

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CHANUKAH

PREPARE YOURSELF BEFORE CHANUKAH BEGINS

Rebbe Nachman says, "Any holy task requires preparation." It is a good idea to review, in advance, the laws of Chanukah in order to be prepared to kindle the lights on time and in the proper way. The following are a few suggested English sources for the laws of Chanukah: *Code of Jewish Law (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch)*, translated by Ganzfried-Goldin; *Halachos of Chanukah* by Rabbi Shimon D. Eider, a comprehensive booklet on the laws of Chanukah; and *The Book of Our Heritage* by Eliyahu Kitov, a three-volume set that provides an excellent overview to the holidays and laws pertaining to each month in the Jewish calendar. Any questions in need of clarification should be addressed to your local Orthodox Rabbi.

USE OLIVE OIL FOR THE CHANUKAH LIGHTS

Although any other oil or candles are also permissible, the preferred way to perform the mitzvah is to kindle the Chanukah lights with pure olive oil and cotton wicks. It is also a reminder of the miracle of Chanukah, which actually involved olive oil. On a spiritual level, oil is an allusion to the mind. Through the mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah lights, we draw upon ourselves *Daat* – holy knowledge (*Likutey Etzot; Chanukah 2*).

LIGHT THE CHANUKAH MENORAH SIMPLY

Sometimes, it is possible to be so overly concerned about inessential details when lighting the Chanukah menorah that one misses the proper time for lighting and doesn't fulfill the mitzvah in the correct manner. Some may be distracted by extra prayers they would like to say; others may be thinking about latkes, presents or Chanukah gelt. The merit of kindling the Chanukah lights properly and on time is a very great thing (*HaRav Elazar M. Kenig*).

GAZE AT THE CHANUKAH LIGHTS

Pull up a chair and spend some time looking at the Chanukah lights. The face of the Tzaddik is compared to a menorah (*Likutey Moharan 21*). Therefore, just as gazing upon the face of the Tzaddik nullifies bad character traits (*Likutey Moharan 4*) so too, does gazing at the lights of the Chanukah menorah (*Rav Ephraim Kenig*).

PRAISE AND THANK GOD IN YOUR OWN WORDS

The days of Chanukah are days of praise and thanksgiving (*Likutey Moharan Tinyana 2*). One of the characteristics of the World to Come is that there will be no requests – only praise and thanks to God. The Chanukah lights are a reflection of the light of the World to Come. Therefore, especially during Chanukah, set aside a specific time to make a list of things for which you are thankful and search for the good points in all areas of your life. Then, thank and praise God in your own words and experience a taste of the World to Come. If you make a sincere attempt, you'll quickly see that the list is endless! ■