

## ROSH HASHANAH, THE JEWISH NEW YEAR

According to tradition, Rosh Hashanah celebrates the birthday of the world. It is the beginning of the High Holiday season and lasts for two days—the first and second of the Hebrew month of Tishrei. Regarded as the day when God judges the world, Rosh Hashanah is observed by praying for a good new year.



In the Orthodox and Conservative traditions the Jewish New Year is celebrated for two days, and for one day in Reform tradition. The secular date changes every year because it is governed by the lunar calendar, but the Jewish day and month always stay the same.

Rosh Hashanah marks the entry into the beginning of a new Jewish year, and, according to rabbinic tradition, the number of years since Creation. Rosh Hashanah is observed in accordance with the following verses from Numbers 29:

*On the first day of the seventh month, you shall observe a sacred occasion... You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded.*

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated both at home and in the synagogue. In the synagogue, there is a special prayer and Torah service. Prayers are read from the **mahzor** (the High Holiday prayer book).

Unique to Rosh Hashanah, the **shofar** is blown. Shofar sounding means many things. Some think of it as a call to return, and others as a ceremony in which God is declared King. It is a *mitzvah*, or commandment, to listen to the shofar. During the course of the Rosh Hashanah service, a total of 100 notes are sounded. The shofar calls us to repentance and reminds us of the sound of the shofar at Mt. Sinai when the Torah was given to the Jewish people.

Finally, Rosh Hashanah encompasses the three elements of judgment and repentance: *Tefilah* (prayer), *Tzedakah* (good deeds) and *Teshuva* (returning to our better selves and God).

At home, families come together much as they do for Passover to share a Jewish holiday meal and to spend time together. On the Rosh Hashanah table is a round challah, symbolizing the continuity of life, and apples and honey, reflecting our hope for a sweet New Year.

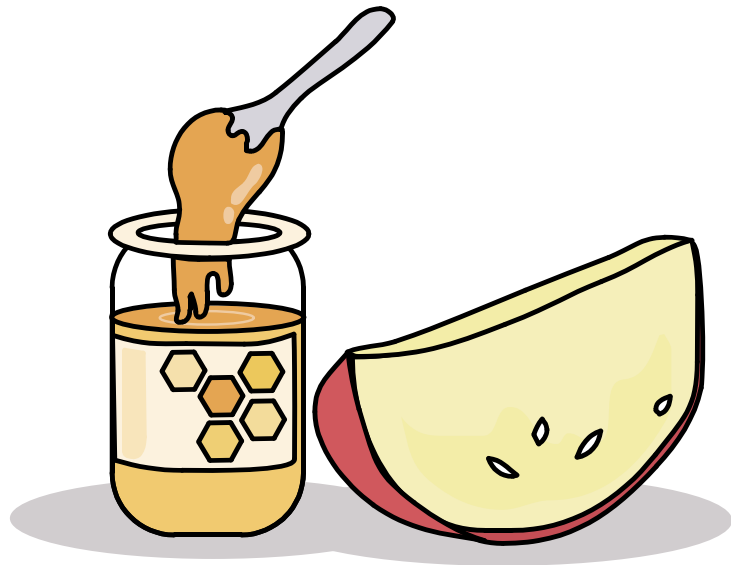
The sweetness of the New Year is celebrated by dipping honey and saying:

*Yehi ratzon Adonay Eloheynu v'elohey avoteynu sheh  
techadesh aleynu shanah tovah u'metukah.*

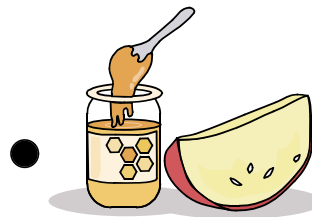
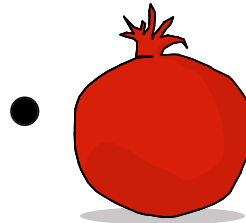
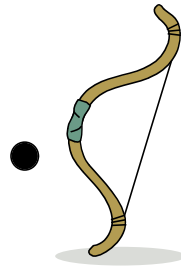
*May it be your will, Lord our God, that you inaugurate  
this year for us as a good and sweet year.*

During this festive meal there is candlelighting, the Kiddush prayer, and a special ritual called **tashlich**, which occurs on the first day of the holiday, unless the first day falls on Shabbat. *Tashlich* is performed by going to a river bank and symbolically casting away sins by throwing bread crumbs into the water and chanting special passages that are found in the *mahzor*.

Other Rosh Hashanah traditions are gefilte fish; matzah balls (round, like the challah); pomegranates, honey cake; teiglach, a gooey, honey dessert; and merren tzimmes, a carrot dish with the carrots cut in round slices like gold coins.



The sign on the left reads, "Rosh Hashanah" in Hebrew. As a family, match the related Rosh Hashanah items to their sign.



## YOM KIPPUR, THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Yom Kippur begins as the sun sets and the tenth of Tishrei begins. A fast day, it is the most solemn day of the Jewish year and a day devoted to prayer. On Yom Kippur we pray for forgiveness for sins committed against God, and for the strength and wisdom needed to acknowledge our weaknesses and to work to improve ourselves.

The theme of repentance and return is central to the Yom Kippur prayer service, which has five special parts:

- Kol Nidre - The special prayer that begins the Ma'arive, or evening service
- Shacharit - The morning service
- Musaf - Another prayer service
- Mincha - The afternoon service when the Book of Jonah is read
- Neilah - The closing service during which the gates of prayer are about to close. This service ends with a single blast of the shofar.



*Teshuvah* is the Hebrew word for return. Jewish tradition holds that human beings can correct wrongs and that they can change for the better, and Yom Kippur provides an opportunity for this important personal decision making. The holiday is observed by fasting from sunset to sunset in celebration of a new life. It is preceded by a pre-fast meal and followed by a break-fast.

The Yom Kippur fast lasts for 25 hours. By fasting on Yom Kippur we set aside our physical desires and needs so that we can concentrate on our spiritual selves. There are other prohibitions besides eating and drinking that help us accomplish this objective. According to tradition we should not: bathe for pleasure (but we can for necessity!), wear shoes made of leather, have sexual relations or use perfume. Of course fasting is reserved for grown-ups, and not for children or any adult whose health would be endangered. But understanding all the reasons adults fast is important to impart to children, including the message that not all holidays are fun and sometimes it is necessary to be serious in order to learn and grow.

Just before Yom Kippur, it is customary to give tzedakah and to ask for forgiveness from God and others against whom wrongs have been committed:

*For sins between persons and God, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, gains forgiveness and newness, but for sins between a person and his or her fellow human being, Yom Kippur does not gain forgiveness and newness until he or she has begged forgiveness and been reconciled with his or her fellow person.*

#### Mishnah Yoma

Before going to synagogue for the beginning of the fast, it is traditional for the father to bless his children with this blessing:

**For sons:** May God make you as Ephraim and Menashe.

**For daughters:** May God make you as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

Ephraim and Menashe are Biblical ancestors who were the beloved children of Joseph. They received a special blessing from their grandfather, Jacob, before his death. Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah are the four matriarchs of the Jewish people. Wives of Abraham (Sarah), Isaac (Rebecca), and Jacob (Rachel and Leah!), they were important people in their own right.



There are also special public confessional prayers, called *vidui*, that are said on Yom Kippur. During these prayers we recite the list of wrongs we've committed, both as individuals and as a community.

All the Jewish holidays are celebrated by lighting candles in the home, but on Yom Kippur we light candles *after* the meal, just before the fast begins. There are other customs that are unique to Yom Kippur as well:

- *G'mar Hatimah Tovah* is the Yom Kippur greeting. It means "May you be sealed in the Book of life for a good year."
- *Seudat Mafseket* is the final meal before the fast begins, and the breakfast is the first meal after the fast ends.
- On Yom Kippur it is traditional to wear white clothing and not to wear leather shoes.

## SUKKOT: FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES

The holiday cycle continues with Sukkot, the Festival of Tabernacles, which is celebrated five days after Yom Kippur. It begins on the 15th of Tishrei and lasts for seven days. This week-long festival is a celebration of both history and harvest. It is a reminder of the historical period of time when the Israelites wandered in the desert, living in huts, or sukkot, after getting out of Egypt.



The mood of Sukkot is joyous - a sharp contrast to the serious tone of Yom Kippur. Sukkot is also the Jewish "Thanksgiving" festival, in which we are grateful for the final harvest gathering. Sukkot actually served as the basis for the Thanksgiving observance introduced into our country by the Pilgrim fathers, who were well-versed in Biblical texts.

Sukkot is the third in the cycle of *Shalosh Regalim*, or the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot - holidays that have important historic and agricultural links. Historically, Pesach celebrates the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, and Shavuot continues the historical cycle, marking the occasion of the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Thus, the Jewish people were freed from slavery for a purpose: to receive the Torah, to fulfill God's commandments and to learn to live a holy

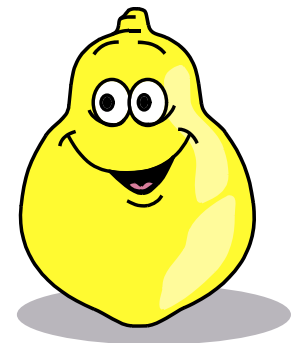
life. Sukkot, then, completes the cycle as a celebration of the period when Jews wandered in the desert - after Mt. Sinai and before entering the land of Israel.

Agriculturally, Pesach, which falls in the spring, marks the beginning of the planting season. Shavuot, in the early summer, is the time of the first fruits. And Sukkot, which is in the fall, is the festival that celebrates the final harvest.

It was on these three occasions that the Israelites were commanded to travel to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the days that the Temple stood.

Sukkot has an unusual number of traditions and customs. First, there is the sukkah. A sukkah is a temporary shelter that is built for just this week each year. As a matter of fact, it may not be left up permanently and still be called a sukkah. The sukkah is built to recall the temporary dwellings used by the Israelites during their wanderings. Being outdoors, it is subject to all the elements, which symbolizes our ultimate dependence on God and reminds us not to become too complacent in our comfortable homes.

Sukkot is a holiday of great joy and happiness within nature. The "four species" which grow in Israel and are mentioned in the Torah, are blessed during this festival. The *lulav* (palm, myrtle and willow branches) and *etrog* (citron) are distinctive symbols of the holiday, and, when waved about, represent the unity of the Jewish ~ people and signify the omnipresence of God.



Sukkot ends with two final, festive days, which are holidays in their own right. We celebrate Shemini Atzeret and Simhat Torah with candles, Kiddush, festive meals, prayer and Torah services.

The eighth day of the Sukkot festival is Shemini Atzeret, and it does not require the use of the sukkah, *lulav* and *etrog*. An important part of the synagogue service is a prayer for rain in Israel to make the land fruitful and the crops plentiful.

The unique moment that Simhat Torah celebrates is the completion and new

beginning of the annual reading of the Torah scroll. It marks the special occasion on which the final reading of the Torah from the book of Deuteronomy is read, and the annual reading begins again with the account of creation in *Genesis*. This day, which translates as "Rejoicing in the Torah," features singing and dancing in the synagogue in a very "unsynagogue-like" fashion.

Simhat Torah begins in the evening with candle lighting, followed by a synagogue service in which the Torah scrolls are taken from the ark. Unique to Sukkot, this is the only time of the year when the Torah is read at night. Members of the congregation then march around the synagogue in seven *Hakafot*, or processions, with the Torah scrolls. All of this is accompanied by singing, dancing and a great sense of celebration that reflects the love of the Torah that everyone shares. Children wave flags in the air as they join the *Hakafot*.



## JEWISH FAMILY TIME: THINGS FOR FAMILIES TO DO TOGETHER

### Book of Life I

Gather your family photo albums and view them together. Look back over the past year and talk about the special times you've shared. Have your child choose one of those special times and draw a picture or tell a story about it. Tuck the picture into the photo album to add to your family memorabilia.

### Book of Life II

Begin a new photo album to be filled with memories of Jewish moments in each year. On the New Year, take a picture of your family eating apples and honey. In December, photograph a Hanukkah candle-lighting scene. Add another picture when Passover comes in the spring. Voila! A "Family Book of Life" filled with "Jewish Kodak moments."

### Apple Orchard Sunday

Take a trip to an apple orchard and go apple picking. Buy some apples. And, of course, have your children teach you the "Apples and Honey" song learned at school. Taste apples and honey for a sweet New Year.

### Bake a shofar

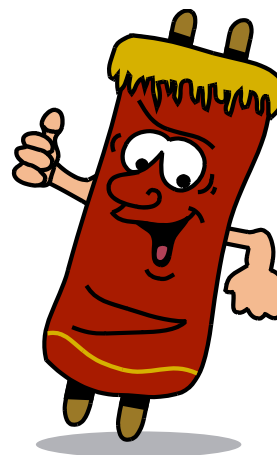
Prepare cookie-cutter dough. Roll it out. Using the shofar shape and a pizza wheel cutter, cut out "shofaretttes." Bake, decorate and enjoy.

### Sukkah Picnic Lunch

Arrange to eat a picnic lunch or dinner in your local JCC or synagogue sukkah one day. Make it a family-and-friends affair. While there, play the Ushpizin game (see below).

### Bake a Torah Cake

Bake a simple yellow cake mix in a 9" x 13" pan. Together with your child, turn it into a Torah cake by frosting and decorating it like a Torah cover. Place two short cardboard rolls at top and bottom, and draw a big Jewish star in the middle.



**Imagine**

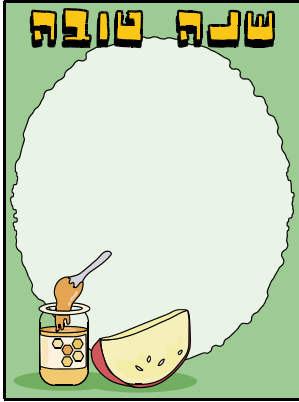
If a little town had no shofar, what else could be used to announce the New Year?

**The Ushpizin Game**

There is an old custom on Sukkot to invite a different person from the Bible to visit your sukkah each night. Choose a category like family members, characters from story books, teachers, etc. Write the name of a person from the chosen category on an index card and tape it to the back of someone. Do the same for all of the Ushpizin players. Next, the players ask each other "yes and no" questions until all of the secret identities are revealed.

## A SUGGESTED FAMILY CHECKLIST FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Following are some things to do, things to think about and things to stock up on as the High Holidays approach.



- ✓ Send New Year's cards to friends and family
- ✓ Send an annual letter to friends filled with news of your family
- ✓ Say "I'm sorry" to whomever it is necessary
  
- ✓ Buy High Holiday prayer books (mahzors) and become familiar with your new mahzor
- ✓ Give tzedaka
- ✓ Visit a Jewish bookstore to find a story or tape about the holidays for your children or yourself
- ✓ Purchase a *yahrzeit* (memorial) candle to honor the loss of an immediate relative. Light it before the fast begins on Yom Kippur
  
- ✓ Stock up on: apples and honey, candles, wine and round challah

## RECIPES FOR A SWEET NEW YEAR

### Carrot Tzimmes - Low Fat!

1 lb. fresh carrots peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
5 dried apricots 20-ounce can crushed pineapple in juice
1/3 cup brown sugar
2 egg whites and 1 egg yolk nutmeg, freshly grated

Boil carrots and sweet potatoes until tender. Allow to cool. In food processor, chop apricots coarsely. Add pineapple, brown sugar and eggs and process until blended. Add cooled potatoes and carrots and process until mixture is smooth and free of lumps. Pour mixture into two lightly oiled glass pie pans. Sprinkle with freshly grated nutmeg, if desired. Bake at 350 degrees for about 40 minutes.

### Carrot Cake

1 cup margarine	1 teaspoon baking powder
1 1/2 cups flour	1 teaspoon water
1/2 cup brown sugar	1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda	2 cups grated carrots
1 egg	1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Cream margarine and brown sugar in food processor. Add remaining ingredients, one at a time. Grease a 9-inch square baking pan. Spread batter in pan and bake for one hour at 350 degrees.

## READ MORE ABOUT IT

### Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur stories for young people:

*A Rosh Hashanah Walk*  
Carol Levin

*It's Rosh Hashanah!*  
Ellie Gellman

*Sammy the Spider's First Rosh Hashanah*  
Sylvia A. Rouss

*The World's Birthday*  
Barbara Diamond Golden

*Happy New Year, Benny*  
Jane Breskin Zalben

*Even Higher*  
Barbara Cohen

*First Fast*  
Barbara Cohen

*Minnie's Yom Kippur Birthday*  
Marilyn Singer

### Sukkot & Simhat Torah stories for young people:

*Let's Build a Sukkah*  
Katherine Janus Kahn

*Tamar's Sukkah*  
Ellie Gellman

*The Big Sukkah*  
Peninah Schramm



*Leo and Blossom's Sukkah*  
Jane Breskin Zalben

*Tikvah Means Hope*  
Patricia Polacco

*Sofer, the Story of a Torah Scroll*  
Dr. Eric Ray

*A Torah is Written*  
Paul and Rachel Cowan

**And for parents...**

*Jewish Holiday Crafts for Little Hands*  
Ruth Esrig Brinn

*The Jewish Parents Almanac*  
Julie Hilton Danan

*Living a Jewish Life*  
Anita Diamont and Howard Cooper

## Glossary

### **Aseret Yemei Teshuvah**

The days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

### **Hakafot**

Seven Simchat Torah processions around the synagogue carrying the Torah scrolls, waving flags and singing.

### **Kol Nidre**

A famous prayer chanted on the eve of Yom Kippur. It has a haunting melody that sets the tone for the day.

### **L'shana Tova Tikateyvu!**

The traditional greeting used on Rosh Hashanah. It means "may you be written in the Book of Life for a good year." Sometimes it is abbreviated to L'shana Tova! (to a good year) even more simply Shana Tova! (good year).

### **Lulav and Etrog**

The palm branch and citron used in ancient ritual, still performed on Sukkot. This ritual is described in the Torah. Your child may come home for arts and crafts class with a creative version of these objects.

### **Machzor**

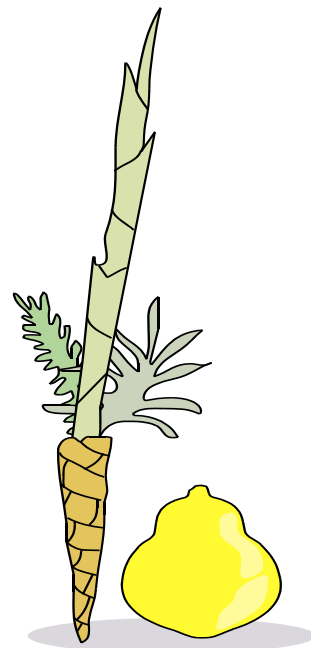
The prayer book that is used on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

### **Shofar**

The ram's horn, blown during the morning service on Rosh Hashanah.

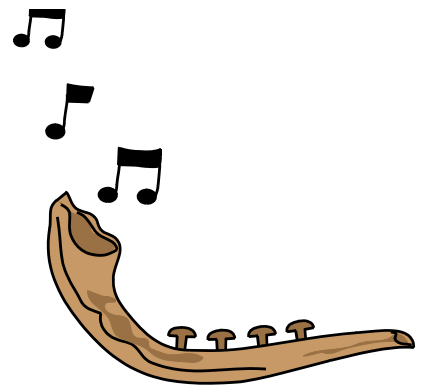
### **Tapuchim U'dvash**

Hebrew for "apples and honey," eaten on Rosh Hashanah for a sweet new year.



### **Tekiyah, Shevarim, Teruah**

The three sound made by the shofar. Each note represents a pattern of shofar blasts.



### **Torah**

The scroll that contains the five books for Moses, the sacred history of the Jewish people.

### **Tzedaka**

"Charity" given through the year, and especially in the season of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.