

# ROSH HASHANA

## SUGGESTED PROGRAMS:

1. What is all the BUZZ about? An alternative way to look at Rosh Hashana through the bees and their honey.  
(Indiana University – Hillel's Program Exchange)
2. It's the Head of the Year – Help children and volunteer at a *Head Start* program in your community. ([www.nhsa.org](http://www.nhsa.org))
3. High Holiday Drive: What is needed in your community? (toys, canned food, toiletries, school supplies, etc.)
4. The Farmer and The Apple → CASE It!



When the Jewish New Year arrives on the first and second days of Tishri (the first month in the Jewish calendar), there are a range of actions to make the day special. We replace the regular prayerbook with a machzor (the High Holiday Prayer book); we hear the shofar blown during the synagogue service; and some Jews engage in the custom of *tashlich*, discarding their sins in a flowing body of water with bread. One tradition that captures both the imagination and the tastebuds involves dipping apple slices into golden honey. This simple tradition potently symbolizes our hopes for a sweet year to come, as we say to each other, "*L'shana tova um'tuka*," "may you have a good and sweet New Year."

### **Stop Chewing and Start Thinking**

The apple and honey ritual is a tangible, tasty way to express the belief that the new year is full of potential for good things. Have you ever thought about the origin of an apple, the very "core" of this activity? How does an apple make its way from an orchard to your Rosh Hashana dinner? Are you supporting certain types of farming by purchasing specific kinds of apples? Tzedek says: CASE it!

- Advertise a special dinner wherein all of the fruits and vegetables used for cooking will be 100% organic.
- Call the dinner "Shabbat Goes Organic" or "An Organic Experience."
- Invite a local farmer to speak at the Shabbat dinner, or the head of the community food cooperative, or a manager from a supermarket that carries a large amount of organic foods such as Freshfields or Whole Foods.
- After the farmer's presentation, discuss topics such as small farms versus large supermarkets, the environmental benefits of raising organic produce, or the health benefits of eating organic produce.
- Encourage a student who attended the program to write a newspaper editorial about how and why students can become involved in buying organic food.

## **Issue: Organic Products**

### **CASE It: The Farmer and the Apple**

This year for Rosh Hashana, buy organic apples for your holiday table. Explain to friends and family that the organic apple symbolizes your commitment to protecting health and the environment.

### **Community partners:**

- COEJL – Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life ([www.coejl.org](http://www.coejl.org))
- A campus environmental group
- Department of Health Studies

### **Advocate/Awareness:**

- Meet with campus dining services and encourage them to purchase organic fruit for an optional table at the dining hall.
- Give out organic apples and honey on the central area on your campus.
- Fast Facts:
  - ◆ Over 7,000 varieties of apples are grown around the world.
  - ◆ According to [guinnessworldrecords.com](http://guinnessworldrecords.com), the largest apple ever grown was picked in England. Belonging to the Howgate Wonder variety, the apple weighed 3 lbs 11 oz and measured 22 inches in circumference.
  - ◆ Discuss who is picking the apples?
  - ◆ Have a conversation about what are genetically engineered foods.
  - ◆ What to Know about Organic Products: They . . .
    - Are grown without synthetic pesticides, herbicides, hormones, antibiotics, or fertilizers.
    - Are not irradiated (a process that uses radiation to extend shelf-life for fruits and vegetables).
    - Do not contain genetically modified organisms.
    - Are grown taking into account the soil's health and the relationship to the surrounding natural habitat.

### **Service:**

- Organize a gleaning project as a field trip around Rosh Hashanah time. Gleaning is the process of picking remaining food after crops have been harvested; in Leviticus (19:10): "You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger." Contact local farms to volunteer Hillel students for gleaning, and donate the food you collect to a shelter or soup kitchen.
- Find the closest organic farm to your campus and volunteer during the harvest season.
- Volunteer for a local food cooperative.

## Educate:

- Did you know?
  - ◆ There is a Talmudic tradition to create blessings by making puns with your food (Keritut). This way, you are not limited to eating just apples as a significant fruit for Rosh Hashana; any food can become an edible omen. For example, you could say, "Lettuce have a wonderful New Year!" when you eat a salad. (See "Try This" for a fun Rosh Hashana activity.)
- Quotable quotes:
  - ◆ Nature is of the very essence of Deity. -Israel Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760, founder of modern Hasidism), *Shivchei Ha-Besht*  
→ *What is your spiritual connection to the environment?*
  - ◆ And the Lord God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to work it and to protect it. –Genesis 2:14  
→ *What you are you doing to protect the environment?*
  - ◆ Like an apple tree among trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the youths. -Song of Songs 2:3  
→ *How do organic products stand out from others in your grocery store?*
- Try this:
  - ◆ It is a mitzvah to eat new fruit during this time of year. Go to your local grocery store, choose a **new type of organic fruit**, and recite the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

*Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, shehechianu v'kimanu v'higianu lazman hazeh.*

Blessed are you, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

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### Resources:

**United States Department of Agriculture:** [www.usda.org](http://www.usda.org)

**Earthbound Farm:** [www.edfarm.com](http://www.edfarm.com)

**Whole Food Market:** [www.wholefoodsmarket.com](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com)

**Organic Foods on About.com:** [nutrition.about.com/cs/organicfoods/index.htm](http://nutrition.about.com/cs/organicfoods/index.htm)