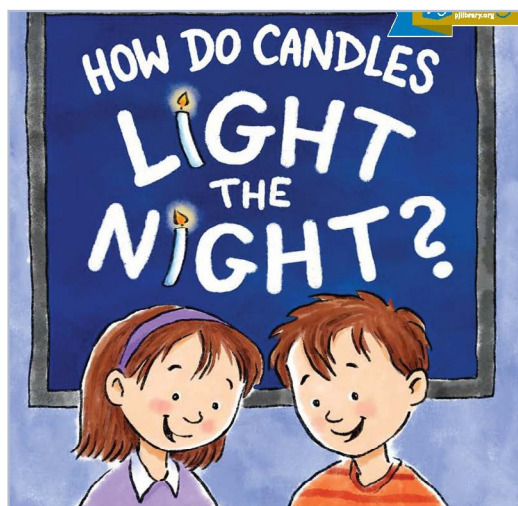


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What is light?



Let There Be Light

When darkness falls, even a tiny light can be very comforting. That's why we tend to associate light with safety, peace, and hope — everything good and beautiful. The traditional Jewish symbol of a menorah (ritual candelabra) evokes all these ideas. Light marks synagogues as special places, too. All synagogues have an eternal light (in Hebrew, a *ner tamid*) that recalls the menorah of the ancient Temple, connects us with our past, and reminds us of God's eternal presence. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/howdocandles.

Light My Fire

Just as light marks the synagogue as a special place, candle lighting marks certain times and events as special. As Simmy and Sammy point out, we light candles to welcome holidays, including Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath. Kindling a flame can connect us to a world beyond the day-to-day, looking back to the moment of creation ("Let there be light!") and forward to a world that is repaired and whole once again.

Mad Scientists

Light sure seems magical, but we can also look at light through the lens of science. In the Talmud (core collection of rabbinic writings), ritual and science are often linked. In one section, the rabbis discuss different materials that can serve as wicks and oils for Shabbat lights. They observe that cedarwood, silk, and seaweed burn unevenly and therefore do not make very good wicks. They teach that oils made from sesame, radishes, gourds, and fish burn well — and olive oil burns best of all. By bringing a scientific eye into our ritual life, Simmy and Sammy are continuing an age-old Jewish tradition.

HANDS ON!

Make Salt-Jar Candle Holders

Make your own candle holders with empty glass jars, salt, and food dye — and of course, candles.



Supplies

Clean, heat-safe jars
Salt (any kind will do)
Food dye (gel or liquid)
Plastic zippered bags



Put salt into separate plastic zippered bags and add a few drops of different shades of food dye to each bag. Seal the bags and shake, shake, shake! Fill each glass jar about halfway up with tinted salt — you can layer different shades if you like. Push candles in deeply enough so that they are stable.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

HOW does candlelight make you feel?

WHEN do you light candles in your home?

WHY do you think so many holidays include candle lighting?