

THE HOLIDAY EDITION

For grades K-2



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CANDLE LIGHTING

Rosh Hashana: rôsh' hæ-shô'ne
(noun) – The Head of the Year.

Head of the year? Rosh Hashana is the Jewish 'New Year', so why not call it that? What does "Head of the Year" mean?

Actually, it is very important to recognize that Rosh Hashana is more than the *first* day of the year – it's actually the "Head" of the Year. Just like the head – the brain – guides the body, Rosh Hashana has the power to guide our entire year in the right direction.

How? Rosh Hashana is a time for **new beginnings**; it's a time to learn from our mistakes and start fresh. It's a time to leave behind the parts of our lives that shouldn't come with us into the future.

Rosh Hashana is a day when we ask ourselves: Is there a bad habit which I need to work on? A part of my behavior that I need to improve?

Although, we should be examining our behavior and improving our conduct all year round, the Torah tells us that, on Rosh Hashana, Hashem gives us *extra* help toward reaching our goals of being better people.

Like we do on all Holidays, we **light candles** on Rosh Hashana. We also recite **Kiddush** (a prayer – announcing the Holiday - over a cup of wine), we eat **challah** and have a delicious meal.

On Rosh Hashana, go to the **synagogue**. Gathering together as a community feels good; we're

THE DIALOGUE

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IT'S ROSH HASHANA!

Adapted from "The Fireman" by Nissan Mindel

Jacob and his family were walking home from shul on Rosh Hashana afternoon. "I just love Rosh Hashana!" Jacob said happily, on his perch on dad's shoulders, high above the world.

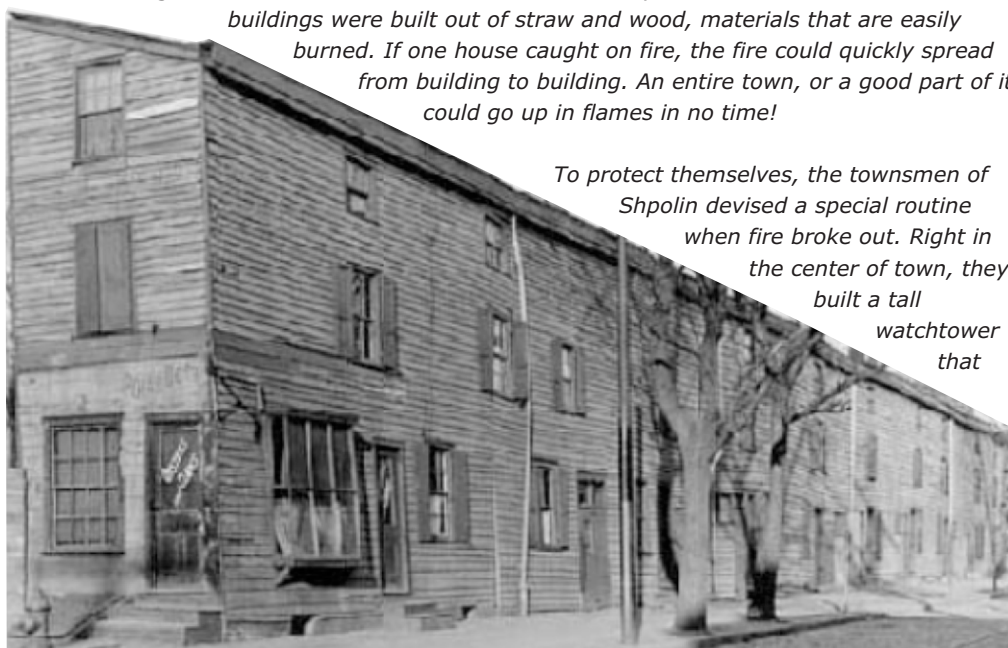
"What do you love about it?" his mom asked.

"Well, we just heard 100 sounds of the Shofar and I feel great. Like the new year has begun and everything is clean and perfect! Out with the old and in with the new!" Jacob answered with glee.

"Interesting, Jacob," his dad said in response. "Let me tell you a story..."

Many, many years ago, before there were any fire engines or electric fire alarms, when a home caught on fire, it was even scarier than it is today. You see, most houses and buildings were built out of straw and wood, materials that are easily burned. If one house caught on fire, the fire could quickly spread from building to building. An entire town, or a good part of it, could go up in flames in no time!

To protect themselves, the townsmen of Shpolin devised a special routine when fire broke out. Right in the center of town, they built a tall watchtower that



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all there because we all want to have a good year. We share a goal. It's nice to be with people who share your goal.

At the Services, the Rabbi/Cantor blows a special horn called the **Shofar** (ram's horn). When you listen to the Shofar blowing, you'll notice that there are 100 Shofar blasts in all. Those 100 blasts are a combination of three different types of 'Shofar-sounds', each calling out to us: "Rosh Hashanah is a gift. Focus on its message. Don't sleep though this experience."

On Rosh Hashanah, a time when we think about the sweet possibility of a new beginning, and our hopes for a sweet new year, we **eat sweet foods**. We eat a piece of apple dipped in honey, honey cake, sweet carrots, etc. Many Jews also eat pomegranates, a fruit with many, many seeds, which brings to mind the *many* good deeds that we hope to do in this coming year.

Another practice of this special holiday is the '**Tashlich**' prayer service, which takes place by a river. As we stand at the riverside, we think about how we want to improve our behavior. It's like we want our not-so-good-behavior to float away on the river's waters. And, just as water helps us clean dirt off of our bodies, we ask for Hashem's help to clean the 'dirt' of bad habits off of our personalities.

In light of these messages, our wish to each other during this times is:
Shana Tova! A Good Year!



overlooked all the other buildings. A watchman would keep a lookout all the time. As soon as he saw smoke or fire, he would sound a loud alarm. All the townspeople would drop whatever they were doing to help put out the fire. They would form a human chain between the fire and the nearest well and pass each other pails of water.

Once it happened that a lad from a small village came to visit Shpolin. He stopped at the inn to rest. Suddenly he heard the sound of a bugle. A bugle? In middle of the day? Whatever for? He asked innkeeper what it was all about.

"Whenever we have a fire," the innkeeper explained, "we sound the bugle, and the fire is quickly put out."

"Amazing! Incredible! How wonderful!" thought the village lad. "My village has suffered so much from fire. What a surprise and sensation I will bring to my village!" Thereupon, the village lad went and bought himself a bugle. The very best bugle he could find.

When he returned to his village, he was full of excitement. He called all the villagers together. "Listen, good people," he exclaimed. "No need to be afraid of fire any more. Just watch me, and see how quickly I will put out a fire!" Saying this, he ran to the nearest hut and set fire to its straw roof. In a matter of minutes, the fire began to spread.

"Don't be alarmed!" cried the lad. "Now watch me."

The lad began to blow the bugle with all his might, stopping only to catch his breath, and to say, "Wait, this will put out the fire in no time!" But the fire did not seem to care much for the bugle's blast and merely hopped from one roof to another, until the entire village was in flames.

*The villagers now began to scold the lad. "You fool," they cried. "Did you think that the mere blowing of the bugle will put a fire out? It is only the **call** of an alarm, to wake up the people if they are asleep or to break them away from their business and work, and send them to the well to draw water and put out the fire!"*



"You see, Jacob," his dad explained, "Like the bugle in the story, the Shofar's sound is an alarm. It is a signal, and it has a message: Wake up! Rosh Hashana is here! It is a special time to think about our ways and to think about what we can DO to make sure our upcoming year is wonderful and meaningful!"

"Ah, I get it," Jacob said, thoughtfully. "The Shofar **reminds** me that I *can* have a sweet, new year. Now, I have to work towards making that happen!"

THE DIALOGUE

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

◆ The Shofar's sound is like a wake-up call. What kinds of things do you want to remember for this new year?

◆ On Rosh Hashanah, we surround ourselves with sweetness. This helps us remember that our life can indeed be sweet. What kinds of things can we do in this new year that will sweeten our own lives, and the lives of others?