How do we celebrate Hanukka?

BASIC LAWS AND TRADITIONS OF HANUKKA

This year, on Wednesday night, December 25th, corresponding to the 25th of Kislev, 5785, we will light the first candle of Hanukka.
The celebration of Hanukka lasts for eight consecutive days.

How Do We Celebrate Hanukka?

HADLAQAT NEROT

The most typical celebration of Hanukka is the *Mitsva* of lighting the candles. Every night, we light the Hanukka candles, as we will explain. Apart from this *Mitsva*, there are other customs and traditions to celebrate this holiday.

HALEL RECITATION

During all days of Hanukka, we recite the *Hallel Shalem*. Hallel is a *Tefila* (prayer) of praise to HaShem, consisting of the reading and intonation of some *Mizmorim* (Psalms) of *Tehilim* related to celebration and joy. Hallel is also recited on Pesach, Shabuot, Sukkot, etc.

‘AL HANISIM

We also introduce in the *Amida* (the main daily prayer) and the *Birkat haMazon* (the prayer after meals) a special paragraph where we thank HaShem for having saved our ancestors from their enemies in the times of Matitiyahu and his sons, the Hasmonayim.

TORA READING

During the eight days of Hanukka, we read the Biblical texts corresponding to the inauguration ceremony of the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle, that is, the Temple erected in the desert of

Sinai), when each of the *Nesiim* (leaders) of each tribe of Israel brought an offering to HaShem to inaugurate the altar (*mizbeach*). Even on Monday and Thursday, the days on which we read the weekly section, we interrupt the reading of the *Parasha* of the week and read only the paragraphs assigned to Hanukka.

SEUDA

Although there is no formal *Mitsva* to have a *Seuda* (a celebratory meal, as we do on Purim), in many communities, it is customary to serve special celebratory meals where words of Tora are shared, and joyful songs are sung. These meals are celebrated with family, friends, and guests. Many also serve dairy dishes in memory of the heroic act of Yehudit, the daughter of Yochanan Cohen Gadol. Others serve *lebibot*, *sufganiyot*, or other oil-fried pastries.

There are also certain practices that we stop during Hanukka to maintain the festive and joyful spirit of these days.

Examples:

FASTING

Many people observe a fast on the anniversary of a parent's passing. However, if this anniversary coincides with Hanukka, the fast is postponed until after Hanukka ends.

EULOGIES (*Hesped*)

It is customary not to perform eulogies (*hesped*), such as *didan*, *shloshim*, *arayat*, or funeral speeches, during Hanukka. Additionally, visits to the cemetery on death anniversaries are avoided. These visits can be scheduled either before or after Hanukka, depending on each community's custom.

TACHANUN

During Hanukka, the *tefillot* (prayers) of confession

(*tachanun*) and *mizmorim* (psalms) of supplication are omitted. As mentioned, this is done to preserve the festive and joyous atmosphere of Hanukka.