



ONCE UPON AN APPLE CAKE

Written by Elana Rubenstein

Illustrated by Jennifer Naalchigar

Saralee's family bakery make the best apple cake around – and at Rosh Hashanah, nothing's better than apple cake! But a competing bakery has moved to town – right at the same time that Saralee's grandfather, the only one who knows the secret ingredient, gets sick. Now Saralee has to figure out how to make that apple cake...and keep the family business afloat.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Saralee loves Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. And why not? Rosh Hashanah is a joyous holiday that celebrates the birthday of the world. It's a time to reflect, sing, pray, gather with loved ones, and of course, eat... which is the part Saralee, a budding baker, loves most. Apple cake is a classic Rosh Hashanah treat, as is any apple dessert, but perhaps the most traditional dish at the Jewish New Year is simply apple slices dipped in honey, which signify that the coming year should be sweet. "A sweet new year, / a sweet new year, / make a wish for a sweet new year," sings Zadie, and that's what the characters in this story do: They make wishes for a year that is as sweet as a honey-dipped apple.

The characters in this book also make a few mistakes. The High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, are a time for us to think about mistakes we've made in the past year and consider how we can improve in the next one. The New Year is a time to practice *teshuvah*, Hebrew for "returning." The most important Rosh Hashanah wish is to become better versions of ourselves. That helps make for the sweetest New Year of all.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Think about the challenges Saralee faces as she tries to figure out Zadie's recipe and protect her family's business, and ask yourself some questions:

- What assumptions does Saralee make about Harold Horowitz? Are they correct?
- When Saralee first meets Harold, she decides that sharing one of his cookies "would be a betrayal." Do you agree?
- At the end of the story, Saralee accepts one of Harold's cookies. Do you think they'll become friends? Why?

You can make an apple cake like the one Saralee makes. Try the recipe on the inside back cover of this book, or visit pjlibrary.org/applecake for a few more dessert ideas. No matter which recipe you choose, take a cue from Zadie and make a wish for the coming year.