

Jackie and Jesse and Joni and Jae

written by
Chris Barash

illustrated by
Christine Battuz

How do friends become better friends?

New Beginnings

Have you ever felt both joyful and solemn at the same time? Put those two seemingly opposite feelings together, and you've got the holiday of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. We celebrate this new beginning with family and friends, and we eat apples dipped in honey to bring in the year with sweetness. Rosh Hashanah is also a birthday party — the birthday of the world! — and even a coronation ceremony: We happily declare that God is ruler over all of creation. Then, in the midst of our joy, the *shofar* (ram's horn) blows. This solemn wake-up call reminds us that we have work to do. Rosh Hashanah kicks off a ten-day period (leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement) during which we take stock of the past year — the things we've done wrong and people we've hurt — and begin the process of fixing mistakes and making changes in our lives, just as the children in this story do. Rosh Hashanah has it all!

I'm Sorry

"I'm sorry" — two short, simple words, but often among the hardest things to say. It's not just about *saying* the words when you've done something wrong, but really meaning them and resolving to change your ways. Jackie, Jesse, Joni, and Jae show that although it's not easy to think about the "unfriendly things" you've done, owning up to your mistakes makes it easier to fix them. Whether you made fun of someone, got upset at someone, excluded someone, or broke your promise, those two little words — "I'm sorry" — can begin to mend things and begin the new year on the right foot. Sometimes it's hard to say "I forgive you," too. But fixing relationships is always a two-way street. These four friends would agree: Forgiveness makes good friendships even stronger. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/jackie.

Letting It Go

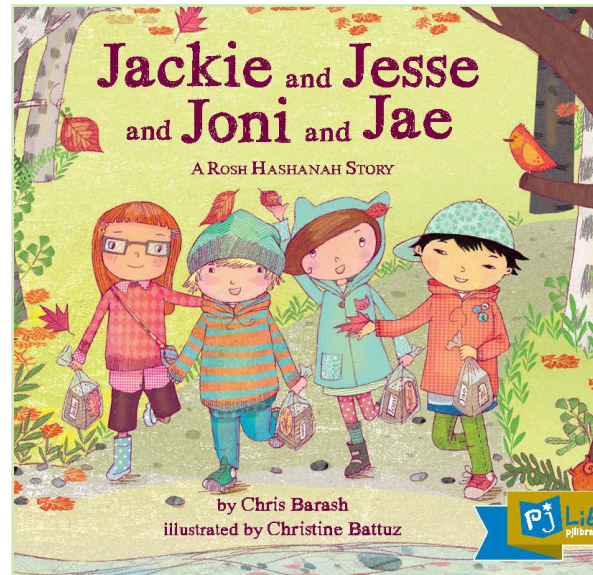
Once we've done some good self-reflection on Rosh Hashanah and started the process of correcting our mistakes, what happens next? Many people "throw" those mistakes away in a 1,000-year-old custom called *tashlich* (Hebrew for "casting off"). Like the four friends in this book, many Jews take some time on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah to visit a body of water. They bring bread crumbs to throw into the water as a symbolic tossing away of past wrongdoings, and read a passage from the biblical prophet Micah: "As you cast sins into the deep waters, God will show compassion." So many of us have trouble letting go of our mistakes. Throwing bread crumbs into the water and watching them float away can help us let go on the inside and move forward into the new year as our best selves.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

Why is it important to say we're sorry when we've done something wrong?

Is there a friend or family member you need to say "sorry" to? Is there someone you need to forgive?

When a friend asks you for forgiveness, how does it make you feel?



HANDS ON!

Make a "Letting Go" Collage



The ritual of *tashlich* is a powerful way of letting go of your mistakes. Here's another idea: Turn them into art!

Supplies

Piece of large poster board
Colorful/patterned paper
Scissors
Pen or marker
Glue



Anytime you need to say sorry to someone for something you've done wrong, do your best to make it right. Then, write or draw a picture of it on a small piece of colorful paper (for example, "I didn't share my toy with my sister"). Cut the paper into small pieces so that you can't read the words anymore. Glue these pieces onto the poster board in any design you like. Continue to add different colored paper each time, letting go of your mistakes as you create something new and beautiful.