

Jewish Experiences in the Nursery School: An Aid for Home Reinforcement

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is generally handled, with young children, as the holiday which represents the birthday of the world. It is a time of renewed hope for good things to come. The Hebrew greeting - *L'Shana Tova Tikatevu* - May you be inscribed in The Book of Life for the New Year is heard all around.

Symbolism of Rosh Hashanah

Apples and honey: These are the foods representing our wishes for a sweet and fruitful year. At the first holiday meal of Rosh Hashanah, which begins on Monday evening, September , an apple is sliced into small sections at the beginning of the meal and each participant dips a piece in honey. The family, together, then expresses the prayer for a good and sweet year - *L'Shana Tova U'Mitukah*.

Shofar: This is the Hebrew word for the ram's horn whose wailing sound announces the start of the new year. It beckons all to rally to God and to self-examination so that we might be better people the coming year than we have been in the past. The shofar is blown in the synagogue in the middle of the morning service, except on Shabbat. Find out what time the shofar will be blown in your local synagogue so that you can take your children to hear it.

Round Challah: Challah is made round as part of the special holiday food, perhaps because its roundness gives a sense of continuity. Jewish bakeries begin selling the challahs several days before the holiday. To add to the festive mood, some are made with raisins. Any round challah you can bake with the children will reinforce this symbolism.

Wearing white: This is a symbol of purity and a clean new start.

Appeal to the Senses

Young children must see, feel, touch and taste to understand. It is, therefore, important when trying to involve them in understanding and relating to concepts that are foreign (unknown) to them, that they have physical involvement with the symbols rather than just abstractly hearing about them. So, take them to the synagogue, bake round challahs, serve apple and honey, take them to see and hear the sound of the shofar.

Rosh Hashanah is observed by families going to the synagogue together. During the service we express gratitude to God for the many good things we have. We ask God to teach us to be good people, nice to others, helpful... We pray to God to keep us healthy, give us peace, and help us to have a Happy New Year.

All Jewish holidays begin at sundown the evening before. Rosh Hashanah will begin at sundown, _____, and continue until nightfall, _____.

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Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur - The Day of Atonement - is on the tenth day after the start of Rosh Hashanah. It brings to a close the ten days of penitence. For Jews it is the most solemn day of the year. It is a day of fasting and prayer. Yom Kippur is a time of reflection and taking stock. It is the day we resolve to do the good and decent things that people should do for one another. We think about mistakes we may have made and promise ourselves to work to avoid their repetition. If, as adults, we offer an apology to a child for a wrongdoing or misjudgment, and explain how we will try not to do it again, the intent and the impact of this holiday can be very powerful.

Services at the synagogue continue for the entire day and are concluded by one long blast of the shofar. Tradition teaches us that during these days our past deeds are weighed and at the close of Yom Kippur the heavenly books are sealed with each one's fate for the coming year.

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