

# SHANAH TOVAH & G'MAR CHATIMA TOVA



## **What is Rosh Hashanah?**

Rosh Hashanah is one of the holiest days in Judaism. In Jewish, Rosh Hashanah means "First of the Year," which celebrates the Jewish or Biblical New Year. The festival often starts



A man is blowing shofar to start the ceremony. *Wikipedia*

with the sound of the shofar or ram's horn to open the doors of heaven and signify the statement: "We are going to begin again!" Rosh Hashanah celebrates the creation of the universe. More specifically, the Jewish New Year commemorates the day God created Adam and Eve. On this day, everyone gathers to celebrate the high spirit of a good year to come, and they reflect on the previous year.

### **When is Rosh Hashanah?**

Unlike the Western or Eastern culture, which celebrates The New Year on the first day of the year, Rosh Hashanah usually occurs in September. In 2021, Rosh Hashanah will begin at sunset on September 6th and end at nightfall on September 8th. Jewish people follow the lunar calendar, so a set day for the unique holiday from year to year is not available. After Rosh Hashanah ends, there will be a start of Ten Days of Repentance, which Yom Kippur acts as the final element – The Day of Atonement on which the activities are fasting and prayer. Rosh Hashanah is when the Jewish people praise God as the King of the Universe, thank him for all the blessings of the previous year and pray for an excellent year to come for all.

### **How is Rosh Hashanah celebrated?**

Rosh Hashanah often follows the procedure of candle lighting. Girls and women (if there are none, the head of the household will begin the process) light the candles and pray in the evenings of the two-day holiday. In the morning of these days, there will be prayer services beginning with the sound of the ram's horn. Working is prohibited on Rosh Hashanah because the sacred holiday requires people to be mentally prepared to focus on praising God. Special foods with special meanings are enjoyed on this holiday as follows:

1. Apple dipped in honey:



The Jews believe that apples have healing elements, and honey symbolizes sweetness. The dipping of apple into honey represents the wish of a good year to come, when people can learn from the previous year and fix their mistakes in the new year.

2. Round Challah loaves:



The bread is often sprinkled with raisins and dipped in honey. The sweet dipping of love with the bread symbolizes each individual's wishes for a good and sweet new year.

3. Parts of a fish head



Many Jewish people eat parts of a fish head on Rosh Hashanah with a wish of starting a new year with the hope of "being a head, not a tail."

## **Yom Kippur**

Yom Kippur or the “Day of Atonement”, originates from Moses's time (around 1313 BCE- many months after the Jewish people left Egypt). After Moses received the Ten Commandments from God, he descended from Mount Sinai and caught his people worshipping a golden calf. Moses angrily condemned them for idolatry and broke the Stone Tablets. Moses then returned to Mount Sinai and prayed to God for forgiveness for his people. When Moses came down from the mountain (the tenth day of Tishrei), he brought the good news that since they atoned for their sin, God had forgave the people for their idolatry.

Yom Kippur stands as the final solemn day of repentance. Yom Kippur is a day when individuals take a look at one’s-self. Yom Kippur also carries the meaning of encouraging people to forgive others' transgressions and with earnest repentance for one's misdeeds against God. In 2021, Yom Kippur the Jewish/Biblical year 5782, will begin on the evening of September 15th and end in the evening of September 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Written By Ngoc Vo**

### Source

Fink, Jenni. “Prayers and Blessings for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.” *Newsweek*, Newsweek, 29 Sept. 2019, [www.newsweek.com/what-do-you-say-rosh-Hashanah-blessings-prayers-greetings-kiddush-1461709#:~:text=the%20holiday%20season.-,%22Blessed%20are%20You%2C%20Lord%20our%20God%2C%20King%20of%20the,'man%20ha'zeh.%22](http://www.newsweek.com/what-do-you-say-rosh-Hashanah-blessings-prayers-greetings-kiddush-1461709#:~:text=the%20holiday%20season.-,%22Blessed%20are%20You%2C%20Lord%20our%20God%2C%20King%20of%20the,'man%20ha'zeh.%22).

“Yom Kippur.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.,

[www.britannica.com/topic/Yom-Kippur](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Yom-Kippur)