ROSH HASHANA

INTRODUCTION TO ROSH HASHANA

Introduction to Rosh Hashana

Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the Jewish calendar year (there are three other dates that begin other aspects of the Jewish year).
Rosh Hashana is observed for two days, which are considered to be one continuous day. In *Temple* times, a *cohen* would offer a sacrifice but might not know until the following evening, after the new moon had been seen (or not), whether he had offered the *Rosh Hashana* offering.
Rosh Hashana focuses on the idea of God as King and of our relationship as Jews to that King.

ROSH HASHANA: GREETINGS

Greetings for the New Year

For greetings for the New Year, say:

- *"Ketiva V'Chatima Tova"*

  From: *Rosh Chodesh Elul*
  Until: Eve of *(erev) Rosh Hashana* (when the holiday begins).

- *"L'Shana Tova Tikateiv V'Tichateim"*

  From: First night of *Rosh Hashana* (when the holiday begins)
  Until: *Musaf* of the first day of *Rosh Hashana*.

- *"Gmar Chatima Tova"*

  From: *Musaf Rosh Hashana*
  Until: End of *Yom Kippur*.

- *"Gmar Tov"*

  From: *Yom Kippur*
  Until: *Musaf Hoshana Rabba*.

ROSH HASHANA: PRAYERS

ROSH HASHANA: PRAYERS: WHAT TIME TO START

Rosh Hashana: Prayers: What Time To Start: Ma'ariv and Kiddush

Ma'ariv and evening *kiddush* for *Rosh Hashana* are not started until after dark.

ROSH HASHANA: PRAYERS: SPECIAL BOWING

Rosh Hashana: Prayers: Special Bowing: Musaf

For special bowing during *Rosh Hashana musaf*, please see Waist-Bowing and Knee-Bowing.

ROSH HASHANA: SHOFAR

Rosh Hashana: How Many Shofar Blasts To Hear

Men are required to hear at least 60 *shofar* blasts on *Rosh Hashana* (*l'chatchila*) in order to fulfill the commandment of hearing *shofar*: 30 before the *musaf amida* and 30 afterward. But they fulfill their

requirement (*b'di'avad*) if they have heard at least 30 on each day of *Rosh Hashana*.
Women only need to hear 30 *shofar* blasts on each day of *Rosh Hashana*.

NOTE Although 100 *shofar* blasts are blown each day of *Rosh Hashana*, hearing all 100 is a non-binding custom. You do not need to hear the first blasts or any other particular set, but you must hear blasts that include:

- 3 *tashrat* (*teki'a-shevarim-teru'a-teki'a*) +
- 3 *tashat* (*teki'a-shevarim-teki'a*) +
- 3 *tarat* (*teki'a-teru'a-teki'a*).

Interruptions after Shofar Blessing

Once the blessings have been said before (and for) blowing the *shofar* on *Rosh HaShana*, no one in the congregation may speak or do any action (*hefsek*) that will interrupt the entire process of blessings and the series of blowing the *shofar*. Any speaking that is not related to the *shofar* blowing or to the prayer service is forbidden.

Woman Blowing Shofar

A woman who knows how, may blow the *shofar* for herself and for other women but not for men.

REASON This is because women, who are not required by the *Torah* to hear *shofar* but who have universally accepted that custom, may not fulfill the obligation for men, who are required by the *Torah* to hear the *shofar*.

Practicing Shofar on Rosh Hashana

You may practice blowing a *shofar* on *Rosh Hashana* (unless it coincides with *Shabbat*!).

ROSH HASHANA: EVENING KIDDUSH

ROSH HASHANA: EVENING KIDDUSH: FRUIT FOR SHEHECHEYANU ON SECOND NIGHT

Rosh Hashana: Evening Kiddush: New Fruit for SheHecheyanu on Second Night

Place a “new” fruit--over which you may say *she'hecheyanu*--at the table for *kiddush* on the second night of *Rosh Hashana.*

REASON So the *she'hecheyanu* of *kiddush* also covers the fruit.
NOTE *B'di'avad*, still say *she'hecheyanu* even if you do not have a new fruit.

ROSH HASHANA: SYMBOLIC FOODS (SIMANIM)

Rosh Hashana: Symbolic Foods (Simanim): Which Foods

Eating the special symbolic foods (*simanim*) on *Rosh Hashana* evening is a universally accepted custom.
These may include:

Apple Dipped in Honey
Beets
Black-eyed Peas
Carrots
Dates
Fish Head
Leeks
Pomegranate

Rosh Hashana: Symbolic Foods (Simanim): HaMotzi

On *Rosh Hashana*, before eating the symbolic foods (*simanim)*:

- Make *kiddush*,
- Wash your hands,
- Say *ha'motzi*, and
- Eat bread.

Then eat the symbolic foods (*simanim)*, saying the appropriate blessings (*borei pri ha'eitz*, *borei pri ha'adama*) before eating the *simanim*.

Rosh Hashana: Symbolic Foods (Simanim): God's Name

SITUATION You made up your own *segulot* for *Rosh Hashana*.

WHAT TO DO You may say them with God's name or without, in the *yehi ratzon*.

ROSH HASHANA: CHALLA CUSTOMS

Rosh Hashana: Challa Customs: Round Challa

It is a custom to make round *challa* for *Rosh Hashana* and other *Jewish festivals (*except *Passover!)*, unless *Rosh Hashana* falls on *Shabbat*.

Rosh Hashana: Challa Customs: Challa Dipped in Honey

Eating *challa* dipped in honey on *Rosh Hashana* is a universal custom but is not *halacha*.

ROSH HASHANA: TASHLICH

Rosh Hashana: Tashlich: Introduction to Tashlich

Tashlich is a universal custom with force of *halacha*. Don't feed fish, don't throw crumbs into the water.

Rosh Hashana: Tashlich: When To Say

Ideally, say *tashlich* on the afternoon of the first day of *Rosh Hashana* (unless that is *Shabbat*, in which case say it on the second day of *Rosh Hashana*). You may say it until the end of the day of *Hoshana Rabba*.

Rosh Hashana: Tashlich: How Much To Say

The minimum amount of the *tashlich* service to say is the first paragraph (*mi eil kamocha*).

Rosh Hashana: Tashlich: Where To Say

Tashlich should be said near a running natural stream or a lake but not at a *mikva*.

ROSH HASHANA: END

Rosh Hashana: End: Baruch HaMavdil Bein Kodesh L'Chol and Birkat HaMazon

Saying *Baruch ha'mavdil bein kodesh l'chol* after dark at the end of *Rosh Hashana* (as for *Jewish festivals*) does not affect the additions you will then say in *birkat ha'mazon*.

SITUATION You washed your hands, said *ha'motzi*, began eating your meal on *Rosh Hashana* afternoon, and it is now dark.

WHAT TO DO You may say *Baruch ha'mavdil bein kodesh l'chol* and do *melacha*, and then continue to eat your meal or say *birkat ha'mazon* INCLUDING *ya'aleh v'yavo* and *ha'rachaman hu yichadeish alenu et ha'shana ha'zot l'tova v'livracha*.

© Copyright 2026 Richard B. Aiken | www.practicalhalacha.com