



Creating Content Rich Jewish Learning Experiences for Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is a holiday filled with opportunities for experiential learning. The list below provides the teacher with a variety of ideas for students to experience holiday practices, rather than learn about them by rote. As children delve into these hands-on projects they also have the chance to learn deeply about the origins and meanings of the customs they are experiencing.

- Taste different types of apples and honey. Compare and contrast the sweetness of each. Rank the apples from most tart to sweetest. Ask the students how they can add more sweetness to their lives this year. Perhaps they can spend more time with family, have more free time, go on long walks, or play with friends. Learn the colors of the apples in Hebrew as well as other Rosh Hashanah Hebrew vocabulary. Hebrew vocabulary lists for Rosh Hashanah are available at JTeach.org.
- Hear, touch and blow the *shofar*. Learn the names of the different *shofar* notes. Have children jump the pattern of the sounds. For an adult-level discussion of the meaning of each sound, visit this [site](#). Explore the story of the [Akedah](#) (Genesis 22), from which the ram's horn is taken.
- Prepare for *tashlich* by asking students to write words and draw pictures of things that they are not proud of from the past year. Be sure to use washable markers. Cast the pictures into a kiddie pool for mock-*tashlich* and watch the water wash their pictures away. Teachers may want to discuss the difference between asking others for forgiveness, and forgiving yourself for things that can not be undone.
- Eat pomegranate seeds. They are often used as the “new fruit,” a fruit that has not yet been eaten for the year. Try counting to see if there really are 613 seeds - representative of 613 commandments - inside. Be careful because pomegranate juice stains!
- Create and mail Rosh Hashanah cards. Consider carefully the messages and images you write on them. You may also see “Send a Talking Shanah Tovah” on JTeach.org.
- Prepare for High Holiday services by learning the High Holiday *nusach* (chanting melodies) for familiar prayers with your cantor or song leader. Learn how to follow along in the *mahzor*.
- Light candles together and say the blessings. Candle lighting can sometimes become routine as we do it every week. This time, pay attention to the flame and the sounds of the prayers. Have a discussion about how students felt in the moment. Talk about how lighting candles creates a separation in regular and holy



time. Discuss other ways we separate regular time from holy time on Rosh Hashanah.

- Greet each other with traditional Rosh Hashanah greetings such as “*shana tova u'metuka*” (a good and sweet year) or “*l'shanah tova tikateivu*” (may you be inscribed for a good year). Use these greetings each time the students come to class during the High Holiday season.
- Bake a round *challah*. The round *challah* represents the cyclical nature of the New Year. It also represents a crown, reflecting God as ruler of the world. You might choose to use slightly sweeter dough or dip your baked *challah* in honey for a sweet new year! A recipe for chocolate chip *challah* can be found on the [Food Network](#) and one for apple honey *challah* can be found at [Tori Avey](#).