

Rosh Hashanah

This fact sheet on the holiday comes from Jewish Care.

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. It is seen as a time of judgement when a person goes before G-d to have their actions over the past year weighed up and their fate decided for the coming year.

Before Rosh Hashanah

For many, this festival starts a month before. The aim during this time is to improve yourself by doing good things. Some activities include:

- visiting the sick
- giving more to charity than usual
- paying debts
- ending rows
- visiting the graves of loved ones

During Rosh Hashanah

Religious services take place on both mornings of the festival. The time from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur is known as the Ten Days of Repentance. During these days, each person thinks about their actions and has the chance to ask others to forgive them.

This time has many important traditions:

The Shofar. The Shofar is blown in the days leading up to Rosh Hashanah and before Yom Kippur, but it is not blown on the Sabbath (Saturday). It is a very important commandment to hear the sound of the Shofar, as it brings emotions with its soulful sound and symbolism of the past, present and future.

Charity. Rosh Hashanah is often a time when people give tzedakah (charity), become volunteers or get involved with a social action project. It is a time where there is a real sense of communal responsibility.

Sweetness. At Rosh Hashanah, we want to have a sweet new year, therefore people eat sweet foods rather than sour or spicy foods. It is traditional to have apples and honey and dip challah into honey rather than salt.

Greetings. The common greeting at this time is L'shanah tovah ("for a good year"). This is a shortening of "L'shanah tovah tikatev v'taihatem" (or to women, "L'shanah tovah tikatevi v'taihatemi"), which means "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year." Alternatively, you can say, "good Yom Tov."

Other Rosh Hashanah activities include:

- Sending New Year cards to family and friends.
- Visiting the graves of family members.
- Eating honey cake
- Tasting New fruits of the season (especially dates, pomegranates and figs)
- Using white as a symbol of purity. It is used in the home and in the synagogue. Many men wear a white head covering (kippa or cupple) and women may wear a white scarf or piece of clothing.

Overall, Rosh Hashanah is about thinking about the past year and making New Year resolutions for the coming year about how to be a better person.