



THE EIGHTH MENORAH

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Sam loves celebrating Hanukkah with his family – and especially his grandma. But when his class makes menorahs in school, he’s worried – his family has a lot of menorahs. He comes up with a plan so that this new menorah has the best home ever.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Sam’s family had a lot of menorahs. What would he do with the new one he made? When he visited his Grammy at her new home in a retirement center, he had a great idea. At the same time, Sam and his family were fulfilling an important *mitzvah* (obligation, often translated as a good deed) -- namely *hiddur pnei zaken*, honoring the elderly.

In Jewish tradition, showing respect to one’s elders is fundamental. As it says in Bible, “You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old” (Leviticus 19:32). According to the *Talmud* (a collection of commentary on rabbinical law and core text of Jewish teachings), we are literally expected to stand up in the presence of an elderly person. Many people interpret this injunction more broadly to mean looking out for our elderly friends and neighbors on a regular basis, making sure they are not lonely or in need of help. In turn, spending time with people who have years of interesting life experiences enriches children’s lives.

A friend of Sam’s Grammy calls Sam a *mensch*, a Yiddish word for a good and decent person. Fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *hiddur pnei zaken* is one of many ways to be a *mensch*. Often the winter holidays are when families get together, but any time of the year is a good time to visit the older people in our lives and practice the *mitzvah* of honoring the elderly.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

The children in Sam’s class made menorahs from materials they found outdoors. You can make a Hanukkah menorah (also known as a *hanukkiah*) out of many different things -- a block of wood, a lump of clay, an empty tissue box, or even a potato! If you’d like to make a menorah at home, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Make sure there is room for nine candles – one for each of the eight nights of Hanukkah and a separate place for the *shamash*, the “helper” candle that is used to light all the others.
- Kindle the *shamash* first, then use it to light one candle for each night. On the first night there will be two flames; on the second, three flames, and so on. You can listen to and download the blessings recited over the Hanukkah candles at pjlibrary.org.
- Place your menorah in a window where people can admire it. This is known as “publicizing the miracle” – reminding everyone of the amazing story of Hanukkah, which you can find at the back of this book. In addition, this shares the beauty of the Festival of Lights with the world.