



Webinar Discussion Guide

Navigating Hanukkah in Multifaith Families

By Rabbi Rebecca Joseph
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Purpose

This guide provides prompts for discussion of the JGN webinar “Navigating Hanukkah in Multifaith Families,” led by Rabbi Rebecca Joseph on December 10, 2024. Grandparent Groups, other grandparent social meetups, and program facilitators can view parts of the [webinar recording](https://jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org/video-library/) (<https://jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org/video-library/>) together, then use the prompts for participants to share their own experiences and thoughts.

Key Takeaways

- Hanukkah can be a magical time for grandparents and grandchildren to celebrate together. It is an opportunity for grandparents and grandchildren to feel connected to a larger Jewish story, and to each other.
- Jewish Americans have different ways of celebrating Hanukkah and navigating challenges of the Christmas season and other faith-based early winter holidays. Finding the right mix with your multifaith family can relieve stress and strengthen your relationships with your adult child and their spouse/partner.
- Hanukkah rituals can provide grandparents — even those with very modest Jewish knowledge or experience — a structure to use when connecting their grandchildren with Jewish tradition.
- Hanukkah stories can provide grandparents and grandchildren with “windows and mirrors” — an opportunity to feel empathy for the experience of another (“look

through a window”) and to recognize their own life in the story of Jews from different backgrounds and our ancestors (“see in a mirror”).

- Creative activities with Hanukkah themes — such as hope, light, and joy — and volunteer service can help grandparents and grandchildren take action to bring a better world into being.

Tips for Navigating Hanukkah in Multifaith Families

- Spend time before Hanukkah determining which aspect(s) of the holiday are meaningful to you and why. Make a list of related activities that you would enjoy sharing with your grandchildren.
- Include your adult child and invite their spouse/partner to participate in planning your Hanukkah celebration. A difficult conversation is more likely to conclude successfully when you listen attentively to them and your words and tone convey, “I respect and love you,” even when you strongly disagree.
- In advance, prepare one or more activities you will do with your grandchildren. For example, find an age-appropriate Hanukkah story that highlights the themes and values you want to explore together.
- Support and encourage your grandchildren while you explore Hanukkah together. Aim to praise the process (“You ask great questions”) rather than innate characteristics (“You have a Jewish soul”) or results (“You said the blessing perfectly”).
- Reflect with your grandchildren on what they and you experienced that makes them feel connected to Hanukkah. Ask them how they would like to celebrate next year.

Discussion Questions

1. Which aspect of Hanukkah do you feel most connected to? Why?
2. Why do you think children should be introduced to Hanukkah? What do you think are the opportunities and the challenges of exploring Hanukkah with *your* grandchildren?
3. How can you be a co-learner with your adult child rather than a teacher?
4. How can sharing Jewish tradition by celebrating Hanukkah together as a multifaith family strengthen your relationships with your adult child and grandchildren, whether your grandchildren are being raised Jewish, in another faith tradition, or in none?
5. What is one thing you want to try out for Hanukkah this year? How will you go about doing it?