

## Welcome to Living in Jewish Time...OnLine

*"The High Holy Days move to meet the challenge of harnessing mortality into a force for life... The true goal? A new appreciation for life."*

*Rabbi Irving Greenberg*

Rosh Hashanah begins on Wednesday evening, September 15.

Beth El celebrates together with evening services on September 15

1<sup>st</sup> day services on Thursday, September 16, at 8:30 a.m., and 11:30 a.m.

2<sup>nd</sup> day services on Friday, September 17, at 10:00 a.m.

As we prepare for our New Year, new beginnings celebration, read p. 93-103 from our sourcebook, **The Jewish Holidays**.

### **EXPECTATIONS**

#### **History**

Our Torah teaches, "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, there shall be a sacred assembly, a cessation from work, a day of commemoration proclaimed by the sound of the Shofar." It was a special New Moon festival, set apart by the blowing of the shofar.

The name *Rosh Hashanah*, head of the year, did not become common language until the era of the Talmud, when 4 new years were declared for each year! There, *Rosh Hashanah*, the first of the month of *Tishrei*, is called the New Year for counting years and marks the anniversary of the creation of the world. From this teaching, we find the theme of celebration of beginnings, on a grand and personal scale. We also begin our official 10-day period of *teshuvah*, in which we recognize our failings, ask forgiveness of God and others in our lives, and work toward our own renewal, returning to God and to our true selves.

#### **Important Words**

*L'Shanah Tovah Tikatayvu*: "may you be inscribed for a good year." This is the Rosh Hashanah greeting which expresses the hope that all friends and loved ones will be written in the Book of Life and granted happiness and fulfillment in the year ahead.

*Mahzor*: High Holy Day prayer book. The word "*Mahzor*" literally means "cycle".

*Tefilah*: prayer

*Tzedakah*: righteousness and justice

*T'shuvah*: returning, repentance

These three terms form the core of the *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* teaching, offering us opportunities for transforming ourselves, our community and our relationship with God through our actions.

*Tashlich*: “send off” or “cast away”. After services on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah*, it is traditional to go to a lake, river or other fresh body of water, to symbolically cast off sins by emptying crumbs from one’s pockets into the water.

*Yom Tov*: “good day”. The term has come to mean “holy day”. It is often pronounced *Yuntiff* (*Yiddish*), and the standard holiday greeting is “*Gut Yuntiff*”.

### **Teachings, Customs and Rituals**

1. The central themes of coronation of God as our sovereign, and our placement in the Book of Life hold today as powerful underpinnings to our New Year celebration.
2. *Rosh Hashanah* is a synagogue-focused holiday, with a celebratory home meal beginning the holiday and ample opportunity for visiting family and friends during these holy days.
3. The hearing of the shofar blasts fulfills a central *mitzvah* of *Rosh Hashanah* and awakens us to the call of our people and of our own souls.

*Tekiah*, one long blast to awaken, call out, announce

*Shevarim*, three broken cries, groaning, crying out

*Teruah*, nine staccato trumpet calls, shattering the silence, calling us to battle (ourselves?)

*And a teaching from Rabbi Arthur Green:*

*"Each series of shofar blasts begins and ends with tekiah, a whole note. We were whole, we became broken, but we shall be whole gain. We were whole, broken, even shattered into the fragments of the teruah, but we shall yet be whole again!"*

4. Our liturgy offers special prayers and melodies which mark these days as special and separate from the rest of the year. *Avinu Malkeinu* and *B'sefer Hayim* are samples of thematic prayers with powerful melodies that bind us to these days.
5. Special Torah readings challenge our understanding of relationship to God. We study the birth of Isaac and casting out of Ishmael and Hagar; we struggle

with the binding of Isaac in our second day reading; we hear the beautiful words of Hannah, as she cries out to God.

### **PREPARATION AND CELEBRATION**

1. Buy or prepare a round challah! It symbolizes the flowing cycle of the year and the circle of life
2. Serve apples, dipped in honey, to bring forth a good and sweet year for all

And we call out: *L'shanah Tovah u'm'tukah...* for a good and sweet year!

3. Light candles and sing together the special *Kiddush* for this holiday (found in our Beth El *Mahzor*)
4. Make sure to add *Shehechyanu* to your table prayers, blessing with joy the delight of being together. On the second night, add a new food you haven't eaten yet this season in order to be able to make *Shehechyanu* again!

5. Some fun foods to include:

- the head of a fish (so you should be the head, and not the tail this year!)
- leeks, always a symbol of good luck and fortune

6. Come to services at Beth El. It is so important to pray in community, and we have services both Thursday and Friday, celebrating *Rosh Hashanah* for two days, as almost all Jews throughout the world do. Actually, our synagogue by-laws mandate a second day service, and we make sure we create a full, meaningful experience together both days - song, prayer, discussion, reflection - and joy.

7. Get together with friends, family to perform the ceremony of *Tashlich* at a nearby body of water. After you cast your personal sins away into the flowing waters, you might add a few of these lighter touches:

For ordinary sins: white bread

For particularly dark sins: pumpernickel

For twisted sins: pretzels

For tasteless sins: rice cakes

For the sin of being holier than thou: bagels

For the sin of pride: puff pastry

You get the idea!

*8. and a beautiful teaching from Reb Zalman Schacter-shalomi explains some of the most important sections of our prayers:*

*Malkhuyot (sovereignty of God). There are many places where habits or people rather than God are king. There are certain people in whose presence I cannot be myself. They have the power to flatten out my heart.*

*Zichronot (remembrance): There are memories I cannot let go of even though they are no longer appropriate. Having placed certain resentments in my memory bank, I have difficulty removing them.*

*Shofarot (Shofar call)...From the Hebrew word, shipur, to improve...I must examine the issues in my life to discover which changes are necessary, because without them my life is too terrible to live. Unless I write myself into the book of Life, I am certainly not going to live for another year. I must renew my will to live. Each of us must try to write a page in the Book of Life, consisting of what we desire in the coming year.*

And our next LIVING IN JEWISH TIME  
WORKSHOP, preparing for Sukkot, will meet on  
Sunday, September 26, at 9 a.m., led by Jan Rybeck  
and Lori Silverstone