

While the candles burn it is a wonderful time, in the soft glow of the lights, to take a few minutes to connect as a family around a theme of the holiday. Below are several suggestions.

Sharing Personal Miracles:

After candle-lighting, invite those present to share a personal miracle they have experienced.

Connection to *Hanukkah*: *Hanukkah* commemorates the miracle of the oil. We recite over the candles a blessing recognizing the historical miracles of 'then' alongside the historic miracles of today.

Personal Light:

Give everyone a piece of paper and crayons or colored pencils.

Ask them to think of and then draw in a modern abstract way:

Who gives them light?

To whom do they give light?

Connection to *Hanukkah*: *Hanukkah* is referred to as "*Chag Ha'Urim*" (the Holiday of Lights). The miracle of the oil burning for 8 days is about giving light. It occurs, not uncoincidentally, during the darkest time of the year.

Candle focus:

After lighting candles, turn off the lights. Ask everyone to simply look at the candles (in silence) for 2 minutes. Then ask everyone to write whatever the light of the candle evoked for them.

Focus on Sacred Spaces:

What spaces in your home, community, or natural environment are most sacred/special to you? What do you get from these spaces? How have you dedicated, protected, or celebrated these sacred/special places?

Connection to *Hanukkah* – *Hanukkah* celebrates the rededication of the Temple as a holy site for the Jews.

Focus on the Maccabees:

Ask the group/discuss – who are modern day Maccabees? Who actively defends his/her own rights and the rights of others? How might you be a modern day Maccabee?

Text Study

Candle lighting did not always look the way we do it. The website below reviews the changes in the custom over time through a series of Rabbinic texts. Especially with older students, take a few minutes to review some or all of the information.

Lighting customs over time – Rabbinic texts in translation

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Hanukkah/At_Home/Candlelighting/Enhancing_the_Lights.shtml?HYJH

Guided Imagery:

Ask everyone to close their eyes during the following guided imagery: Imagine walking into a (or your) synagogue. It is completely quiet and dark. Then you see one tiny beam of light. You walk into the synagogue, looking for the source of the light. It is coming from the ark. You open the ark and see that it is coming from inside a Torah scroll. You roll open the Torah - from the very beginning to the end - and 'bingo' you see the story or idea or line which is the source of the light. This is your 'light' in the Torah. What did you see? What part of the Torah gives you light?

Focus on Giving

Hanukkah is full of giving gifts and of gelt/money. Consider making a family contribution to Tzedakah in honor of the holiday – put a different spin on the giving – possibly in lieu of gifts one night.

Sing a Song or Two

Your children know many songs. If you would like the words, Google “Hanukkah songs” and several sites will come up. Choose any site and ask your child which songs they know.

Focus on the story

The website below contains a summary of the history of the holiday. There are also lots of picture books available. Check with Lydia Schultz (school librarian) if you would like to check one out to read after the candle lighting.

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Hanukkah/History.shtml?HYJH

Some of the ideas above were taken from <http://www.ayeka.org.il/>