

Lighting the Chanuka candles

1. Common practice is that on the first night, one lights the rightmost candle. On the second night, one lights the candle that is second to the right (i.e. the new one) followed by the candle all the way to the right. One continues to add candles to the left each night, lighting the new candle first and moving from left to right.¹
2. Many poskim say that one should say all of the Brachot before lighting the candles, while others say that after the first night one should say LeHadlik, light one candle, then say She'asa Nissim and light the rest.²
3. Some say one should say HaNeirot Halalu after lighting the first candle, while others suggest saying it after lighting all the candles.³



1. Maharik (Responsa 183, cited by Beit Yosef 676:5) writes that on the first night, one should light the rightmost candle and on subsequent nights should add a candle to the left and light the new one first such that one lights from left to right (the way English is written). He bases his argument on the Gemara (Sotah 15b) that a person always should turn to the right. The S" A 676:5 codifies this as halacha.

The Levush (676:5) and Taz (676:6), however, argue that the Gemara means in one's first decision between right and left one should go right, but afterwards one may continue to follow that path even if that means going left. Therefore, they rule that on the first night, the candle is placed in the leftmost position, and on the subsequent nights, the candles are put to the right of the previous candles and are lit from right to left.

A third approach is that of the Gr" a (Bei'ur HaGra 676:5 and Maaseh Rav 240). He writes that one always should light the candle closest to the door first, even if it is not the newest candle and even if it means lighting from right to left.

Mishna Brurah 676:9 writes that one may follow either the S" A or the Gra. The Kitzur S" A 139:11, Aruch HaShulchan 676:11, and Kaf HaChaim 676:31 concur with S" A. Rav Mordechai Willig (Hilchos Chanuka and Purim #1, 37-8) observed that the minhag is like the S" A.

Rav Hershel Schachter (oral communication) said that common practice is to put the candles in from right to left. He explained that the idea is to start the candles within a tefach of the doorway.

2. The Gemara (Shabbat 23a) says that on the first night, one should say three Brachot: LeHadlik, She'asa Nissim, and Shehechyanu. On the remaining nights, one says only two Brachot, leaving out Shehechyanu. The Rambam (Chanuka 3:4), Tur, and S" A 676:1 codify this as halacha. Although the Shiblei HaLeket

(Siman 185) argues that the text of first bracha should be Al Mitzvat Hadlakat Ner Chanuka, the Rosh (Pesachim 1:10) cites Rabbeinu Tam and Riva, who justify the text of LeHadlik Ner Shel Chanuka. S" A 676:1 rules that the text is LeHadlik.

The Maharil (Responsa 145) writes that one should recite all of the Brachot before lighting, in accordance with the principle of Over LeAsiyatan. The Rama 676:2, Kitzur S" A 139:12, Mishna Brurah 676:4, and Kaf HaChaim 676:21 concur with the Maharil. Rav Mordechai Willig (Hilchos Chanuka and Purim #1, 35-6) commented that the minhag is like the Rama.

On the other hand, the Maharam (cited by Hagahot Maimoniyot 3:2), based on the Masechet Sofrim, said LeHadlik before lighting, leaving She'asa Nissim and Shehechyanu for afterwards. Rav Soloveitchik (quoted in Nefesh HaRav p. 224 and Mesorah vol 4, p. 8) explained that the Masechet Sofrim holds that the Bracha of She'asa Nissim functions as a Birkat HaRoeh and should be made after seeing the candles lit. He notes that in order to satisfy both views, Rav Chaim's practice was that on all nights besides the first, he would say LeHadlik, light the first candle, say She'asa Nissim, and then light the rest of the candles. On the first night, when this is impossible, he made all three Brachot before lighting. Rabbeinu Yerucham (9:1) quotes a similar idea in the name of Rabbeinu Yonah.

3. Masechet Sofrim 20:4 says that a person should say HaNeirot Halalu and implies that it is said in middle of the lighting. Magen Avraham 676:3 says that HaNeirot should be recited after lighting the first candle, while Pri Megadim M" Z 676:5 suggests that perhaps since the Bracha applies to all of the candles, one should say HaNeirot Halalu after lighting all of the candles. Mishna Brurah 676:8 cites both opinions.