



Decorative Shabbat Candlesticks

Topic

Hiddur mitzvah, making decorative Shabbat candlesticks

Grade Level(s)

All

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will

- Experience the joy of creating Shabbat candlesticks for their family
- Be able to explain the concept of *hiddur mitzvah*, beautifying the *mitzvah* and apply it to their own lives

Materials needed

- 2 jiggers per student - Jiggers are hourglass-shaped, stainless-steel implements used for measuring cocktail ingredients. They are cheap and easy to find in most housewares stores, or to order online. Typically, the larger cup measures out exactly one jigger, or 1 1/2 ounces. The smaller cup is normally one half jigger, or 3/4 ounces. This size is perfect for this project as the wider cup makes a stable base for a candlestick and the small cup holds a standard Shabbat candle.
- Multi-colored tissue paper; cut into one-inch squares
- Polymer gloss medium - to be used to glue tissue around the jiggers and as a top coat. Use either Dick Blick's Polymer Gloss Medium available at <http://www.dickblick.com/products/blickrylic-mediums/> or Mod Podge available at most craft stores.
- Foam brushes and plates/bowls/table coverings for working with the polymer medium.
- Download and print a copy of the picture prompts (located at the end of this lesson)

Optional embellishments:

- Small beads: glass, crystal or seed beads
- Craft wire; the higher the gauge number, the thinner the wire. Make sure the wire you choose is thin enough to thread through the beads you are using. The following information can be helpful when purchasing wire and beads:
 - Use 22 or 20-gauge craft wire with glass or crystal beads
 - Use 26 or 24-gauge craft wire with seed beads (seed beads are very small and require good fine motor skills)
 - Use 16 or 20-gauge craft with pony beads if working with younger children.



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Technology needed

Optional: Internet access, computer and projector or whiteboard to project images of Shabbat candlesticks for inspiration.

Prepare in Advance

- Cut tissue paper into squares and place them in a few bowls for the students to share.
- Pour the polymer medium into bowls
- If you are going to have students add beads around the “neck” of the jigger, precut the wire into 15-inch lengths and place a little piece of masking tape on one end so that the beads stay on the wire while students are working. You will need 2 wires per student.

Background for Teachers

זֶה אֱלֹהֵי יְאֻנְהוּ

This is my God, and I will glorify Him. (Shemot/Exodus 15:2)

Rabbi Yishmael taught: “Is it possible for a human being to add glory to his Creator? What this really means is: I shall glorify Him in the way I perform mitzvot...”
(Mechilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 15:2).

The above passages are the sources for the concept of *Hiddur Mitzvah*, enhancing or beautifying a mitzvah beyond its formal requirements.

Making ritual objects with students is a tangible way to help kids connect with rituals of Jewish life and feel a connection to the concept of *Hiddur Mitzvah*. Bringing beautiful, hand-crafted candlesticks home can instill pride in the creator and may inspire families to participate in the mitzvah of lighting Shabbat candles. This project enables students to create charming candlesticks that are safe to use and enhance their families’ experience when lighting Shabbat candles.

The mitzvah of lighting Shabbat candles dates back at least to the Mishnah, which devotes a chapter to the types of candles that can and cannot be used (Mishnah Shabbat chapter 2). Among the reasons given by commentators for the mitzvah are *kavod* (respect for) *Shabbat* (Rashi, Tractate Shabbat 25b c.v. *chovah*) and *oneg* (enjoyment of) *Shabbat* (Tosefot, Tractate Shabbat 25b, c.v. *hadlakat*).

While the basic mitzvah of lighting Shabbat candles requires both men and women to light one candle, many individuals and families have the custom to light two (or more) candles for their households (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 263:1-2). While several explanations exist for the custom to light two, the most common explanation is that the candles represent the



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two different words that introduce the fourth of the Ten Commandments: “*Zachor* (Remember) the Sabbath day to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8), “*Shamor* (Keep) the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Deuteronomy 5:12). Some families light extra candles each week, usually corresponding to the number of children in the home.

Description of Activities

Trigger discussion to introduce the concept of *hiddur mitzvah*:

Show students the pictures of the brown paper bag and the colorfully gift wrapped boxes.

Explain that each container holds a present. Ask:

- Which packaging do you like better and why?
- How does the way something is wrapped make you feel about what you might find inside?

Discuss what things in their own lives they like to spend extra time or money on in order to make them more beautiful. Examples might include decorating their bedroom or locker, dressing up for a special event rather than wearing jeans and a tee shirt, putting colorful stickers all over their notebooks.

Explain the concept of *hiddur mitzvah* (beautifying the mitzvah). Use the teachers' background information for guidance.

Show the images of candlesticks. Ask:

- What do you notice? Which candlesticks do you like the best and why?
- Do any of the pictures look like a pair of candlesticks in your house?

Making the Candlesticks:

1. Cover the tables and lay out the materials.
2. Demonstrate brushing a bit of the glue on the jigger and laying the tissue in place.
3. Have the students cover their jiggers with tissue paper, working in small sections at a time. Although mod podge is not flammable, tissue paper is. **As an added precaution against fire, have the students leave the stainless steel top lip of the jigger plain (no tissue).
4. While the jiggers are drying, have students string beads onto their wires. Students should string about 9 inches of beads on each wire. Once dry, wrap the beads around the jiggers and twist the ends and tuck the ends in behind the beading.
5. If necessary, trim the ends of the wire so they don't stick out from behind the beading.



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