



Read the PJ Library Book

Melly's Menorah (4's)

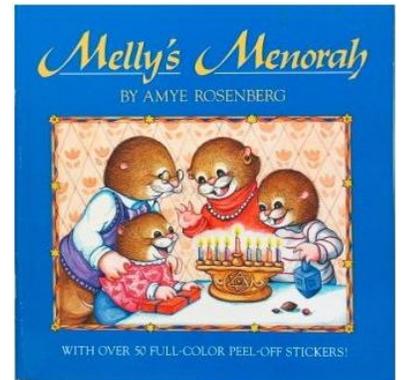
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Synopsis

Melly is the youngest member of the Gopher Family, and she longs to help her family prepare for Hanukkah. Melly's family ignores her offers to assist with decorating the house, wrapping presents, and frying latkes, much to her dismay. Grandma allows Melly to play with some leftover cookie dough, which Melly transforms into a menorah. At candle lighting time the family tries in vain to find their menorah; Melly's cookie menorah saves the day! Melly glows with pride as the family gathers around her innovative creation.



Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Family - *Mish-pa-chah* - משפחה

Industriousness - *Me-la-cha* - מלאכה

Every person is unique - *A-dam ya-chid* - אדם יחיד

Family – Mishpacha. Hanukkah revolves around the family and the home – for reasons that go beyond the fun and festivities. According to Jewish law, every household should light its own menorah. Even if you attend a community party where a menorah is lit, the family menorah holds special importance. Rabbinic authorities suggest that while the candles are burning, the family should refrain from work so they can enjoy the lights together. Many families have adopted the custom of singing, reading, and playing in front of the menorah's cheerful light. Rabbi Hillel C. Lavery-Yisrael suggests that Hanukkah is linked to family life to “remind us that Judaism remains safe and strong only when it is safeguarded in the home.”

Industriousness – Melacha. Melly wants to be as helpful and as busy as the rest of her family. Like Melly, Judaism values industriousness. According to the Torah, humanity’s job is to “work and guard” the earth (Genesis 2:15). The Midrash, a compilation of stories and legends that are designed to explain the words of the Torah, teaches that just as there is an obligation to rest on Shabbat, there is an obligation to work on the other days of the week. The Torah further defines man’s role in the world “to walk in God’s ways” (Deuteronomy 28: 9). Rabbis explain that if God worked vigorously to create and care for the world, we, too, must work to protect and enhance the world.



Every individual is unique – Adam yachid. While most of Melly’s family believes that she is too young to be of any real help, Melly proves that every family member, no matter his/her size or age, can make a unique contribution to the family. Judaism teaches that we must learn to value and appreciate the diversity of human beings. *Pirkei Avot*, a compilation of ethical teachings often translated as Ethics of our Ancestors, reminds us that every person “has his/her hour”. In his writings on Hasidic sayings, Martin Buber explains that within every person there is something precious that cannot be found in any other person. Our task is to admire and honor every person’s individual uniqueness.

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

**How will your classroom change?
How will families be involved?**

In the Classroom / Centers

- ✧ **Family:** Design family mobiles in your **art center**. Children hang a variety shapes/photos on their mobile; one for each family member. On the back of the shape or photo, the child records each person’s name along with one way that person brings light and happiness to the family. You might make a mobile that represents the classroom family.
- ✧ **Family:** What makes a family a family? Explore different types of families as part of a **social studies** project, or research animal families in your **science center**.
- ✧ **Industriousness:** In the **art/writing corner** of the room, display materials that the children can use for creating their own Hanukkah cards, such as old cards to cut and recycle, ink pads with rubber Hanukkah stamps, dried flowers, etc. Include job certificate templates that will become Hanukkah presents. The child describes task that she will perform for a particular family member or friend. For example: *For Mommy – I promise to set the table for 3 nights in a row. For Jason – I will read you a book after school.*
- ✧ **Industriousness:** Shape and bake Hanukkah cookies in your **cooking center**. Enlist the children’s assistance in creating a list of all those who help with the care and upkeep of the school. Help the children deliver the cookies to the school’s “hardest workers.”
- ✧ **Every individual is unique:** Designate a class star of the week. At **morning meeting**, ask the class to create a list of “what is special” about this week’s star. Ask the child’s family to send in photos and a description of their child’s attributes to add to the classroom list.
- ✧ **Every individual is unique:** Use fingerprints as a means of demonstrating the uniqueness of every individual. Provide water-based inkpads and paper along with magnifying glasses in your **science center**. Help the children notice some of the differences between individual fingerprints.



Bridging Home and School

Recycled Menorahs

Ask families to create a menorah out of recyclable material(s). These menorahs are meant to be funky, not necessarily functional. Send information to your families about the basics of a traditional menorah,



which contains spaces for eight candles plus the *shamash*, the lighter/helper candle. The *shamash* is usually set apart from the other spaces in some way. Set up tables in the entryway of the school, where the families can display and admire all of the menorah creations. (This recycling project fits in perfectly for schools concentrating on the *shmita* or sabbatical year. For more on *shmita*, read the [shmita resource guide](#).)

Smile!

Celebrate the uniqueness of your school families. Dedicate a space at the entrance of your school for a family photo collage. Request pictures from home – or take pictures as families come to school.

Family Engagement at Home

We Can Work it Out

Encourage industriousness in and out of school by sending home a sample job chart with a list of kid-friendly household tasks. Ask families to send in descriptive notes or pictures that capture their child helping around the house.



Share

 your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about children's developing understanding of family

Family is important to all of us. Just as you set aside space for family photos, designate a spot for children's comments about family relationships. As you discuss families throughout the year, you may see a range of comments from "I love Mommy" to "Cindy and I work together a lot. Can she be my family now?"

Share with all of us on our private Facebook group page! <http://pjfor.me/pjgts-facebook>

More

 resources and websites for inspiration

Hanukkah Pinterest <http://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/hanukkah-books-and-activities/>

Kids and chores <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/chores-for-children>

Articles on a variety of family relationships and issues <http://www.understandingchildhood.net/>

