

A Sense of Jewish Symbols 24/7



for the Early Childhood & Primary School Classroom
 A weekly idea from SAJES Dept. of Early Childhood Education
 Week of December 9 - 14 / Kislev 29 - Tevet 5, 5768

Jewish Symbols -24/7

Shabbat/Holiday Candlesticks

We light candles to mark the beginning of Shabbat on Friday evenings and the evening when a Holiday begins. The candles can symbolize many things such as welcoming into the home the warmth and light that accompany Shabbat and the holiday. Or the candles are a symbol of the light of God's presence in our world, perhaps an association with the Ner Tamid (eternal light). There is no commandment in the Torah to light candles, despite the fact that the berakhah we say includes the words "asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu le-had-lik ner shel Shabbat/Yom Tov" (who has made us holy with commandments and has commanded us to light the Shabbat/Holiday candles). But, lighting candles is a *Mitzvah*.

Tradition dictates that candles be lit roughly eighteen minute before sunset, which is the time that, according to Jewish law, the new day actually begins. It is traditional to light the candles, cover your eyes, and then recite the blessing. We cover our eyes to block the view of the candles. Usually in Judasim, one recites the blessing and then does the action. It cannot be done that way in lighting the candles, so by covering our eyes we sort of circumvent the tradition! There are several reasons why we circle our hands. Some say to pull the warmth of the flames towards you. Others say it is to ensure that the flames are well lit. It is customary to light at least a pair of candles for Shabbat, because the Torah states that we should "*Shamor*"- *Observe* and "*Zahor*"- *Remember* Shabbat. Many people light more than two (either with multiple candlesticks or a candelabrum), some following the custom of lighting one candle for each family member and others finding another symbolism in a given number.

"The rabbis of the Talmud looked into a candle and saw a Jewish experience-the light of the Torah. It seems that today children who are raised with the weekly lighting of candles find an equally Jewish experience in the mystery of a candle flame." Rabbi Ron Wolfson *The Art of Jewish Living, The Shabbat Seder*

Multi-Intelligence Integration Ideas

- ✧ Since there isn't a "set" reason for circling hands before saying the blessings on the candles, why not ask the children what they think? This could be the beginning of a wonderful class discussion and maybe even a book with photographs of the children and their own illustrations.
- ✧ Can the children make their own candlesticks (They don't necessarily have to ones to light with real candles although they could)? Ask them bring in some materials that they think would be appropriate, and then allow them to trade and share and create and display!
- ✧ Andi Josephs' CD "I've Got That Shabbat Feeling" has a wonderful Shabbat movement song "Listen and Do" in which the children can be the candle in the candlestick!
- ✧ The children can make edible candlesticks for Shabbat snack. They can place a banana in a pineapple ring and place a cherry or grape (slightly split through the middle) on top. Can the class think of other ways to make this? Each week could be a whole new candle experience!

HEBREW VOCABULARY

פָּמוֹט /PA-MOTE/CANDLESTICK

נֵר (וֹת) /NAIR (OT)/CANDLE (S)

לֶה־הַ־וַה /LEH-HA-VAH/FLAME

*The Symbol: the outward expression of the inward signification-
 should above all charm the senses by and for itself. Heine*

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