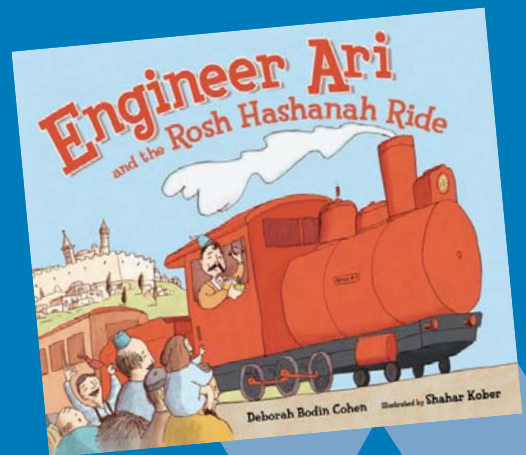


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Engineer Ari and the Rosh Hashanah Ride

By Deborah Bodin Cohen
Illustrated by Shahar Kober
Kar-Ben: 2008



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Rosh Hashanah

The holiday of *Rosh Hashanah* (literally “Head of the Year”) is celebrated for the first two days of the Jewish month of *Tishrei*. In addition to celebrating a new annual cycle, *Rosh Hashanah* offers a chance to reflect on the past year as well as to 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 is characterized by symbolic foods: apples and honey are eaten in hopes of a sweet New Year, while a round *challah* represents renewal and the cycle of life. *Engineer Ari* mentions a number of items being transported from the port city of Jaffa to Jerusalem. In addition to the foods mentioned, the train also carries *shofarot* (the plural of *shofar*), the ram’s horn used to announce the imminent New Year and to call Jews to contemplation and repentance.

Teshuvah

In Hebrew, *teshuvah* (literally, “turning”) is the term for repentance. *Engineer Ari* portrays a person who makes a mistake, regrets his actions, and goes about trying to make amends. As he says: “Teshuvah means turning ourselves around and promising to do better.” *Teshuvah* can take place at any time; the 10-day period from *Rosh Hashanah* through *Yom Kippur* (called the Days of Awe) provides a special opportunity to do so.



This book provides a wonderful stepping-stone to discuss with your children both the land and the agriculture of Israel. The book mentions various landforms and makes clear the great diversity of what the land can support – from palm trees to wheat fields to cactus. Make a list with your children of all the plants and trees mentioned in the book; you might then use the Internet or other library sources to explore the land of Israel, including the amazing agricultural and scientific achievements of making the desert bloom.

Engineer Ari offers a fascinating view of an earlier time. The train referred to in the book is part of an actual rail line, the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway, sometimes shortened to J&J. It was completed in 1892 in what was then Ottoman Palestine, is still in use today, and was the first railroad in the Middle East. For the many children who love trains – *rakevot* in Hebrew – this book presents a marvelous opportunity to discuss the history of trains and their importance not only in transporting people but also in building a nation!

Engineer Ari’s train skims past fields in which sheep are grazing with their shepherd nearby. Later the train takes on board a number of rams’ horns to deliver to Jerusalem. Children are fascinated by the *shofar*, its appearance and the sounds it makes. You may 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, go to MyJewishLearning.com and type in “shofar.”