



**Y**OU PROBABLY KNOW Nate Berkus as the featured design expert on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. What you may not know is that Nate grew up celebrating Jewish holidays with his family in the suburbs of Minneapolis. Berkus, whose home-furnishings collection launched on the Home Shopping Network in October, talked with us about his passion for design and ideas for lighting up your space for the holidays.

**JL: Were you into interior design as a child?**

**Berkus:** I think I had a sensitivity at a very early age about how your environment impacts the way you feel—but of course at 7 years old you're not really able to articulate that. When I was 11, my parents renovated our basement so I could have my own room. If you were to track down those contractors in suburban Minneapolis and ask who their most exacting client was, it was this kid at 11.

**JL: Did your family decorate for the holidays?**

**Berkus:** No, not really, because the house always looked like it was ready for somebody to come over anyway. The Jewish holidays, for me, represent more than anything a connection to our culture. It's a time about family and the collective experience.

**JL: Are there mezuzahs on your doorways?**

**Berkus:** (Laughs.) Yes, there are. In fact, I was on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and went into a Judaica shop and found these beautiful handmade mezuzahs carved out of wood and bone.

**JL: Since Chanukah is the Festival of Lights, how can people bring more light into their surroundings?**

**Berkus:** People's biggest mistake is to be overconcerned with light. You first have to be truthful about the architecture and the space. If you have a small, dark room, for instance, embrace it. I probably have 15 lamps in my living room. They don't go on at the same time; it depends on how I'm using the space. A rule of thumb is that in every nook or corner of a space where people either sit or congregate, there should be a source of light.

## Nate Berkus

Oprah's favorite decorator talks about his very first renovation, mezuzahs, and why you need more lamps

BY JULIE JACOBS



For more of our interview with Nate Berkus, go to [jewishlivingmag.com/profiles](http://jewishlivingmag.com/profiles).