



## **Hiddur Mitzvah: Shabbat by Caroline Saliman**

*Subject Area: Holidays/ Art*

*Multi lesson plan*

*Age group: PreK- 7th grade (projects to be adapted to specific ages)*

*Lesson Objectives:*

- 1. Students will be able to explain the meaning of hiddur mitzvah.*
- 2. Students will be able to explain, hopefully with Kavanah, the meaning of the candlesticks, challah cover and Kiddush cups they have made.*
- 3. Students will create a Kiddush cup, challah cover, challah tray, candlesticks, and a covered matchbox to use on Shabbat.*
- 4. Students will be able to recite the Shabbat blessings. (candles, haMotzi, abbr. Kiddush)*

*The idea of “hiddur mitzvah” comes from Exodus 15:2, “This is my G-d, and I will glorify G-d.” How do we glorify G-d? We perform the mitzvot above and beyond the minimum requirements. For example, we are commanded to use a cup for Kiddush that holds a certain amount of wine, but it is hiddur mitzvah that has the cup be a beautiful, extraordinary cup for Kiddush. The same idea of hiddur mitzvah holds true as we take an ordinary handkerchief for a challah cover, and with kavannah, we create a beautifully colored and decorated cover. This lesson plan is focused on creating beautiful Shabbat ritual objects in order to fulfill the commandment of hiddur mitzvah.*

### **Session One: Hiddur Mitzvah**

*Using the text, have students read Exodus 15:2. Discuss together what “glorifying G-d” might mean. Introduce the term, Hiddur Mitzvah” and have students share their ideas/examples. Emphasize that the art they are about to create is a mitzvah, and through their artwork and creativity, they are in fact “glorifying G-d”.*

*Shabbat Light: We are commanded to light candles to welcome in Shabbat. As we light the candles, we “spread Shabbos light”. We circle and gather in the light three times to bring in the warmth, peace, and light. We cover our eyes to create a special space, and as we uncover, we are now in the new, holy space of Shabbat.*

*Students are encouraged to share what makes space/time holy. Questions for discussion:*

- What is holy?*



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- *How do we create an atmosphere of holiness?*
- *Why do we light candles first, then say blessing after?*

### **ART: Shabbat Candlesticks**

**Materials needed:** Small, paper cups (“Dixie cups”); Plaster; Water; Powdered tempera (optional); Beads, plastic gems, sparkles, etc... for decoration; Shabbat candles; Vaseline

**Process:** In a paper cup, mix plaster and water according to directions on container. (It should have the consistency of a milk shake)

At this time, add desired paint. (It is also possible to paint the candlesticks later if you wish.) Stir it up well with a popsicle stick. Vaseline up the bottom inch or so of a Shabbat candle, and place in the plaster. Add the jewels, beads, etc. at this point, making sure they are in the plaster just enough to hold, but not covered.

Let the candlesticks set. After the candlesticks have hardened, peel away the paper cup. For more decoration, you can paint, or glue more sparkles/beads. The candle should slide out easily, leaving the correct size indentation for use later.

### **ART: Decorated Matchbook**

**Materials Needed:** Small matchbox; Double sided craft tape; Copies of candle blessing, cut to size of matchbox; Small bugle beads, glitter, seed beads

**Process:** Cut craft tape to fit large sides of a matchbook, leaving the match strike area uncovered. On one side, place and stick the candle blessings. On the opposite side, stick on assorted beads, then sprinkle glitter to completely cover the sticky tape.

**BLESSING:** Learn/read/chant blessing together.

### **Session Two: Kiddush**

We fill our cups with wine (or grape juice) to sanctify this time. With our cups filled with wine, our cups are filled with joy. We can taste the sweetness of Shabbat.

Reading the English translation of the Kiddush, have students share any wonders of creation. Continue with reading, emphasizing our always remembering when we left Egypt. Students are encouraged to share why we mention this in the Kiddush, what does this mean for us everyday, and why it is important to include here.

Questions for discussion:



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- *What are some examples of miracles that surround us?*
- *How do we show our gratitude for the gift of Shabbat? How is Shabbat a “gift”?*

**ART:** *Glass painted Kiddush cup OR beaded stem Kiddush cup*

**Materials Needed:** *Glass wine goblets; Glass paint (available at craft stores); Paintbrushes; White vinegar; Masking tape; permanent marker(optional); (for a beaded project- use thin, bendable wire and any variety of beads.)*

**Process:** *Begin by rubbing the glasses with a paper towel and vinegar. This cleans the glass and helps the paint to stick. Use a strip of tape and wrap the top of the glass covering ¼ inch or so from the top. This keeps paint away from the top of the glass so that it can be used later. These steps are best to prep ahead of time before the students begin. Make sure glass is dry before painting. If desired, use a permanent marker to write the Hebrew for Kiddush on the glass, or any other words or designs. Students can paint freely with this paint, but being careful not to get any paint on the inside. (A helpful tip for preschool age children is to place the glass upside down on the table.) These glasses are hand washable after the paint has cured. Check labels on glass paint container for exact instructions.*

*For a beaded glass, bend the wire, (needle nose pliers work great) around the base of the stem. String and wrap the beaded wire to the top of the stem, tightening with the pliers, and using a little hot glue if needed for support.*

**BLESSING:** *Learn and read/chant blessing together*

### **Session Three: HaMotzi**

*Challah is the special braided egg bread we eat on Shabbat. The three braids remind us of the creation of the world, second, leaving Egypt, and third, our messianic vision of the future. The braids also remind us of all Jews coming together. The word “challah” itself, is the term used for the piece of dough broken off and discarded or burnt in the oven as we prepare the loaves. The challah reminds us of the mitzvah to give a portion of the bread to the Kohanim in Temple days. We can use this sacrificial piece now to remind us of all the people in the world who are suffering, who are hungry, who need our help. Taking “challah”, a piece from our own loaf, reminds us that there is a lot of work to do to help this world, and it is up to us to do it.*



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*The two loaves of challah are covered with a beautiful cloth before the Motzi is recited. We cover the challah to remind us of the time we spent wandering in the desert and received manna from G-d. On Friday, we received a double portion of manna to last us through Shabbat. (no manna fell on Shabbat) That portion of manna was covered with a layer of dew to keep it fresh and ready for us. Another reason we cover the challah is to take care not to embarrass it. After all, the candles are first, then Kiddush, and since challah is third, we don't want that challah should feel bad. It's covered so that it shouldn't realize, and covered with a beautiful cloth as to fulfill hiddur mitzvah.*

**Questions for discussion:**

- *Why do we cover the challah? What is the significance of "challah"? Why two loaves?*
- *What do the braids of the challah signify?*

**ART: Challah cover:**

*Materials needed: Plain white handkerchiefs; Food coloring; Paintbrushes or droppers OR Rubberbands (optional if you choose to do a tie dye effect); Permanent marker; Embroidery thread (optional, and also depending on the ages of students); Assorted fringes, trim (available at cloth stores) (also optional)*

*Process: With a permanent marker, draw any border, design, and also write the Hebrew "Shabbat" on the handkerchief. (depending on ages, students may need assistance for this part). Using watered-down food coloring, paint the handkerchiefs. It is also possible to a tie dye effect by rubber-banding small sections and dipping them into the colors.*

*When dry, (these dry quickly. A hair dryer also speeds the process along), add embroidered borders, sew on fringe trim, etc. Note: These challah covers **cannot** be washed.*

**ART: Acrylic Challah Tray**

*Materials needed: Clear acrylic cutting boards; Glass paint; Permanent markers*

*Process: On the reverse side of the cutting board, paint or draw any design. (Remember any wording needs to be backwards as it will be read on the flipside. The idea is that the challah doesn't touch the painted side)*

**ART: Wooden Challah Tray**



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**Materials needed:** Desired size/ piece of thin wood; (note: hardware/lumber stores will usually cut for free any plywood/boards for school use); Food coloring (watered down); Wood burner (optional); Felt furniture tabs (smallest size)

**Process:** Prep the wood boards by sanding all edges prior to the students arrival. For younger students, prep the boards also by pre-writing "Shabbat" or whatever desired word(s) with the wood burner. Older students will enjoy using the wood burner- with supervision.

Paint with the food coloring directly onto the bare wood. The colors soak in to the wood. Painting slower will create deeper color, but be careful as to not "drown" the wood with paint, as it may warp later. Finish by attaching small felt pads (may be cut to desired size) to bottom corners of board. Note: This board is not washable.

**BLESSING:** Learn/Read/ Chant HaMotzi together.

### Stories

Finish each session with an age appropriate Shabbat book/story.

HaSifria, the library at BJCC, has a large assortment of Shabbat picture books, as well as short stories to tell or read aloud. ("Joseph the Sabbath Lover", "The Sweetest Sound", and "Challahs in the Ark" are wonderful read aloud stories for any ages)

**Family extension:** Send home with each student copies of blessings, (transliterated if needed), challah recipes, and instructions and care for their new objects. Include a booklist of the stories/books.

Encourage families to share their experience of Shabbat with their beautiful ritual objects.

**Reference:** Gates of the Season: A Guide to the Jewish Year,  
Central Conference of American Rabbis