטרה תכליתית. לא זהו
הלקח לדורות. הלמוד לדורות
הוא האור.

ומאליו מובן שאם העקר הוא
שרפת הרע ובעורו, הרי כל
מה שהאש שורפת יותר, הולך
ופוחת יותר הרע המתבער...

ואם הזכרון הוא האור, הרי כל
מה שדולק יותר מאיר יותר.

- ◆ In R. Zevin's explanation of Beit Hillel's position, he says that we shouldn't turn a military victory into a symbol or ritual. Why not? What's dangerous about doing that?
- ◆ We follow Beit Hillel's opinion, and increase the amount of light every night of Hanukkah. What can we learn from that?



הדלקת נרות • Candle Lighting

These are the בְּרָכוֹת (berakhot, blessings) to recite before lighting Hanukkah candles:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

Blessed are You, God our Lord, Ruler of the world, Who has made us holy with mitzvot and commanded us to light Hanukkah candles.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, God our Lord, Ruler of the world, Who made miracles for our ancestors in those days on this date.

This berakhah is only for the first night you light Hanukkah candles this year:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעֵנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, God our Lord, Ruler of the world, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this time.

We say or sing Hanerot Hallalu after lighting the first candle (Arukh Hashulhan OH 676:8). It describes how special and holy Hanukkah candles are.

These candles we light are for the miracles, wonders, salvations, and wars that You made for our ancestors in those days on this date, by the hands of your holy kohanim (priests). During all the eight days of Hanukkah these lights are holy, and we aren't permitted to make use of them; we're only supposed to look at them, so that we can give thanks and praise to Your Great Name for Your miracles, wonders, and salvations.

הַנֵּרוֹת הָלָלוּ שְׂאֵנוּ מִדְּלִיקוֹ, עַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל הַנִּפְלְאוֹת
וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמַּלְחָמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ
בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה, עַל יְדֵי כֹהֲנֶיךָ הַקְּדוֹשִׁים.
וְכָל שְׂמוֹנֶת יָמֵי הַחֲנֻכָּה הַנֵּרוֹת הָלָלוּ קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְאִין
לָנוּ רִשּׁוֹת לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם, אֶלָּא לְרְאוֹתָם בְּלִבְךָ, כְּדִי
לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ
וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתְךָ.

