

jewbelong

ROSH HASHANAH

Cheat Sheet

What is Rosh Hashanah?

Basic: Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year. (It translates to "Head of the Year" in Hebrew.) A little like December 31st, but without the champagne. Together, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, are known as the High Holidays, aka High Holy Days and to many people they are the most important Jewish holidays of the year.

When is Rosh Hashanah?

So, you'd think this would be an easy answer, but us Jews like to keep people guessing. This is because the dates change every year since the Jewish calendar is based on the lunar (moon) calendar, whereas the United States and many other places use the Gregorian (solar) calendar. To add to the confusion, Jewish holidays begin at sundown on the evening before the date indicated on your Google/Outlook/Apple calendar. This year (2023) Rosh Hashanah starts at sundown on Friday, September 15th and ends at sundown on Sunday, September 17th. Since it's a weekend you won't have to worry about it, but most Jewish people take the first full day of the holiday (this year that's Saturday, September 16th) off from work and school, and many of them go to synagogue and then have a big lunch with family or friends. And just to keep your head spinning, on the Hebrew Calendar, we are going into year 5784.

What is Rosh Hashanah, really?

At the core, Rosh Hashanah is about cleaning up your life so you can start the New Year with a fresh slate. This mostly means thinking about the past twelve months and taking responsibility for where you didn't (and of course did) show up for yourself and those you love. At JewBelong we think of Rosh Hashanah as being about the trifecta of forgiveness: apologizing, forgiving, and receiving forgiveness. Making amends with loved ones and forgiving yourself can be the most powerful part of the holiday.

Do I need to go to synagogue to celebrate?

The short answer is no, but there is something special about celebrating in community. Many of the prayers at synagogue are beautiful and the sermons are thought provoking. It's also cool to hear the shofar, which is the ram's horn that is blown on the holiday. However, the reason JewBelong puts so much work into our free High Holidays Booklet, is so that everyone, whether they go to Synagogue or not, can celebrate!

Tickets! Get your tickets here!

So we hear a lot of bitching about the price of High Holidays tickets, and we sort of get it. However, it's super expensive to operate any house of worship and many synagogues (and churches) are sucking wind when it comes to membership. All that being said, if you can afford it, be a mensch and buy a ticket. If you can't afford it, call around. The less fancy synagogues have less expensive tickets and some are free.

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Things not to miss out on, whether you go to synagogue or not:

- Tashlich: Tashlich, which means “to cast” in Hebrew, as in cast off your sins into water is one of those little known, but fabulous don’t-miss Jewish High Holidays rituals.
- Apples and honey: Dipping apples in honey is a tradition to mark the beginning of a sweet new year, and is also delicious.
- Wishing people L’Shanah tovah: It’s the Hebrew version of “good new year.” Shanah is year, tov is good. Or say “Happy New Year” if you feel weird about the Hebrew.
- JewBelong’s Personal Roadmap: If you’re like, well anyone ever, there are probably some things in your life you’d like to change about yourself. JewBelong’s Personal Roadmap will help you get real with yourself by asking questions like: If I knew I couldn’t fail, what would I try to accomplish? What important decision did I avoid making last year? For some of us, the Personal Roadmap is the most important part of the holiday. It can be transformative, especially when you share your answers out loud with someone.
- JewBelong’s free High Holidays booklet: It’s a perfect mix of blessings, songs, and readings to add meaning to the holiday. It’s best when read out loud with friends and family.

We wish you a happy and healthy new year! L’Shanah tovah!