



8 Days of Chanukah

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

“8 Days of Chanukah, 8 Days of Chanukah; We Celebrate the Festival of Lights”

This is one of my favorite Chanukah songs from when I was a child. This version is sung by Cindy Paley and I promise you that you will be happier that it is her rendition of the song and not mine! A famous teacher once said, “You couldn’t carry a tune if you had a bucket!” However, I do love to sing.

But as we are entering into this time of the year, have I mentioned it is my favorite?? We are getting ready for Chanukah. Eight days of celebration of the miracle of light. A very long time ago, when the ancient temple was ransacked, all of the containers of oil (no electricity back then) were smashed and only one remained. As the flame was supposed to be burning at all times, this was a problem. But when the temple was cleaned and dedicated to reopen, they lit the candelabra - a regular menorah - and instead of only one day, the flames burned for the full eight days needed to make more oil.

The holiday of Chanukah celebrates this miracle and many others. One of the names of the holiday is the festival of lights, as the song says. It is traditional to light a chanukiah or chanukah menorah that has nine places for candles. Eight to represent the eight days of Chanukah and the ninth to light the rest.

This theme of light in the darkness is spread throughout many holidays and in different religions. Most recently, I attended a Diwali celebration and that was one of the many themes that was evident. Diwali, or Deepavali is a Hindu festival of lights celebrated every year in autumn in the northern hemisphere (spring in the southern hemisphere). One of the most popular festivals of Hinduism, it spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. Its



celebration includes millions of lights shining on housetops, outside doors called diya, oil lamps. Kwanzaa also uses candles to represent the seven principles highlighted during the holiday.

The Kinara, according to Wikipedia, is modeled after the menorah. The first kinara was created by [Maulana Karenga](#) in 1966, (and is) based on the Jewish [Hanukkah menorah](#). Even Christmas has connections with this idea of a festival of light This comes from the Book of John where Jesus is described as the Light of the World.(This is from Answers.com.) It's definitely the time of year when the sun sets earlier and doesn't rise quite as early either. With the winter solstice, the daylight hours are shorter, necessitating the need to add brightness.

There are so many fun ways that you can add that fun and light into your homes this season celebrating Chanukah or not.

Chanukah as a gift giving holiday

It is a relatively new tradition to give gifts at Chanukah. Typically, it was money or needed items; not XBoxes or Barbie Dream Houses. Of course because of other holidays around this time, gifts are definitely a big part of the holiday in some families.

How else can you celebrate without the focus on gifts?

Because the holiday lasts for eight days, there are so many opportunities to extend the celebrations. Some families make each day a theme. Pajamas for one night, volunteering for another, and still cooking for another. Find activities that interest you and your family. My suggestions below are just that. What do you NEED to do on Chanukah? Light the Chanukah menorah each night.

Day 1

Here is a shameless plug to make Day 1 - Community. Join the Early Learning Center for Lots and [Lots of Latkes](#), our Chanukah dinner and celebration to start the holiday season. From 4:30-6 p.m., join us for music, great, kosher food, a



bounce house, stories and arts and crafts. Visit the EVJCC website and search lots of latkes.

Day 2

Pajama Night

Dress in your favorite, fun, cozy and cool pajamas to eat dinner with your family. Any menu items are good. Choose fun, all the time food choices and just make it comfy and cozy. New PJs are not required! Be sure to play a few games of dreidel while in your PJs!

Day 3

Story Time

Choose a few favorite Chanukah stories to share with your children. Find them in your local library, borrow from a friend or even use the Internet to find electronic versions of favorite Chanukah stories. Some good options include: pjlibrary.org/hanukkah. There are podcasts, music, games, arts and crafts and cooking projects. Youtube.com is also a great resource for songs, stories, crafts and cooking projects.

Day 4

Dance Party

Make Day 4 all about the music! Again, PJ Library and Youtube are great sources. Spotify or your favorite music app is great! And who's to say you need to only use Chanukah music? Find some great tunes and rock out with your kids. Pajamas can be great attire for this as well!

Day 5

Volunteer

Make Day 5 all about volunteering. Make cards or pictures for a local assisted living facility. Buy a few extra non-perishables for a local food bank. Clean your closets and donate unused clothing items. See what will interest your child to be able to include them.



Day 6

Family

Day 6 can be all about your family. Take funny family selfies and email them to far away relatives. Set up a Zoom call with those family members and share your Chanukah story time. Invite your family members to meet you in the park - while it gets dark sooner, the days are still fairly mild when it comes to the weather; take advantage of living in Arizona this winter!

Day 7

Cooking

Whether you fry latkes or sufganiyot (an Israeli delicacy) or just make a fruit salad, involve your children as much as possible and make it a group effort. Again, depending on the age of your children, this can be a wonderful playdate activity.

Day 8

Nature

Plan a day at the park or local walking trail and really enjoy that outdoor time. This is the time of the year that we all love and why many of us moved to Arizona in the first place. Don't be stuck inside. Be in the moment, off your phones, and enjoy nature.

Directions: Follow these suggestions for a fun, present free, low-cost/no-cost Chanukah. Just remember to light the Chanukah Menorah each night!