

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah (literally 'Head of the Year') marks the first and second days of the Jewish New Year. The festival is also known as the Day of the Sounding of the Shofar, the Day of Judgement and the Day of Remembrance. According to rabbinic tradition, the world was created on the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishri, and in a number of the prayers God is proclaimed as the creator and king of the universe.

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It's a time for some serious thought about life and a chance to ask questions about your actions throughout the year. Questions considered during Rosh Hashanah include:

- What's the most meaningful thing in my life?
- Who in my life means the most to me? How often do I let them know this?
- What are the most significant things I've achieved in the past year?
- What do I hope to achieve next year and in my life generally?

A great deal of time is spent in the synagogue during Rosh Hashanah. Services focus on God's kingship. People will reflect on their actions over the past year and ask for forgiveness for their sins. The central feature of the Rosh Hashanah services is the blowing of the shofar, a ram's horn. The sound was heard on many important occasions in Biblical times.

The shofar at New Year warns the Jewish people to reflect on their deeds and ask forgiveness from God. The sound of the shofar starts a ten-day period known as Yamin Noraim (literally 'Days of Awe'), which ends with the solemn festival of Yom Kippur. A hundred notes in all are blown on the shofar at three periods during the service.

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After the service on the first evening of the festival a special meal is eaten, including apples or bread dipped in honey. A sweet carrot dish called tzimmes is also sometimes eaten.

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