

written by
Varda Livney

illustrated by
Varda Livney

{ **What makes holidays special?** }

Birthday Bash

Silly Uncle Max – while everyone else says Happy New Year, he’s saying Happy Birthday! But as he explains, Rosh Hashanah (literally “head of the year” in Hebrew) is like the birthday of the world (yom harat olam in Hebrew). Max isn’t the only one who thinks of Rosh Hashanah this way. After all, what are birthdays? They are an opportunity to take stock of the year we’ve just had and to set intentions, or “make a wish,” for the one to come -- and that’s what Rosh Hashanah is all about. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/roshhashanahunclemax.

New Year, New Moon

When Max first arrives, the family watches the sun go down. Every day in the Jewish calendar begins at sundown. Because this calendar is lunar based, Jewish holidays fall on different dates in the secular calendar from year to year. You can tell when Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of a month, or “head of the month”) is coming by looking at the phases of the moon. When all you can see is the sliver of a new moon, you know the month is beginning anew, too -- and come early autumn, a new year. Some years Rosh Hashanah might feel “early,” and other years it might feel “late,” but it actually always falls on exactly the same day: the first of the Hebrew month of Tishrei.

A Sweet Year

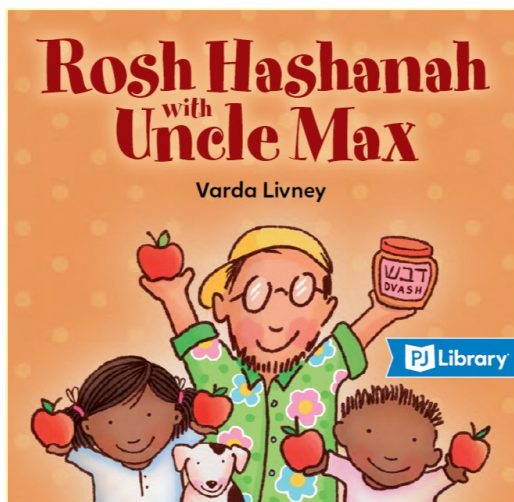
Uncle Max and the rest of the family take part in many traditional Rosh Hashanah activities. They light candles together and bless wine and grape juice. They dip apples and challah (not glasses, Uncle Max!) in honey to help usher in the new year as sweetly as possible. They go to synagogue to hear the shofar, whose loud blasts serve as a wake-up call to try to be our best selves. And of course, they sing “Happy Birthday” in Hebrew – wait, no, that’s not traditional. But hey, it can’t hurt.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

CAN you pretend to blow a shofar? What sounds does your shofar make?

WHAT foods does this family eat for Rosh Hashanah? What are some of your favorite foods?

THE family sings “Happy Birthday” to the world. What songs do you like to sing?



HANDS ON!

An (Apple) Bowlful of Honey

When Apples and honey is a classic Rosh Hashanah treat, and when children are over a year old, they often enjoy dipping their own apples in honey. Here’s a fun way to present it at Rosh Hashanah -- or any snacktime gathering.

Ingredients:

Several apples
Honey

Select the largest of your apples. Using a paring knife, cut the top off the apple and cut away some of the fruit, creating a hollow. Fill the hollow with honey.

Place the apple “bowl” in the center of a plate. Slice up the other apples and arrange the slices around it.

Go ahead and start dipping! Shanah tovah u’metukah – happy and sweet new year!