Read the PJ Library Book

Sammy Spider’s First Rosh Hashanah (3s)
Written by Sylvia A. Rouss
Illustrated by Katherine Janus Kahn
Published by Kar-Ben Publishing

Synopsis
Sammy’s curiosity about the Shapiros’ Rosh Hashanah preparations leads him
to become stuck in a drop of spilled honey. As Sammy happily sips his way
free, he discovers that even spiders can enjoy a “Sweet New Year.”
For more about Rosh Hashanah, click here.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

New beginnings/growth - שִׂמְחַת תּוֹרָה
Staying calm/A-ha-vat To-rah - אָהַבַת תּוֹרָה

Introducing the value of new beginnings
Hatchala chadashot

From Jewish teachings
The Talmud, a book of Jewish law
and wisdom, teaches that Rosh
Hashanah marks the anniversary
of the creation of the world (Rosh
Hashanah 27a). The literal
translation of Rosh Hashanah means
“head of the year.” The word shana,
or year, shares it three letter root,
ש-נ-ה, with the Hebrew word
shinui, meaning change. Rosh
Hashanah has therefore been
celebrated as a time for
contemplating new beginnings
and positive changes that can be made in
the new year.

For the teacher
- Can you describe one change
  that you might like to make in
  the year ahead?
- How do you help the children in
  your classroom recognize that
  they are changing and growing?
- What types of changes and
  milestones would you like your
class to keep track of in
  the year ahead? How
  will you document
  these changes?

Questions for children
- In our book we learn that
  Sammy has grown and
  changed so much since
  last year that he and his
  mother now need a
  bigger web. How have
  you changed since last
  year? How can you tell
  that you’ve changed?
- What new skills would
  you like to learn and what
  new things you would like
to do in the year ahead?
Imagine your community living these Jewish values. How would your classroom change? How will the books come to life?

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| In Judaism, calmness is considered a virtue. Teachers of Musar, a movement focused on ethical and spiritual development, describe shalvat nefesh, calmness of the soul, as the ability to maintain an inner peace despite the ups and downs of daily life. Pirkei Avot, a book of ethical teachings, states that the strongest individuals are those who are able to control their emotions (4:1). The book of Proverbs adds that the person who is slow to anger has great wisdom (14:29). | **What strategies do you use to stay calm when you feel your anger or anxiety rising?**  
**Ideally, how would you like the students in your class to express and cope with their strong emotions?**  
**How can you enlist help to transform an area in your classroom into a calming spot?** | **When Sammy Spider becomes stuck in the honey, he cries and panics. Then he frees himself — how does he do it? Can you think of a time when calming down helped you?**  
**Why is it hard to find a good solution to a problem when you are upset?**  
**When you are feeling angry or frustrated, what helps you calm down and relax?** |

### In the Classroom / Centers

- **Hatchala chadashot/new beginnings:** Ask families to send in pictures of their children from last year. See if the class can identify who is portrayed in each photo. Compare pictures from last year with the student today. Ask children to describe how the person in the photo has changed.

- **Hatchala chadashot/new beginnings:** Work with children to choose ongoing math and measurement activities that track change throughout the year. For example, compare hand and foot tracings. What will the children choose as their measuring tool? You might choose to measure skills, such as how long a child can balance on one leg.

- **Shalvat nefesh/staying calm:** Listen to “Count to Ten” in your music center. Act out all of the suggestions of the song. You can find a copy of the lyrics, here. Make a chart of calming techniques to refer to in class or at home.

- **Shalvat nefesh/staying calm:** Create a quiet, cozy space in your classroom in which a child can seek comfort. Perhaps this spot has pillows, a big chair for getting hugs, or plush animals for cuddling. Hang a cloth curtain for a little privacy. Teach some calming yoga, as shown here.

Please share your PJGtS experiences with us on our private Facebook group page!  
[http://pjfor.me/pjgts-facebook](http://pjfor.me/pjgts-facebook)
Engage the families in your community
How can you involve families and deepen home-school relationships?

Tree of positive change
Start your year with a Tree of Change instead of a mitzvah tree. Provide apple-shaped Post-Its or other die-cut apples to families as they enter the school or classroom. Ask them to write down a positive change they would like to see at home or at schools in the coming year, such as more recycling, less phone time, or healthier snacks. How can you help families accomplish their goals?

Zen in a bottle
Invite families to make calm-down jars together at school. When a child is upset, a bottle of goo and glitter (or beads, small objects, etc.) helps children refocus their attention. Shaking the bottle gets excess energy out, and watching glitter settle triggers slower breathing and heart rates.

Family Engagement at Home
See below for a mini-newsletter about this book. Cut on the dotted line to send directly to families, or copy any part for your website or electronic communications.

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DO fun stuff at home
New foods
Take your child to the market, and find a food you have never eaten before. Take it home and taste it together. What did you think? Maybe say the Shehecheyanu blessing for special occasions first:

Baruch ata adonai elohehu melech ha’olam,
shehecheyanu, v’k’iyimanu, v’higiyanu la’z’man ha’zeh.
Blessed are You Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe who has given us life, sustained us, and allowed us to reach this day.

DISCUSS Jewish values
New beginnings – Hat-cha-la cha-da-shot
The Jewish New Year marks a time for contemplating positive changes in the year ahead.
• What are some helpful changes or new experiences our family might try in the New Year?
Staying calm – Shal-vat ne-fesh
Jewish sources equate emotional self-regulation with wisdom, strength, and health.
• Use weather terms to help your child express emotions, such as, “When I’m angry I feel like thunder.”

MORE resources
Make a mini Zen garden:
Why kids need meditation breaks:

Photo courtesy of MyCrazyBlessedLife.com