



LIGHT

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According to a sixteenth-century legend, when the world began the Creator intended to add sparks of light to all creation. Held in a vessel that broke apart, the sparks scattered. The task of people is to gather the sparks and contain them once again, thus repairing our imperfect world. Light is a mythical, poetic retelling of this story.

People have a primal connection with light. Literally and symbolically, light is vital. Consider the lighting of candles on Friday evening to “bring in” the *Shabbat* (Sabbath), lighting a special braided candle for *Havdalah* (the ceremony at the conclusion of the *Sabbath*), and lighting candles to dispel the darkness and commemorate the miracle of *Hanukkah*. A special everlasting light, the *ner tamid*, remains burning at all times above the *aron kodesh* (holy ark) which houses Torah scrolls. Even the daily Hebrew greeting *boker tov* (good morning) is commonly answered with the phrase *boker ohr* (literally, “morning light”).

TIKKUN OLAM

As mentioned in the author’s introduction to *Light*, *tikkun olam* (Hebrew for “repairing the world”) is a vital Jewish objective, the essence of which is that acts of goodness and generosity bring the possibility of wholeness and peace for the world. Every affirming act contributes to *tikkun olam*, and in this goal every person counts, from the youngest to the most senior. It is critical that even young children know that there are contributions they can make to this effort; equally important is adult help in providing children with opportunities for *tikkun olam* and encouragement for involvement. Through the text and illustrations of *Light*, children can come to see that each person—and perhaps each fish and flowering tree!—has a creative spark that when united with every other, has limitless possibilities.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Light provides a great opportunity to consider with your children the unity of all nature. Talk with them about the unique purpose of all creatures and objects in the natural world. What might it mean if every object contains a shard of light and each person possesses the ability to help put all of those shards together into one magnificent, radiant LIGHT? What if, through acts of loving-kindness, we could gather the fragments and make of them something extraordinary? These are questions that may seem philosophical, but they are the stuff from which great imagination and creativity can spring in children.

Youngsters often love tints and shadings of color—aqua-marine, chartreuse, etc. Explain that light can be broken down into colors. Encourage your children to use colored chalk to draw rainbows on a section of sidewalk, or if needlework is your strong suit, take this opportunity to teach your children the basics of needlepoint, crocheting, or knitting, using rainbow colors. Could there be a better example of *tikkun olam* than a scarf made by a child and given to someone with love?

And if there exists a spark in every thing and every person, what form might that spark take? See the author’s Art Notes at the back of the book to inspire inventive thinking, then give your children the green light to create a collage, painting, sculpture, poem, rock garden, Light jar, Light show, recording, game, recipe, mud pie...anything to bring out their spark. Pj