

## **A Rosh Hashanah Family Event: Theory and Practice of Family Education**

**Cherie Koller-Fox**

### **SESSION SUMMARY**

Teaching children and adult education are both important pieces of life-long learning, but there is something magical about a family event. It has the possibility of bringing what you have taught into the home life of the family and giving the parents agency. In this workshop, which uses a simple round robin model, we will make a prop for the home appropriate for the new year. There are many possibilities of props to make, but I've chosen to share a calendar with you. A calendar stays up year-round and provides a map to guide families through the Jewish year cycle. We will also make a sweet and round treat for the holiday called Taiglach. This both adds to the family repertoire of holiday foods and elicits stories from the participants. Finally, we will talk about the study aspect and how to make it meaningful for each member of the family.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Cherie Koller-Fox is a founder of CAJE and NewCAJE. Currently, she serves as President of the NewCAJE board and is a full-time volunteer for NewCAJE. Professionally, she serves as Rabbi of the Chapel Service and as a chaplain visiting hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities.  
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To be honest, this was the first family event I ever did. It is a round-robin event done with whole families with kids pre-school to high school. If you want, you can do it as a grade level or class level event. It has three rotations:

- a. Making a calendar
- b. Making Taiglach
- c. Learning about the holiday of Rosh HaShanah

### **The Calendar**

Not every family has a Jewish calendar these days. But this one will get posted in most every kitchen letting families know when the holidays are coming. It is part of the family education theory of year-cycle whose goal is to make Jewish families aware of the rhythm of the Jewish year. In the course of a year or more, you would introduce them to each of the holidays listed. One of the things that families need is Jewish props in their homes. As part of this year-cycle approach, you will make things that people need to celebrate holidays so they will have them in their home. Rosh HaShanah too, has a cycle of several years. In other years, you will make a honey dish, or a plate in the shape of an apple, or have them make a shofar<sup>1</sup>.

Back to the calendar: The calendar's English dates need to be updated every year. To make this project you need pizza rounds which you can buy from a pizza shop in your neighborhood. The children color the images on the calendar. If there is more than one child in the family, they can both work on it because the calendar is round. You can also make more than one calendar for a larger family. The calendar is glued onto the pizza round. (get one that fits the size of the calendar).

You will also need hole punches, yarn, brass fasteners (brads), a piece of poster board, scissors. While the kids are coloring, the parents can cut out a pointer from a piece of poster board. They can help paste the calendar onto the pizza round (the kids can still color after that). They can punch two holes on the top of the calendar and two on the bottom. The kids can help put one piece of the yarn from one hole to the other. This creates a hanger and a way to turn the calendar once the first half of the year is over. Use the point of the paper fastener to poke a hole in the center of the calendar where the point is and attach the pointer. The idea is to move the pointer to the next holiday all during the year.

This project can be ended with a brief lesson about the lunar calendar and how there are names for the Jewish months as well as the English ones. If you prepare in advance, you can find the Hebrew birthdays of all the children in your group. Or show them (depending on age) or their parents how to use Hebcal or other English date to Hebrew date converter online. For a low tech approach the Encyclopedia Judaica index volume has a calendar in it that people can check.

This project takes 45ish minutes.

**The Taiglach project**

The Recipe is in this packet as well as explanations of how and why this works.

**The Study**

A family event in my view is basically an adult ed experience in which the children participate. It's not that they don't get anything out of it, but your target is always the adults. I know not everyone agrees with me on this, but I believe this point strongly. This is what Vicki Kelman calls scaffolding. Jerome Bruner used this term first in the 1960's. It means that your job as an educator is to help the parents be the Jewish teacher of their own children. You do that by teaching them content but also giving them opportunities to do this at school.

When it comes time for study, 95% of the time, it is best to separate the family into age-appropriate groups. The subject of the study should be the same for each group so they can have a great conversation about it on the way home or over lunch, but, it is better if each can learn at their own level.

All three activities have to last the same amount of time. This one also takes 45 minutes. You can change the amount of time or the number of activities you do to match the time you have available.

**Here are some topics of study:**

The Tishrei Holidays and how they are connected to each other

The different names of RH and its Biblical origins (Lev. 23:24-25)

The Shofar (history in the Bible, how it's used in liturgy)

God's kingship on Rosh HaShanah (see my paper in this issue)

How a Jewish calendar works (lunar, why is it the date it is, why RH is in the 7<sup>th</sup> month not the 1<sup>st</sup>)

There are 4 Jewish new years, not one.

Look at the prayers that are additions to the service especially for RH. (See the chart and explanations in my article in this issue)

Torah readings (The binding of Isaac and the Story of Sarah and Hagar) or whatever your synagogue reads.]

Taschlich

Etc.

**Conclusion**

**While this is relatively easy to do, it would be better to try and get a committee of parents. Better for you and for them to feel ownership of the event. You can do some music at the beginning or end and of course you will need a schedule and an evaluation. You need to learn what worked for the parents and what worked for the children. What they liked about it and what they didn't. One thing I learned is that some parents love to move from one activity to the next and others don't. Have the option of staying in the same room and having the instructors move to you. In this event, you might have to make an exception for the kitchen. Cherie Koller-Fox**

### Taiglach

*Taiglach (little dough) date back to the times of the Romans who made strips of fried dough in honey called vermiculos. Italian Jews adopted the dish but it disappeared from their repertoire in the Middle Ages. In the 12th century, Franco-German rabbis mentioned eating a dish of fried or baked strips of dough covered in honey. It is popular on Rosh Hashanah, when it is traditional to eat sweet foods made with honey to usher in a sweet new year. This recipe was given to Carol Kaufman, a teacher at my school, by her mother Zelda z”l.*

6 eggs

6 tbsps. Oil

3 ½-4 cups flour

2 tsp. baking powder

1 tbsp grated orange or lemon rind

1 cup sugar

1 ½ lb honey

1 rounded Tsp Ginger

2 cups shelled walnuts (broken into small pieces)

Grate additional rind from a lemon or lime (optional)

Pour flour in large bowl. Make a well in the center of the flour. In a smaller bowl, mix the eggs, oil, and ½ cup sugar, and beat them together. Then pour them into the well of the flour. Add the teaspoon of grated rind and baking powder. Mix well, forming a soft dough.

Divide the dough into 3-4 parts (or more) and knead on a floured surface. Roll the dough on a floured surface, making sure both sides of the dough are well-dusted with flour. Roll dough into a rectangle about ¼” thick. Cut dough into long strips 1/3” to ½ inch wide. Toss the dough strips with flour and dice them into cubes. Transfer the cubes to large baking pans.

Heat the oven to 375 degrees. Bake dough in the middle of oven for a total of 25-30 minutes. Check after 10 minutes, breaking apart and turning the dough pieces. Dough is done when it is golden brown in color and dry in the center.

Remove from oven and shake dough in a strainer to remove extraneous flour. Reserve dough in a bowl or pan.

In a heavy soup pot\*, bring honey to a boil and lower the heat to a medium low flame. Add ginger. (If you want you can add additional grated rind here) \*(don’t use your best pot. Honey burns and is difficult to clean off.)

Cook for 10-15 minutes, stirring often, until honey turns to a reddish brown color. (Be careful because honey burns easily). Add ½ cup sugar and stir until the sugar dissolves. Add walnuts and then the baked dough squares—stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Keep stirring and turning until the dough and nuts are well-mixed and thoroughly coated with honey. Mixture should be “tacky” to the touch.

Shaped Taiglach mixture into mounds into foil lined and well- greased large muffin cups.

PS. When making it at home, you can also spoon it onto a plate or into jars when it can be frozen.

**Why this recipe is great for a family event:**

It has jobs for every member of the family. The adults do the boiling honey, the older kids can measure out ingredients, the younger kids can cut the dough squares with plastic knives and break up the walnuts with their hands.

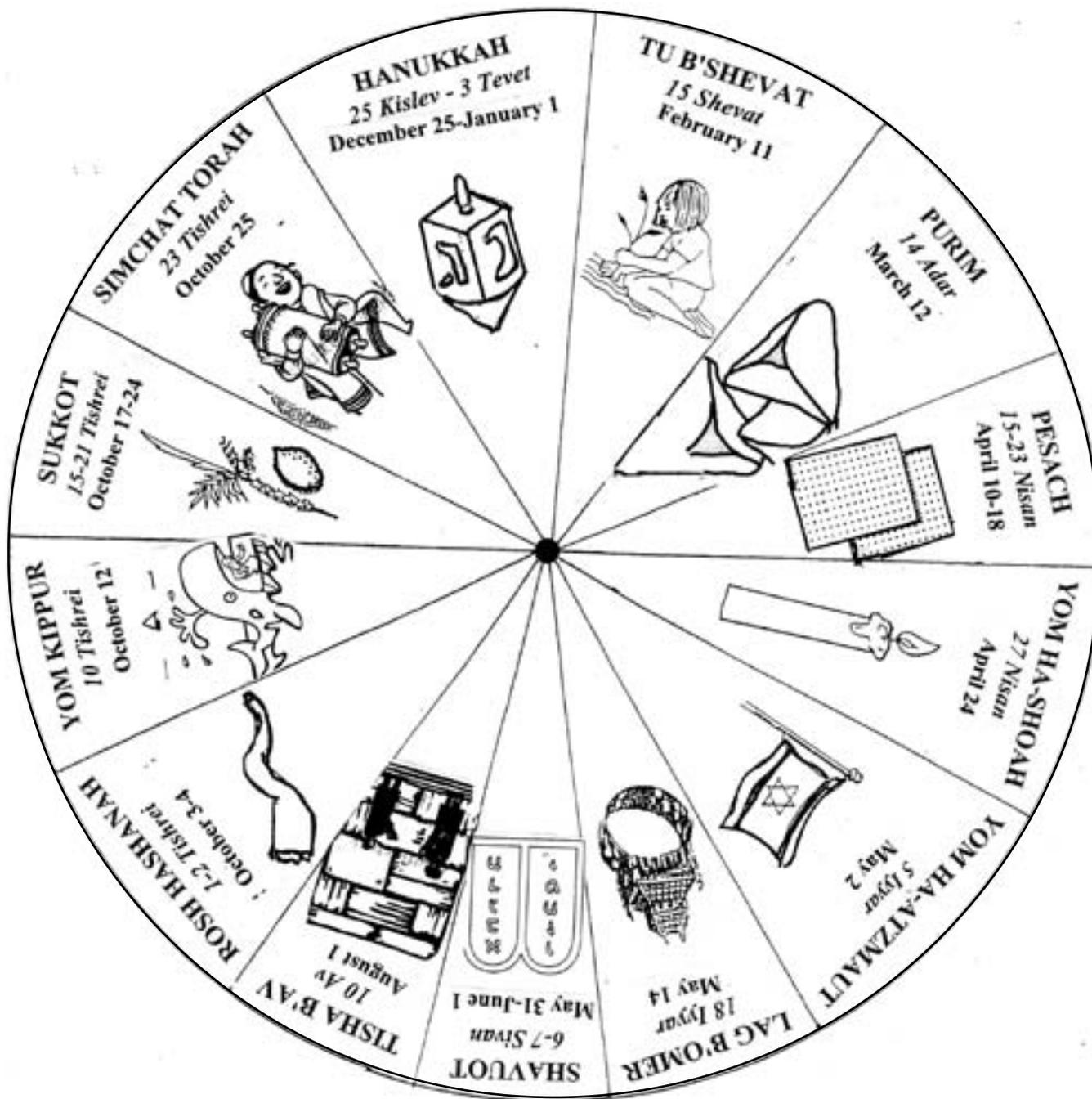
This activity can be completed in 45ish minutes.

It brings a clearly Rosh HaShanah dish to add to a family repertoire. Be sure to send the recipe home.

While the work is being done, the adults spontaneously tell stories of their grandparents and memories of Rosh HaShanah. If they don't, you can ask them. You can also be prepared with a story of your own. They may go from a memory to Taiglach to Matza ball soup or brisket or shofar blowing or going to synagogue in their youth but it is an important jogging of the memory and a good experience for the kids to hear these stories. In families with a parent not born Jewish, you are not putting them on the spot because not everyone will have a story to share.

To make this work, you have to make the first batch and have it cooked when the first group arrives. The second group will have to use the baked dough made by the first and so on.

You will have to play with the quantities to see how much you need for your group. You'll know when you bake the first batch of dough. Everyone only has to have enough for one muffin cup per person.



This is the text for the pointer

5777 (2016-2017)  
Festivals begin at sundown on the previous day