

# Bialik's Approach to a Great New Year

## BIALIK COLLEGE

In the month leading up to Rosh Hashanah, Bialik students accept the challenge to engage in introspection and self-evaluation.

"The Jewish New Year is a time for students to make connections to customs and concepts of Rosh Hashanah" says Tali Barr-Waanders, Bialik's Co-ordinator of Hebrew and Jewish Studies for Primary and Early Learning, "and they participate in cheshbon nefesh (self-reflection), listening to the shofar (the word comes from the Hebrew word shipur which means self-improvement) taking part in Tashlich (a custom to 'throw away the bad deeds') and attending a Seder Rosh Hashanah." This learning takes place in a variety of age-appropriate ways throughout the year levels.

In the ELC, younger students are introduced to the shofar with visits from Melbourne's Shofar Factory. They will also visit a synagogue or the Jewish Museum where their task is to search and identify Jewish symbols. They use all their senses to connect with these experiences – they hear the shofar, touch the Torah and smell the inside of the Aron Kodesh (Holy Ark). This tactile and experiential approach helps young children form the links to their heritage and creates the basis for further learning about Rosh Hashanah in the years to come.

As they get older at Bialik, the students learn traditional New Year tefilot (prayers) such as Avinu Malkeinu and listen to the shofar being blown every morning for the month of Elul. The shofar is blown by a Bialik student, usually in Year 5, who visits each classroom in the Primary School.

Primary-aged students are asked to think

about personal growth in the coming year, about ideas like forgiveness, self-improvement and asking 'what can I do differently next year?' The school's core value of 'Responsibility' is closely tied to Rosh Hashanah and students explore what it means to have responsibility for their actions.

Middle and Senior School students delve deeper into the meaning of Rosh Hashanah, working on New Year resolutions and reflecting on the ways they can forgive, grow and take responsibility in the next year. Immediately, an opportunity becomes available as the Year 12 students buddy up with young Prep children to talk about resolutions for the New Year, strengthening the bond between the older mentors and their young counterparts.

Being a pluralist community, Bialik respects that families will celebrate the Jewish New Year in different ways, and so the College aims to teach students about the many different ways of celebrating Rosh Hashanah, providing a solid and informed foundation on which they can form their own opinions.

One of the more significant aspects of Rosh Hashanah for Bialik, is that this is the time of year when there is a 'changing of the guard' in student leadership (Mazkirut). The current Year 12 Mazkirut reflect on their tenure as a team, and discuss what can be improved upon with the incoming Year 11 group. At Bialik, mazkirut volunteer to lead the school reflecting the school's culture that leadership is open to all students who want to give back to the school and is not a popularity contest. The new leaders are subsequently inducted as Mazkirut at the Senior School Rosh Hashanah assembly, partying and undertake a first aid course.



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