

ROSH HASHANAH AND OTHER JEWISH HOLIDAYS

by Heather L. Bode





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AT A GLANCE

- Judaism is one of the world's oldest religions. It is about 4,000 years old.
- Abraham is the father of the Jewish people. Moses is the greatest prophet of Judaism.
- Israel is a small country that links the continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia. It was an important trade route in ancient times, making it appealing to many empires.
- Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. Jewish people make plans for the year ahead.
- Yom Kippur is a solemn holiday. The Jewish people fast and show they are sorry for their sins.

ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR

Rosh Hashanah means “head of the year” in Hebrew. It is the Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashanah is also called the Feast of Trumpets.

In some ways, Rosh Hashanah is similar to New Year celebrations in other cultures. It is a time to look back and reflect. People think about what they did in the past year. Then they make plans for the year ahead.

On Rosh Hashanah, the sound of the shofar, or ram’s horn instrument, reminds Jews to consider their wrongdoings of the past year and repent.





Jews gather at a lake in Uman, Ukraine, to celebrate Rosh Hashanah.

But Rosh Hashanah is also filled with rich symbols and meaning.

TESHUBAH

Many Jewish holidays recall events from Jewish history. Rosh Hashanah does not. Instead, it is a time for teshubah. This means repentance. People show

repentance when they are sorry for the wrongs they have done. Then they think about how to make changes in the New Year.

Rosh Hashanah includes a custom called tashlik. Jewish people walk to a body of water. This might be a lake or river. Then they throw bread into the water. Tossing the bread is a symbol. It represents getting rid of their sins, or actions that go against God's laws. This allows them to start fresh in the New Year.

A Rosh Hashanah greeting is, "May you be written and sealed for a good year."⁴ Some Jews believe there is a Book of Life. On Rosh Hashanah, God opens this book. He writes down who will live and who will die in the New Year. This belief reminds

The Days of Awe are a time for good deeds. Jews apologize to each other. They ask for forgiveness. They prepare for Yom Kippur.

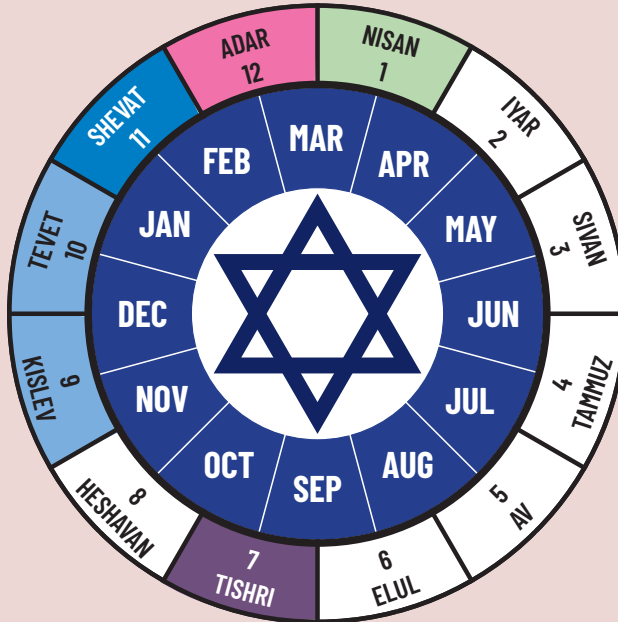
YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the Jewish year. Yom Kippur means Day of Atonement. *Yom* is Hebrew for “day.” *Kippur* is Hebrew

The Jewish Calendar

Days in the Jewish calendar begin when the sun sets. Jewish holidays begin at sunset the day before the actual holiday. The Jewish calendar is lunar. It goes by the phases of the moon. Moon phases determine when the Jewish holidays will be. The Jewish calendar has names for each month. These months start on a new moon.

THE JEWISH CALENDAR



Rosh Hashanah= 1 Tishri
Yom Kippur= 10 Tishri
Hanukkah= 25 Kislev to 2 or 3 Tevet

Tu B' Shevat= 15 Shevat
Purim= 14 or 15 Adar
Passover= 15 to 22 Nisan

Source: Sid Z. Leiman, "Jewish Religious Year," Encyclopedia Britannica, October 17, 2024. www.britannica.com.

The Jewish calendar is based on the positions of the sun and moon. This graphic shows how the Jewish months and holidays align with the standard calendar.

Yom Kippur is a somber holiday. But at the end, there is joy. People hear of God's forgiveness. Families and friends gather to share a meal. They break the fast.

GLOSSARY

covenant

a promise or agreement between two people

famine

an extreme shortage of food

manna

food sent by God while the Israelites traveled through the desert

menorah

a candlestand with nine branches used during Hanukkah

miracle

a supernatural event that cannot be explained

pagans

people who worship many gods

prophet

a person carrying messages from a god or gods

sacrifice

to offer something valuable to a god

synagogues

Jewish places of worship

SOURCE NOTES

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