Apple Days: A Rosh Hashanah Story (High Holidays)

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Katy's favorite holiday is Rosh Hashanah, when she gets to pick apples and make applesauce with her mother. But what happens when the tradition is interrupted by the early arrival of her baby cousin?

Allison Sarnoff Soffer

grew up in the New York area. She attended Princeton and Columbia Universities and earned a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University. She lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland, with her family.

Bob McMahon can never remember a time when he didn't draw, even when his teachers wanted him to stop. He received his degree in art from Cal State Northridge and has worked as a political cartoonist, advertising artist and children's book illustrator. He works digitally, from sketch to final color artwork. Bob was also a movie extra in "MacArthur" with Gregory Peck. He is the illustrator of many children's books.

"Katy, an eager, bubbly young girl, is counting down the days until she goes apple picking with her mother - a yearly family tradition at Rosh Hashana. They will peel, chop and cook the apples with cinnamon and sugar to make applesauce for her favorite holiday.

This year Katy is especially excited, she tells her classmates, because she is also expecting a new baby cousin. She also spreads the word to other friends, as well as her neighbors, shopkeepers and rabbi.

But when the new baby arrives early and Katy's mom has to leave town, the girl's disappointment is palpable. With the help of her dad and a surprise from her friends, teachers and rabbi, Katy rises to the challenge.

Soffer's first children's book is an entertaining read that will delight young children who will share Katy's enthusiasm. McMahon's colorful, cartoon-like illustrations radiate high spirit and energy.

" -- American Jewish World (Newspaper)

"While Eden Ross Lipson's Applesauce Season remains the gold standard on the subject. Soffer's debut adds a fun Jewish angle to the profound resonance of a humble fruit puree. For school-aged Katy, applesauce-making and Rosh Hashanah are inextricably linked. It's not just because it's a food custom associated with the Jewish New Year - Katy and her mother have created a tradition of their own, 'Apple Day,' which starts with a trip to a local orchard and ends with the kitchen filled 'with the sweet smell of apples and cinnamon. Just

thinking about it made Katy's mouth water.'

Soffer understands how kids savor rituals: every step is significant, and anticipation is to be broadly shared.

When it looks like Apple Day might be derailed by the early arrival of Katy's new cousin, her circle of friends and supporters - who range from peers to the woman who cuts her hair - pitches in. McMahon's (All Kinds of Kids) cartooned drawings don't offer much emotional depth, but they're smartly composed and a solid accompaniment to Soffer's upbeat and deeply empathic prose." -- Publisher's Weekly (Journal)

"Katy is always excited to make apple sauce with her mother for Rosh Hashana. This year, she also has the arrival of a new cousin to look forward to. When baby Will's birthpreempts apple-picking day, Katy tells afriend about her disappointment, and herfriend helps spread the word. Katy's teacher, principal, rabbi, crossing guard, and friends each give her an apple, and soon she has enough to make applesauce with her father. She is excited to be able to share with herclassmates the next day, and sets aside a small jar in the freezer for Will to enjoy when hegets old enough.

Young readers will identify with Katy's anticipation of a cherished family tradition and share her disappointment at having the plans cancelled. Soffer deftly shows Katy moving from frustration to the pleasure of celebrating with friends and family, including the new baby in the fun.

Seeing members of the community pitch in to help Katy, and following along as she and her father cook might inspire readers to start a new Rosh Hashana tradition.

Includes an applesauce recipe. Recommended for ages 3-7." -- Jewish Book World

(Magazine)

"This book will make readers hungry for applesauce.

There's a theory that the old Disney live-action movies were popular because the kids acted like adults and the adults acted like kids. In this book, Katy has no choice but to act like an adult. Her aunt is in labor, and her mother can't be home until after the baby is born. It's the Jewish New Year, and Katy was expecting to make applesauce with her mom - following the family tradition - but all her dad can do is stare helplessly at the ingredients lined up on the counter. Katy starts typing on the computer until a recipe pops up. Younger readers may find it very satisfying when her father asks, 'What's next?' This book is full of such small, satisfying moments. The highlight may be a sequence in which, one by one, Katy's friends, her rabbi and even the neighborhood crossing guard bring her apples. They know her mother is away. The characters in McMahon's illustrations, painted in warm colors, all look like people readers might want to know. In the last scene, Katy reaches into her pocket and pulls out a jar of applesauce for the new baby. It's just what an adult would do.

This is a simple story and on the face of it a slight one, but underneath, it's an extremely moving tale.

(Picture book. 2-7)" -- Kirkus Reviews (Journal)

"Every year at holiday time, Katy looks forward to making applesauce with her mother. When she shares her excitement with her religious school classmates, she also mentions the other exciting news: Later in the month, she will have a new baby cousin.

A well-written, preschool-appropriate story of a young child and her mother sharing the love of picking fresh apples and then cooking together. 'Apple Days' blends the themes of the Rosh Hashanah holiday with the value of living as part of a warm Jewish community. When the baby arrives on the exact day Katy is planning to go apple picking with her mom, she is disappointed, and it makes her sad that her plans have been thwarted. But her caring community of friends, including the crossing guard, her teacher, principal, hairdresser, shoe salesman and rabbi, work together to make Katy's applesauce-making day as enjoyable as she had hoped it would be. Katy learns how to work around disappointment with the help of her father and friends and shares her cooking success with her classmates and even the new baby. Alert readers may note that the illustrator has realistically depicted an ethnically diverse Hebrew school class - a nice change from other books for the Jewish preschool set. (Also, no biggie here: a woman rabbi.) An applesauce recipe at the end looks very tasty and would be easy to make with young children upon finishing this cheery, enjoyable book." -- Jewish Journal (Magazine)

"Katy's favorite holiday is Rosh Hashanah because she and her mother always make applesauce together. But Mom is called away to help with a new baby, threatening both the holiday menu and Katy's status as the center of her family's universe. Luckily all of Katy's friends and acquaintances donate ingredients: apples from the rabbi and her schoolmates, cinnamon from Sam at the shoe store, and sugar and a lemon from Carla at the beauty shop. Dad pinch-hits as chef, too, resulting in a perfect dish for the holiday meal - especially when Mom arrives at the last minute. McMahon's cartoon-style digital art features broadly smiling characters who demonstrate infinite patience with Katy and her preoccupations. Appended with a recipe,

this will be welcomed by young families and religious preschools looking for holiday activities

. Pair with Leslie Kimmelman's Sound the Shofar! A Story for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (1998), which offers a more detailed explanation of these festivals and their apple traditions." -- Booklist Online

(Website)

Other Books

Festivals for You to Celebrate, Gives the historical background for the celebration of more than twenty-nine special occasions from various countries like Guy Fawkes Day and Swedish Spring, with instructions on traditional touches, decorations, games, and making items for a party.

2 2 2 2 . Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Several important holidays of the Jewish religion are celebrated in the autumn . As in biblical days , the New Year holidays , including Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur , are held at this time ."