

High Holiday Discovery

Adapted from The Jewish Grandparents Network

Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the Jewish New Year. Celebrated on the first and second days of the month of Tishrei in the Jewish calendar, Rosh Hashanah traditionally commemorates the creation of the world. Leviticus 23:24 refers to Rosh Hashanah as a day that is to be observed with “loud blasts.” Each year, we listen to the blowing of the shofar, an instrument created from a ram’s horn, that calls our attention to this time of reflection. It is customary to eat apples dipped in honey to symbolize the hope we have for a sweet new year ahead.

Yom Kippur (“Day of Atonement”), observed ten days after Rosh Hashanah, is considered to be the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. This day is set aside for reflecting on the previous year, seeking forgiveness for any actions we regret, and committing to self-improvement. In observance of the holiness of the day, many people do not eat and drink. Some wear white clothing as a symbol of spiritual purity and a reminder of our mortality.

You can prepare for the High Holidays by considering these questions:

- How has my life changed since this time last year? What has surprised me, challenged me, and pushed me to grow?
- What new skill, hobby, or passion can I make time to pursue in the coming year?
- In what new ways do I hope to connect with my grandchildren/children in the coming year? What can I teach them, and what do I hope they teach me?

Help grandchildren/children get ready for the High Holidays by choosing from these questions:

- What big events, trips, or experiences do you remember most from this past year? What made them special?
- What can you do on your own that you used to need help with, like getting dressed by yourself? What skills or new experiences do you hope to explore this year?
- What happened this year that you feel grateful for?

Here are some activities to help you explore the Days of Awe:

Paper Towel Tube Shofar Playfully learn about the sounds of the shofar together. Materials: Cardboard tube for each person Instructions:

1. Share that the three different sounds of the shofar are called t'kiyah, shevarim, and teruah. T'kiyah is one long blast, shevarim is three consecutive blasts, and teruah is nine quick blasts.
2. Use a cardboard tube as a shofar and blow each of these sounds through the tube. Take turns: grandparent says a shofar sound and grandchild blows that number of blasts; then switch.
3. Now, explore the three sounds with movement. Try using the shofar blast sequence (1, 3,

and 9) as a memory game using steps, jumps, or spins. Once you remember the Hebrew names of the number of blasts, try calling out the name and see if your grandchild/child can make the corresponding movements. (You call out “teruah jumps” and your grandchild can take nine jumps; call out “shevarim spins” and your grandchild/child can spin three times.) Visit My Jewish Learning (or go to www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-shofarblasts/) to hear the sounds of the shofar.

Round Food Feast On Rosh Hashanah many people eat round foods — often apples and round challah — to represent the cycle of the year and life’s continuity. To explore this idea, design a Round Food Feast together. Instructions:

1. Together, talk about a variety of round (oval is fine too!) foods, for example, oranges, grapes, eggs, and jelly beans
2. Plan snack time that features foods from your list. Serve your food on round plates!
3. Invite family members to share your snack.

“Bee” Together with Honey Explore the sweetness of the new year by learning more about honey.

Watch this video together or go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4YlpGQiD3w>, then, try these honey experiments. Conduct a Honey Dipping Taste Test. Go shopping together and find a few different types of honey, for example, orange blossom or manuka. You can also buy a variety of apples.

Mix and match by dipping the apples in the honey to choose your favorite combination. Or try dipping challah or bread, pretzels, celery, and peaches. Explore the properties of honey by creating a density tower. You’ll need an empty clear jar, honey, milk, dish soap, water, and vegetable oil. When you pour the liquids into the jar in that order, you’ll see they create layers and don’t mix, with the honey as the most dense (at the bottom) and the oil as the least dense (at the top). Make honey crystallize. Use five small clear containers. Label them 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Add a tablespoon of honey to each jar. Now, add one teaspoon of water to the jar labeled 1, two teaspoons of water to the jar labeled 2, and so on. Mix the honey and water together in each jar

Now, put the five jars in the freezer. Over the next half hour, check the jars periodically to compare the consistency of each mixture and see if crystals start to form in any of the jars. How does the water change the way that honey freezes or crystalizes?

Visualize a Sweet New Year

1. Ask each other: What does a “sweet” New Year mean to you? How can you be sweet to your friends, family, and community this year? Just as a bee travels from flower to flower to collect nectar and make sweet honey, how can you spread sweetness wherever you go in the world?
2. On a piece of paper, draw two intersecting lines, dividing the page into four quadrants.
3. Label each quadrant with a place you spend time (home, school, playground, family member’s house, stores, the beach).
4. In each square, write or draw a way you can be sweet this year in each of those places. For example, under Home, you might write or draw, “spend more time playing with _____ [dog’s name]”; for Playground, you might add “pick up litter” or “let my friend go first in a game”; in Store, “thank the shopkeeper.”

5. Hang up your poster as a reminder of the ways you can spread sweetness all year long.

Teshuvah: Reflection, Accountability, and Self-Improvement

The Jewish New Year is a time to reflect on our actions of the previous year and dedicate ourselves to doing better in the coming year. Traditionally, the act of teshuvah (literally, “returning” in Hebrew) is a practice of repentance that involves three steps:

1. Naming something we regret and wish we had done differently.
2. Apologizing from the heart for our actions.
3. Committing to making a change.

Activities to explore the concept of Teshuvah: Tashlich (literally, “cast away” in Hebrew) is a ritual done on the first day of Rosh Hashanah at a body of moving water, in which we traditionally throw bread crumbs to represent sending our mistakes away.

Here are alternative tashlich rituals to do with your grandchild/child using stones at a pond, lake, or the ocean — or in a sink or bathtub. Skipping Stone Tashlich

1. Collect pebbles or stones, and pretend each one is something you did this year that you’d like to change. Imagine that these actions are “weighing you down” like a heavy stone. Think about a few things you’ve done that the stones might represent and share with each other.
2. When you are ready, throw the stones into the water and watch the ripples that expand outward.
3. Discuss how these ripples represent the ways that our actions ripple out into the world, impacting the people around us. Adapt the following questions depending on the age of the child: • What did you notice about the water when we threw in our “mistake” stones? • What do the ripples represent to you? • How do your actions ripple out and impact others? • What is one action you can take this year to make positive changes in your family and your community?

Tikkun Olam: Actions to Change Ourselves and Our World The High Holidays can provide the impetus for us to get involved in social action projects in the year ahead.

How can you and your grandchildren/child find ways to impact your community positively this year?

- a) Activities to explore the concept of tikkun olam: Kindness Ripples Out
 - b) How can an act of kindness ripple out into the world?
 - c) Create a visual representation of how your actions have an effect on the people around you.
1. Talk with your grandchild/child about acts of kindness they can do in the coming year (offer a cold drink to a delivery person, play with a child who is feeling left out, help a school friend pick a book from the class library).
 2. With your grandchild/child, choose one kindness and together complete the activity. Write or draw the action in the middle, then add how this can impact your grandchild/child, their family and friends, and possibly the community and even the world.
 3. Post the paper somewhere visible to remember this is something you want to do. Talk to each other about times you do the acts and what resulted.

Make the World Better Together:

Below are other ideas to help bring about positive change in your community.

- Share with others: Choose a toy to lend to a friend, or surprise them by offering it to them to take home forever. Make an activity out of going through gently used books and toys, and donate them to a local shelter.
- Show gratitude to helpers: Create a thank-you picture or card and deliver it to a librarian, firehouse, or police station. You can visit these places together, and your grandchild can see how a thoughtful gesture can brighten someone else's day. Offer a snack or drink to your postal carrier or Amazon, UPS, or Instacart deliverer. You can even set out a basket of snacks and drinks and they can choose what they want.
- Take care of the planet: Take a recycling bag and collect litter at a local park, playground, or the beach. What might other people do when they see you? Talk about how we are all citizens of planet earth.

Wishing you a happy, healthy
and peaceful new year!