

2024

# HANUKKAH

*Lights & Insights*

**There are so many reasons to get together this time of year! Hanukkah! Christmas! Kwanzaa! Chinese New Year! Secular New Year! We love finding reasons to celebrate together.**

This year, the first night of Hanukkah and Christmas overlap. This can serve as a beautiful backdrop for noticing and celebrating the other ways our celebrations overlap that add light and warmth to your relationship and your home. It can also serve as an opportunity to honor and discuss your own unique experiences, memories and traditions around this time of year.

**There are so many ways to celebrate!** There has always been more than one way to celebrate Hanukkah – eat latkes, give gifts, have a Hanukkah party, or light Hanukkah candles.

Speaking of lighting Hanukkah candles, two of the most influential ancient rabbis, Hillel and Shammai, disagreed on how to light the *hannukiah* (Hanukkah menorah). Shammai believed that on the first night of Hanukkah, we should **light all the candles, and gradually light fewer candles each night**, until only one candle is lit on the last night. This was to **symbolize the slowly decreasing oil in the menorah**.



While Hillel believed the very opposite, that on the first night of Hanukkah we light one light, and **gradually increase until all candles are lit** on the eighth night. Hillel believed that we should **increase light, as a symbol of increasing the joy and celebration** of the holiday.

Each of us brings our own unique experiences, memories, and traditions around this time of year. You can choose to celebrate Hanukkah like Shammai, like Hillel, or in some other way that is meaningful to you and your family. We hope the questions on the next page might **guide your discussion in illuminating the beautiful similarities and differences in the ways each of us celebrates Hanukkah**.

## Lights & Insights

1. Hillel and Shammai each have their own tradition for how to light Hanukkah candles. **What are some of your favorite winter holiday memories or traditions?**
2. Each of the ways described to light the candles has different symbolism and meaning. **Where do you find meaning during the holiday season?**
3. Hillel's approach of increasing light each night emphasizes growth and hope. Across cultures, many winter holidays include themes of lighting up the darkness. **What are some ways you try to bring light to the winter holidays?**
4. Finding a balance between different practices can be difficult. **Have there been times when you've struggled to combine your holiday traditions with those of your partner?**
5. Sharing Shammai's minority opinion reminds us of how important it is to show how different traditions evolve. **When have you been able to combine your traditions together with those of your partner?**
6. Hillel and Shammai give us permission to develop our own holiday traditions. **What are some holiday traditions you and your partner have developed together?**
7. Hillel and Shammai agree on how important it is to celebrate the joy of the holiday season. **What about your holiday traditions kindles joy?**
8. Hillel and Shammai also agree on how important it is to continue bringing light into the darkness during this time of year. **What is a new tradition you would like to create to bring more light into your home or the world?**