



Minhagim of Chanuka

1. Some say there is a mitzvah to eat a festive meal on Chanuka, while some say that there is only a partial mitzvah in commemoration of the Chanukat HaMizbe'ach of the Mishkan, and some say that there's no obligation at all.¹ The minhag is to sing zemirot and say divrei Torah and then certainly the meal is a Seudat Mitzvah.²
2. The minhag is to eat dairy foods on Chanukah, in commemoration of the miracle that happened with the righteous woman Yehudit, who tricked and killed the enemy using dairy.³
3. There is a Minhag to eat Sufganiot and Latkes that are fried in oil because the miracle of Chanuka happened with the oil of the menorah.⁴
4. It's recommended to learn Hilachot Chanuka on Chanuka.⁵
5. There's a minhag for children to play Drediel.⁶

1. Gemara Shabbat 21b states that the days of Chanukah were instituted as days of "Hallel VeHodaah". Rashi D"H VeAsum explains Hodaah as Al Hanisim in birkat hoda'ah of amidah. However, the **Rambam** (Hilchot Chanuka 3:3) explains Hodah as Simcha. The **Yam Shel Shlomo** b"r 7:30 writes that the Rambam holds that meals of Chanuka are a mitzvah and not voluntary (see Moed Katan 9a). However, both the **Tur** and **S"A** 670:1 rule that festive meals on Chanukah are only optional. Lastly, **Rama** 670:2 writes that there is a partial mitzvah to have a festive meal on Chanuka as a commemoration of the Chanukat HaMizbe'ach in the desert. Why didn't Chazal institute a festive meal on Chanukah? 1) The **Levush** 670:2 explains that there is a meal on Purim because the miracle was that Jews lives were saved from a physical threat, whereas on Chanukah the threat was a spiritual one against the Jewish soul. 2) The **Taz** 670:3 asks on the Levush, isn't a spiritual threat greater than a physical one?! Therefore, the Taz offers another explanation; since the miracle of Purim was made famous and brought happiness in this world, whereas on Chanuka the famous miracle of the oil only benefited the Jewish people in the next world and so there's no institution of a festive meal. 3) The **Chochmat Shlomo** 670:2 says that since the spiritual threat of Chanuka was more dire, the miracle Hashem performed deducted from the merits of the Jewish people. 4) **Halichot Shlomo** (pg 320 note 32) explains even though we won the war and returned to the Mikdash we continue to fight the culture of the Greeks to this day and so there's no festive meal.

2. **Rama** 670:2. Kaf HaChaim 670:16 writes that the practical application of this is that since it's a Seudat Mitzvah a Talmid Chacham is permitted to benefit from it.

3. **Rama** 670:2, Kitzur S"A 139:71, Nitai Gavriel (Chanuka 51:12). See **Nitai Gavriel** who writes that the Sephardim don't have this minhag and this is also implied by Chazon Ovadyah (Chanuka pg 18).

4. **Sarid UPalit** (pg 8) translates a letter of Rabbi Maimon (father of Rambam) who writes that one shouldn't be lenient in any Minhag and specifically mentions the Minhag is to make Sufganiot on Chanuka to publicize the miracle of the oil. This minhag is mentioned by the poskim including Yalkut Yosef 671:15 and Nitai Gavriel (Chanuka 51:13). **Halichot Shlomo** (Moadim, vol 1, pg 318) adds that perhaps the minhag is to have Sufganiyot because in Al HaMichya we say Al Mizbechecha remembering the Mizbe'ach which had to be put in genizah because of the Greeks. **Nitai Gavriel** (Chanuka 51:13) adds that the minhag is to have Latkes.

5. **Yalkut Yosef** 670:4 writes that it's good to learn Hilchot Chanuka on Chanuka and quotes Salmat Chaim who agrees. See Alim LeTerufah (Miketz 5769 pg 48) who quotes the **Orchot Chaim** (a Rishon) that this is an obligation, however, he comments that in the hand written copies of the Orchot Chaim this text is omitted.

6. **Otzer Minhagei Yishurun** (19:4, pg 50) writes that the minhag is for children to play Dreidel because the Greeks who forbade gathering to learn the Talmidei Chachamim used the Driedel as a pretense for gathering to learn Torah. **Minhagim VeHalichot Shel Maran Chatam Sofer** (14:11, pg 181) writes that the Chatam Sofer kept this minhag. For more sources and reasons see Nitai Gavriel (Chanuka 51:1) and Bnei Yisaschar (Kislev 2:25).