



High Holy Days Family Information

Rosh HaShanah

Rosh HaShanah (literally, "Head of the Year") is the Jewish New Year and is celebrated on the first day of the Hebrew month of *Tishrei*, which—because of differences in the solar and lunar calendar—corresponds to September or October on the secular calendar. Customs associated with the holiday include sounding the shofar, eating a round challah, and tasting apples and honey to represent a sweet New Year.

Shofar

The shofar, made from the horn of a ram, is sounded throughout the High Holiday period, beginning during the preparatory days of Elul, the month before we celebrate Rosh HaShanah. It also is sounded during the Rosh HaShanah service and at the end of Yom Kippur. The shofar is always curved or bent, symbolizing our humility as we stand before God and confront our actions. There are four different shofar "calls," each with a unique name: *t'kiah* (one long blast), *sh'varim* (three short blasts), *t'ruah* (nine quick blasts) and *t'kia g'dolah* (one very long blast).

Learn more about blowing the shofar by watching Shalom Sesame and sharing this discussion guide: <https://reformjudaism.org/celebrate-rosh-hashanah-shalom-sesame-sounding-shofar>

Round Challah

Challah is the special twisted loaf of bread eaten by Jews on Shabbat and other special occasions. The challah eaten on Rosh HaShanah is round in shape. This custom has several explanations. One is that the round shape reflects the ongoing cycle of years and seasons. The most common interpretation is that the challah resembles a crown, symbolizing the kingship of God, a common theme throughout the High Holy Days.

Apples and Honey

Over the centuries, Jews have commonly eaten apples, as well as challah, grapes, and other fruits dipped in honey, symbolizing their hope for sweetness in the year ahead.

For holiday recipes, check out: <https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/rosh-hashanah/recipes>



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Blessings for Rosh HaShanah

Kiddush (the blessing over the wine)

Lift the cup(s) of wine and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

HaMotzi (the blessing over the bread)

Uncover the challah and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Eat the challah.

Shehecheyanu Thanking God for allowing us to reach this day.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu laz'man hazeh.

Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.

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Blessing for fruit: Pick up a slice of apple, dip it in honey, and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

Then add:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,
שֶׁתַּחַדֵּשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה.

Y'hi ratzon milfanecha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu, shetchadesh aleinu shanah tovah um'tukah.

May it be Your will, Eternal our God, that this be a good and sweet year for us.

Eat the apple dipped in honey.

Your family also may want to enjoy challah dipped in honey. Some families include a pomegranate as a treat before the meal. It is said that the number of seeds in the pomegranate reflects the number of good deeds that you will do in the coming year.



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Holiday greetings:

A good New Year: – שְׁנָה טוֹבָה *Shanah Tovah*

Good day – traditional Yiddish holiday greeting – *good yontif*

Happy holiday – *chag sa -me'ach* - חַג שְׂמֵחַ

For more information on history, customs and recipes check out this page:

<https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-holidays/rosh-hashanah>

L' Shanah Tovah
Have a sweet year!





Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur means "Day of Atonement" and refers to the annual Jewish observance of fasting, prayer and repentance. Part of the High Holidays, which also includes Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur is considered the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. In three separate passages in the Torah, the Jewish people are told, "the tenth day of the seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: You shall practice self-denial." (Leviticus 23:27). Fasting is seen as fulfilling this biblical commandment. The Yom Kippur fast also enables us to put aside our physical desires to concentrate on our spiritual needs through prayer, repentance and self-improvement.

By reciting prayers in a synagogue on Yom Kippur we atone for transgressions against God. For wrongs committed against other people, it has become customary to seek out friends and relatives whom we have wronged during the year and to ask their forgiveness before Yom Kippur begins. The holiday is a time when families should be at peace, and gives us a yearly opportunity to put aside past hurts and create a new beginning.

Wearing White

Traditionally, many Jews wear white on Yom Kippur. Because white is a symbol of purity and Yom Kippur is a day when we undertake a spiritual cleansing, it is an appropriate color for the occasion. Others interpret white as representative of the white shroud in which Jews are buried, symbolizing our mortality and reminding us of the need for humility and repentance.

Shofar

Yom Kippur ends with a single, long blast of the shofar. The stirring sound of the shofar at the conclusion of the holiday has many different explanations. One is that the practice recalls the giving of the Torah at Sinai (when the shofar also was blown). Another is that the shofar signals the triumph of Israel over its sins for another year and heralds the possible coming of the messianic age.

No special blessings are recited for Yom Kippur in the home, but candles are lit, kiddush is made and challah is often shared.

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Holiday greetings:

A good ending (meaning may it all be good for you at the end of the holiday) - *Gamar tov* - גָּמַר טוֹב

May you be sealed for good (refers to being written in the Book of Life for good for one more year) - *Gamar chatimah tovah* - גָּמַר חֲתִימָה טוֹבָה

Here are tips to help you prepare for the fast: <https://reformjudaism.org/how-prepare-fast-yom-kippur>

