

For young children, Rosh Hashanah is all about the sensory experiences—the taste of the warm, round challah, the sticky feeling of honey from dipping apples, and the sound of the shofar, to name a few. Through these experiences we weave the blessings, customs and traditions for the holiday. We enjoy sharing the book “Sammy Spider’s First Rosh Hashanah”, by Sylvia A. Rouss, as a way to introduce many concepts about the holiday in a fun way.

Typically, the challah children see on Shabbat and other holidays, is braided into a long loaf, but on Rosh Hashanah the challot are round. We can just hear a young child asking “why?” The reason for the change in shape is that a circle represents the “circle of life”, the “cycle of the new year” The books, “How The Rosh Hashanah Challah Became Round” by Sylvia B. Epstein, is a cute story to share with young children about this concept. Baking a challah is a very hands on activity that children will enjoy doing with you. Even if you have never baked a challah before, this can be the start of a new tradition that your children may pass down to their children. The circular shape of the Rosh Hashanah challah, has also been said represents the Earth, as it is the birthday of the world. “Happy Birthday, World” by Latifa Berry Kropf has simple text, this book explains symbols and customs of Rosh Hashanah by comparing a child's birthday celebration with the rituals of the Jewish New Year.

The tradition to eat apples and honey on Rosh Hashanah is one of the many ways we can express our hope for a sweet new year. The children love the sweet stickiness of the honey. We love teaching our young children to say “L'Shana Tova U'metuka”, which is wishing each other a sweet new year in Hebrew. There are 2 books, with very similar titles, that we love to share with our young children. The first is, Apples and Honey: A Rosh Hashanah Story by Jonny Zucker. This book is a simple introduction to the festival of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. It follows a family as they celebrate the festival by eating apples and honey, hearing the shofar and planning for a sweet and joyful year ahead. The second is “Apples and Honey”, by Joan Holub. It is a wonderful flap book that includes many exciting Rosh Hashanah activity shown, little ones begin to explore the meaning and traditions of the Jewish New Year.

Finally, seeing and hearing the shofar is a favorite for young children. They hear the differences between the notes, we sing a song by Ellen Allard called, I like to Hear the Shofar Blast, which teaches the names of the notes and how different they are. The children try to blow shofars themselves and learn that blowing the *shofar* can be a way for people to wake up and pay attention. The book “Sound the Shofar- A Story for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur” by Leslie Kimmelman is one book we use when discussing the shofar with young children.

Everyone at the Judy Gordon Early Learning Center Staff wishes everyone a Shana Tova.