

Holiday Light for the Soul

Topic

Jewish Holidays, Hebrew, Sources of light

Grade Level(s)

3rd – 6th

Big Ideas

How light manifests physically can affect how one experiences the spiritual nature of a holiday.

Light can represent many different things: physical light, good, happiness, salvation, discovery, sight, understanding, etc.

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Learn Hebrew words related to “light”
2. Become familiar with the light(s) used for each Jewish holiday and its meanings
3. Relate how *Or* represents different ideas for each Jewish holiday

Materials / Technology Needed

- Large Wall Post-It and markers
- [Jewish Holiday Rug](#) (optional)
- Physical candles: *Shabbat*, *Havdalah*, *Hanukkah*, Memorial
- Print 4-5 sets of the pictures of different candles and types of fires (on pages 8-9).
- Prepare 4-5 sets of flashcards with the names of the Jewish holidays (see names on table on pages 4-5).
- Colored paper, cellophane paper, sequins, feathers, or any other art supplies available in the classroom.
- Cake with chocolate icing, red and yellow Lollypops, resealable bags, hammers for kids, and wafer rolls (access to an oven). Remember to check for food allergies.

Relevant Vocabulary

חג/חגים (<i>Chag, Chagim</i>)	Holiday(s)
מועד, מועדים (<i>Moed, Moadim</i>)	Fixed festival(s)
חז"ל (הַחֲכָמִינוּ זְכוֹרֵנוּם לְבָרָכָה) (<i>(H)azal / Hachameinu Zichronam Livrchah</i>)	Our Sages May Their Memory Be for a Blessing
אור (<i>Or</i>)	Light
אש (<i>Esh</i>)	Fire
פסח (<i>Pesach</i>)	Passover
יום הזכרון (<i>Yom Hazikaron</i>)	Israel's Memorial Day
יום השואה (<i>Yom Hashoah</i>)	Holocaust Remembrance Day
יום העצמאות (<i>Yom Ha'atzma'ut</i>)	Israel's Independence Day

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Background for Teachers

The idea that a person's soul resembles a candle stems from a biblical verse "*The candle of God is the soul of man*" ([Mishlei 20:27](#)). In the same way that God created the first light to spark off the world, God also blew a breath of life to create man's body and soul. *Or* also provides a metaphor for the human soul, *Torah*, and *mitzvot* "*A mitzvah is a candle, and the Torah is light*" ([Mishlei 6:23](#)).

Or - אור

Or, both physical and spiritual, is a distinctive feature in Jewish holidays. There is a tradition in Judaism to bring the light (by lighting candles) during happy occasions such as Jewish holidays. We light candles to indicate the transition from profane to sacred time, and bring the happiness and the positive into the holidays. We also bring the light (by lighting candles) during sad moments such as death, the anniversary of someone's death, and other commemorations. We light candles out of respect for the deceased and to remember people or tragic events. We also light a memorial candle because the candle symbolizes the person's soul ([Mishlei 20:27](#)).

Chagim u'moadim – חגים

Chagim u'moadim represent all the holidays, festivals, and observances in the Hebrew calendar. Some *chagim u'moadim* are mentioned in the Torah, some were fixed by *Hazal*, and others were determined by the State of Israel in modern times. The *chagim* are happy occasions, while observances include mourning, remembrance days, and fast days. Below please find a table with 12 *chagim u'moadim* including information about the source, type of light, how many and reasons.

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<i>Chagim u'Moadim</i>	Source	Type of Light	How Many	Reason
<i>Shabbat</i>	Torah	Single-wick candle	At least one	To have usable light on Shabbat
<i>Havdalah</i>	Rabbinical	Multiple-wick candle	At least one	To mark the separation between Shabbat and the days of the week
Rosh Hashanah	Torah	Single-wick candle	At least one	To mark the beginning of the festival
Yom Kippur	Torah	1. Memorial Candle 2. Single-wick candle	At least one	1. To honor and remember loved ones 2. To mark the beginning of the holiday
Sukkot	Torah	Single-wick candle	At least one	To mark the beginning of the festival
Hanukkah	Rabbinical	Single-wick candle	Total of 44 in 8 nights	To remember the miracle of the oil and the triumph of the Maccabees over the Syrian-Greeks
Pesach	Torah	1. Fire 2. Single-wick candle	1. One 2. At least one	1. To burn <u>hametz</u> 2. To mark the beginning of the holiday
<i>Yom Ha'shoah</i>	Modern	Memorial Candle	At least one	To memorialize the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust
<i>Lag Ba'Omer</i>	Custom	Bonfire	One	To celebrate the passing of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his high level of spirituality.
<i>Yom Hazikaron</i>	Modern	Memorial Candle	At least one	To honor and remember fallen soldiers and victims of terror.
<i>Yom Ha'atzmaut</i>	Modern	Torches	12	To symbolize the 12 tribes of Israel (at Israel's official <i>Yom Ha'atzmanut</i> ceremony)
Shavuot	Torah	Single-wick candle	At least one	To mark the beginning of the festival

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For more information, please read the short article “[The Motif of Light in Jewish Tradition](#).” The videos below provide background information on the use of fire during *chagim u’moadim*.



Burning Hametz (Leaven) (before Pesach)



Lighting the Torch - *Yom Haatzmaut*



Building a Bonfire - *Lag Ba'Omer*

Description of Activities

1. Ask learners to sit on rug with the Jewish holiday motif, if available. If rug is not available, learners can sit in a circle on the floor.
2. Explain to learners that they will be doing an activity in which they will look at different types of lights and their connection to the Jewish holidays.
3. Draw a vertical line to create two columns on the wall Post-It. write “Light – אור” on the left column, and “Jewish Holidays – חגים” on the right column. Ask learners what type of natural or artificial light—אור—they already know and write their answers on the left column. Ask learners what they already know about Jewish holidays—חגים—and write their answers on the right column.
4. Teacher passes around physical candles and pictures of different types of fire.

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5. Ask learners what is similar and different about the candles. Things to notice include:
 - a. Size and color
 - b. Number of wicks
 - c. Color of light
 - d. How long does each candle burn?
6. Ask learners to discuss on which occasion or for what purpose people use a bonfire, a torch, a barbecue fire, or a burning fire. Then, ask the same question but specifically on which occasion or for what purpose Jewish people use a bonfire, a torch, a barbecue or a burning fire.
7. Hand out a set of the pictures of the candles and types of fire and a set of flashcards with the names of the Jewish holidays. Break learners into small groups (3-4 in each group) and ask each group to match the specific candle or fire used on each given holiday. Please advise them that some candles or types of fire might be used for more than one holiday. Tell them also that it is ok to guess if they do not know the right answer.
8. With the full group, lead a discussion and confirm what candle or type of fire is used on each Jewish holiday. Explore how the different lights of different holidays represent the different characteristics of the word *Or* (physical light, good, happiness, salvation, discovery, sight, understanding, etc.).
9. Learners can share the candles and the type of fire their families use during the different holidays. Provide your own examples with the group.
10. Ask learners why they think there is typically no light/fire on *Tu B'shvat* and *Purim*. [Note that this is an open-ended question that does not have a right answer.]
11. Divide learners into groups of 2 – 3. Each group creates a poster including the name of one Jewish holiday and the candle(s) or type of fire used in it using the Hebrew vocabulary. Ask learners to include an idea about what *Or* represents on the particular holiday and how it can enhance one's connection to the theme of the day. Laminate the posters and display the respective posters in the classroom before each holiday.
12. Optional - Create Kosher Edible Bonfire for *Lag Ba'Omer*. Discuss how *Or* can be represented in different ways while preparing the edible treat.

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Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance

- Memory game: Use two sets of the pictures of candles and the pictures of the types of fire on pages 8 – 9 to play memory game.
- Learners select their favorite Jewish holiday and create the light to be used during that holiday, using art supplies available.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Learners create a slideshow exploring how the different lights of different holidays represent the different characteristics of the word *Or*.
- Prepare a Lotto game using all the Hebrew words related to candles and fire.

נרות חנוכה
Hanukkah
Candles



נרות שבת ויום טוב

Shabbat and
Festivals **Candles**



נר-Candle



נר הבדלה
Havdalah **Candle**



נר נשמה
Memorial **Candle**



נרות - Candles

מְדוּרָה
Bonfire



מִנְגֵּל
Barbecue



מְשׁוֹאָה
Torch



שְׂרִיפַת חֶמֶץ
Burning
Leaven



אֵשׁ - Fire



אֵשׁ - Fire

Other Sources of Light

פִּנֵּס
Flashlight



גַּחְלִילִית
Firefly



בָּרָק
Lightening



מִגְדָּלוֹר
Lighthouse



שֶׁמֶשׁ
Sun



נוֹרָה חֲשֵׁמֶלִית
Lamp

