

CHANUKA REVIEW

This will be a combination of a halachic review, practical suggestions, useful information, and more. Do not take anything written here as “the final word”; if you have any doubts or confusion, check things out with your Rav.

SETTING UP THE CHANUKIYA

In general, one should prepare his Chanukiya well in advance of lighting time, so that there will not be a delay in lighting at the proper time. This is especially so on Friday of Chanuka because things get kind of hectic as Shabbat approaches. (And especially **NOT SO** for Motza'ei Shabbat lighting - Obviously, no preparation for lighting after Shabbat may be done on Shabbat - but one should set up for Motza'ei Shabbat on Friday - see further).

Some have the custom of setting up their Chanukiya in the morning for the evening (this goes for every day - except Shabbat, of course). This not only serves the practical purpose of being ready to light on time without undue delay, but it also commemorates the practice in the Beit HaMikdash called Hatavat HaNeirot, whereby the Kohen (Gadol) tended the Menora and prepared it in the morning for kindling in the late, late afternoon. Since our lighting on Chanuka directly commemorates the lighting of the Menora in the Beit HaMikdash, this suggestion provides a nice "added touch" to the mitzva and symbolism of Chanuka lighting.

AL HANISIM is added to every Amida and Birkat HaMazon throughout Chanuka.

There is no reference to Chanuka in BRACHA MEI'EIN SHALOSH (a.k.a. AL HAMICHYA).

Forgetting AL HANISIM does NOT invalidate either the Amida or Birkat HaMazon. That means that neither is to be repeated because AL HANISIM was omitted.

However, if one realizes the omission before the end of the Amida, AL HANISIM can be said right before YIHYU L'RATZON, with the modified introduction, below.

In Birkat HaMazon, an omitted AL HANISIM becomes a HARACHAMAN, right before HARACHAMAN HU Y'ZAKEINU, as follows (there are variant texts for this)...

הֲרַחֵמֵנו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ נִסִּים וְנִפְלְאוֹת
כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה. בִּימֵי מַתְתִּיהוּ...
...
בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה. בִּימֵי מַתְתִּיהוּ...

BRACHOT BEFORE LIGHTING

Brachot should be recited BEFORE beginning to light the candles. This complies with the general rule for Brachot of Mitzva, that they be recited immediately before performance of the mitzva, if possible. This means, that on the first night, wait until all three brachot are said before lighting the candle. And, even on the eighth night, don't start lighting the candles until you finish both brachot.

(Some hold that this applies to the first b'racha - the mitzva b'racha, but not necessarily to the other b'rachot. Check

with your Rav if you are not sure which opinion to follow.)

LOADING THE CHANUKIYA

Opinions differ, but a common practice is to place the first candle (or oil cup) in the right side of the Chanukiya.

If one lights at the doorpost, then the first candle should be closest to the doorpost, even if it is the left side of the Chanukiya.

From the second night on, the custom (one of the customs) is to "load" the Chanukiya from right to left, and to light it, left to right.

At the doorpost, one loads it from the doorpost out, and lights it starting with the candle closest to the doorpost.

Loading and lighting direction are not crucial to the performance of the mitzva, but there are reasons for the various practices.

It should be stated that if you light on a window sill, then right and left are different for you and for someone looking from the outside. Check with your Rav which way to load and light in that case.

ESSENCE and HIDUR

The essential performance of the mitzva of Chanuka Lights is the lighting of a single candle each night. The custom that we follow of increasing the number of candles each night is a HIDUR MITZVA (enhancement of the mitzva). This is not to suggest that anyone should follow the original

practice of (just) one candle each night. The Jewish People "across the board" accepted upon itself - a long time ago - the current practice of lighting the number of candles that correspond to the day of Chanuka.

It is because the first candle you light fulfills the mitzva, that the b'rachot should be said before any lighting.

One practice that has developed because of the distinction between the first candle and the others, is to begin reciting/singing HANEIROT HALALU after the first candle is lit, while lighting the others.

Alternatively, one can wait until the lighting is done to say HANEIROT HALALU. Stick to family practice on this, unless good reason to switch.

RIGHT AFTER LIGHTING

One should not just light the Chanuka candles (and sing Maoz Tzur) and then go on to business as usual, but rather one should look at the candles for a while, ponder G-d's miracles, spend some time with the family talking about the message of Chanuka and how it relates to our time, play a little dreidel, sing a song or two, have a special Chanuka snack, have some Chanuka fun.

TORAH sh/b PART OF LIGHTING

It is recommended to learn some Torah, share a Dvar Torah, have a family shiur, or something like that, right after candle lighting (or sometime in the evening). The decrees of the Greeks included a ban on learning Torah. Our

celebrating Chanuka marks our freedom from Greek oppression, including the ability to learn Torah in public without fear. So let's do just that!

Here's a MASHAL (analogy) to the above point. (You can use it as the DT for one of the nights - see further in this Pull-Out for other Divrei Torah to share with family and guests.) There was a dancer who had a terrible accident - badly breaking his/her leg. The leg required two surgeries to repair the damage, a subsequent third operation to adjust things properly, and lots and lots of physiotherapy and recuperation time. Finally, after almost a year and a half, the dancer is given the good news that the leg is now as good as new. The dancer throws a party to celebrate the restoration to good health. At the party there is food and drink, good music, even some party favors and games. But the main element of the party is the Dance. When the dancer does his/her dance, then the celebration is complete.

After years of Greek oppression, during which time Torah Learning and Mitzvot Observance was forbidden under pain of death, there was a series of operations (military, in this case) and miracles that finally restored the Jewish People to good, spiritual health. We celebrate by the lighting of candles, the saying of Al HaNisim and Hallel, with traditional foods, even party games (dreidel). But the highlight of our celebration should be Torah Learning and increased attention to Mitzvot. If we have a CHANUKA, a rededication of ourselves to Torah and Mitzvot, then we will know that Chanuka is real.

TEXT OF THE BRACHA

Notice on the "Chanuka Candle Lighting" page (centerfold) that the word SHEL in the first bracha is in parentheses. There is a dispute as to whether the bracha ends L'HADLIK NER SHEL CHANUKA or L'HADLIK NER CHANUKA. One should follow his own (or family) minhag, if you have one. If not, ask your Rav which wording you should use. (A third opinion is to combine the words: L'HADLIK NER SHE-L'CHANUKA.)

The following comments are not meant to encourage you to go with the NER CHANUKA version, but they might help explain why some people embraced this text for the bracha. BTW, Rinat Yisrael siddur has NER CHANUKA. So does the GR"A siddur, Eizor Eliyahu. Koren siddur has NER SHEL CHANUKA. So does T'filat Kol Peh.

Candles for Shabbat are candles, in the sense that they produce light (which is their main function), heat, fire - just like "regular" candles. Therefore, the appropriate term for them is NER SHEL SHABBAT, candles of or for Shabbat. So too, SHEL YOM TOV and SHEL YOM HAKIPURIM. Chanuka candles are not "regular" candles. We are not allowed to use them - not their light nor heat nor fire. As we say, ELAH LIR-OTAM BILAVAD, (they are) exclusively to look at them, to see them. That's it. They are not candles that are being used for Chanuka. They are CHANUKA CANDLES.

[Here's another MASHAL... It's like the difference between the flowers one buys for his Shabbat table - here and

outside Israel. In most other places of the world, one would go to a flower shop and buy flowers, using the flowers to honor Shabbat. They are flowers for Shabbat. But in Israel, one usually buys Shabbat flowers. They are flowers that are being sold for Shabbat by vendors who only sell flowers on Erev Shabbat and Chag. Same flowers, but different.]

Again, this is not meant to discredit referring to them in the bracha as NER SHEL CHANUKA. The gemara and many authorities since, have given the text as NER SHEL CHANUKA. The above was just meant to explain why other sources go for NER CHANUKA as the ending of the bracha. If you do, then you've got another nice DT to share with your family and guests.

Additionally, with NER CHANUKA, the first bracha has 13 words, corresponding to the 13 MIDOT of G-d's mercy. With the second bracha also having 13 words, the two brachot add to 26 words, 26 being the numeric value of HaShem's name. (NER CHANUKA and NER SHEL'CHANUKA both fit this numeric observation.)

INDOORS/OUTDOORS

The original place for lighting and displaying of the Chanukiya was outdoors at the entrance to one's home or courtyard.

Over many generations in exile, where lighting outdoors was inconvenient (weather-wise) to say the least, and often dangerous ("neighbors"), the practice evolved to light indoors.

In some circumstances, the lighting was to be done at a window, so that the

candles would be visible to passersby in the street. In other cases, the Chanuka lights were lit in a conspicuous location for the attention of the members of the household, especially when it was dangerous to light at the window.

When lighting inside the home - for whatever reason - the one place that the Chanukiya should not be placed is where the Shabbat candles usually are. They need to be in an eye-catching, attention-grabbing location so they can serve their function of Publicizing the Miracles.

Many people who have come to Israel, still light inside, at the window, as they had been doing in their countries of origin. Others have gone back to the original practice of lighting outdoors, which is common in Israel - especially in Jerusalem.

When lighting outdoors, the candles are usually protected from getting blown out by being placed inside a fish-tank like box, specifically made for that purpose.

If you are considering changing any aspect of your Chanuka candle lighting routine, (candle to oil or vice versa, sunset to stars-out or vice versa, indoors to outdoors or vice versa, window to door or vice versa, boys and girls to boys only or vice versa, each family member to one for the family or vice versa...), you should consult a Rav.

AGAIN, we remind you... These pages should be considered a review of some - but not all - of the many Chanuka topics. Even when we've presented

more than one opinion, there might be others that we haven't mentioned. We've said it often, but we repeat, it is best to consult your Rav to clear up any doubts you might have.

CANDLE LIGHTING

The following applies to

FIRST CANDLE: Sunday, Dec 22nd

SECOND CANDLE: Monday, Dec 23rd

THIRD CANDLE: Tuesday, Dec 24th

FOURTH CANDLE: Wed. Dec 25th

FIFTH CANDLE: Thursday, Dec 26th

Sixth candle - FRIDAY and seventh candle - MOTZA"SH are presented separately, see further on.

EIGHTH CANDLE: Sunday, Dec 29th

In other words, the six nights of Chanuka that are neither Erev Shabbat nor Motza"Sh.

WHEN TO LIGHT

There are two opinions as to when is the ideal time to light Chanuka lights during the week (i.e. except for Friday and Motza'ei Shabbat, when Shabbat affects the timing, as we will soon present).

Minhag Yerushalayim (which many, but not everyone in Jerusalem follow - and some outside Jerusalem do follow) is to light with the setting of the sun.

CONCERNING SUNSET...

In Yerushalayim, the custom is to calculate sunset taking into account the elevation of the city of about 800m above sea level. Most other locations use the sunset at sea level. You should check with your local rabbinate or

religious council (or someone else who knows about these things), exactly what timings to use for Chanuka candles (and anything else that uses sunset as a beginning or ending point).

Chanuka 5780, sunset is progressively later each night. Sunsets for Jerusalem are as follows: first 5 nights - 4:45, 4:45½, 4:46, 4:46½, 4:47pm. 8th night - 4:49pm. For Friday & Motza"sh lighting, sunset is not used - it is either too late or too early.

Other locations in Israel will vary from these times a few minutes earlier or later. If you need exact timing, check the internet or with someone who knows the details. If you round off these times, go later rather than earlier.

Those who light with sunset should have already davened Mincha, and should subsequently daven Maariv at the appropriate time, obviously after lighting candles.

THE OTHER OPINION

The "rest of the Jewish world" lights when the "light of the sun has left the sky", i.e. Stars-Out a.k.a. Tzeit HaKochavim.

CONCERNING TZEIT...

There are different opinions as to when Stars-Out occurs. Except for Friday (too late) and Motza'ei Shabbat (too early), the earlier times are available to use for candle lighting. The times of Stars-out can be as little as 13 minutes after sunset, 17 minutes, 20 minutes, 25 minutes. The Shabbat out time is about 35 minutes after sunset (in Israel, more

as your location's latitude increases) and Rabbeinu Tam is 32 minutes later than that. Check with your Rav to fine-tune your stars-out Chanuka candle time. (Remember that Friday & Motza'ei Shabbat have different timing.)

Those who light with Stars-Out should light right after Maariv, unless they have a fixed time later in the evening for davening, in which case they can light before davening.

Stars-Out lighters should favor the earlier times for TZEIT (except, of course for Motza"Sh). 17-20 mins after sunset seems to be a good time to shoot for. But check with your Rav if you are in doubt. 5:10pm will work this year.

UNTIL WHEN?

Candles must burn at least a half hour after stars-out. This was the original (time of the Gemara) time period after dark that people were still around outdoors and became the definition of the time range for PIRSUMEI NISA, publicizing the miracle.

Although in our day, people are out later than this time, the halacha only requires the half hour after stars-out.

However, it is recommended that one use longer candles or more oil to extend this time (somewhat), in recognition of the expansion of the current-day Pirsumei Nisa time-frame. We would further suggest that one's candles should stay lit at least a half hour after the latest stars-out time, namely Rabbeinu Tam time. This is only a recommendation, not in any way meant to be a halachic ruling.

Again, using Jerusalem timing - and reminding the TTreader elsewhere to adjust the times, as is necessary - the stars-out time for Shabbat-out is 5:25pm this year. That's a generously later TZEIT time, which we are suggesting because of the above point. Candles, then, should burn (every night of Chanuka) at least to 5:55pm, and 'somewhat more' will bring the time to 6:00pm. To include Rabbeinu Tam's timing, if your candles will burn to 6:30pm, you are totally covered.

HOW EARLY CAN ONE LIGHT?

When necessary, one may light as early as PLAG MINCHA (1¼ halachic hours before sunset). This is by no means preferable, but if circumstances are such that you have to light early - leaving town, and the like, then PLAG is the earliest.

For Jerusalem, 3:45pm should be the red line for early lighting (we added a few minutes). Remember, that the candles must burn until at least a half hour after stars-out, regardless of how early you light. Extra large candles or a lot of oil might be necessary to accomplish this, when lighting soon after PLAG. Early is not so good, so the closer to sunset, the better.

SIXTH CANDLE: Fri. Dec 27th

It is preferable to daven Mincha before lighting Chanuka candles, but one should not miss out on a minyan to daven before lighting.

The OU Israel Center has a Mincha minyan at 12:10pm on Friday, Erev Shabbat Chanuka (Dec 27th), to facilitate davening Mincha before candle lighting. (Even though we are

generally closed on Fridays.)

Chanuka candles should be lit BEFORE Shabbat candles - even if different people are lighting each. Count on 5-10 minutes before the posted Shabbat lighting time; adjust according to your household's experience. Save Ma'oz Tzur for the Shabbat table - it saves some time and also helps us bring Chanuka to the Shabbat Chanuka table.

IN JERUSALEM...

Some follow the practice of delaying Shabbat candle lighting for 20 minutes (4:28ish this year, instead of the scheduled 4:08pm) and lighting Chanuka candles right before Shabbat candles.

For Maale Adumim, Petach Tikva, Tzfat, Haifa - and any other locale where regular Shabbat candle lighting is 30 minutes or more before sunset, one should ask his local Rav what the practice is for delaying (or not) Shabbat candles. Those living in places where regular Shabbat candle lighting is 18-22 minutes before sunset, should keep to their posted times.

Care should be taken when lighting early (as on Friday, but even during the week for a variety of reasons) to...

[1] Never light before PLAG mincha - use 3:45pm as the red line. Outside of Israel, the times are most likely to be different - a local calendar should be consulted.

[2] Make sure the candles are long/fat enough - or that there is sufficient oil - to last the required amount of time after stars-out, and then some. They should last at least until 6:00pm (using the later Shabbat-out time as TZEIT) or

6:30pm (taking Rabbeinu Tam's timing) but preferably somewhat longer.

If Shabbat candles were inadvertently lit before Chanuka candles, then - if it is still before sunset, anyone who has not yet taken Shabbat, may light Chanuka candles. If there is any doubt as to whether the sun has set or not, candles should NOT be lit.

7th Candle: Motza"Sh Dec 28th

Candles for Motza'ei Shabbat should be set up from before Shabbat so as not to delay the Chanuka candle lighting any more than necessitated by Shabbat. (This is not required by halacha, but it is a highly desirable thing to do, and it reflects a love and care for this mitzva.)

Because, this year, we need to light 7 candles on Mota"Sh, one will either need to set up a second Chanukiya, or at least have the candles, shamash, matches ready and waiting close by so there will be no undue delay of the lighting of Motza'ei Shabbat.

Many shuls will daven Maariv on Motza'ei Shabbat Chanuka earlier than usual (13-17 minutes after sunset is an acceptable Tzeit HaKochavim time for the reciting of the Sh'ma - even though Shabbat is not over yet). This allows people to get home closer to "right after Shabbat" and maximize the time that Chanuka candles will be lit during their "prime time". OBVIOUSLY, one cannot light Chanuka candles - or even set them up - before Shabbat is out. But by having set up for Motza"sh on Friday, and by davening Maariv a little earlier, and by hurrying home, unnecessary delay can be avoided and the prime time for candles can be maximized.

WHICH GOES FIRST?

Havdala or Chanuka candles. This is a topic that bears yearly review because of how fuzzy our memories can sometimes be.

TWO MITZVOT TO PERFORM -

Havdala and Chanuka candles. By the rule of TADIR (that which is more frequent should be done first), havdala should be said first. And by logic, one should "finish" with Shabbat and then light candles for the next day of Chanuka, which is Sat. night and Sunday. Many authorities hold that on Motza'ei Shabbat, one should say havdala first and then light Chanuka candles. This opinion is followed by the majority of Chanuka-candle-lighting Jews all over the world. The Maharal (among others) is vehement in his insistence that we cannot possibly consider doing something so "week-day-ish" as lighting candles, unless we have first said havdala. He rejects any contrary arguments. Even if you want to point to the halachic permission we have on Motza'ei Shabbat to do certain things before havdala, provided, of course, it is after Shabbat time-wise and we've either davened Maariv with ATA CHONANTANU or at least said BARUCH HAMAVIDIL... - answer the phone, for example, with Chanuka candles the objection would be based on instituting candle lighting as a fixed yearly task before havdala. This first opinion objects to the formalizing of such a weekday activity before the havdala ceremony. And, as mentioned earlier - most Jews follow this opinion and say Havdala before lighting

Chanuka candles on Motza"Sh.

ON THE OTHER HAND...

There is a strong argument for lighting Chanuka candles before havdala. First of all, Shabbat is over when it is 5:15pm (to use Jerusalem time as an example - substitute your location's Shabbat-out time) AND one has said Havdala in davening (ATA CHONANTANU in the Maariv Amida) OR at least said BARUCH HAMAVIDIL BEIN KODESH L'CHOL. The Havdala with wine, spices, candle, is NOT what ends Shabbat - it is what honors the departing Shabbat (and permits eating and drinking). Even so, havdala should go first, except for one very important factor: The prime time (and according to some opinions, the only time) for Chanuka candles is ticking away - namely, the first half-hour after dark. We cannot, of course, light Chanuka candles when it is still Shabbat. But we should maximize the portion of time of the "half-hour after" once we are allowed to light. Havdala will wait; Chanuka candles will not.

Therefore, the OTHER opinion is that Chanuka candles go first and then havdala. Remember: Shabbat must be over - both with time and havdala words - before one may light Chanuka candles.

And this procedure comes with the additional reminder not to use the Chanuka candles for havdala (or even to light the havdala candle from one of the Chanuka candle), since one may not benefit from the Chanuka lights, and the bracha in havdala is specifically upon using the light (examining of

fingernails, etc.). Chanuka candles first is the opinion of the Vilna Gaon and others, and is Minhag Yerushalayim. (Remember that not everyone in Yerushalayim follows the practices known as Minhag Yerushalayim and some people elsewhere do.)

SO WHICH IS IT?

This dispute is one of the few in halacha that is resolved in this way: D'AVAD K'MAR AVAD UD'AVAD K'MAR AVAD. "Whichever opinion you follow, you have performed correctly." Either procedure may be followed. Family and community custom should play a deciding role in this issue. Again, a Rav should be consulted, especially if one is considering a change of his/her practice.

Some add that those who light outdoors should follow the custom of lighting before havdala. Those who light indoors can take their pick.

REMEMBER: Shabbat is paramount. In case of doubt as to whether Shabbat is being encroached upon, one should NOT light Chanuka candles yet. It must be DEFINITELY after Shabbat before lighting. But one should not unnecessarily delay the fulfillment of the mitzva of Chanuka candles.

A note for Rabeinu Tam people:

Those who end Shabbat throughout the year 72 minutes after sunset and consider it to be the correct halachic time, must keep it on Motza'ei Shabbat Chanuka, even though it means losing "prime time" for Chanuka candles.

Those who hold Rabeinu Tam as a CHUMRA (a strict measure, a way of extending Shabbat, but consider the earlier time as halachic), may end Shabbat earlier on Motza'ei Chanuka, in order to fulfill the mitzva of Chanuka candles at their better time. Check this out with your Rav if you are not sure what to do.

IN SHUL, by the way, it is the universal practice to light Chanuka candles before saying havdala, this to maximize Pirsumei Nisa in a situation where everyone present will be leaving for home shortly.

At home, people will still be there for the Chanuka candles, so there is no need to light before havdala (according to those who follow the first opinion).

A NICE TOUCH...

Those who say havdala first can light the Shamash for the Chanuka candles with the havdala candle before extinguishing it, thus dovetailing the two mitzvot.

Those who follow the second opinion can light the havdala candle from the Shamash (not one of the Chanuka candles), thereby dovetailing one mitzva into another.

On Motza'ei Shabbat, when we light after Stars-Out, it is sufficient for the candles to burn for half an hour. Still, it is preferable that they last longer. This has to do with the fact that in our time, people are out in the streets later than in times past and Pirsumei Nisa (publicizing the miracle) applies later than the original "half-hour after

stars-out" (according to most opinions).

MORE ON (WEEKDAY) TIMING...

If, because of one's work or travel schedule, one has to choose between lighting early or late, or between lighting early or appointing someone to light for you at the proper time, or between lighting late and appointing someone to light for you at the proper time - one should consult a Rav for a p'sak based on how early and how late, and any other relevant factors.

Sometimes a less-than-perfect performance of a mitzva is a fine, acceptable "second best". Sometimes, not. Lighting Chanuka candles early or late is a poor second, at best (except when Shabbat insists on early or late, depending upon which end of Shabbat is at issue).

Lighting early lacks an element of Pirsumei Nisa at the time of lighting - which is when the mitzva is performed - because a candle flame is not eye-catching during full daylight.

Lighting late is not so good because of the time-period for Pirsumei Nisa from the days of the Gemara remains the optimum time (and some say the ONLY time) for the fulfillment of the mitzva.

Although we follow other opinions, and basically allow lighting any time of the night, it is far less than ideal to light late. A "good" excuse is okay, but not great.

One should consult a Rav especially for recurring situations, such as coming home late from work or school, and the like. Remember that having someone light for you is a valid alternative to

your lighting for yourself, and sometimes it is even the preferred alternative. Ask your Rav.

OTHER MATTERS...

Many shuls sing L'CHA DODI to the tune of MA'OZ TZUR on Leil Shabbat Chanuka. And, of course, at the table, there are many Chanuka songs to add to your usual Friday night and Shabbat day repertoire of Z'mirot and songs. Remember, although Chanuka does not require a SEUDAT MITZVA, any meal (especially, but not only, on Shabbat) with songs, stories, and relevant Divrei Torah becomes a special Chanuka Seudat Mitzva.

We say Full Hallel on all 8 days of Chanuka

CHANUKA TORAH READING

Torah reading for Chanuka is from Parshat Naso, Bamidbar 7 (known as Parshat HaN'si'im) and the beginning of Bamidbar 8 (beginning of B'haalot'cha). It is the portion of the Torah that tells of the dedication (CHANUKA) of the Mishkan during the time of Moshe Rabeinu and the generation that came out of Egypt. On Chanuka, we celebrate the rededication of the Beit HaMikdash during the time of the Chashmona'im - hence the choice of Torah reading.

Furthermore, we have sources that say that the original Mishkan was ready to be put in service on the 25th of Kislev, but the inauguration of the Mishkan was held over to Rosh Chodesh Nissan in honor of Yizchak Avinu who was born in Nissan. So reading about the dedication of the Mishkan is perfectly

appropriate for our Chanuka, which begins on 25 Kislev.

On "regular" days of Chanuka, one Torah is read from; three people are called to the Torah. On Rosh Chodesh (that is a weekday - Sunday this year), two Torahs are read from; four Aliyot (3+1). On Shabbat Chanuka this year, it is also Rosh Chodesh - three Torahs - see further.

FIRST DAY OF CHANUKA

MON 25 Kislev - December 23rd

On each day of Chanuka, the portion of the Nasi (tribal leader) of the day will be read.

On the first day, the reading starts with the introduction to Chanukat HaMizbei'ach (the dedication of the Altar/Mishkan) and continues to include the day one Nasi of Yehuda (Nachshon b. Aminadav). For the first Aliya, we read the 11-pasuk intro with the allocation of wagons and oxen to the Levi families for carrying the parts of the dismantled Mishkan (except for K'hat, who carry the sacred vessels on their shoulders).

Some communities begin with the 6-pasuk portion of Birkat Kohanim which immediately precedes parshat HaNesi'im. This is appropriate because the battles and dedication of the Second Beit HaMikdash, which we celebrate with Chanuka, were done by the Kohein family of Chashmona'im.

The portion of each day's gifts from the Nesi'im is made up of 6 p'sukim, which are divided on the first day between the second and the third Aliyot.

SECOND DAY OF CHANUKA

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TUE 26 Kislev - Dec 24th

The 6-pasuk portion of Netanel b. Tzu'ar of Yissachar is read. First half (3 p'sukim) for the Kohein, second half (3 p'ukim) for a Levi, and the full 6 p'sukim are repeated for the Yisrael. (In Chutz La'Aretz, instead of repeating day two, the 6 verses of day three are read for the third Aliya.)

THIRD DAY OF CHANUKA

WED 27 Kislev - Dec 25th

One Torah, 3 people. The 6-pasuk portion of Zevulun's Eliav b. Cheilon is read. Same pasuk breakdown as the 2nd day: 3 + 3 + 6 (repeated).

FOURTH DAY OF CHANUKA

THU 28 Kislev - Dec 26th

One Torah, 3 people. The 6-pasuk portion of Reuven's Elitzur b. Sh'dei-ur is read. Same pasuk breakdown as the 2nd day: 3 + 3 + 6 (repeated).

FIFTH DAY OF CHANUKA

FRI 29 Kislev - Dec 27th

One Torah, 3 people. The 6-pasuk portion of Shimon's Sh'lumi'el b. Tzurishadai is read. Same pasuk breakdown as the 2nd day: 3 + 3 + 6 (repeated).

SHABBAT CHANUKA

6th day, 30 Kislev - Dec 28th

First day Rosh Chodesh Tevet

This year, we read from three Torahs on Shabbat Chanuka. In the first Torah we read Parshat Mikeitz to six people, combining the sedra's Shishi and Sh'vii into this Shabbat's Shishi.

In the second Torah, we read the Shabbat-Rosh Chodesh portion from Parshat Pinchas - Bamidbar 28:9-15, which presents the Musaf offerings of Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh. This reading in the second Torah is Sh'vii and completes the regular seven aliyot of Shabbat.

In the third Torah, we read the Maftir for Chanuka, namely, the 6-pasuk portion for Gad's Elyasaf b. D'u'el.

The **HAFTARA**, which is exactly the same as the one for Parshat B'haalo-t'cha, is from the book of Zecharia and includes the description of a vision of a golden Menora.

It ends with a message that is as fresh today as it ever has been. "Not through armies and not through might , but through My (HaShem's) spirit..."

Yes, we need an army, and tanks and planes, etc. etc. But our ultimate and foolproof weapon against our enemies is the spirit of G-d, which we are granted when we remain faithful to Him, keep His Torah and Mitzvot, and live by His values. We merit victory via faithfulness in HaShem and our efforts.

At Mincha of Shabbat Chanuka, we read the first part of Parshat Vayigash, as usual.

SEVENTH DAY OF CHANUKA

SUN 1 Tevet - Dec 29th

2nd day Rosh Chodesh Tevet

Two Torahs are used. To the first one we call three people for the Rosh Chodesh reading from Parshat Pinchas. (We don't need to repeat a pasuk or

two as we would on just a weekday Rosh Chodesh.)

In the second Torah, we read the portion of the tribal leader of the day. That would be Efrayim's Elishama b. Amihud. Total number of Aliyot is 4, as for every Rosh Chodesh (& Chol HaMoed).

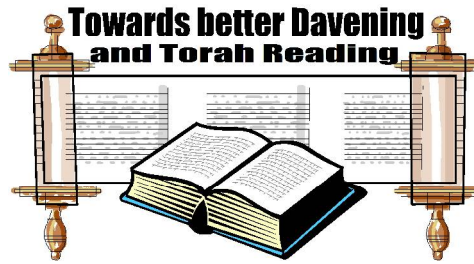
EIGHTH DAY OF CHANUKA

a.k.a. ZOT CHANUKA

MON 2 Tevet - December 10th

First and second Aliyot split the Nasi's portion of the 8th day, Gamliel b. P'datzur of Menashe.

For the third Aliya, we read the portions of days 9, 10, 11, and 12, and then the summary of the gifts from all twelve days, and then the first part of B'haalot'cha, the portion of the Menora. The name ZOT CHANUKA comes from the Torah reading - and for another reason - see further.



**Here are some AL HANISIM words
to pay attention to:**

chash-mo-NAI (totally silent ALEF)

k'she-a-M'DA (not am-da)

a-M'CHA (not am-cha)

a-MAD-ta (not a-ma-d'ta)

**RAV-ta, DAN-ta, na-KAM-ta,
ma-SAR-ta** - all mil'eil accent

o-S'KEI (not os-kei)

lid-VIR (not l'd'vir even though the word without the prefixed LAMED is D'VIR, here the LAMED takes the DALET to it making the first syllable LID and the second syllable VIR gets the accent)

v'ka-V'U (not v'kav-u)

ul-ha-LEIL (not u-l'ha-leil)

Paying more attention to these words will slow down our AL HANISIM but will give us a chance to better thank G-d for all of the miracles and victories He has wrought.

And since the whole AMIDA is full of similar words to pay attention to, the result can be a slower, better pronounced and better understood davening.

In brachot #2 and #3 for the candles:

ba-Z'MAN (not baz-man)

la-Z'MAN (not laz-man)

Here are some Chanuka challenges that can be fun at a family party or get-together

Take the word **MIRACLES** and see how many words of three letters or more you can make from its letters.

Differently, see how many anagrams you can make from **MIRACLES**, like RICE SLAM

Start with the word 'A'. Add one letter at a time and make a new word - you can scramble the letters. Next make a 3-letter word by adding another letter. Continue until the 8th word is **MIRACLES**. You should end up with a list of 8 words, increasing in number of letters from 1 to 8.

CHANUKA GELT: Challenge your Chanuka gelt intended recipients with this challenge. I want to give you two shekels. How can I do it with 8 coins? So too with 5, 10, 18 shekels - and - different numbers of coins - whatever you plan on giving. Make your children or grandchildren work a little for it. Remember, Chanuka fun is the goal - not frustration. So go easy when that is called for.

As a group game, you can sit around in a circle, spin a dreidel and when it "lands", each player tries to be the first to call out a Chanuka word beginning with that letter. Do a couple of rounds for Chanuka words, and then call out a different category. Animals, fruits, items of clothing, parts of the body, and so on. If you find it too hard with only the NUN, GIMEL, HEI, and PEI, you can add the letters of the words they each represent: NUN includes NUN and SAMACH for NEIS. GIMEL is also DALET, VAV, and LAMED. Etc. For one or more rounds, you can have the spinner sing a song beginning with that letter.

Use the numbers 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 in order, with the four basic arithmetic symbols [+ , - , x , / , parentheses, when necessary] - you can also concatenate numbers - that is, put 1 and 2 together to form 12 - to form expressions that equal 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. For example: $(12/3 - 4) \times 5678 = 0$. We didn't ask for zero, but this is how you can get it. Your challenge is to form the numbers 1 through 8. You can set other goals to extend the challenge. Those goals can be any numbers at all, or they can be Chanuka related. 36 or 44, for example. Connection? Total number of candles - without or with Shamash. 89 or 83? Gimatriya of Chanuka, with or without the VAV.

CHANUKA CANDLE LIGHTING

KAVANA: One should have in mind to fulfill the Rabbinic Mitzva (with Torah backing) of **NER CHANUKA** plus the **HIDUR MITZVA** of the extra candles (each night after the first).

One should acknowledge G-d and thank Him for the Chanuka miracles in particular, and for all His miracles and kindnesses in general.

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

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

On the first night add

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחֵינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזְמַן הַזֶּה.

הַנִּירוֹת הַלָּלוּ אֲנַחְנוּ (or אָנוּ) מִדְּלִיקִים עַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל
הַנִּפְלְאוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמְּלַחְמוֹת, שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ
לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה, עַל יְדֵי כְּהֵנִיךָ
הַקְּדוֹשִׁים. וְכָל שְׂמוֹנֵת יָמֵי חֲנֻכָּה הַנִּירוֹת הַלָּלוּ קִדְּשָׁנוּ
הֵם, וְאֵין לָנוּ רְשׁוֹת לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בָּהֶם, אֲלֵא לְרֵאוֹתָם
בְּלָבָד, כִּי לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל לְשִׁמְךָ הַגָּדוֹל עַל נִסִּיךָ וְעַל
נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ.

מעוז צור ישועתי לך נאה לשבח,
תכון בית תפילתי ושם תודה נזבח,
לעת תכין מטבח מצר המנבח,
אז אגמר בשיר מזמור חנכת המזבח.

רעות שבעה נפשי ביגון כחי כלה,
חיי מררו בקשי בשעבוד מלכות עגלה,
ובידו הגדולה הוציא את הסגלה,
חיל פרעה וכל זרעו ירדו כאבן במצולה.

ד: ביר קדשו הביאני וגם שם לא שקטתי,
ובא נוגש והגלני, כי זרים עבדתי,
ויין רעל מסכתי כמעט שעברתי,
קץ בכל, זרפבל, לקץ שבעים נושעתי.

כ: רת קומת ברוש בקש אגני בן המדתא,
ונהיתה לו לפח ולמוקש וגאותו נשבתה,
ראש ימיני נשאת, ואויב שמו מחית,
רב בניו וקניניו על העץ תלית.

ו: וננים נקבצו עלי אזי בימי חשמנים,
ופרצו חומות מגדלי וטמאו כל השמנים,
ומנותר קנקנים נעשה נס לשושנים,
בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו שיר ורננים.

ח שוף זרוע קדשך וקרב קץ הישועה,
נקם נקמת דם עבדיך מאמה הרשעה,
כי ארכה לנו הישועה, ואין קץ לימי הרעה,
דחה אדמון בצל צלמון הקם לנו רועים שבעה.

SHIR SHEL YOM FOR CHANUKA

According to MINHAG YERUSHALAYIM (MY - mostly based on minhagim of the GR"A, brought to Eretz Yisrael by his students and followers over 200 years ago), there is a special chapter of T'hilim said on each day of Chanuka (Ps.30) which preempts the regular Shir shel Yom. That is, except for Shabbat. Shabbat's perek, 92, is said on Shabbat Chanuka, not 30. The chapter for Rosh Chodesh (104) also trumps that of Chanuka (and even that of Shabbat, when they coincide - as they do this year). The following chart covers all possible arrangements of Chanuka in our fixed calendar. For this year, 5780, use the row coded PEI-BET-SHIN.

yr. code	%	total	🕯	🕯	🕯	🕯	🕯	🕯	🕯	🕯
פבח מבח	5.7 5.8	11.5%	SUN 30	MON 30	TUE 30	WED 30	THU 30	FRI 104	מקץ 92	SUN 30
פבש מבש פגכ מגכ	11.8 4.7 6.2 5.2	27.9%	MON 30	TUE 30	WED 30	THU 30	FRI 30	מקץ 104	SUN 104	MON 30
פהכ	18.1	22.0	WED 30	THU 30	FRI 30	מקץ 92	SUN 30	MON 104	TUE 104	WED 30
מהח	3.9	%	WED 30	THU 30	FRI 30	מקץ 92	SUN 30	MON 104	TUE 30	WED 30
פהש מהש	3.3 6.7	10.0%	THU 30	FRI 30	מקץ 92	SUN 30	MON 30	TUE 104	WED 104	THU 30
פזח מזח	4.3 5.8	10.1%	FRI 30	וישב 92	SUN 30	MON 30	TUE 30	WED 104	THU 30	FRI 30
פזש מזש	13.7 4.7	18.4%	וישב 92	SUN 30	MON 30	TUE 30	WED 30	THU 104	FRI 104	מקץ 92

NOTE:

Example: Those who follow Minhag Yerushalayim, will say only Psalm 30 on the first day of Chanuka. They will not say the Psalm for Monday. However, according to Ramban (and others), referring to Monday as YOM SHEINI B'SHABBAT is a fulfillment of ZACHOR ET YOM HASHABBAT L'KAD'SHO, Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it. Therefore, those who follow MY, should also declare each day (without the day's Psalm):

HAYOM YOM so-and-so B'SHABBAT

T'hilim 30 is the introduction to P'sukei D'Zimra (or the bridge between Korbanot and P'sukei D'Zimra) and is said by some not only at the end of Shacharit on Chanuka, but also at the end of Maariv and/or at candle-lighting. (According to the GR"A, it is not said every day before שמונה עשרה; only on Chanuka.) This year, we say it on Monday through Friday and on Monday, Zot Chanuka.

מְזִמּוֹר שִׁיר חֲנֻכַּת הַבַּיִת לְדוֹד: אַרְוֹמְמָךְ ה' כִּי דָלִיתָנִי, וְלֹא שִׁמַּחְתָּ
 אִיבֵי לִי: ה' אֱלֹהֵי, שְׁוַעַתִּי אֵלֶיךָ וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי: ה' הֶעֱלִיתָ מִן שְׂאוֹל נַפְשִׁי,
 חִייתָנִי מִיָּרְדֵי בּוֹר: זָמְרוּ לַה' חֲסִידָיו, וְהוֹדוּ לְזִכְרֵךְ קֹדְשׁוֹ: כִּי רָגַע
 בְּאִפּוֹ, חַיִּים בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ, בְּעָרַב יָלִין בְּכִי, וְלִבְּקָר רָנָה: וְאֲנִי אָמַרְתִּי
 בְּשִׁלוֹי, בַּל אָמוּט לְעוֹלָם: ה' בְּרִצּוֹנְךָ הֶעֱמַדְתָּה לְהַרְרֵי עֵז, הַסְתַּרְתָּ
 פְּנֶיךָ, הֵייתִי נִבְהָל: אֵלֶיךָ ה' אֶקְרָא, וְאֵל אֲדֹנָי אֶתְחַנֵּן: מַה בָּצַע בְּדַמִּי,
 בְּרַדְתִּי אֶל שַׁחַת, הַיּוֹדֵךְ עֶפֶר הִיגִיד אֲמַתְּךָ: שָׁמַע ה' וַחֲנַנִּי, ה' הִיָּה
 עֵזֶר לִי: הַפְּכַת מִסְפְּדֵי לְמַחֹל לִי, פִּתַּחְתָּ שִׁקִּי וַתִּאֲזַרְנִי שִׁמְחָה: לְמַעַן
 יִזְמְרֶךָ כְּבוֹד וְלֹא יָדָם, ה' אֱלֹהֵי לְעוֹלָם אֲוֹדֶךָ:

Psalm 92: For Shabbat Chanuka, but not this year because of R"Ch

הַיּוֹם יוֹם שַׁבַּת קֹדֶשׁ, שְׁבוּ הַיּוֹם הַלְלוּם אֹמְרִים בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ:

מְזִמּוֹר שִׁיר לְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת: טוֹב לְהַדוֹת לַה' וּלְזַמֵּר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלִיּוֹן:
 לְהַגִּיד בְּבִקְרָה חֲסִדְךָ וְאַמוּנָתְךָ בַּלַּיְלוֹת: עָלִי עֲשׂוֹר וְעָלִי נָבֵל עָלִי
 הַגִּיּוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר: כִּי שִׁמַּחְתָּנִי ה' בְּפַעֲלֶךָ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יַדְיָךָ אֲרַנֵּן: מַה גָּדְלוֹ
 מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה' מְאֹד עָמְקוּ מַחְשַׁבְתֶּיךָ: אִישׁ בְּעַר לֹא יֵדַע וּכְסִיל לֹא יִבִּין
 אֶת זֹאת: בְּפִרְחֵי רִשְׁעִים כְּמוֹ עֵשֶׂב וַיִּצְיָצוּ כָּל פְּעָלֵי אֹן לְהַשְׁמַדָּם
 עָדֵי עַד: וְאַתָּה מָרוֹם לְעֵלָם ה': כִּי הִנֵּה אִיבֵיךָ ה' כִּי הִנֵּה אִיבֵיךָ
 יֵאבְדוּ יִתְפָּרְדוּ כָּל פְּעָלֵי אֹן: וַתֵּרֶם כְּרָאִים קִרְנֵי בִלְתִּי בְּשֶׁמֶן רַעֲנָן:
 וַתִּבֶּט עֵינַי בְּשׂוּרֵי בְּקָמִים עָלִי מְרַעִים תִּשְׁמַעְנָה אָזְנֵי: צְדִיק כַּתְּמָר
 יִפְרַח כְּאַרְז בַּלְבָּנוֹן יִשְׁגָּה: שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית ה' בַּחֲצֵרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 יִפְרִיחוּ: עוֹד יִנוּבּוֹן בְּשִׁיבָה דְשָׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ: לְהַגִּיד כִּי יֵשֶׁר ה'
 צוּרֵי וְלֹא עוֹלָתָה בּוֹ.

Psalm 104: Rosh Chodesh Tevet - This year, on Shabbat and Sunday

בְּרַכֵּי נַפְשֵׁי אֶת ה', ה' אֱלֹהֵי גְדֻלַּת מְאֹד הוֹד וְהִדְר לְבִשְׁתָּ: עֹטָה אוֹר
כְּשֶׁלְמָה נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם כִּירִיעָה: הַמְקָרָה בַּמַּיִם עֲלִיּוֹתָיו הַשָּׁם עָבִים
רְכוּבוֹ הַמְהִלָּךְ עַל כַּנְפֵי רוּחַ: עֲשֵׂה מְלֶאכֶיו רוּחוֹת מְשַׁרְתָּיו אֲשֶׁר לֵהִט:
יִסַּד אֶרֶץ עַל מְכוּנָיָה בַּל תִּמּוּט עוֹלָם וָעֶד: תְּהוֹם כְּלָבוּשׁ כִּסִּיתוֹ, עַל
הָרִים יַעֲמְדוּ מַיִם: מִן גְּעַרְתָּךְ יְנוֹסוֹן מִן קוֹל רַעֲמָךְ יִחְפְּזוּן: יַעֲלוּ הָרִים
יִרְדוּ בְקַעוֹת, אֶל מְקוֹם זֶה יִסְדַּת לָהֶם: גְּבוּל שְׁמֵתָ בַּל יַעֲבְרוּן בַּל
יִשְׁבוּן לְכִסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ: הַמְשַׁלַּח מַעֲיָנִים בַּנְּחָלִים בֵּין הָרִים יִהְלִכוּן: יִשְׁקוּ
כָּל חֵיתוֹ שְׂדֵי יִשְׁבְּרוּ פְּרָאִים צְמָאִם: עֲלִיהֶם עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁכּוּן מִבֵּין
עֲפָאִים יִתְנוּ קוֹל: מִשְׁקָה הָרִים מַעֲלִיּוֹתָיו מִפְּרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ תִּשְׁבַּע הָאָרֶץ:
מִצְמִיחַ חֲצִיר לְבַהֲמָה וְעֵשֶׂב לְעִבְדַת הָאָדָם לְהוֹצִיא לָחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ: וַיֵּין
יִשְׁמַח לֵבֵב אָנוּשׁ לְהַצְהִיל פָּנִים מִשֶּׁמֶן וְלָחֶם לֵבֵב אָנוּשׁ יִסְעֵד: יִשְׁבְּעוּ
עֲצֵי ה' אֲרָזֵי לְבָנוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָטַע: אֲשֶׁר שָׁם צִפְרִים יִקְנְנוּ חֲסִידָה בְּרוּשִׁים
בֵּיתָה: הָרִים הַגְּבֹהִים לִיעֲלִים סִלְעִים מַחֲסֵה לְשִׁפְנִים: עֲשֵׂה יָרַח
לְמוֹעֲדִים שֶׁמֶשׁ יָדַע מְבוֹאוֹ: תִּשְׁתַּחֲשֹׁךְ וַיְהִי לַיְלָה בּוֹ תִרְמַשׁ כָּל חֵיתוֹ
יַעַר: הַכְּפִירִים שֹׁאֲגִים לְטָרֶף וּלְבִקֵּשׁ מֵאֵל אֲכָלָם: תִּזְרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יֵאֲסַפּוּן
וְאֵל מְעוֹנָתָם יִרְבְּצוּן: יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפַעֲלוֹ וּלְעִבְדוֹתוֹ עַדֵי עָרֵב: מָה רַבּוֹ
מַעֲשֵׂיךָ ה' כָּלֵם בְּחַכְמָה עֲשִׂיתָ מְלֶאכֶה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנְךָ: זֶה הַיָּם גְּדוֹל וּרְחֹב
יָדָיִם, שָׁם רָמַשׁ וְאֵין מִסְפָּר חֵיּוֹת קִטְנוֹת עִם גְּדֻלוֹת: שָׁם אֲנִיּוֹת יִהְלִכוּן
לְוִיתָן זֶה יִצְרַת לְשַׁחֵק בּוֹ: כָּלֵם אֲלֶיךָ יִשְׁבְּרוּן לְתַת אֲכָלָם בְּעֵתוֹ: תִּתֵּן
לָהֶם יִלְקִטוּן תִּפְתַּח יָדְךָ יִשְׁבְּעוּן טוֹב: תִּסְתִּיר פָּנֶיךָ יִבְהַלּוּן תִּסְף רוּחָם
יִגּוּעוּן וְאֵל עֲפָרָם יִשׁוּבוּן: תִּשְׁלַח רוּחְךָ יִבְרָאוּן וּתִחַדֵּשׁ פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה: יְהִי
כְבוֹד ה' לְעוֹלָם יִשְׁמַח ה' בְּמַעֲשָׂיו: הַמְבִיט לְאָרֶץ וּתְרַעַד יִגַּע בַּהָרִים
וַיַּעֲשֶׂנוּ: אֲשִׁירָה לָהּ בְּחַיֵּי אֲזַמְרָה לֵאלֹהֵי בְעוֹדֵי: יַעֲרֹב עָלָיו שִׁיחֵי
אֲנֹכִי אֲשִׁמַּח בָּהּ: יִתְמוּ חַטָּאִים מִן הָאָרֶץ וּרְשָׁעִים עוֹד אֵינָם בְּרַכֵּי
נַפְשֵׁי אֶת ה' הַלְלוּיָהּ:

Note: Many do not follow the One-Psalm-a-Day custom of MY. Some will add the Chanuka Psalm (and Rosh Chodesh Psalm) to the regular Psalm of the day.

Towards Knowing Our Calendar

The first 5 days of Chanuka each can fall on any of 6 days of the week.

Specifically, 25 Kislev cannot be on a Tuesday; all other days are possible.

It follows that the 26th cannot fall on a Wednesday, the 27th cannot fall on a Thursday, the 28th cannot fall on a Friday, and the 29th cannot fall on a Shabbat.

The 30th of Kislev (which there is this year, but not in all years) can fall on 4 different days of the week. 30 Kislev is LO ADU, but not linked to the 295 calendar dates that are in the LO ADU pattern.

The last days of Chanuka (and all of Tevet) can fall on 5 days. First day of Tevet cannot be Thursday or Shabbat. 2 Tevet cannot be Friday or Sunday. And 3 Tevet (which is not on Chanuka this year, but is Zot Chanuka when Kislev has only 29 days and there is only one day of Rosh Chodesh Tevet) cannot be Shabbat or Monday. That's the way it goes.

The 6th day of Chanuka is ALWAYS Rosh Chodesh. The seventh is sometimes (like this year) but not always.

The only Nasi that is never read on Shabbat is Shlumiel, which, Dr. Avshalom Kur suggests, might be an origin of the Yiddish word Shlemiel.

Take the Hebrew ALEF-BET or the English alphabet (or both) and see if you can come up with a Chanuka-related word for each letter. ALEF and/or A is for Antiochus, BET and/or B is for BEIT HAMIKDASH... now you take over.

Why have wine during dreidel-play?

Make 4-word Hebrew and/or English sentences with פ ה ל נ or N G H P

The culmination of the confrontation between Eliyahu HaNavi and the false prophets of Baal was an open miracle wherein the sacrifice to G-d offered by Eliyahu was consumed by divine fire, even though it and the altar had been doused and saturated with water. The people's reaction was a clear declaration of commitment to G-d:

HASHEM HU HA-ELOKIM,
HASHEM HU HA-ELOKIM.

These stirring words share a gimatriya with
NEIS GADOL HAYA PO

This Gimatriya Match serves as a numeric pointer to the concept of B'CHOL DOR VADOR... in every generation...

Are all mezuzah cases made in and for chutz la'aretz?

Reuven is odd; Shimon is triangular, Levi is square - how many candles does each one need for Chanuka? (incl. Shamashim)

What is the probability of spinning four different letters on a dreidel in four spins? What is the probability of spinning the same letter 4 times in a row?

PONDER THIS...

The Rambam, in Hilchot Megila v'Chanuka, devotes chapters 3 and 4 to Chanuka. In the first 'halacha' of Perek Gimel, he writes:

During (the time of) the second Beit HaMikdash, when Greece ruled (over Eretz Yisrael), they decreed (harsh) decrees upon Israel (the Jewish People), (attempted to) nullify their religion, did not allow them to study Torah or practice Mitzvot, plundered their possessions and their daughters, and entered the Mikdash - caused damage, defiled the pure, and pained Israel greatly and put tremendous pressure on them - until the G-d of their fathers took pity on them and saved them, and strengthened the sons of Chashmonai the Kohanim, and restored kingship to Israel for more than 200 years, until the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash.

But that's not the whole story. Read on...

(The following is based on Binizri's Seder HaDorot HaKatzar)

The Chanuka miracles occurred in 3622 (138BCE).

For a period of 26 years from then, no foreign nation ruled in Israel, however, the battles of the Maccabees against the Greeks continued.

After these 26 years, the Romans gradually increased their control over Eretz Yisrael. This gradual increase in Roman power continued for 180 years, until the Churban.

Yehuda HaMakabi ruled for six years, until he was killed - after having killed 15,000 Greek soldiers.

Yehonatan ruled for six further years.

Then Shimon ruled for 8 years. He and his wife were killed by their son-in-law Ptolemy, Macedonian ruler of Egypt. Two of their sons were taken captive - one was killed and the other escaped...

Yochanan Hyrcanus Yanai ruled after his father Shimon... killed many of the elders of Israel...

So what are we pondering?

The second Beit HaMikdash was a pale shadow of the first one - spiritually. The Jewish population at the time was, sadly, a small minority of the greater Jewish population.

And, as you have just reviewed, the victory of the Chashmona'im was nowhere near the "and they lived happily ever after" ending that the kindergarten version of the Chanuka story implies.

Not really 200 years. Not even a smooth 26 years. A totally rocky period that got progressively worse and worse.

And yet...

B'nei Vina - men of deep understanding, saw fit to establish a joyous 8-day holiday with full Hallel and more, to thank HKB"H for what we got - a renewed dedication to Torah and Mitzvot and the chance to continue to grow spiritually.