



{ **What miracles are all around us?** }

The Right Place at the Right Time

Many Jewish holidays have roots both in Jewish history and in the cycle of the natural world. Hanukkah recalls how the Maccabees, a small group of Jewish soldiers, revolted and prevailed against the much larger Greek-Syrian army. It also marks the onset of winter, when days are short and sunlight scarce – a time to light flames. And because the olive harvest has just been completed in Israel, an abundance of olive oil is available to light those flames and observe the Festival of Lights. When we gather around a bright, shining menorah, we are celebrating religious freedom and gathering warmth with friends and family.

HANDS ON!

Make an Oil Menorah

Chances are you have seen menorahs that use wax candles, but it's traditional to use oil, just like the Maccabees – and like the family in this book. You and your family can make a simple oil menorah at home.*

Supplies

8 glass votives of equal size
1 taller glass votive for the *shamash*, the helper candle that lights the others

Olive oil
Floating wicks (found at Judaica stores or online)

Wax candle



Arrange your votives on a piece of aluminum foil or other heat-safe surface, placing the *shamash* in the middle. Pour an equal amount of water into each votive, then add a little olive oil to each one – the more you add, the longer it will burn. Place floating wicks on top. With adult supervision, light the wick on the *shamash*. Use that flame to light a wax candle, then use that candle to light the other wicks. *Chanukah Sameach* – Happy Hanukkah!

*Never leave a lighted menorah unattended.

All About the Oil

The miracle of Hanukkah is, well, *oily*. When the Maccabees found one day's worth of olive oil in the ransacked Temple, they lit the Temple's ritual menorah anyway – and the oil miraculously burned eight days. Even before that, though, olive oil was special in Jewish tradition, and it is mentioned in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). Early rabbis liked olive oil best in a Hanukkah menorah because its light is the clearest (Babylonian Talmud Tractate Shabbat 23a). To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/harvestlight.

Miracle of Miracles

Here's a riddle. If the Hanukkah miracle is that one day's worth of oil lasted for eight, then that first day was just an ordinary day, right? What's miraculous about a single day's worth of oil burning for a single day? Some commentators have wondered if the holiday should last for only seven days, in that case. The medieval Spanish scholar Nachmanides thought about this, and he concluded that there are miracles we can see and miracles we can't see. The seven extra days that the oil burned represent the miracles of the unseen. But the first day represents the miracle of the seen – that which is around us every day, and that we often take for granted, like the fact that a candle burns at all! On Hanukkah, we celebrate all miracles, seen and unseen alike.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

DO you have olive oil in your home? What do you use it for?

WHAT foods do you like to eat during Hanukkah?

WHY do you think people like lighting candles?