

## **Rosh haShanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot – The basics**

The Jewish month of Tishri, beginning this year on the evening of 18th September, has a series of festivals, generally known collectively as the “Chaggim” (Festivals):

- *Rosh haShanah, the New Year, begins at dusk on Friday 18th September (around 7.10pm in central Scotland). As it is also Shabbat, candles should be lit before that time, followed by Kiddush. There are many tradition to eat symbolic foods at this meal – see below.*
- *After Shabbat, candles for the second day of Rosh haShanah should be lit after dark (around 8.15pm), and Kiddush includes Havdalah for the end of Shabbat. The Shofar is blown on the second day but not the first because it is Shabbat; Tashlich is traditionally said beside running water in the afternoon. Rosh haShanah ends on Sunday night, 20th September at around 8.15pm.*
- *The period from Rosh haShanah to Yom Kippur is the “Ten Days of Repentance” (Aseret yemei teshuvah), when Slichot, penitential prayers, are added to the liturgy.*
- *The first day of this period, Monday 21st September, is the Fast of Gedalyah, one of the four minor fast days that commemorate the chain of events that culminated in the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians. The fast is observed only during the day (in central Scotland from around 5.45 am to 8pm).*
- *Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a day of fasting, reflection, and prayer, starts at dusk on the evening of Sunday 27th September (around 6.45pm in central Scotland), and ends after dark on Monday 28th (around 7.51pm).*
- *Sukkot, the “Festival of Tabernacles” begins together with Shabbat at dusk on Friday 2nd October (around 6.30pm in central Scotland). Candles should be lit before that time, followed by Kiddush in the sukkah after dark (around 7.40pm).*
- *After Shabbat, candles for the second day of Sukkot should be lit after dark. Kiddush and Havdalah for the end of Shabbat should be made in the sukkah after around 7.40pm. The Lulav and Etrog are waved on the second day but not the first because it is Shabbat.*
- *The first days of Sukkot end on Sunday night, 20th September at around 7.35pm, and are followed by 5 days of Chol haMoed, the intermediate days of Sukkot, until Friday 9th October. The last day of Chol haMoed, Friday 9th October, is Hoshanah Rabbah (“The Great Hoshanah”).*
- *This is immediately followed by two more festival days: Shmini Atzeret (“The Eighth Day of Assembly”) and Simchat Torah (“Rejoicing with Torah”). These begin at dusk on Friday 9th October (around 6.15pm in central Scotland). As it is also Shabbat, candles should be lit before that time, followed by Kiddush.*
- *After Shabbat, candles for Simchat Torah should be lit after dark, and Kiddush (with Havdalah for the end of Shabbat) should be made around 7.20pm. The Festival ends on Sunday night, 11th October, at around 7.20pm.*

## Customs

### **Rosh haShanah:**

There is an almost universal custom to eat a piece of apple dipped in honey, and recite, “May the new year be a good and sweet year”, especially at the evening meals. Many people also dip bread into honey or sugar rather than salt.

Other customs include eating pomegranate to represent fruitfulness, fish to represent fecundity, and the head of an animal or fish to represent leadership; and beets, spinach, carrots, and other vegetables based on a variety of multi-lingual puns relating to overcoming adversity.

The *Shofar* is the horn of a kosher animal (usually a ram) which is blown during the morning service on Rosh haShanah (except on Shabbat). Most communities blow 100 notes, and there are various customs about how and when to blow.

*Tashlich* is a prayer symbolically casting away last year’s sins into flowing water. Some people have the custom of throwing bread-crumbs into the water.

### **Yom Kippur:**

The primary observances are abstinence from food, drink, and bathing, and not wearing leather shoes to symbolise that humanity is not superior to other animals.

### **Sukkot:**

The main observances are the *Sukkah* and the *Lulav* and *Etrog*. A *Sukkah* is a temporary structure whose roof is made of wood or other plant material, as a reminder of the temporary structures the Israelites lived in after their escape from slavery in Egypt, and our reliance on nature. Many people eat in the *Sukkah*, and some also sleep there. In Scotland it is worth noting that there is no requirement to eat or sleep in the *Sukkah* if it is raining! The *Lulav* is a shoot from a palm tree, which is held with an *Etrog* (citron), and twigs of myrtle (*Hadassim*) and willow (*Aravot*), and shaken together in all directions. Congregants process round the synagogue each day except Shabbat carrying the *Lulav* and *Etrog*, and seven times on *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

### **Simchat Torah:**

The custom is to process round the synagogue seven times carrying all the Torah scrolls, to finish the annual cycle of readings from the Torah, and immediately to begin again from Genesis – and then to party!

*Shana tovah, Chag sameach* from all at SCoJeC – a happy, healthy, and successful new year and a happy Sukkot –and stay safe and well.



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