

Celebrating Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year

For the prayers, you will need:

Tall candles and matches or lighter

Cups of grape juice or wine

Cup, small bowl or ramekin with some liquid honey (to dip bread and apples into)

Brioche or challah bread

Apple(s) cut into segments

Hunting horn, vuvuzela or shofar

Bowl of water and crumbs left over from the brioche or challah bread

For Christians, this is not necessary for salvation. It's not that we've got to do it, but we do get to do it. It's a God-given celebration that forms part of our rich heritage from the Bible. Perhaps it's time to reclaim it.

We don't have two days for this! This will have to serve as an introduction and we'll say some prayers together.

What is Rosh Hashanah?

It literally means "Head of the Year" - it's the Jewish New Year, celebrated over two days. Rosh Hashanah occurs 163 days after the first day of Passover.

It starts on the first day of the Jewish month of Tishri, the first month of the civil year in the Jewish calendar and the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year.

[In 2016], its date, as governed by the Hebrew calendar, is from sunset on October 2 until sunset on October 4.

It's one of the holiest days in the faith and a massive occasion for families and communities to come together.

What is actually being celebrated?

Mentioned in the Torah – in the book of Leviticus – as Yom Teruah, it's translated as the Feast of Trumpets, or the Day of the Sounding of the Shofar.

It's a traditional anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve, and the Jewish Mishnah, from the Oral Torah, says it's a "day of judgement".

The day marks a time of reflection and penitence, and worshippers ask God for forgiveness.

It's also the start of the agricultural cycle of sowing, growth, and harvest.

What greeting do I give on Rosh Hashanah?

Common on Rosh Hashanah is the salutation "Shanah tovah u'metukah". It's Hebrew for "A good and sweet new year".

How does the Jewish community mark Rosh Hashanah?

Customs include blowing the shofar - a hollowed-out ram's horn - and eating symbolic foods such as apples dipped in honey to evoke a "sweet new year".

For communities, feasts and synagogue services will be held.

Challah bread is also eaten in a round loaf [i.e., not plaited as is usual] to symbolise a circle of life and the new year.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/happy-rosh-hashanah-2016-everything-8946596.amp>

It makes sense to celebrate the start of a new year after harvest is over. Theologian Paula Gooder agrees!

<http://www.gooder.me.uk/autumn-new-year-reflections/>

The two day marking of one of the Hebrew calendar's holiest holidays, Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins on a Sunday evening.

Prayers associated with Rosh Hashanah are contained in a prayer book for the high holidays – also including Yom Kippur – called the Machzor.

Candle-lighting prayer

Candles should be lit no later than 18 minutes before sundown on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, while on the second night they should be lit right after nightfall. These words are recited while lighting:

"Bo-ruch a-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu
me-lech ho-olom
a-sher ki-de-sha-nu
be-mitz-vo-sov ve-tzi-vo-nu
le-had-lik ner shel Yom Ha-zi-karon."

"Blessed are you, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us to kindle the light of the Day of Remembrance."

[Prayer text: http://m.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/114392/jewish/Holiday-Candle-Lighting-Procedure.htm]

Kiddush

This is the blessing given while holding a cup of wine before the evening meal:

"Attention, Gentlemen!

[Presumably the ladies are listening?]

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine."

All say: "Amen"

"Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has chosen us from among all nations, raised us above all tongues, and made us holy through His commandments. And You, L-rd our G-d, have given us in love this Day of Remembrance, the festival of holy assembly, a day for sounding the shofar, a holy assembly, commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. For You have chosen us and sanctified us from among all the nations, and Your word, our King, is true and

enduring forever. Blessed are You L-rd, King over all the earth, who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance."

All say: "Amen"

[Prayer text:

http://m.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/418881/jewish/Kiddush.htm]

Shehecheyanu

After saying the Kiddush, the Shehecheyanu is then recited for the special occasion of Rosh Hashanah. It states:

"Baruch atah Adonai
Elohenu melekh ha'olam
shehecheyanu vekiymanu
vehigi'anu lazman hazeh"

"Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this occasion."

[Prayer text: <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shehecheyanu>]

HaMotzi

Just like on the Shabbat, this blessing is made over challah bread, although for Rosh Hashanah the bread should be round and dipped in honey to signify that the coming year will be a sweet one:

Ba-ruch atah A-do-nay, E-lo-hei-nu
Melech Ha-Olam,
hamotzie le-chem min ha-ar-etz.

Blessed are You, L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

[Prayer text: http://m.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/4839/jewish/Rosh-Hashanah-Eve-Meal.htm]

Blessing over fruit

As with the challah, Rosh Hashanah is also marked by dipping apples in honey. Before eating, the following is recited:

Ba-ruch a-tah Ado-nai E-lo-hei-nu
me-lech ha-olam
bo-re pri ha-etz.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

Ye-hi ratzon she-ti-cha-desh alei-nu
shanah tovah u-m'tu-kah.

[remember the greeting?]

May it be Your will to renew for us a good and sweet year

[and we would add...]

in our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.”

[Last line occurs in the text from <http://www.ibtimes.com/rosh-hashanah-2016-6-prayers-recite-jewish-new-year-2424802?amp=1>. Main prayer text:

http://m.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/4839/jewish/Rosh-Hashanah-Eve-Meal.htm]

Shofar blessing

The shofar-blower recites two blessings, and then blows a set sequence of three kinds of blasts:

[Attempt to play these as below]

- 1) *Tekiah*—an uninterrupted blast lasting for several seconds.
- 2) *Shevarim*—three medium-length blasts.
- 3) *Teruah*—a minimum of nine very short blasts.

[Above paragraph from

http://m.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/735522/jewish/Printable-Rosh-Hashanah-Guide-2016.htm]

During Rosh Hashanah, a shofar – a hollowed out ram’s horn – is traditionally blown up to 100 times. Following the sounding of the horn, the following blessing is read:

"Blessed are You, Lord our God, king of the universe, who sanctifies us with his commandments and commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar."

We come before a cosmic God – the one who loves the cosmos ("the world") so much that He is reconciling all of Creation to Himself.

Tashlich Prayer [last one!]

Tashlich is the ritual of going to a body of water and tossing in bread crumbs as a ceremonial casting away of the sins of the previous year:

"Who is like you, God, who removes iniquity and forgives transgression of the remainder of his heritage? He doesn't remain angry forever because he desires kindness. He will return and he will be merciful to us, and he will conquer our iniquities, and he will cast them into the depths of the sea. Give faithfulness to Jacob, kindness to Abraham like that you swore to our ancestors from long ago. From the straits I called upon God and with abounding relief God answered me. God is with me, I will not be afraid, what can man do to me? God is with me to help me, and I will see my foes [annihilated]. It is better to take refuge in God than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in God, than to rely on nobles."

<http://www.ibtimes.com/rosh-hashanah-2016-6-prayers-recite-jewish-new-year-2424802?amp=1>

We're only human. This year, let's put our trust in the Lord our God, King of the Universe.

In the name of Yeshua HaMoshiach!

Amen.