



## ENGINEER ARI AND THE ROSH HASHANAH RIDE

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*Israel's first train chugs from Jaffa to Jerusalem just in time for Rosh Hashanah, taking treats to children for a sweet new year and seeing sights all along the way.*

The Jewish New Year, *Rosh Hashanah* (literally “Head of the Year”) is celebrated on the first two days of the month of *Tishrei*. (Israelis and many Reform Jews observe a one-day holiday). As we celebrate a new annual cycle, *Rosh Hashanah* offers a chance to reflect on the past year and consider the one to come.

Many Jews celebrate *Rosh Hashanah* by attending worship services at synagogue and by sharing festive meals with family and friends. The holiday dinner includes a number of symbolic foods, among them apples and honey in hopes of a sweet New Year and a round *challah* to represent the cycle of life.

### THE SHOFAR

In addition to food, Engineer Ari transports a number of things from the port of Jaffa to Jerusalem. One such item is the *shofar*, the ram’s horn used to announce the New Year and call Jews to contemplation and repentance. Many children are fascinated by the *shofar*’s appearance and the sounds it makes. You can buy many varieties (including toy models) in Judaica stores or online. To learn more about the traditions surrounding the *shofar* and to hear its authentic sounds, visit a local Jewish preschool or synagogue.

### USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Engineer Ari opens the door to discussions of both the land and agriculture of Israel. The book makes clear the nation’s great botanical diversity—from palm trees to wheat fields to cactus. Make a list with your children of plants and trees in the book; then, using the Internet or library sources, explore the amazing agricultural and scientific achievements that made the desert “bloom.”

The train referred to in this story is part of an actual rail line, the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway (J&J). Completed in 1892 in what was then Ottoman Palestine, it was the first railroad in the Middle East and is still in use. For the many children who are captivated by a trains (*rakevet* in Hebrew) this book provides a great opening to discuss the history and importance of railroads in building and maintaining a nation! Pj

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