

Values Curriculum:

Rosh Hashanah: New Year, New Beginnings

OVERVIEW	This session explores the holiday of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Through the ritual of <i>tashlich</i> students will learn about Rosh Hashanah as a time for reflection.
OBJECTIVE	To engage students in the experience of reflection on the year behind and commitment to the year ahead using the rituals of Rosh Hashanah.
VALUE(S)	<i>Hitbonenut</i> (reflection)
STORY	"Tashlich at Turtle Rock" by Susan Schnur and Anna Schnur-Fishman
MATERIALS	Rosh Hashanah symbols, Looking Back & Looking Forward materials, Tashlich tools
AT HOME CHALLENGE	Students will take home Looking Back/Looking Forward hangings to hang at home. Families are encouraged to practice tashlich as a family this year.

Materials List

Activity One

- White or light colored cardstock cut to ½ pages (4" x 5.5")
- Tempura paint in different colors & a few brushes
- Wax paper for putting the paint on
- Wet wipes or access to a sink and water
- Markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils
- Hole punch
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Stapler or clear tape

Activity Two

- Coffee filters
- Washable markers
- A large bowl with water

Gathering Activity

- Shofar (one or more)
- Pomegranates
- Plates for seeds
- 3-4 types of honey and/or 3-4 types of apples
- Bowls for honey
- Tasting spoons
- Cutting board and knife

Opening/Closing Circle

- Book: Tashlich at Turtle Rock by Susan Schnur and Anna Schnur-Fishman
- Big pad of paper and markers
- At Home Challenge Sheet

Gathering Activity: Rosh Hashanah Symbols (15 Minutes)

Children will explore symbols of Rosh Hashanah.

1. Lay out Rosh Hashanah symbols in 3 different areas: Shofar(s) in one. Pomegranates in another. Honey and/or apples in a third.
2. Direct the children to the different stations, either going all together from one station to another or with children invited to visit each station when they are ready (whichever is easier for you to manage).
3. At the Shofar station, invite children to see if they can make a noise from the shofar. This 2 minute video will teach you everything you need to teach the children. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJY-yy94FaI> They can practice on their hands while they wait for a chance to play the shofar. The shofar is our call to the new year. It awakens us to pay attention.
4. At the pomegranate station, have one or more cut pomegranates. Depending on your tolerance for mess, either seed them first or let the children pull out the seeds at this station. Leave at least one pomegranate partially intact (cut in half but not seeded) so they can see what it looks like when it is together. Have the children see how many seeds they can count from one pomegranate. They can work on this in groups or each count some and add them together.

5. Tradition says that a pomegranate has 613 seeds representing the 613 mitzvot to which we recommit ourselves at Rosh Hashanah.
6. At the honey station, have 3-4 different kinds of honey in bowls and tasting spoons. Have the children try the different kinds of honey. Can they taste the difference? Which do they like best? If you prefer apples, have 3-4 varieties of apple sliced and ready to taste. You can also have them in combination. Honey represents the sweetness we wish for in the new year.

Opening Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle and begin with a melody, a *niggun* or a greeting song such as *Hineh Ma Tov*.

Tell about today's theme:

- Today we are learning about Rosh Hashanah
- What do we already know about Rosh Hashanah?
- Rosh Hashanah is: the Jewish new year, a time for reflecting on the year that ended and for getting ready for the year to come, the birthday of the world, celebrated by blowing the shofar, eating apples and honey, eating round foods, attending services, gathering with friends and family.

Introduce today's Hebrew words: *Rosh Hashanah* & *Tashlich*

- Everyone, put your hands on your head and say "rosh". Then roll your arms down the front of your body saying "ha – sha " and end with your hands out in front of you (ta-da style) and say "na". Put them together and say "Rosh Hashanah." Rosh Hashanah means the head of the year or the new year.
- Everyone pretend to be reaching into your pocket and say "tash", then motion like you are throwing something away and say "lich." Put them together and say "tashlich."
- Tashlich is a Rosh Hashanah ritual for throwing away your mistakes from the past year. We are going to read about it today.

Story (20 Minutes)

Introduce the Story — *Tashlich at Turtle Rock*

- Ask the children if they ever make mistakes. Do those mistakes ever hurt another person? Does anyone have an example?
- Ask the children if they have ever done or heard of the ritual of *tashlich*.
- The story we're going to read is about a child named Anna whose family has a special *tashlich* ritual they do every year for Rosh Hashanah. This year Anna has added a few new things to the family ritual that help them reflect on the year they are leaving and get ready for the year that is coming. Let's see what their ritual is like.

Read the Story. Ask some good Questions.

- **Check for Understanding**

- ◇ What was the first part of the ritual? What kinds of good things did Anna's family want to keep from the year that is ending?
- ◇ What was one thing that one of Anna's family members wanted to throw away into the water, a mistake they wanted to let go of?
- ◇ How did Anna's family mark their commitment to the new things they want to work on in the new year?

- **Get Curious**

- ◇ What are kids wondering about the story?
- ◇ Encourage kids to wonder about WHY something happened in the story, WHAT might happen next, or HOW someone did something.
- ◇ Record these questions on the big pad of paper.
- ◇ These questions don't have to have answers – though kids are welcome to try and answer each other's questions.
- ◇ Have kids respond to each other's questions with "good question!" and a thumbs up

- **Give one more Question to Ponder**

- ◇ I'm wondering: What kinds of things could you do at home that would help you think about the year that is ending and the new year that is beginning?

10 Minute Break

Activity One: Looking Back and Looking Forward (20 Minutes)

Children will make drawings of one memory or new learning from this past year that they would like to keep and hand-print promises of something they would like to work on for the coming year. They will put these together to make a hanging that they can bring home to remind them of both what they are bringing with them and what they are working on.

Introduce the Activity:

In our story, one part of Anna's family ritual is for remembering something special from the year that is ending. Another part of their ritual is for committing to something they want to do in the new year. Today we are going to remember something special from our year that is ending and make our own commitments for the new year.

1. Gather the children around a table with handprint paint materials.
2. Show the children how to put their hand in the paint (poured/brushes onto wax paper – one sheet per color) and then press it onto the cardstock to make their handprint.
3. Have each child choose their color and make their handprint on a plain piece of cardstock.
4. Set the handprints aside to dry and have children wash their hands.
5. Gather children back around the table (or at a new table with drawing supplies).
6. BEFORE they begin to draw, ask the children to think about something special that they did this year, a special event, a new friend, something new they learned, a new activity they tried.
7. Once a child has an idea, have them share it with you, and then give that child a fresh piece of cardstock.
8. Each child will draw something that represents their thing they want to keep. They can use words, but they should also draw.
9. Once their drawing is complete, have each child think about one thing they want to work on or try out in the coming year. Maybe a habit they want to break or a new one they want to make, a person they would like to be friends with, a new activity they want to try.
10. When a child has an idea, they should raise their hand, share it, and then get their handprint. They should add words or a drawing to their handprint that represents the new thing they want to do in the new year.
11. When both pieces are complete, have the children staple them together, back to back so that both pictures show.
12. Punch a hole at the top in the middle.
13. Cut a piece of yarn. Thread it through the hole and tie it, leaving enough yarn to tie to something for hanging.

Activity Two: Tashlich (20 Minutes)

Children will think of mistakes they made in the past year and then cast them off, in a bowl of water, as a way of doing tashlich.

Introduce the Activity:

In our story, Anna and her family members each thought of some mistakes they had made in the last year that they wanted to get rid of. They each picked one mistake to say out loud and others they said in their hearts. Then they threw them away by casting objects or bread crumbs into the water. We call that ritual tashlich. Jews all over the world practice tashlich as a way of leaving their mistakes behind them so that they don't bring them into the new year. We are going to do a version of tashlich together today.

Before we do our activity let's think about what kinds of mistakes we might have made this year. For ideas, let's start with Anna's family. What were some of their mistakes they made this year that they were willing to share out loud? Has anyone else made those mistakes? (Have kids raise hands. Don't forget to raise your hand if it's a mistake you've made this year.) Does anyone have other mistakes they can think of, maybe one's you've made? (As kids share, have others raise hands if that's a mistake they've made too). Now that we have some ideas, think of a mistake or 2 or 3 that you've made this year that you are ready to get rid of.

1. Gather the children around a table with markers and coffee filters.
2. Have them write or draw each mistake they want to cast off on to a separate coffee filter (or they can tear one into a few pieces).
3. Once every child has at least one mistake written down, gather them around the bowl of water.
4. Have the kids go to the water one at a time and put their papers into the water one at a time.
5. When everyone is done take a look at the papers in the water. Can you read the words? (They should quickly fade in the water.)
6. Say together, "Amen!"

Closing Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle with their Looking Back/Looking Forward hangings.

Have each child share what they are bringing with them and what they are committing to in the new year. After everyone has shared, read the tashlich prayer from the story:

God, we have thrown out our mistakes and regrets,
And we have picked the best things from the year to keep with us.
Help us start over.
Help us remember our vows and promises,
And protect us this whole long year.

Everyone says, "Amen."

Review the Hebrew Words of the Day:

Have the children practice the Hebrew words with their bodies:

- Rosh (hands on head) Hashanah (arms roll down the front of your body). Rosh Hashanah means new year.
- Tash (hand in your pocket) lich (throwing it away). Tashlich is the Rosh Hashanah ritual for throwing away your mistakes from the past year.

Pass out the At Home Challenge Sheet

Sing a goodbye song like *Shalom Chaverim* or *Oseh Shalom*.

At Home Challenge: Hitbonenut/Reflection For The New Year

Today, in celebration of Rosh Hashanah, we reflected on the year behind and got ready for the year ahead by learning about the ritual of Tashlich.

We thought of one good thing we would like to keep from year we are ending and one thing we are committed to doing in the new year, and we made a Looking Back/Looking Forward hanging out of it. We also thought of mistakes we've made this year that we would like to get rid of, and we cast them into the water to leave them behind.

Here are things you can do as a family to practice *Hitbonenut*/Reflection at your house as we enter the new Jewish year.

1. Hang your Looking Back/Looking Forward hanging in your home to remind you of the good things you are bringing along into this year and the new things you are committing to. If you build a sukkah, you can hang this in your sukkah this year. If you don't, you can leave it hanging through Sukkot and then put it away somewhere special.
2. Consider practicing *tashlich* as a family this year. You can learn more about the traditional practice of *tashlich* here: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tashlikh/>
3. You can also read about a variation on that ritual in the story we read today Tashlich at Turtle Rock by Susan Schnur and Anna Schnur-Fishman.
4. Tashlich only requires bread (or lint or paper), a body of water, and honest reflection.