

Hanukkah in Alaska

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What are miracles?

Hope in Darkness

Alaska is dark in the winter, but luckily that's when Hanukkah arrives. Falling on the 25th of the Jewish month of *Kislev*, which coincides with November-December, this holiday commemorates triumph in the face of overwhelming odds. The eight days of Hanukkah remind us to tune in to life's many wonders, such as the aurora borealis (northern lights) streaming across the night sky. As the child in this story says, "Miracles can happen in a lot of different ways."

Moose on the Loose

The concept of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*, preventing animals from suffering, is an important Jewish value that holds true from cuddly pets to backyard pests. But a moose is a much bigger adversary than most wildlife interlopers! Hanukkah is all about taking on larger-than-life foes. The Maccabees were vastly outnumbered by the Syrian-Greek army, but they didn't give up hope. When we face our struggles head-on, we often find we're more powerful than we'd thought. A little perseverance (and in this story, a few latkes) can go a long way.

Bet You Can't Eat Just One

Did someone mention latkes? These delicious potato pancakes are a classic Hanukkah treat. Kind of a cross between a french fry and an onion ring, a hot, crispy latke is hard to resist. Another Hanukkah treat is *sufganiyot* (donuts). The point of Hanukkah food is that it's fried in oil, a reminder of the miracle of the oil in the Hanukkah story. Plus, it's delicious — even for a moose! To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/hanukkahinalaska.

Letting in the Light

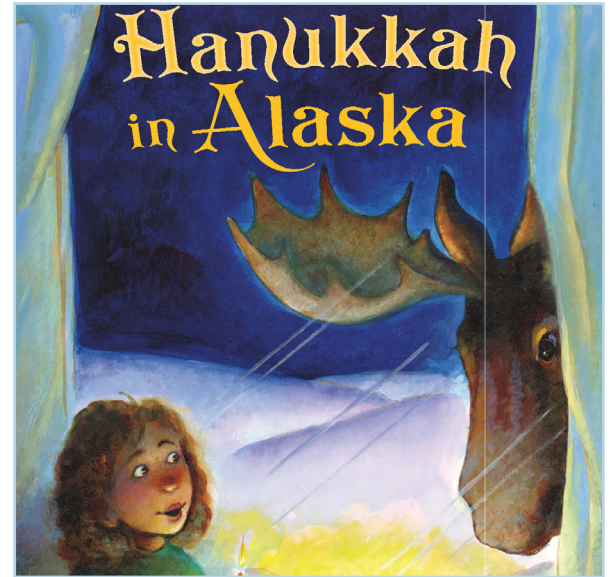
It's customary at Hanukkah to place one's menorah in a window where passersby can see it. This tradition, known as *pirsum hanes* (Hebrew for "publicizing the miracle"), helps everyone recall the miracles that took place years ago, and is a small reminder that miracles can still happen if you know how to look for them. It also brings some welcome light into the darkest time of the year — which is its own kind of miracle.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

How do you feel when it's dark in the afternoon?

Giving latkes to a moose is a creative solution. What creative solutions have you come up with for your own problems?

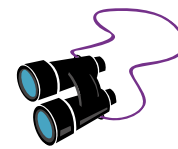
How is this family's Hanukkah similar to yours? How is it different?



HANDS ON!

Go Stargazing

During Hanukkah, night falls early. The moon is but a sliver — and on the sixth night, can't be seen at all. That means this is a perfect time to check out the night sky. You may not see the aurora borealis where you live, but perhaps you can identify the constellation Orion, which appears in the northern hemisphere at the winter solstice.



- 1 Head outside. If there's no snow on the ground, you can even put down a blanket and get comfortable.
- 2 A telescope or binoculars are great to have, but optional.
- 3 Bring a sketchpad and pencil and draw what you see. When you head back inside, look up the constellations online and try to identify the star show.