

Jewish New Year | Welcome

Jewish New Year

Jewish New Year, which is known as Rosh Hashanah, is the epitome of festivities in Judaism. With its literal translation of “head of the year”, Rosh Hashanah marks the start of Jewish New Year. Jewish New Year heralds in the days of celebration and remembrance of Jewish past. Celebrated ten days before Yom Kippur, it offers an opportunity to look at the past and plan for the future. Rosh Hashanah is valid not just for humans in Jewish theology but also holds true for animals and legal contracts.

Jewish New Year is celebrated at the end of 29 Elul, always after sunset as per the laws set down in Jewish scriptures. It is never celebrated on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday given the laws set by Jewish religious texts. Elul is a month of repentance and self-examination and Rosh Hashanah marks the end of that catharsis and celebration of Jewish history and traditions. Jewish calendar is based on moon and there is no exact date of Tishrei, or the first day of Jewish New Year. It is, however, celebrated in the months of September and October with a different date each year. It was celebrated on September 8 in 2010 and will be celebrated on

September 28 in 2011, reflecting a fluctuation of 20 days.

There are many traditions and customs associated with the Jewish New Year. Blowing of the Shofar, or Jewish prayer horn, is customary and heralds in the year. It is blown several times during the two days of festivities and with special instructions as laid down in Talmud and other scriptures. Shofar is not blown if Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat so as to comply with Talmudic rules. The holiday was traditionally of one day but now Jews have started celebrating it for two days. Jews are expected to abstain from working or indulging in heavy physical tasks during the holiday.

After the sunset on 29 Elul, festivities begun with long Synagogue services with special prayers added for the occasion. The most common greeting during the holiday is shana tova, or good year. On the day of the Jewish New Year, special meals are cooked including the famous braided bread, Challah, which represents the completion of a year cycle. Honey and apple have a special significance in Jewish New Year as they represent happiness and health. Apples are dipped into honey and served to guests and family members alike to mark the occasion. It is believed that doing so will protect them from ills and will bestow them with good health and contentment.

Other foods eaten during Jewish New Year include Gefilte fish, dates, black-eyed peas, spinach, and gourd, among others. Fruits are consumed during second night of the festival in Jewish communities that celebrate the second day of Tishrie; others have festivities only on the first day. Some Jews, especially the Orthodox ones, also perform Tashlikh, where they throw pebbles or bread into natural flowing water as a way of casting off sins. Jewish New Year ends with a wait for Yom Kippur, which is a sober holiday of fasting and prayers.

New Year Celebrations

Many different cultures celebrate New Year at many different times of the lunar calendar. The Jewish New Year is usually in early autumn whereas the Chinese New Year tends to be in late winter / early spring. Most cultures celebrate New Year according to the lunar calendar on 1st January. It has become

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an international tradition to have extravagant
firework displays to see in the new year.