



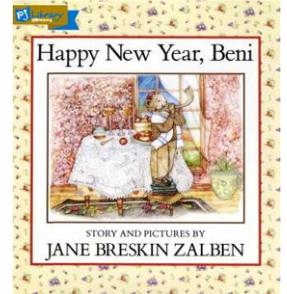
# Read the PJ Library Book

## Happy New Year, Beni (4s)

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### Synopsis

Sara and Beni enjoy celebrating Rosh Hashanah at their grandparents' house, but their mischievous cousin Max almost ruins the holiday for everyone. Max hogs all the sweet dates, puts creepy plastic spiders in his cousins' bed, and provokes his cousins into name-calling and fighting. Tempers flare until Grandpa shows how *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year, can be used to acknowledge past mistakes, ask friends and family for forgiveness, and begin the year with hopes for improvement and change.

For more information on Rosh Hashanah go to [pjfor.me/rosh-hashanah-and-tashlich](http://pjfor.me/rosh-hashanah-and-tashlich).

# Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Family - *mish-pa-cha* - משפחה

Peaceful home - *sha-lom ba-yit* - שלום בית

### Introducing the value of family *Mishpacha*

#### From Jewish teachings

Jewish life revolves around the family. Both the Torah (five books of Moses) and Talmud (an ancient text of Jewish law) contain guidelines describing family members' responsibility to one another. The Ten Commandments instructs children to honor and their parents (Ex. 20:12), and the Talmud outlines a parent's obligation to teach their children Torah, find them a spouse, and even teach them to swim (Kiddushin 29a). Each person in the family should strive to meet the others' physical and emotional needs, giving "beyond their means" to care for one another (Hullin 84b).

#### For the teacher

Since families are so central to Jewish life, how do you ensure that families are well represented in your classroom?  
How does your role in your own family inform your role in the classroom?  
What aspects of family relationships do you want to explore with your students?

#### Questions for children

Who are the people in your family? How do you treat the members of your family?  
When does your whole family come together? How do you prepare for large family gatherings?  
In what ways is our class like a family? How do you treat your classmates the same as or different from the way you treat family members?

## Introducing the value of a peaceful home *Shalom bayit*

### From Jewish teachings

The root of *shalom* or peace is *שְׁלֵמָה* (sh-l-m) which means wholeness or completeness. To create a unified, loving home, family members should listen carefully to one another, treat one another with respect, willingly cooperate with one other, and graciously forgive mistakes. Bringing peace to the home requires effort and action. Family members must create peace, becoming *rod'fay shalom*, pursuers of peace, similar to Moses' brother Aaron, who would go out of his way to end conflict between fellow Jews (*Pirkei Avot* 1:12).

### For the teacher

What would your ideal "peaceful" classroom look like? What new conflict management or scheduling techniques could you institute in your classroom to heighten the feeling of shalom in the environment? How might the shalom bayit strategies you use in your classroom filter into your students' homes?

### Questions for children

Shalom bayit means a peaceful, happy home. What might be going on in a home that is filled with shalom/peace? What would a home without shalom bayit look like? How can people bring shalom into their home? How can we bring shalom into our classroom?



# Imagine

 your community living these Jewish values.

**How would your classroom change?  
How will families be involved?**

### In the Classroom / Centers



☆ **Mishpacha/family:** Stock your **writing center** with supplies for making New Year's cards. Encourage children to relay personalized wishes to various family members and classmates, acknowledging the recipient's unique traits and interests, which you can record for them. For example: "Dear Sarah, I know you like to dance and sing, so I hope your year is filled with music." – Or – "Dear Dad, Thanks for always making me laugh and for the pancakes you make each morning."

- ☆ **Mishpacha/family:** Graph the number of people in each child's family as a **math activity**. Expand on graphing skills by tracking the number of families hosting guests versus being guests on Rosh Hashanah, or chart attributes of family members, such as eye color or height.
- ☆ **Mishpacha/family:** Focus on "Our Family of the Week" in the **social studies** area of your classroom. Ask each week's family to send in photos and notes describing activities the family enjoys.
- ☆ **Shalom bayit/peaceful home:** Set aside an area of your room as the **shalom (peace) center or negotiation station**. When conflicts arise, ask the children involved to meet there and discuss their issues. You might include "peacemaker" as one of the choices on your **job chart**, and encourage children to jointly resolve their problems (with your gentle guidance).
- ☆ **Shalom bayit/peaceful home:** To foster positive relationships in the classroom, play cooperative games during **outdoor time**. For example, divide children into pairs and give each pair a paper bag that is decorated with pieces of colored tape. Send each pair on a scavenger hunt, in search of toys or objects that match the colors displayed on their bags.



## Bridging Home and School

### Once Around the Blocks

Ask families to send in photos of family members and pets. Make sure they know the photos will not be returned. Use these photos to create personalized doll families for the **block corner**. Help the children trim their photos and tape the pictures onto wooden or plastic blocks.



### Building Shalom Bayit, One Brick at a Time

Send home a rectangular paper brick cutout. Ask families to write a note about a recent moment of shalom bayit that was experienced in their home. At school, have the children work cooperatively, arranging their bricks and notes into the shape of a home, tent, or apartment building.

## Family Engagement at Home

### Bless Our Home

Many families hang an artistic rendering of the *Birkat ha-bayit* (blessing of the house) in a prominent spot at home. There are many versions of this newly popular *berakha* or blessing. Recommend your families use one of these templates (see link below) or create their own to say to one another on Shabbat or any time. Their unique family blessing can be a part of a collage or decorated poster to hang on the wall.

# Share

 your stories and experiences with everyone.

**What happened?**

**How can the learning go deeper?**

### Tell us a story... about how you pursue peace in the classroom

Write little stories that show how your students are learning about peaceful resolution in the classroom. Read them aloud to the children, especially the children involved in the story, at appropriate moments during the day. For example:



*I'm amazed at how well the shalom table is working in our classroom. When Ben and Micah argued in the block area, each claiming that the other was taking up too much space, I invited them to the peace table with this week's peacemaker, Sophie. Sophie listened to the boys' problem and asked "How can you build together?" Ben replied, "Micah, maybe you build on top of my building and we'll see how high we can build?" "Yeah!" replied Micah enthusiastically, "maybe we can build all the way to the ceiling." Ben and Micah spent the rest of the morning, building and rebuilding tall towers. I took pictures of their towers, and Sophie used collage glue to add the photos onto our ever-blossoming peace table.*

# More

 resources and websites for inspiration

Text for Blessing of the Home (*Birkat Habayit*): [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birkat\\_HaBayit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birkat_HaBayit)

Beautiful images of Birkat Habayit <http://www.pjfor.me/homeblessing>

Family problem solving: <http://tinyurl.com/familyproblemsolving>

Using guidance to maintain an encouraging classroom: <http://www.pjfor.me/gartrell>

