

Shabbat Miketz/Shabbat Hanukkah 5782  
A New Spin on Hanukkah candles and Shabbat candles  
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Shabbat Shalom! And Happy Hanukkah.

*Nes Gadol Haya Po.* A great miracle happened here. This week my phone battery had just one hour of juice left, but it somehow lasted a full eight hours! It must be Hanukkah.

Speaking of Hanukkah, last night we lit a whole lot of candles - Hanukkah plus Shabbat. That's a lot of light. But while Hanukkah candles and Shabbat candles have a lot in common, they differ in key ways because these different candles tell different stories. Guess how many differences there are between them? I counted *eight*.

First, the big idea: Hanukkah candles stand for *Pirsum Hanes* - publicizing the miracle. Hanukkah candles remind us of the twin holiday miracles - first, the military victory of the few Jews over the many Greeks. And second, the miracle that the little oil lasted for 8 days. In one word, Hanukkah is all about the “*Nes* - miracle.”

On the other hand, Shabbat candles are about two words: “*Shalom Bayit* - peace in the home.” Shabbat is the time for families to be together - or as traditionally understood, married couples. And you can't enjoy a nice dinner together in the dark. The weekdays are for *doing*, but Shabbat is for *being*, for being present with our families. The Shabbat lights represent the day's emotional warmth. The Talmud teaches that if one does not have enough money for both, they should buy Shabbat candles instead of Hanukkah lights because *Shalom Bayit* supersedes even the Hanukkah miracles.

Two. Hanukkah candles focus *outward*. In ancient days, they physically lit the lamps outside. Even when we today light the candles inside, we are to place them by the window in order to maximize visibility. The miracles are to be highlighted *publicly*. The holiday reminds us of the importance of making public our Jewish identities.

On the other hand, Shabbat candles focus *inward*. We light them away from the window and on our dinner table or close to it. The focus is the home, so only the family sees these lights. Being Jewish should positively affect the home we create and share with other family members.

Three. Hanukkah candles are seasonal, as we light them for only 8 days of the year. We do so starting on a fixed date, the 25th of Kislev, which marks the historical anniversary of the miracles. We light the candles when it's dark outside and in the pitch of winter, the darkest times of the day and the year. Even then, light still triumphs.

By contrast, Shabbat candles are weekly. We light them 52 days of the year, every Friday night *before* dark, at sundown. This too is an anniversary, of the first Shabbat of creation, when G-d paused creative activity and was simply present.

Four. We light Hanukkah candles on fixed Hebrew dates, and the Jewish calendar dates are always set by the *moon*. Hanukkah will always fall on every day of the week. We need a Jewish calendar in order to know when to celebrate this holiday.

On the other side, Shabbat candles have their basis in the *sun*. We light them based on the day of the week, not the calendar date, and Shabbat touches every season of the year. So we do not need a Jewish calendar to celebrate Shabbat, just a reminder when it's Friday.

Five. The number of Hanukkah candles we light changes nightly. The Talmud records Hillel supporting lighting one candle the first night plus the Shamash, two candles the second night, and so on. While Shammai advocates starting with all eight candles the first night and working our way down to one. While Hillel wins this argument, both of them agree that there should be different numbers of candles each night. Hillel wins the day by saying we should increase in matters of holiness and not decrease. The *grandeur* of the original miracle increased each passing night, which is reflected in additional candles.

But Shabbat candles are different. We light the same number of them 52 Fridays of the year. For most families, it's two candles because these speak to the twin dimensions of Shabbat: remembering Shabbat and observing it, fulfilling certain actions and rituals while abstaining from other actions. Other families may light more than two. My wife lights 5 weekly, one for each person in our family. Rabbi Joseph Telushkin explains that this way every child understands every week that they add light to the home.

Six. Hanukkah candles are *preceded* by *two* blessings (three on the first night). We know that we say these blessings *before* we light, as nearly every Mitzvah is preceded by its blessing in order to properly set our intentions. This general rule is known as *Over Laasiyatan*. This is why we should wait until we finish singing the two blessings before we actually light any of the Hanukkah candles.

Shabbat candles go in a different direction. We know there's only *one* blessing, not two. And we also know that we say the blessing *after* we light the candles. Here's why: like I said, the blessing is supposed to come first. But once a person recites this blessing, Shabbat begins for them and they would then be forbidden to light a candle because of the prohibition on starting fire on Shabbat. To keep the spirit of *Over Laasiyatan*, the

person lights the candles and then covers their eyes. Next they say the blessing and only then open their eyes. Thus they say the blessing *before* they enjoy and benefit from the Shabbat light.

Seven. Hanukkah candles mark the holiday's newest day, which while it is a celebratory day, is not a Yom Tov that brings on a Shabbat or Festival level of sanctity.

On the other hand, Shabbat candles instantly change the status of time from ordinary to holy and bring on the rest day's accompanying restrictions and rituals like Kiddush.

And eight. Hanukkah candles are purely symbolic and not to be used functionally. After we light candles, we read or sing *Hanerot Hallalu*, which affirms that the lights themselves are holy, and we may only gaze at them. In doing so, we recall the miracles. (By the way, listen to *Hanerot Hallalu* sung separately by 613 and Rabbi Josh Warshawsky. Both versions are fabulous.) Because Hanukkah lights are strictly for show, we have the Shamash not simply to light the other candles but to claim we are using this candle's light instead of the others'.

Once more, Shabbat candles are different. We do not use a Shamash candle to assist us here, and we are supposed to dine by this light and have it illuminate a special dinner. These are functional and practical. Remember, before the light bulb and smartphone flashlight were invented, candles were the only way to see in the dark.

There we have eight differences between Hanukkah candles and Shabbat candles. But there is still much shared between what these different lights stand for. At their core, they both represent G-d's presence. Hanukkah affirms that G-d was present among the Jews long ago and still today, making miracles then and now. In a world of darkness and disillusionment, we need this reminder every year. And Shabbat candles have us recall G-d's creation of the universe and the fact that we human beings are custodians of this world. Shabbat candles remind us that we must pause and recall our place in G-d's world for 25 hours, then go out and construct a better world for the following 6 days. In a world where some people place themselves as the center of their universe, we need this reminder every week. Hanukkah candles and Shabbat candles speak to different stories within the same book.

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