

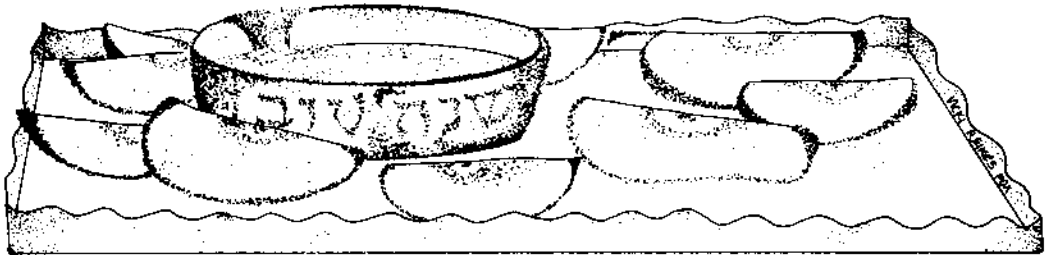
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ROSH HASHANAH— THE NEW YEAR

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a holy day; you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the shofar is trumpeted (Numbers 29:1).

THE holiday of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins the autumn season filled with Jewish holidays. This holy day of blowing the *shofar*, the ram's horn, is based on several biblical references and heralds the new year.

Rosh Hashanah, which literally means the head of the year, arrives in September or October, depending on the particular year. It is celebrated as a two-day holiday in most communities, including Israel, although some Reform and Reconstructionist synagogues celebrate only one day.





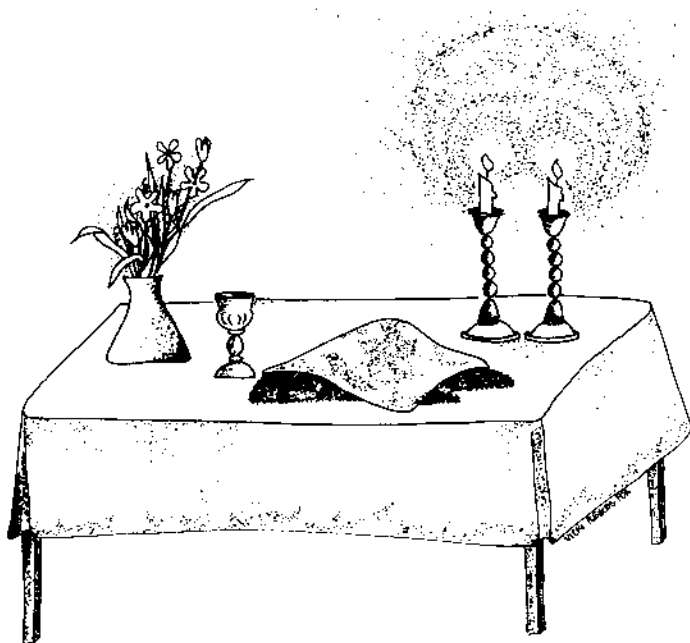
Rosh Hashanah is a new year's celebration unlike a secular American new year. It is serious, yet also joyous. The Jewish new year is one that emphasizes a personal spiritual renewal linked with an ancient form of prayer and personal reflection. It is a time when Jews pray for a year of life and health for themselves, their loved ones, and the whole world.

The Jewish new year requires Jews to stop the pace of busy lives by shutting out other distractions and focusing on renewing ties with family and friends. The new year emphasizes the creation of the world and challenges people to consider this and other beginning moments.

We take stock of our lives. We ask: Where are we now in our relationships and our goals? Where are we going? This process of introspection known as the Ten Days of Awe begins at Rosh Hashanah and continues through Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

GREETINGS

Most Jewish holidays have unique greetings. "*L'shana Tovah Tikatayvu*—May you be inscribed for life in the New Year" is the greeting for Rosh Hashanah. Or one can simply say "*L'shana Tovah*—Happy New Year."



This greeting focuses on the essence of the holiday: Each individual wishes for life in the new year. The phrase acknowledges the unspoken Divine role in this plan. Jews ask that God, the Judge and Source of all life, grant life, health, and fulfillment in this coming year.

HOME TRADITIONS

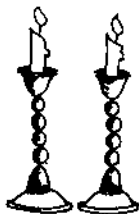
Preparing for the Holiday

In preparation for Rosh Hashanah, consider everything that can be accomplished in the days before the holiday. Buy round *challahs*, apples and honey, wine for *Kiddush*, and candles. Plan for the giving of *tzedakah*, a gift of money or time for a charitable cause, as you plan holiday meal menus and invite guests.

The table for Rosh Hashanah holiday meals is set with an especially nice tablecloth, candlesticks, wine, round challah, and apples and honey. Use fresh flowers to decorate the table.

While Judaism encourages the giving of *tzedakah* throughout all seasons, on Rosh Hashanah this act of generosity takes on greater significance. In the Rosh Hashanah liturgy, *tzedakah* is one of the three ways in which a person can influence God, as the Eternal judges the merits of each person and determines if that person is “written into the Book of Life.”

There are many opportunities for giving *tzedakah* before the holiday. It can be given to social agencies or individuals, food pantries, schools, and hospitals. You can give a gift to any cause whose values you believe in, whether it is a specifically Jewish cause or not.



Evening

As with Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah begins at night with the lighting of two candles and the recitation of the blessing. This occurs with the setting of the sun or when sitting down to dinner. Some families follow candle lighting with a blessing for their children.

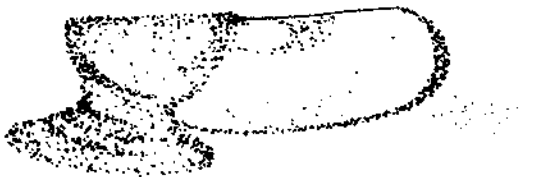


Next the *Sheheyanu* prayer is recited, acknowledging the privilege of having reached this time of the new year together.

At the dinner table the wine is blessed first. Kiddush, the prayer over the wine, is recited over a full cup. For Rosh Hashanah the wording and even the music of this prayer is slightly different from the Shabbat version. This special Kiddush emphasizes that Rosh Hashanah is the day of creation, the day of remembrance, and the day of the shofar sounding.

The challah, a twisted egg or white bread, is baked specially for Rosh Hashanah in round loaves rather than the usual oblong shape used for weekly Shabbat meals. The round loaves represent the continuous seasons of the year and the cycles of time.

The prayer over the challah is recited, and then pieces of the challah are distributed to be dipped by each person into honey before eating. The table ritual is concluded as apple slices are individually dipped in honey, which represents sweetness and hope for the new year.



At the beginning of the meal, some Sephardic Jews eat fish, leaving the head of the fish on the plate, to symbolize a wish for prosperity and good luck in the coming year. They also add special blessings for other fruits and vegetables, all symbolic of different wishes for the new year.

At the conclusion of the meal the *Birkat Hamazon*, the thanksgiving prayer, is sung.

Second Evening

The same rituals are repeated the second night of Rosh Hashanah, including the *Sheheyanu* prayer. In some homes, after eating apples and honey, people also eat special, unique fruits not eaten yet during the year, such as figs, kumquats, pomegranates, and papaya. These are called *Sheheyanu* fruits, fruits that highlight the uniqueness of Rosh Hashanah on the second day of the holiday.



Daytime

Based on an understanding of the biblical verse that defines aspects of Rosh Hashanah, it is a tradition to celebrate the holiday at home and in the synagogue with family and friends. It is a time to refrain from work. “In the seventh month on the first day of the month, you shall observe a complete rest” (Leviticus 23:23). All who are able should not work or attend school on this day.

After morning synagogue services on both days, people gather for a festive lunch. At the table they recite a shorter version of the blessing over the wine and then the blessings over challah and the apples and honey. The Birkat Hamazon follows the conclusion of the meal, and then the afternoon is enjoyed by socializing and relaxing.

SYNAGOGUE TRADITIONS

Rosh Hashanah is a community holiday, and much of its celebration occurs within a synagogue. Although the various movements within Judaism (Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, and Reform) reflect different beliefs about theology and practice of Jewish life, each welcomes the new year with introspection and with common themes of renewal and hope.

Slichot, a preparatory forgiveness service, is held at midnight the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah. At this service, the holiday pleas for forgiveness, recited throughout the Days of Awe, are heard for the first time.

On Rosh Hashanah the prayerbook used is known as the *Machzor*. The intent of this word indicates the hope that people turn and change within the High Holiday period—the Days of Awe. Some synagogues provide a *Machzor* for each congregant; other synagogues require you to bring your own. Be sure to check ahead of time if you are attending a synagogue’s holiday services for the first time so you won’t find yourself without a prayerbook.

For the entire Ten Days of Awe, the synagogue itself looks different. The *Torah* coverings are changed from their everyday colors to white. The same transformation to white is seen on the cover on the reader’s stand and the Ark curtain. In addition, cantors and rabbis are dressed in *kittels*, white robes. White is a symbol of purity, and as we approach God during these days of introspection we do so with a pure heart.

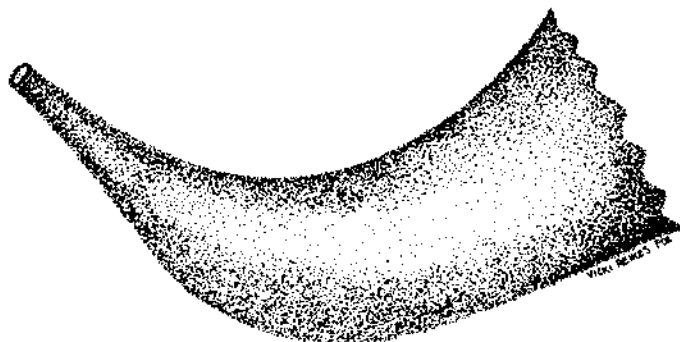
Temple Membership

In almost all synagogues throughout the country, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the two holidays for which it is necessary to call the temple in advance of the

holidays and join the synagogue as a member to participate in the holiday services. At times, holiday tickets are available for nonmembers who are visiting or have just moved into town.

While it is true that any person is welcome to attend services throughout the rest of the year without being a member of a congregation, synagogue membership is important year round. It is crucial that the synagogue, supported by its members, be there to meet individual needs: for support at death, for celebration at births, for marriage ceremonies. The temple is also needed to meet community goals: for Jewish education, for enrichment for children or adults, and for a political presence.

If you are unable to locate a synagogue to join, you may call the national headquarters of the Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, or Reform movements (see Appendix, p. 155) for a temple near you. Often congregations advertise in Jewish newspapers or local papers in the weeks preceding the new year; also check the Yellow Pages for congregations.



Shofar

The shofar is a specially cleaned, treated, and hollowed horn, usually a ram's horn, which carries the potential for deep sounds and high notes. The shofar was sounded in ancient times to declare significant occasions, such as the new moon of each month of the Jewish calendar, the start of the holidays, and special events such as a call for war.

According to tradition, blasting of the shofar occurred as God gave the Torah to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, and the blasting of the shofar occurs whenever Jews are judged by God. The peculiar crying sound of the shofar is a unique symbol for the new year.

The whole congregation stands each time the piercing cry is sounded, and three specific sounds are repeated many times totaling one hundred shofar notes, ending with a final, elongated note.

It has been a tradition to bring the shofar to homebound people who are unable to go to synagogue so that they too may hear the shrill cry. Volunteer shofar blowers go to the homes of shut-ins or to hospitals to fulfill this *mitzvah*, good deed.

The month preceding Rosh Hashanah is set aside to practice blowing the shofar. During this period the shofar is blown at weekday services in synagogues throughout the country, including services at Jewish camps, and in many households this skill is practiced daily. As people practice, the high notes and the breathy sounds remind them of the hard work that entering the new year demands of each Jew.

Services

The evening service welcomes the holiday and sets the mood. It is a custom in the Orthodox community to attend services early in the evening prior to the holiday meal. Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist synagogues begin the evening service after the festive meal.

The morning service contains the major themes of Rosh Hashanah. The Torah reading for the first day describes the matriarch Sarah's fulfillment of her wish for a child. The reading for the second day describes the patriarch Abraham's trial as he responds to God's call. The service is punctuated with the blowing of the shofar.

Central Prayers for the Holiday

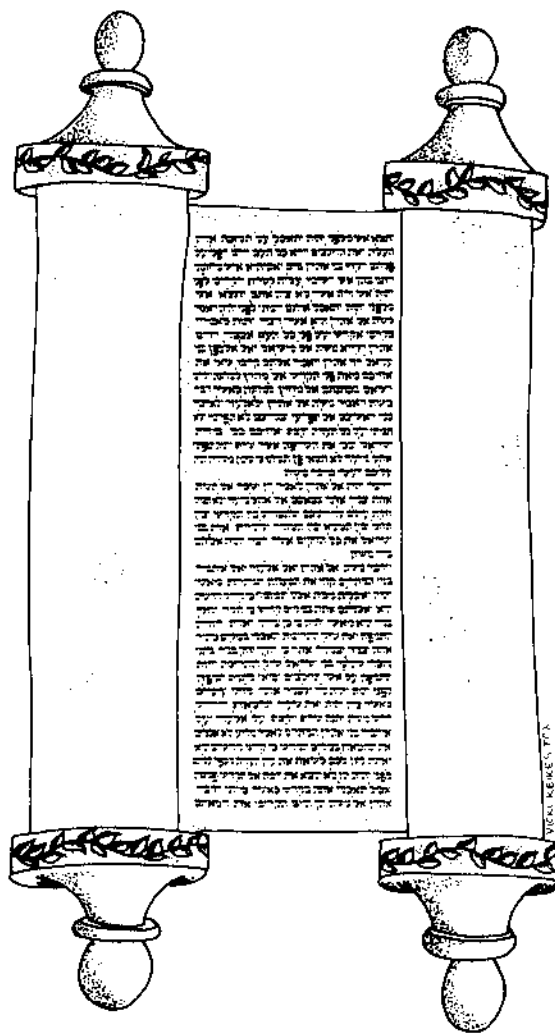
Three central prayers in the Rosh Hashanah service focus on the holiday's special themes: *Avinu Malkaynu*, *Unetaneh Tokef*, and the *Musaf Amidah*.

Repetition of *Avinu Malkaynu*, Our Parent, Our Sovereign, occurs throughout Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is an emotional, highly melodic, eerie-sounding prayer in which Jewish people turn to God. They ask for forgiveness, for protection, for blessings.

This prayer dates from between the second and sixth centuries and includes forty-four requests for God's help in life. The prayer reflects on God as the Source of all Life, the Eternal One, and also acknowledges the Power that is Divine, the Ruler that determines life and death.

Unetaneh Tokef describes the moment in which God judges each individual. The prayer is emotional and dramatic; it is expressed through poetry and eerie music: "On Rosh Hashanah our destiny is written; at the end of Yom Kippur it is sealed. Who shall live and who shall die? Who by fire and who by water?" God determines beginnings and endings and yet human beings struggle to influence the Divine decree.

The prayer continues: "But personal renewal, prayer, and charity avert the harsh



decree.” This reflects the hope that individual actions will influence the Divine to grant life for the next year.

The *Musaf Amidah*, known in Reform synagogues as Service for the Sounding of the Shofar, includes the blowing of the shofar. It accents the three themes found in its three sections. *Malchuiot* (Rulership) proclaims God’s eternal power over all the earth; *Zichronot* (Memory) stresses the historical experiences of the Jewish people which God remembers as God judges each individual; and *Shofarot* (Blessing of the Ram’s Horn) emphasizes the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai with the accompanying sounding of the shofar.



THE ROSH HASHANAH FASHION PARADE

When I was a little girl growing up in the small town of Elgin, Illinois, the holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were a wonderful time for me to see all the women decked out in their holiday best. Life in a small town did not afford frequent opportunities to observe such clothes, hats, and jewelry. To me this was part of the excitement of the holidays.

Only when I was older did I learn that there

was a reason for all this “dressing up.” Rosh Hashanah was the start of a new year, a new chance to set our lives on the right track. And it was only proper to appear ready for those changes. This wasn’t merely a fashion parade: New and special attire had an important purpose after all!

—P.Z.M.



INSIGHTS

Rosh Hashanah Names

Rosh Hashanah, besides meaning the head of the year, is also known by other names that highlight specific concepts that are key to the holiday:

Yom Harat Olam—The Birth Day of the World

According to Jewish tradition, the creation of the world occurred on Rosh Hashanah, which is also the first day of the Jewish month of *Tishre*. Jews acknowledge the birth of the universe as they welcome each new year.

“When was the earth created?” asked the rabbis. “When human beings could acknowledge it.” The actual dating of the beginning of creation is *not* what is commemorated. Rather, Jews commemorate and celebrate that there was a beginning. That beginning gives opportunities for new beginnings as human beings.

Each Jewish new year begins another year in the Jewish calendar. The numbering is a Jewish measure of years since the moment of creation forward. The Rosh Hashanah that begins in the fall of 1992 coincides with the Jewish year 5753. Included in the appendix is a listing of the Jewish calendar dates through 2005.

Yom Hadin—The Judgment Day

Rosh Hashanah is the day when God begins the process of examining the life of



each Jew over the past year. An ancient legend envisions God judging the world and each individual on this day (*Talmud Babli*, Rosh Hashanah, 16b). Each person is responsible for his/her actions and is weighed according to his/her behaviors.

Rosh Hashanah is not only the day when God judges. It is also the day in which individuals search their souls and evaluate their own lives.

There are three concrete ways to change: through *ishuvah*—personal religious renewal; *tfillah*—prayer and introspection; and *tzedakah*—good deeds and gifts of charity.

Yom Zikaron—Day of Remembrance

Rosh Hashanah is the holiday in which God remembers each individual and when Jews remember their essence as a people. It is a holiday that encourages us to remember families, traditions, and identity.

Yom HaTruah—Day of the Shofar Blast

As a human monarch celebrates his/her coronation with drama and sound, so the Divine celebrates the Monarchy each year at Rosh Hashanah. The sound of the shofar allows the spirit of the holidays to enter each individual not through word or activity but through an experience of pure, natural sound.

Repentance Is Possible

The High Holiday cycle emphasizes that repentance is possible for all people. It reassures Jews that they can achieve forgiveness even if they are stubborn, reluctant, defiant, maybe even unbelieving. Judaism emphasizes that all human beings have an opportunity to explore and transform their lives. That optimism is the essence of the Days of Awe.

Bonds Between Parents and Children

The *Akedah*, a Torah portion read on Rosh Hashanah, describes the biblical scene in which Abraham responds to God's call to sacrifice his son. Isaac is spared after God sees that Abraham was willing to obey the command; a ram is sacrificed in Isaac's stead.

Today we consider how to live life to the fullest without sacrificing children's needs for parental love and stability. In the ever increasingly complex world, this theme is a challenge for each parent to consider in the new year.

ACTIVITIES

1. Preparing for spiritual renewal:

a. Ask yourself: What have I learned in the last year? What am I looking forward to in this year? What are my personal goals?

b. Make a large family chart and discuss similarities and differences of what you have learned and what are your goals. Do parents comment on different things they have learned than children do? What do those differences tell you? What can family members learn from each other?

2. In the last century the tradition of sending Rosh Hashanah greeting cards has blossomed. Of course the influence of the greeting card business has touched the Jewish community, but aside from that it is a way for family and friends to send each other wishes for the coming year.

a. Purchasing cards is one way to send greetings.

b. Design your own logo or special decoration and make your own greeting card. Use construction paper to cut out symbols of the holiday and paste onto background material of card stock. Look at the illustrations in this chapter for examples. You can add a “growing family” picture to personalize the greeting even more.

c. You can also write a Rosh Hashanah update every year to send to family and friends. This is a good occasion to write of changes in your lives, issues of concern, and joyous moments.

3. The Rosh Hashanah dinner table can be a wonderful place for sharing on the holiday.

a. Besides special friends and family, you can invite visiting college students, new community members, single adults, single parents and their children, and recent immigrants.

b. Storytelling can be a great addition to the Rosh Hashanah dinner or lunch. Stories can highlight Rosh Hashanahs in other countries or previous years’ memories. They might even have a moral or pose a difficult question.

c. Over Rosh Hashanah lunch after morning services one person might begin to discuss an aspect of the Torah portion or a point of the sermon delivered at the synagogue. This can lead to a lively discussion right through to dessert.

d. Discussions during holiday meals may reflect different generations’ experiences. What was it like growing up and marking Rosh Hashanah in New York? in Teheran? in Vienna? in Moscow? in Elgin, Illinois? in Fullerton, California? Share those differing backgrounds and experiences; the richness and variety of experiences in growing up Jewish will surprise you.

4. Another focus is the opportunity to give each person a blessing. Again, going around the table, one person can begin by asking the person sitting next to her, "What would you like to be blessed with in this year?" After the response, the blesser continues, "May you be blessed with . . . _____ in this upcoming year." This experience can be moving. It also takes the concept of blessing and expands it from only parents blessing children, or rabbis blessing congregants, to a broader experience of blessings that we can give to one another.

5. Books to consider reading for the holiday for young children may include: *Gates of Awe, High Holiday Prayers for Young Children* by R. Orkand, J. Orkand, H. Bogot, (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1991); *Hear, O Israel: About Learning* by Molly Cone (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1971); *Stories for Children* by Isaac Bashevis Singer (New York: Farrar/Strauss/Giroux, 1985). Books for adults may include: *Modern Hebrew Poetry*, edited and translated by Ruth Finer Mintz (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966); *Where Heaven and Earth Touch* by Danny Siegel (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1989).

RECIPES

Preparing the Rosh Hashanah meals can be one way to participate and contribute to the holiday. Special holiday meals may include foods from the Ashkenazic traditions coming from such countries as Germany, Poland, and Russia, and foods from the Sephardic traditions coming from such countries as Turkey, Greece, and Morocco. Each culture in which Jewish people live influences aspects of Jewish traditions, and this is true particularly with food.

SARA'S SWEET-AND-SOUR SALMON

3 or 4 salmon steaks
2 white sliced onions
¾ cup mild vinegar
2 cups water

small handful of sugar
bay leaf
peppercorns
two handfuls raisins

Buy 3 or 4 thinly cut salmon steaks. Cut them in half. Cover them with two sliced white onions. Next make the brine: mix vinegar, water, sugar, bay leaf, peppercorns,

and raisins. Simmer the brine until it boils. Pour it over the fish. Cover the fish and put it in the oven for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Make it several days in advance so it can soak in the spices.

SEPHARDIC STUFFED ZUCCHINI

<i>4 fresh zucchini</i>	<i>juice of 2 lemons</i>
<i>1 lb. ground beef, veal, or turkey</i>	<i>1 can tomato puree</i>
<i>½ cup chopped parsley</i>	<i>1½ cups water</i>
<i>1 finely chopped onion</i>	<i>2 tsp. cumin</i>
<i>2 Tbsp. matzah meal</i>	<i>salt and pepper to taste</i>
<i>2 Tbsp. sugar</i>	

Cut each zucchini into 2 three-inch pieces. Scoop out each piece (saving the insides), leaving the shell for stuffing. Mix meat, parsley, onion, cumin, matzah meal, salt and pepper to taste. Stuff the meat mixture into the zucchini shells. Put all the zucchini scooping into the bottom of a large pot. Arrange the stuffed zucchini in the pot. Pour the tomato puree over it. Add the sugar and lemon juice with the water. Cover and bring to a boil on a high flame, then reduce to a medium flame. Cook for ½ hour and serve with spiced rice.

HIMMEL AND ERDE—THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH

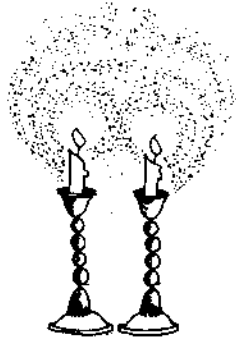
(A German Rosh Hashanah food symbolizing the relationship between people on the earth and God above.)

<i>2 lbs. white potatoes</i>	<i>½ cup margarine</i>
<i>2 lbs. green apples</i>	<i>1 cup honey</i>

Cut apples and potatoes into slices. Layer the slices of potatoes and apples alternately in a glass dish. Dot with margarine and honey. Cover with foil paper. Bake at 400 degrees for an hour. Should be soft and juicy.



ROSH HASHANAH BLESSINGS



Introductory meditation to be recited together before candle lighting:

Today we gather to thank God for all the goodness in our lives, for the beauty of nature, for the love we feel for one another, for the Rosh Hashanah tradition which we share.

May our celebration increase our awareness of your ongoing gifts, O God.

Candle lighting:

(Recite this blessing, then light the candles. If it is also Shabbat, light the candles first, then recite the blessing.)

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, asher keedshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadleek ner shel (Shabbat v') Yom Tov.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who enables us to welcome (Shabbat and) Rosh Hashanah by kindling these lights.

Shehehayanu:

(On the first night of Rosh Hashanah add:)

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, shehehayanu, v'keeyomanu v'higeeyanu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and encouraged us to celebrate this New Year.

Parents' blessing for their children:

(Place hands on children and recite.)

FOR BOYS:

May God touch you as you strive to live in the image of Ephraim and Menashe, leaders who carried on our traditions with pride.

FOR GIRLS:

May God touch you as you strive to live in the image of Sarah and Rebeccah, Rachel and Leah, leaders who carried on our traditions with pride.

CONTINUE SAYING FOR BOTH:

May the Eternal bless you and keep you.

May the Eternal bring you warmth and protect you.

May the Eternal embrace you and grant you peace. Amen.

Rosh Hashanah Evening Kiddush to be used for holiday nights and Shabbat:

(Raise wine cups and recite. Then drink the wine.)

We praise God with this symbol of fullness, and give thanks for the opportunities we have to share life's blessings.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, boray p'ree hagafen.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who creates fruit from the vine.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, asher bachar banu meekol ahm, v'romemanu meekol lashon, v'keedshanu b'meetzvotav. V'teetayn lanu, Adonai Elohaynu, b'ahavah (Shabbatot leemnucha oo) moadeem l'seemcha, chageem u'zmaneem l'sasson et yom (haShabbat hazeh v'et) yom hazeekaron hazeh, yom truah, mikrah kodesh zaycher l'tzeeat meetzrayim. Kee banu bacharta v'otanu keedashta meekol ha-ahmeem, (v'Shabbat oo) moaday kodshecha (b'ahavah oo'vratzon) b'seemcha oo'vsasson heenhaltanu. Baruch Ata Adonai M'kadesh (haShabbat v') Yisrael, v'hazmaneem.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who has chosen us from among all people, sanctified us with holy acts, and given special times and seasons for rejoicing. (Shabbat and) Rosh Hashanah remind us of the times for celebration, recalling this day filled with the call of the shofar and its many memories. You have distinguished us from all people, and have given us (the Shabbat and) holy festivals, full of joy and inspiration. Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who sanctifies (the Shabbat,) the people Israel, and our sacred seasons.

Daytime Kiddush:

(Raise wine cups and recite. Then drink the wine.)

El Moaday Adonai Meekrah-ay kodesh, asher teekrehoo otam b'moadam. VayDaber Moshe et moaday Adonai el b'nay Yisrael.

These are the sacred times appointed by God; and you shall announce them in their season.

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, boray p'ree hagafen.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who creates fruit from the vine.

Blessing over the challah:

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, hamotzi lechem meen ha-aretz.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who creates bread from the earth.

Blessing over the apples and honey:

(Dip apple slices in honey and recite. Then eat the slices.)

Baruch Ata Adonai Elohaynu Melech Haolam, boray p'ree ha aytz.

Blessed are You Adonai, Eternal One, Who creates fruit from the trees.

Eternal, our God, and God of all people, make this new year sweet and good for all.