



**How can our year be sweet?**

## It's a Date!

In Jewish tradition, honey has long been valued as a medicine, a symbol of learning and wisdom, and as food – but many biblical scholars believe that the historical “honey” of Israel was actually a syrup made from dates. The Hebrew word for honey in the Bible, devash, refers not just to the sticky stuff bees make, but also to the sweet juice of almost any fruit. When we talk about ancient Israel as “the land of milk and honey,” the abundance and sweetness the land provided was probably from date palms, not beehives. But who knows? Archeologists recently uncovered evidence of beekeeping in Israel’s Jordan Valley from more than 3,000 years ago. Sweet! To learn more, visit [pjlibrary.org/whatsthebuzz](http://pjlibrary.org/whatsthebuzz).

## HANDS ON!

### Make Bee-eautiful Rosh Hashanah Cards

Many families send Rosh Hashanah cards to family and friends. Here’s a simple bee card that you can make to wish folks a sweet new year.

Supplies:

- Card stock
- Yellow acrylic paint
- Paper plate
- Black fine marker

Fold the card stock in half.

Pour a little yellow paint on the paper plate. Dip your thumb into the paint and press it on the card a few times.

When the thumbprints are dry, draw on black stripes, wings, faces, and antennae. Look: it’s a swarm of bees!

Write a sweet message to your family and friends on the inside.

## Apples and Honey

It’s a tradition on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, to kick off the year on a sweet note by eating apples dipped in honey. This may stem back to ancient Israel, when people often ate apples at the beginning of a meal to spark their appetite and enjoyed sweet, sticky devash for dessert. By dipping apples in honey, we connect symbols for the beginning and end of a meal, symbolizing how one year is ending and another is beginning. For the same reason, challah – the traditional braided bread eaten on Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath – has a round shape on Rosh Hashanah, representing the cyclical nature of the calendar and of our lives.

## For a Sweet New Year

Honey is a perfect ingredient to help us wish for a sweet new year. But if the original “honey” was from dates, why do we use honey from bees now? Some rabbis say it’s because we need a particular kind of sweetness in our daily lives. The honey from bees is challenging to collect, and bees don’t just make a sweet product; they also pack a powerful sting! That’s a useful metaphor. We acknowledge that life is sometimes harsh, but we still have hope for a year sweeter than dates, sweeter than apples . . . as sweet as honey from a bee.

## TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**AT** the beginning of the story, Amit is worried about the bees’ sting. What tools does the beekeeper, Yigal, use to keep himself and the students safe?

**THE** child in this book brings apples and honey to a friend who is sick. How do you try to cheer up someone who’s sick?

**WHAT** new things did you do for the first time this year? How did you get ready for your adventure? Were you nervous at first?