

# Rosh Hashanah

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**Rosh Hashanah**, literally "Head of the Year," marks the beginning of the Jewish New Year. It also marks the beginning of the ten Days of Awe leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The Days of Awe are a period of introspection and repentance in preparation for Yom Kippur.

In the Jewish calendar, Rosh Hashanah falls on the first two days of the month of Tishrei.

The Bible does not refer to the holiday as

Rosh Hashanah; rather, it describes the holiday as Yom Hazikaron, the **Day of Remembrance**, or Yom Teruah, the **Day of the Blowing of the Shofar** or **Feast of Trumpets** (Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6). During synagogue services, the Jewish community sounds the *shofar* (ram's horn) as a call to repentance.

Special foods are eaten during Rosh Hashanah - for example, we dip apples in honey to symbolize a good and sweet new year. Traditionally, we eat pomegranates as part of the holiday celebration, because we hope our good deeds in the coming year will be as numerous as the seeds of a pomegranate.

**Tashlich**, "you will cast," is one of the most significant observances of Rosh Hashanah. During Tashlich, Jewish communities gather along bodies of running water to say prayers and toss bits of bread into the flowing water, symbolizing the casting of one's sins into the depths of the sea, as the prophet Micah states, "He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19).

Paul speaks of the resurrection of the dead at the sound of the blowing of the *shofar* (I Cor. 15:50-54; I Thes. 4:13-18). During this time, God will transform the bodies of believers who have died, giving us new, immortal bodies. The sounding of the *shofar* encourages us to remember that our present bodies are only temporary, but we look forward to our eternal bodies, in which we will live in an unbroken relationship with God.



# Rosh Hashanah FAQ

## 1. When is Rosh Hashanah?

Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown on the first day of the Jewish month of Tishrei. The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, and the month of Tishrei always begins in either September or October, depending on the year. In 2013, Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown on the evening of Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>. In modern observance, Rosh Hashanah lasts for two days. Each Jewish day begins at sundown and continues until sundown of the next day. This tradition developed out of the creation account in the Torah, where it says, "the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:5).

## 2. What does Rosh Hashanah celebrate?

The Bible does not refer to the holiday as Rosh Hashanah, but rather as "a memorial of blowing of trumpets," *zikron teruah* (Lev. 23:24) and later as the "day of blowing of trumpets," *yom teruah* (Num. 29:1). The Scripture does not explicitly explain the reason for the holiday, but states it is a day of "rest," set aside for various sacrifices (Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6). The blowing of trumpets functions as a means of calling the nation to repentance. Later Jewish tradition added various other names to the holiday: **Yom HaZikaron** (Day of Remembrance); **Yom HaDin** (Day of Judgment); **Yom HaKeseh** (Day of Concealment for sins) and Rosh Hashanah (Head of the Year).

Today, Rosh Hashanah, as the Jewish New Year, marks the beginning of the civil calendar. It also begins a ten-day period of repentance and self-examination, known as the "days of awe," *yamim nora'im* in Hebrew. According to Jewish tradition, God keeps the Book of Life open during the "Days of Awe" and finalizes His judgment on the final day, **Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement).

Blowing the *shofar* (ram's horn) remains one of the main features of Rosh Hashanah. The blowing of the *shofar* calls the nation to repentance. In Psalm 81:1-4, blowing the shofar symbolizes overwhelming joy during worship. It also represents hope for the arrival of the Messiah (Zech. 9:14).

## 3. Why do we still celebrate Old Testament holidays like Rosh Hashanah?

Believers in Messiah Jesus have freedom to celebrate these holidays or not to do so. Celebration of these festivals is a great way to draw attention to Messiah, as each of the appointed festivals in Leviticus 23 points to Jesus, and remembering His first coming and looking forward to His return (see question #6).

## 4. How is Rosh Hashanah the New Year?

Exodus 12 states that the Jewish year begins with the month of Passover, which is known in the Jewish calendar as Nisan (Ex. 12:2) and falls in the spring. Tishrei, the month of Rosh Hashanah, is actually the seventh month in the Jewish calendar. If Rosh Hashanah is the first day of the seventh month, then why is Rosh Hashanah considered the Jewish New Year?

In Jewish tradition, there are several new years. The month of Nisan represents the beginning of the religious year and the start for calculating the reign of kings, but Tishrei, according to Jewish tradition, signifies the beginning of the creation of the world. The Jewish civil calendar thus moves ahead on every Rosh Hashanah. On the evening of September 16, 2012, the Jewish calendar will turn from 5772 to 5773.

## 5. What are the traditions of Rosh Hashanah?

Rosh Hashanah has many fascinating traditions. Although it is a joyous holiday, celebrating the dawn of a new year, it also commences a season of reflection and repentance. Since the holiday is predominantly a religious celebration, many of the significant observances take place within a traditional synagogue service. The special Rosh Hashanah prayers focus upon judgment, repentance, God's kingship, and remembrance. Probably the most stirring moment of synagogue service is the sounding of the *shofar*, ram's horn. The sounding of the *shofar* reminds the community of God's kingship over Israel. It also calls the nation to repentance and a period of introspection during the ten Days of Awe leading up to Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).

Special passages of Scripture are read during Rosh Hashanah, most notably the story of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22. Some Jewish traditions say that the binding of Isaac took place on Rosh Hashanah, and God's provision of a ram as a replacement for Isaac connects the story to Rosh Hashanah, on which the nation hears the sound of the ram's horn. The sounding of the *shofar* also helps remind the nation of God's provision of a substitute for His people.

Sometime in the afternoon of Rosh Hashanah or during the ten Days of Awe, many Jewish people participate in a poignant ceremony called **Tashlich**, which means "casting off." It involves gathering along bodies of running water to say prayers and cast small bits of bread into the water, symbolizing the casting of sins into the depths of the sea, as the prophet Micah states, "He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

Rosh Hashanah also has many holiday foods associated with the celebration. Throughout the year, the Jewish community eats special braided bread, known as *challah*, on Friday night to celebrate Shabbat. During Rosh Hashanah, we eat a round *challah*, whose shape represents the never-ending cycle of years – as one year ends, another year begins. The *challah* also represents a crown, because on Rosh Hashanah we recognize God as King.

Other symbolic foods include apples dipped in honey, symbolizing a sweet new year, and pomegranates, which symbolize the numerous good deeds we hope to do in the coming year, just

as the pomegranate has numerous seeds.

## **6. Does Rosh Hashanah have any prophetic significance?**

The Rosh Hashanah service focuses upon the blowing of the *shofar*, which is sounded 100 times in modern services. It is possible that Paul alludes to this Jewish tradition when he speaks of the last trumpet at the rapture:

*"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"* (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

In his letter to the Thessalonians, he also writes,

*"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

Since Rosh Hashanah is the "Day of the Sounding of the Shofar" it looks forward to the moment when we hear the great sound of the *shofar* during the last days. At this time, God will transform the bodies of believers who have died, giving them new, immortal bodies. The sounding of the shofar thus encourages us to remember that our present bodies are only temporary, but we look forward to our eternal bodies, in which we will see the Lord face to face and be with Him forever.

# Faith Requires Risk: Reflections on the Binding of Isaac

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During Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish community traditionally reads the *Akedah*, the story of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22. The sounding of the *shofar* (ram's horn) reminds us of the ram sacrificed in Isaac's place. The Akedah shows how faith requires risk.

When God calls to Abraham, he immediately responds, "Here I am." Abraham was attentive to God's voice, and he obediently followed His instruction. God told Abraham to take Isaac and go to the land of Moriah. Four times God emphasizes which son He requires Abraham to take on his journey by repeating: "your son," "your only one," "whom you love," "Isaac." The fourfold repetition of these references to Abraham's son emphasizes Isaac's position as the son of promise. God is asking Abraham to surrender everything.

Abraham does not ask any questions. He does not challenge God's motives or dispute God's sanity. He immediately begins taking the necessary steps to follow God's instructions obediently. He wakes up early in the morning, gathers his entourage and makes the preparations for the journey. Abraham does not delay or waste any time in fulfilling God's command. Abraham had waited years for Sarah to give birth to the son through whom God had promised to make a great nation. Even though God's command seems to contradict His earlier promise, Abraham did not hesitate in carrying out His instruction.

When Abraham and his entourage arrive at the mountain he confidently explains to his servants that he and his son will go up the mountain to offer a sacrifice, and that both will return to the base camp. On their way up the mountain, Isaac inquired about the lamb for the burnt offering. Abraham replied with certainty, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering."

Although Abraham did not know exactly how God would supply his need, he understood that God would not abandon him, nor would He fail to keep His promise of making a great nation through Isaac. At the last moment, after Abraham had bound Isaac and placed him upon the altar, the Angel of the Lord stopped Abraham from slaying his son. Abraham then noticed a ram caught in the thicket by its horns, which he offered as a sacrifice in place of Isaac.

Abraham's faithful obedience reminds us that we will never experience a robust relationship with God until we step out in faith. Too often we would rather have a life of safety and control than a vibrant life courageously following God. Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost write in their book, *The Faith of Leap: Embracing a Theology of Risk, Adventure & Courage*, "When our need for security becomes obsessive, we remove ourselves from the journey of discipleship!"

Faith does not promise a life that is safe or secure, nor does it guarantee an easy life. Faith requires risk. It forces us to follow God into a life of adventure. If we don't risk our safety and security by stepping out in faith, we will never experience God's provision. If Abraham had not risked everything and obediently followed God's instruction, he would not have discovered God's

provision and blessing.

## **Podcast: The Akedah: Lessons from Testing**

[Download "The Akedah: Lessons from Testing" \(mp3 file, 12 MB\)](#)

# **Rosh Hashanah Recipes**

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*At home, our family tradition is to dip slices of apple or challah into honey. "May it be a good, sweet year - shanah tovah u-metukah" we say to each other, and we exchange sweet, sticky kisses. These recipes provide a new twist on this tradition - enjoy!*

## **Apple and Honey Sorbet**

You can serve this sorbet at your Rosh Hashanah meal between first and main course. It is white (flecked with bright green) - tangy from the green apples, and sweet with honey. Fresh and fabulous.

- 1 1/4 pounds Granny Smith apples, cored and thinly sliced
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 1/2 lemons, juiced
- 1 tablespoon honey

1. In a large, resealable plastic bag or plastic container with a lid, mix apples with the juice of 1/2 lemon. Freeze for several hours or overnight.
2. In a small saucepan, bring water and sugar to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and stir in honey. Cool completely.
3. Place apple in a blender, and liquidize them with juice of 1 lemon and the cooled sugar syrup until as smooth as possible. The peel will add texture, and prevent the mixture from being completely smooth.
4. Transfer the mixture to an ice cream machine and freeze according to directions. Leave the sorbet out to soften 10 minutes prior to serving.

## **Rosh Hashanah Apple & Honey Breakfast Cake**

(16 servings)

- 2 cups. all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp cloves
- 1/2 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 cup. margarine or butter, softened
- 1 cup honey + 3 Tbs.
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup. orange juice
- 2 1/2 cups. dried apples

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease a 2 quart baking dish; set aside. In a small bowl stir together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, cloves, sugar, and baking soda. Set aside. In a mixing bowl beat margarine with an electric mixer on medium speed for 30 seconds. Add the 1 cup honey and eggs; beat until smooth. Add flour mixture and orange juice alternately to the beaten mixture, beating on low speed until just combined. Pour batter into prepared pan.

Bake for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, pour boiling water over apples to cover; let stand 15 minutes; drain well. Sprinkle cake with apples. Bake 15-20 minutes more or until a wooden toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. In a small saucepan, heat the 3 Tbs. honey just until warm; drizzle over cake.

## **Sweet and Sour Braised Brisket**

Makes 8 to 10 servings.

- 1 (6-pound) brisket
- Salt
- Vegetable oil
- 1/2 pound carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
- Few stalks celery, cut into big chunks
- 3 medium onions, peeled and cut into eights
- Cloves from 1 head garlic, peeled and lightly smashed
- 26-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 1/3 cup light brown sugar
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar

Preheat oven to 200 degrees F.

Rub brisket generously with salt and vegetable oil.

Heat a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add vegetable oil to evenly coat pan and when

the oil is hot and is just beginning to smoke, add the brisket and brown on both sides. Transfer the brisket to a shallow baking dish. Add the vegetables to the saute pan. Cook until they brown and start to soften, about 5 minutes. Then pour the vegetables over the brisket.

Whisk together the tomatoes, sugar, stock and vinegar in a mixing bowl then pour it into the same saute pan. Cook for a few minutes to get all the flavor out of the skillet, and then pour over the brisket. It should be at least 3/4 of the way submersed in the liquid. Cover the dish loosely with aluminum foil and bake for 8 to 10 hours until tender and the meat begins to fall apart. Slice thinly and serve with veggies and cooking liquid.

## **Mom's Authentic Kosher Cholent Recipe**

Servings: 8

"Chuck roast with kidney beans, barley, and potatoes makes a very filling beef stew. It cooks at 200 degrees Fahrenheit for 10 to 15 hours."

- 3 onions, quartered
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 4 pounds chuck roast, cut into large chunks
- 1 cup dry kidney beans
- 1 cup dried pinto beans
- 1 cup pearl barley
- 5 large potatoes, peeled and cut into thirds
- boiling water to cover
- 2 (1 ounce) packages dry onion and mushroom soup mix
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- salt and pepper to taste

1. In a large oven-safe pot or roasting pan, sauté onions in oil over medium heat.
2. Add meat, and brown well on all sides.
3. Mix in beans; stir continuously until the beans start to shrivel. Stir in the barley. Add potatoes, and add just enough boiling water to cover the meat and potatoes. Mix in dry soup mix and garlic. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, lower heat, and simmer partially covered for 20 minutes on stove top.
4. Preheat oven to 200 degrees F.
5. Cover pot tightly, and place in preheated oven. Allow to cook overnight for at least 10 to 15 hours. Check periodically to make sure you have enough liquid to cover; add small amounts of



water if needed. Do not stir; stirring will break up the chunks of potatoes.

## **Rosh Hashanah Challah**

Yields two braided loaves.

- 2 1/2 cups warm water (110 degrees F)
- 1 tablespoon active dry yeast
- 1/2 cup honey
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 eggs plus one more egg
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 8 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup golden raisins

In a large bowl, sprinkle yeast over barely warm water. Beat in honey, oil, 3 eggs, and salt. Add the flour one cup at a time, beating after each addition, graduating to kneading with hands as dough thickens. Add raisins. Knead until smooth and elastic and no longer sticky, adding flour as needed. Cover with a damp clean cloth and let rise for 1 1/2 hours or until dough has doubled in bulk.

Punch down the risen dough and turn out onto floured board. Divide in half and knead each half for five minutes or so, adding flour as needed to keep from getting sticky. Divide each half into thirds and roll into long snake about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Pinch the ends of the three snakes together firmly and braid from middle. Form into a round braided loaf by bringing ends together, curving the braid into a circle, and pinching the ends together. Grease two baking trays and place finished round on each. Cover with towel and let rise about one hour.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Beat the remaining egg and brush a generous amount over each braid.

Bake at 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) for about 40 minutes. Bread should have a nice hollow sound when thumped on the bottom. Cool on a rack for at least one hour before slicing.