



## THE SECRET SHOFAR OF BARCELONA

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*In this story set in Spain in the 1500s, the son of a conductor blows the shofar in preparation for Rosh Hashanah, a practice he must keep secret.*

During *Elul*, the last month of the Hebrew year, Jews around the world prepare for the New Year, *Rosh Hashanah* (literally “Head of the Year”), which begins with the first day of *Tishrei*. One powerful way to prepare for the coming year is by sounding the *shofar* (ram’s horn). The sounding of the smooth, curved ram’s horn proclaims to all who hear its blasts that it is time to pay very close attention, consider past behaviors and contemplate how to improve in the coming year.

Children will be interested to know that the *shofar* has a fascinating history spanning the millennia. Its uses have been varied: in ancient times, it called out across the distance to mark the beginning of *Shabbat*, the Jewish Sabbath, and certain holidays, while in modern Israel it still announces the inauguration of each new president. The ancients also used the *shofar* as a call to battle, as it was thought that the mighty sound of the horn would frighten off the enemy! Consider with your youngsters what other possible uses—serious or not—a *shofar* might have. These often-beautiful “instruments” can be purchased in many Judaica stores or from online sources.

### USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

*Rosh Hashanah* is especially conducive to memory-making family times. Include the entire family and begin early to

consider ways to celebrate the New Year that will be meaningful for each person.

- Involve loved ones across the generations to prepare fragrant round *challah* (egg bread) for your holiday meals. If possible, take a family excursion to an orchard to pick and purchase apples which, when paired with honey, are symbolic of a sweet new year.
- As a family, review the past year and consider changes that would make life more pleasant for everyone.
- Make it an annual event to send greetings to loved ones at *Rosh Hashanah*. Encourage your children to contribute to these cards or letters by describing in writing their current interests and personal milestones.
- Set a “family togetherness goal” by designating a regular time for activities you all enjoy—games, biking or woodworking. The New Year is a perfect opportunity to set aside the time for such changes.
- Make it a habit at this time of year to talk about your many blessings, including that, unlike Rafael and his family, you live in a time and place where your lives unfold openly and without fear. Pj