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JEWISH CONCEPTS

Rosh Hashanah

The holiday of *Rosh Hashanah* (literally “Head of the Year”) is celebrated for the first two days of the Jewish month of *Tishrei*. Some Jews observe a one-day New Year. *Rosh Hashanah* offers a chance to reflect on the past year as well as to consider the one to come.

Many Jews celebrate *Rosh Hashanah* by attending worship services at synagogue and by sharing festive meals with family and friends. The holiday dinner is characterized by symbolic foods: apples and honey are eaten in hopes of a sweet New Year, while a round *challah* represents renewal and the cycle of life.

The last page of *Happy Birthday, World* has an illustration of *tashlich*, a traditional ceremony that takes place on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah. It is customary to walk to a body of running water and toss breadcrumbs into the water, a symbolic discarding of our wrongdoing of the past year.

One of the most powerful moments during the *Rosh Hashanah* service is the blowing of the *shofar*, a ram’s horn. The unique sound of the *shofar* is meant to awaken in us a sense of introspection and a desire to renew ourselves.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Rosh Hashanah provides a splendid opportunity to begin new family traditions. Create prints of your children’s hands and feet with paint or ink; these can be made into greeting cards and sent to family and friends for the holiday. You might also choose to include a family photograph with your personalized card. Keep a card so that you can compare the prints to ones you create in future years. On your copy, you might make notes about what your children are learning to do, favorite expressions they use, or special activities you’ve recently taken part in as a family. It is hard to imagine how much your children will have grown by this time next year; as time goes by, you’ll appreciate a keepsake of these times!

Another tradition is that of creating a family *tzedakah* box in which your family can put aside money to be donated to worthy causes. Take an empty coffee can (any container without sharp edges will do) and wrap it in bright paper. Little hands can decorate the paper with markers, glue and buttons, or any available decorative items. When the can is full of coins, decide as a family where to send the money. As your children grow older they can participate in this decision-making in increasingly meaningful ways. Selecting a charity might be something you do as part of your *Rosh Hashanah* preparations each year.