

Etz Chaim Of Livingston

Chanukah Guide 5786 / 2025

With guidance from the Rabbinical Council of America

Chanukah 5786 begins Sunday night, December 14, and concludes after Monday afternoon, December 22. Below is a short summary of the basic laws and practices associated with Chanukah lighting.

When should one light the Chanukah lights?

1) During the Week: Flames should be lit between ten and twenty-five minutes after sunset, assuring that there is enough fuel to allow the flame to remain lit for thirty minutes after nightfall (*tzeit hakochavim*). These times are listed below. If one cannot light during this period, it is preferable to light during the thirty minutes that follow nightfall (*tzeit hakochavim*). If this too is impossible, one can light with a beracha, so long as there are passersby in the street or other people awake in the home.

Please consult with me about cases where:

- Multiple family members live in one home, and one family member will first arrive home after the rest of the family is sleeping.
- You are leaving your house for the night after *plag haminchah* (approx.. 3:33PM).
- You will be at work or unable to light a flame for the entire night.

2) Friday Night: Before the Shabbat candles. [It is preferable to daven mincha before lighting. We will have minyan at 4:10PM.]

3) Motzaei Shabbat: When Shabbat ends.

(Please Note: There are different customs with regards to the order of the Chanukah lights and Havdalah. If your custom is to light Chanukah lights first, you must say “Ata chonatanu” in Maariv or “Baruch hamavdil bein kodesh lechol” before lighting a fire.)

How long do the candles have to burn?

The candles must burn for at least thirty minutes after *tzeit hakochavim*.

What does this all mean for those living in Livingston?

	Optimal lighting time	Tzeis Hakochovim (Nightfall)
Sunday 12/14	4:45PM	5:16PM
Monday 12/15	4:45PM	5:16PM
Tuesday 12/16	4:45PM	5:16PM
Wednesday 12/17	4:45PM	5:17PM
Thursday 12/18	4:45PM	5:17PM
Friday 12/19	4:05PM	5:18PM
Motzaei Shabbat 12/20	After 5:18PM	5:18PM
Sunday 12/21	4:45PM	5:19PM

What is the procedure for lighting?

The established custom is to light Chanukah lights in a way that the Talmud calls “*mehadrin min hamehadrin*,” whereby on the first night one lights one light, and on each successive night an additional light is added, the additional light being lit first. By the eighth night, we light eight lights.

Light the *shamash* first. While holding the *shamash*, recite the *Brachot* (three on the first night and two on the remaining nights) in their entirety. Only then should one begin lighting.

On the first night, begin with a single light in the rightmost position on the menorah. Each night, a light is added to the left. The new light is lit first. The lighting then proceeds to the right of the new light.

The declaration “*Haneirot halalu*” is recited by all once the *last* person lighting has lit their *first* light. If that last person is not familiar with the text and cannot begin this statement until he/she has finished lighting, all can wait until that time.

Moaz Tzur is then sung. On Friday afternoon, if time is short, *Maoz Tzur* can be recited at the Shabbat dinner table.

Where is the best place to put my Menorah?

By a window that is in view of the street, or at the very least, that is in view of an alley or courtyard where people walk. If there is no window by which to place the menorah, it should be placed in an area of the house where it will be visible to members of the house. In this case, one should take care that the flames of the menorah be between one and three feet off the floor.

The lights should be in a straight line at the same height, except for the shamash, which should be placed in a way that visibly distinguishes it from the other lights. Multiple menorahs should be placed in such a way that onlookers can differentiate between them and identify the number of lights clearly.

Once the menorah has been lit in its proper place, it should not be moved. The *mitzvah* is fulfilled by lighting the candles in their designated location.

What if my lights blow out?

If the flames extinguish before they have burned for the required minimum time (thirty minutes past nightfall), one should relight them using the *shamash*, but without reciting a *berachah*. If they went out after the minimum time, they need not be re-lit.

Should the entire household light at the same time?

Since the *mitzvah* (as it is practiced today), is primarily designed to publicize the miracle to the household, this is preferable. If the entire household can work out a time to light together, they should do so, even if that will result in lighting later than the preferred time.

I would like to leave home, but I don't want to leave my lit menorah unattended. May I put out the flames?

Provided that the candles have burned for the time required (see above), one may put them out.

I live alone or will be alone for a night of Chanukah. Do I say a berachah on my lighting?

Yes. However, it is appropriate to light where people can see your menorah from the outside, or to invite someone - even a non-Jew - to see the lights.

We will be going to a family Chanukah party in the late afternoon and won't get home until late at night. Should we light before we leave, after we get home, or at the party?

You should light at home upon your return. However, you must do something (leave a note on your front door or set an alarm) that will remind you to light Chanukah candles when you return home.

I am going out for dinner on Friday night and then returning home to sleep. Where should I light?

In your home, before Shabbat.

I will be in someone else's home at the time of lighting and sleeping there. How should I fulfill my obligation?

You may light your own lights with a *berachah*. It is preferable to light before your hosts. Alternatively, you may give a token amount to the host to join his/her lighting.

We are going away for Shabbat Chanukah. Where should we light on Friday afternoon? If we are coming home on Saturday night, where should we light on Saturday night?

On Friday afternoon, you should light with your hosts, as explained in the previous question and answer.

On Saturday night, you may light at the house where you stayed for Shabbat, remaining at your host for at least thirty minutes after lighting. If you will not be remaining for thirty minutes, you light immediately upon returning home.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any other questions.

Happy Chanukah!

Rabbi Klibanoff