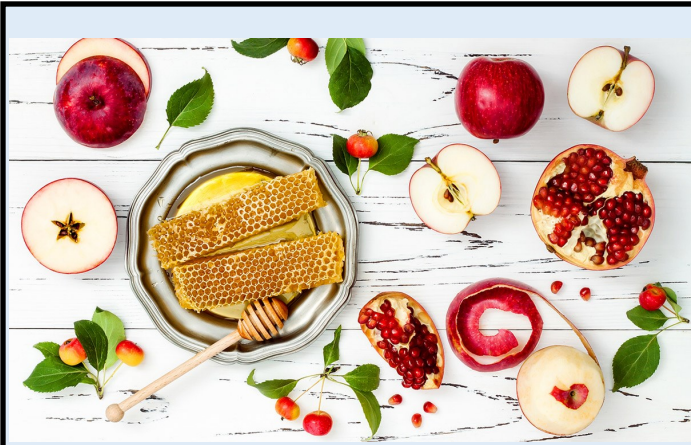


Rosh Hashanah Cheat Sheet



Rosh Hashanah (literally “Head of the Year” in Hebrew) is the Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashanah is the first of the High Holy Days (or Jewish High Holidays), beginning a 10-day period of soul searching and contemplation that concludes with Yom Kippur. Traditionally, this period of 10 days, the Days of Awe in Hebrew—*Yamim Nora'im*—are for thinking about our behavior during the previous year, asking forgiveness from those we may have wronged and pledging to make positive changes for the coming year.

Since Judaism uses a lunar calendar, the date will change every year on the Gregorian calendar, but most often, the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah falls in September or early October.

How Do We Celebrate Rosh Hashanah at Home?

While the High Holy Days are often spent at synagogue, there are many ways to observe the Jewish holidays if you choose to spend them outside of a synagogue setting. There might be alternative offerings in your community, so make sure to do some searching (try your local Federation or JCC) or asking people in your community to see what your options are. You can also create your own practices such as spending some time in nature, walking or hiking, taking some time to yourself to think in a calm space, volunteering somewhere meaningful or spending time at home with friends and family and talking about the coming year. Take the time to mark this important Jewish holiday in a way that feels authentic and meaningful to you.



A new day in the Jewish calendar begins at sunset, so the traditional start of the holiday is the evening meal before the day of the holiday. Menus and customs vary from home to home, often based on family tradition and family origin. Those who are Ashkenazi, whose family origin is Eastern Europe, might make or buy a round challah with raisins: The roundness of the bread symbolizes the never-ending cycle of time and the sweetness of the raisins symbolizes the hope that the coming year will be a sweet one. Many families will also serve apples dipped in honey symbolizing the wish for a sweet new year. Those with Sephardic origin, families who come from southern Europe, North Africa or

the Middle East might serve pomegranates and bean-based dishes and might even dip challah in sugar rather than honey. (Find Rosh Hashanah recipes [here](#).)

Before the Rosh Hashanah meal, as is customary at the start of most Jewish holidays, candles are lit with this blessing (if it is also Friday evening, include the words in brackets):

Before the Rosh Hashanah meal, as is customary at the start of most Jewish holidays, candles are lit with this blessing (if it is also Friday evening, include the words in brackets):

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commands us to light the [Sabbath and] holiday lights.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu,
melech haolam, asher kid'shanu
b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner
shel (Shabbat v'shel) Yom Tov.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל (שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל) יוֹם טוֹב.

Then as we do in any moment of joy, we raise a cup of wine and say:

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu,
Melech Ha-olam, borei p'ri
ha-gafen.* בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Any time we celebrate something new, even new for that year, we say a prayer of gratitude for new things, the Shehecheyanu:

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, melech
haolam, she'hecheyanu, v'kiy'manu
v'higi'anu lazman hazeh.* בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעַנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה.

Before cutting or breaking the round challah, we say the blessing over bread, which acts as a blanket blessing over all food we will be eating at the meal:

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech
haolam, Hamotzi lechem min haaretz.* בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

What Happens at Synagogue?

Services on Rosh Hashanah begin in the evening with a special service and continue the next morning. After the morning service, most communities will also have a tashlich service, which takes place outside by a body of water. Reform congregations usually offer services on the first evening of the holiday and the following day. Some Reform congregations, Reconstructionist, Conservative and Orthodox congregations will have services on an additional day making it a two-day holiday. Rosh Hashanah prayers focus on the themes of judgment and repentance. God is visualized as a parent and ruler in prayers that are sung to special holiday melodies. [The shofar](#), a ram's horn, is blown several times in different rhythms as a wake-up call to pay attention to the ending of the year and the beginning of a new one.

What is Tashlich?

Tashlich is a short "service" most often during the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah. Tashlich is the Hebrew word for "send off" or "cast away" and takes place at a body of moving water, such as a lake, river or ocean where we symbolically cast off our sins by throwing bread crumbs into the water. Many communities have a special spot for tashlich and encourage people to bring something to cast off into the body of water. We have learned that it's important to throw duck-friendly foods into the water (instead of bread, try rice, lettuce or grapes). It is a very powerful physical moment that mirrors the liturgy from the morning service. It is also a great way to spend some time outside and reflect in a completely different way. If you choose to spend your Rosh Hashanah at home, rather than synagogue, tashlich can be a great option to connect to a community in your area. You can also do your own tashlich with friends or family. [Here's an alternative](#) if you're not near water.

Glossary of Jewish Holiday Terms

L'shanah TovahTikatayvu: "May you be inscribed for a good year." A greeting which expresses the hope that you will be written in the Book of Life and granted happiness and fulfillment in the year ahead.

Machzor: High Holy Day prayerbook, literally means "cycle" in Hebrew

Shofar: Made from the horn of a ram, the shofar is a basic instrument that is blown daily in the month preceding Rosh Hashanah, on Rosh Hashanah and at the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

Shanah tovah: Literally, "a good year." This is another greeting you might hear during this season, which is equivalent to "Happy New Year."

Teshuvah: Literally means "returning," a Hebrew term for repentance. Think of it as "turning a new leaf" or "turning over."

Tzom Kal: "An easy fast." Another greeting you may hear right before Yom Kippur as many begin their fast.

Yom Tov: Literally "a good day" in Hebrew, it is often pronounced Yuntiff (the Yiddish pronunciation) and is used as a synonym for "holiday." A standard holiday greeting is "Gut Yuntiff" (Yiddish for "good good day").