



Article 2 - December 2024 | Kislev 5785

Lighting the Way: Hanukkah & the Power of Discovery

Hanukkah is a celebration of light, resilience, and miracles. It's a time to reflect on the courage of the Maccabees, the miracle of the oil, and the joy of bringing light into the darkest days of the year. It's also an opportunity to connect our children with these timeless values in meaningful ways.

In Israel, Hanukkah is not only celebrated at home but also spills into the streets with joyful traditions. Donut shops display colorful *sufganiyot* (jelly donuts) in every flavor imaginable - from classic strawberry to caramel and pistachio.

Children gather to play dreidel games, sing songs, and enjoy the glow of *hanukkiot* (menorahs). These vibrant traditions inspire us to make Hanukkah a time of family togetherness and discovery.

In America, some of our *menorahs* shine brightly in windows. In Israel, they flicker outside, on the streets! Can you spot which *menorah* is in Israel and which in America?

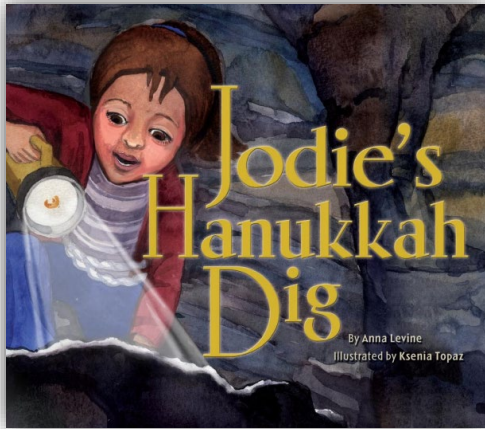


Image by [sdecesare](#) from [Pixabay](#)



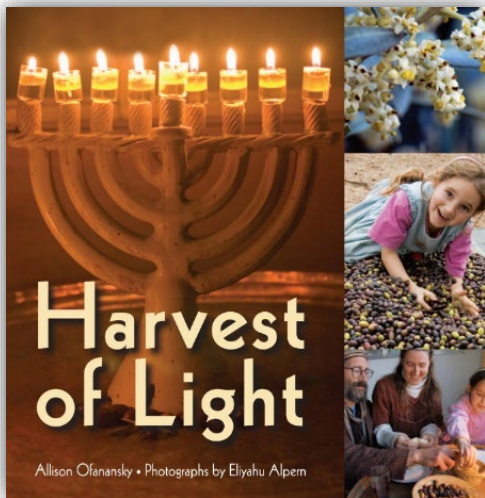
This month, we invite you to explore the themes of light and discovery with your children. Through stories, traditions, and creativity, Hanukkah can become more than just eight nights of candles—it can be a season of wonder.

Selected Reading



One book that beautifully ties together Hanukkah and discovery for older early childhood children is [*Jodie's Hanukkah Dig* by Anna Levine](#). This engaging story takes young readers on an archaeological adventure in Modi'in, the historical home of the Maccabees.

As Jodie uncovers ancient artifacts, she learns about the world of the Hanukkah story and its connection to Israel's history. The book introduces young children to the idea of uncovering stories from the past in a way that sparks their curiosity and imagination.



For a more nature-focused story, we recommend [*Harvest of Light* by Allison Maile Ofanansky](#). Set in the olive groves of modern Israel, this book follows a family harvesting olives and making oil. It's a perfect way to connect the ancient *Hanukkah* miracle of oil lasting eight days to modern-day traditions in Israel.

With its rich photographs and simple, rhythmic text, it's ideal for young children, and can inspire conversations about care, perseverance, and gratitude across generations.

Music

Music is another powerful way to celebrate the themes of Hanukkah. Songs like “*Banu Choshech*” highlight the joy of bringing light into the world. In Israel, they are always singing about *sufganiyot*, jelly donuts and the lit Hanukkah candles! While eating *sufganiyot*, playing dreidel or lighting candles, you can listen to these songs to get into the spirit of the holiday!

[Banu Choshech](#) | [S'vivon Katan](#) | [S'vivon Sov Sov Sov](#)





This Hanukkah, consider how your family can discover new ways to celebrate. You might try making *sufganiyot* together—exploring flavors and shapes like those found in Israel’s bakeries—or sharing reflections on what the light of the menorah means to each of you.

For young children, this might mean asking simple questions like, “What makes you feel warm and happy, just like the menorah’s candles?” or “Who brings light into your life, like how we bring light with the *menorah*?” These reflections can help young children connect to the meaning

of *Hanukkah* in a personal and accessible way.

Another beautiful way to celebrate is through the act of giving. Families can set up a *tzedakah* (charity) box, decorated by the child, where coins are added as part of a daily or weekly habit. Some families adopt the idea of dropping a penny a day as part of the child’s morning routine, emphasizing the habit of giving rather than the amount.

Others may choose to donate a portion of *Hanukkah gelt* (money given as a holiday gift), allowing the child to select an Israeli charity to support.

Whether it’s through small donations or a family visit to a website supporting Israel, these acts of kindness add a special light to the holiday. And while giving, don’t forget to connect the act of giving thanks back to the word *todah* or *todah rabbah* you learned in last month’s article!

Whether it’s celebrating miracles, small victories, or the joy of being together, these moments of connection bring warmth to the holiday.

May your Hanukkah be filled with light, discovery, and meaningful traditions that illuminate the year ahead.

~ *Alana & Meir*

The Robert Russell Early Childhood Department of CAJE: The Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education in Miami presents a new initiative aimed at enriching your children's understanding of Israel through engaging and thought-provoking content from a monthly article penned by two early childhood education experts: [Rabbi Dr. Meir Muller](#) and [Alana Gelnick](#).

CAJE-Miami.org

