



# ROSH



SWEET & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## *Hashanah*

**Rosh Hashanah marks the start of the Jewish New Year, as stated in the Bible (Leviticus 23:23-31).**

While some ancient cultures, such as the Celts, celebrated the start of a new year during the spring equinox because it was the time of planting, Semitic cultures in the Near East celebrated the new year in the fall, after the harvest was gathered. The name of Rosh Hashanah can be translated as “first” or “head of the year.” It is also sometimes called “The Feast of Trumpets.”

Also, Rosh Hashanah marks the start of the Jewish High Holy Days leading up to Yom Kippur. It marks the beginning of the 10 “Days of Awe,” in which Jews focus their attentions on repentance and reflection leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, considered to be holiest day of the Jewish year. Traditionally, the blood of an animal was sacrificed as a way to remove sin or defilement.

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

Unlike the festive celebrations of New Year in other faiths, the Jewish New Year is a time of reflection on one’s actions of the past year and sincere repentance for those sins.

However, it also is a time to share meals and prayer with family and friends. That includes special treats such as apples or challah bread dipped in honey (to symbolize one’s wish for a sweet new year to come); prayer services and Torah readings on both mornings of Rosh Hashanah that include repeated blasts from a ram’s horn, called a shofar; and the lighting of candles in the evenings with appropriate blessings.

Rosh Hashanah is meant to be a day of rest, not labor. The Torah expressly forbids one to do any work on Rosh Hashanah, as well as other major Jewish holy days.



Three unique sets of prayers are added to the morning service during Rosh Hashanah. These are known as Malkhuyot, which address the sovereignty of God, Zikhronot, which present God as the one who remembers past deeds, and Shofarot, in which we stand in nervous anticipation of the future.

Each of these sections culminates in the blasts of the shofar, the most potent symbol of the holiday. The story and the shofar serve as reminders of the covenant between God and the people of Israel, carrying with them the message of sacrifice, hope, and continuity. Among the popular traditions associated with the holiday is a ceremony performed on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah called Tashlich, when people throw crumbs or pieces of bread, symbolizing their sins, into flowing water.

### **Special food is also eaten during Rosh Hashanah.**

That may include pomegranate fruit, as people wish for blessings in the new year as plentiful as the seeds of a pomegranate. The pomegranate's 613 seeds also symbolize the 613 "mitzvot," or commandments, in the Torah.

Round challah bread baked with raisins inside is also popular during the holiday. The challah (traditional bread) that is eaten for the Rosh Hashanah season is round, symbolizing the eternal cycle of life. The challah is traditionally dipped in honey, symbolizing the hopes for a sweet New Year. The same is done with apples, which are made even sweeter with the addition of honey.

Some people also will traditionally eat the head of a fish or a ram to symbolize the "head of the year." Fish is also eaten because it is a symbol of fertility and abundance.

### **What are Rosh Hashanah greetings?**

If you're not sure how to greet someone on Rosh Hashanah, you could just say "Shanah Tovah," which means "good year" in Hebrew. The word "u'metuka" – meaning "and sweet" – is sometimes added to the end of that phrase as in "good and sweet year."

