



EVEN HIGHER

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Each year, just before Rosh Hashanah, the rabbi of Nemirov disappears. Where does he go? Reuven's friends decide to find out by appointing Reuven to follow the beloved older man.

The holiday of *Rosh Hashanah*, literally “Head of the Year,” is celebrated for the first two days of the Jewish month of *Tishrei*. Many Jews celebrate *Rosh Hashanah* by attending worship services and sharing festive meals with family and friends. *Rosh Hashanah* offers us a chance to reflect on the past year as well as to hope and plan for the year to come. The holiday also gives us the opportunity to consider who we have been and who we want to be.

LEARNING THROUGH FOLKTALES

Folktales are a means of remembering the “old country” and of transmitting valuable lessons and history to the next generation. Many Jewish folktales, such as *Even Higher*, take place in the European *shtetl*, a poor Jewish village populated by country folk trying to get by while living a decent, respectable life.

CARING FOR EACH OTHER

A Jewish precept states: “*Kol Yisrael aravim zeh l'zeh*” or “All Jews are responsible for each other.” What many consider a moral obligation for each Jew to care for another is, by extension, a duty we bear to all people. By acting in accordance with this ideal we have an opportunity of bringing about *tikkun olam* (the repair of the world). That the rabbi in *Even Higher* chose to do *mitzvot* (righteous acts) just prior to a holy day speaks volumes about the Jewish imperative of caring for each other.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Where can the rabbi possibly disappear to each year on the day before *Rosh Hashanah*? What an appealing mystery for young children! Before finishing the book, explore with your children where the rabbi might go. After finishing the book, consider the significance of the person the rabbi visits. Of all needy people, why does he visit the widow? Why does the rabbi disguise himself when visiting the woman in the forest? (The rabbi himself explains this when he describes various levels of giving to the poor.) Additionally you might ask; why is the rabbi simply called “rabbi,” when all the children are named?

Even Higher presents the perfect opportunity to consider the needs of others. How can you and your children brighten the lives of lonely relatives or assist neighbors who need help? Create a list of people who can use your aid and friendship—not just during holiday times but throughout the year. Make it a regular part of your family's life to make a real difference in the world.

If your children do not notice on their own that there is a bird on each double page of *Even Higher*, you might help lead them to this discovery. While there is obviously no right or wrong answer, what are your children's ideas of why the author added this feature to his book? Take a close look at the final page of the book where the rabbi is shown with wings! Pj