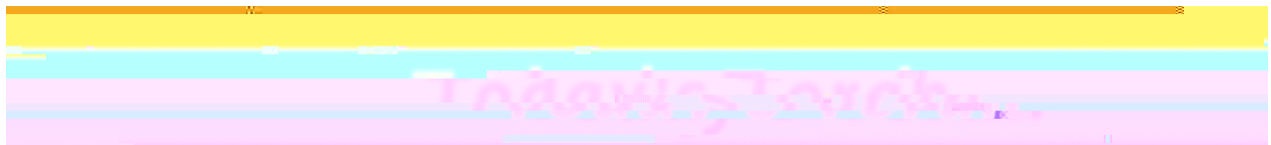


*Note to Readers: In addition to providing holiday inspiration, we are pleased to offer you continuing access to a vast library of Ziegler Torah commentaries on each weekly Parashah throughout the entire Torah cycle. To delve deep, please*



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## Hanukkah

**December 10 (Sundown) - December 18 (Evening) 2020**  
**25 Kislev - 3 Tevet 5781**



**By: Rabbi Gail Labovitz**  
**Professor, Rabbinic Studies**  
**Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies**  
**American Jewish University**

## Rites and Responsibilities

Hanukkah is not a holiday that gets a lot of attention in the earliest rabbinic texts (the Mishnah and its sister text, the Tosefta). It is known as a holiday but only a few of the dos (say Hallel, read Torah) and

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We are looking towards a Hanukkah this year that – like Passover, like Shavuot, like the holidays of Tishrei – will not look like it normally does, will not look like what we wish it could be. But hidden in this peripheral law of Hanukkah is a central tenet of what it means to be Jews who place the protection of human life above nearly every other value. Our rites serve God only if they do not willfully harm people, and only if we take responsibility to be sure they do not. May we find ways to celebrate this year that bring both praise to God for the miracles experienced by our ancestors in their time, and safety for our community in ours.

*Hag Urim sameah* – a happy Festival of Lights!

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**Rabbi Gail Labovitz, PhD**, is Professor of Rabbinic Literature and former Chair of the Department of Rabbinics for the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies. She also enjoys serving as the Ziegler School's faculty advisor for "InterSem," a dialogue program for students training for religious leadership at Jewish and Christian seminaries around the Los Angeles area. Dr. Labovitz formerly taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) and the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York. Prior to joining the faculty at AJU, Dr. Labovitz worked as the Senior Research Analyst in Judaism for the Feminist Sexual Ethics Project at Brandeis University, and as the Coordinator for the Jewish Women's Research Group, a project of the Women's Studies Program at JTS. Rabbi Labovitz is also preparing a teshuva (rabbinic responsum) for consideration by the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly on whether a person who is unable to fast for medical reasons may nonetheless serve as a leader of communal prayer on Yom Kippur.

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