

A Teacher's Guide to Judaism

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year; a time when Jewish people look back at the previous year and repent for their sins, in order to look forward and know what they want to do better in the year to come. It is celebrated on the first and second days of the Jewish month of Tishrei which is usually in September or October.

Meaning:

Rosh Hashanah means 'Head of the Year': Rosh = head, Ha = the, Shana = year

Traditional activities:

- **Selichot:** meaning forgiveness. Prayers are traditionally recited in the days before Rosh Hashanah to help Jewish people get prepared for Rosh Hashanah and they begin to think about what they need to be forgiven for and being honest with God.
- **Synagogue services:** held during Rosh Hashanah, when many prayers are focused on the topic of God's reign and his judgement of the Jewish people.
- **Shofar blowing:** during the morning service the Shofar, a ram's horn, is blown. There are four different sounds made on the shofar. Tekiah – a continuous blast, Shevarim – three short blasts, Teruah – at least nine short blasts. The final note is called Tekiah Gedola "the big tekiah" and is one very long blast.
- **Tashlich** - prayer ceremony recited during the days of awe (the days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur) recited alongside a body of running water. It symbolizes casting away the previous year's sins.

In the Home:

Candles are lit, ceremonial wine is drunk and a special round challah (bread) is eaten. The special challah often has raisins and honey swirled into it, representing a sweet year, and is circular rather than plaited to represent the start of the cycle of the year.

Torah reading:

Traditionally the story of Isaac's birth and childhood is read on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, and the story of the binding of Isaac is read on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

Biblical source: Leviticus 23: 24 - Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of Sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts'. It was called Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance) or Yom Teruah (Day of Sounding the Shofar).

Greeting: The traditional greeting on Rosh Hashanah is 'Shanah tovah' – a good year.

DEFINITIONS AND GLOSSARY

Shofar – Ram's horn



Challah – bread used for festive ceremony



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These resources describe practices that are common in the UK, but there is a wide range of Jewish traditions and observance, and different Jewish people have different levels of observance. When interacting with Jewish pupils and their parents, teachers should be aware that it is always best to ask about their own preferences.

Torah – the five book of Moses from the Jewish Bible



Jewish months (lunar calendar)

Nisan (March-April)

Iyyar (April-May)

Sivan (May-June)

Tammuz (June-July)

Av (July-August)

Elul (August-September)

Tishrei (September-October)

Cheshvan (October-November)

Kislev (November-December)

Tevet (December-January)

Shevat (January-February)

Adar (February-March)

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