



# Chagim Supreme @ sajes

A weekly idea from SAJES Department of Early Childhood Education  
for the Early Childhood & Primary School Classroom

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## Chagim Supreme @ SAJES

## Celebrating in Israel

## Rosh Hashanah

I am very happy to share with you some visions of Israel at this time. Shira Ackerman Simchovitch, Director Early Childhood Services -The Jewish Agency for Israel has sent the following (edited) description.

**You Were Here Right Now, This is What You Would See: Elul, Tishrei and Rosh Hashanah**

Everything that accompanies the January (or civil) new year outside of Israel in the way of summing up the year – the top songs, the most influential people, the demographics and statistics – happen in Elul in Israel. January 1<sup>st</sup> is noted and is the beginning of the fiscal year. There are some celebrations but it's not a day off and if anyone wants to make New Year's resolutions, they do it on the first of Tishrei.

It's the end of summer. The days are shorter and the evenings cooler, but it's still very hot during the day. The landscape is brownish yellow and very, very dry. All that is left in the fields is the brown stubble called *Shelef* and the *Kimshonim* that are what plants at the end of the cycle are called. At the same time, the fruit of four of the seven species – *shivat haminim* - have ripened or are about to ripen any second depending on where you live in the country. The grape, the pomegranate, the fig and the date grow all over Israel, are on sale in the supermarket and part of most of the tastiest recipes for the many holiday meals coming up in the month of Tishrei-Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur (before and after the fast) and Sukkot. Starting a few weeks before Rosh Hashanah, recipes for the "chagim" (the plural of *chag* – holiday) as this cluster of holidays is called, appear in all the newspapers, on all the T.V. cooking shows and in any other venue that has anything to do with food.

All the stores, no matter what they sell, are already holding big Rosh Hashanah sales. In Israel, Rosh Hashanah is a big gift giving season and a time to buy new clothes and household items. The sales pitch is always linked to the traditional Jewish notion of the New Year – a time to start fresh, a perfect time to buy loads of new things. The ads in all the media will mix bits and pieces of passages from the Torah, the *machzor* – the prayer book for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with advertising language and sometimes the results are very amusing. In the home goods stores you can find everything you might need to set a beautiful Rosh Hashanah table – centerpieces featuring apples and pomegranates, napkin holders in the shape of doves so that the new year will be one of peace and so on. In the supermarket, honey, apples, pomegranates, dates, fish, wine and more are the top selling items. Clothing, especially white clothing which symbolizes the pure new year, can be found in all the department stores and on the street corners, people sell Rosh Hashanah greeting cards, flowers, table decorations and edibles from the fruits of the season.

Children in preschool learn about a lot of the same things that their Diaspora peers do.

Everyone also learns about the *Chatzav* – Squill also called *mevaser hastav* – the harbinger of the autumn. It is a symbol of this time of year together with the shofar and apples and honey. When Israeli children learn about honey, they also learn about the Tamar -the date and the date palm. That is what's growing outside the window and the honey referred to in "the land of milk and honey" is from dates not bees. Date honey is called Silan and you can buy it in any grocery store. Because the rimonim - Pomegranates in Israel ripen at this time of year, they are another symbol of the season's festivals and a topic of study for preschool children in both religious and nonreligious settings. Torah, math, science, nature studies, language arts and art all come together through the study of the pomegranate and in many preschool classrooms you can find the work of famous Israeli artists such as Reuven Rubin and Nachum Gutman who created more than one work featuring the *rimon*.

Years ago, before you could send electronic Rosh Hashanah greetings, every preschool child in Israel engaged in a unit on the doar – the post office. There are still teachers and children who enjoy this exploration. This was always linked to the experience of sending Rosh Hashanah cards sometimes called "Shanot Tovot". In Israel, the post office is still very much a neighborhood institution with a recognizable symbol is the *ayala* – a deer known for her speed. Since most preschools are also neighborhood institutions, the actual experience of going to the post office to mail the Rosh Hashanah cards a child made is easy to do. The stamps are put out by the post office and are almost always related to Jewish themes and seasonal events in Israel and integrate well into the Tishrei curriculum.

**Celebrating in School** - There are so many ideas from Shira's message that can be integrated into your classroom. The post-office, the shopping and the produce of Israel (see issue #2 for some ideas) are only a few! The *CHATZAV* is a wonderful way to discover about Israel's flora and the seasons in Israel. Shira has included a story that can be creatively interpreted in many ways. To read [Click here](#). One is for the children to rewrite it and illustrate it for themselves. She also sent special poems. The first can be illustrated through art, drama or movement. The potential and possibilities are limitless and lends itself to much discovery! The second is one that many of us have sung, but when reading the words we are given a sense of the history of Israel and the value of the family and the people to each other and the land. [click here to read](#).

*"Only the holidays twine themselves together to form the circle of the year."* Franz Rosenzweig

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