

# Rosh Hashana

A Basic Summary of Holiday Laws  
In a Clear and Simple Style

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Basic

Detailed

## ❖ Erev Rosh Hashanah

- There is a custom to fast on Erev Rosh Hashana<sup>1</sup> and most communities fast until midday.<sup>2</sup>
  - As with most customs, it is advisable that those who fast have in mind not to accept this practice as a vow. Otherwise, it will become one after fasting for three consecutive years.<sup>3</sup>
- Selichos on Erev Rosh Hashanah are much longer than usual. Expect them to last at least an hour or two.
- Tip: Remember to buy the different symbolic foods that are customarily eaten on Rosh Hashanah evening (see your machzor for a list of them). Additionally, be sure to obtain a new fruit, which will be used on the second night of Rosh Hashanah.
- Since this year Shabbos immediately follows Rosh Hashana, it is necessary to make an "Eruv Tavshilin". Its purpose and procedure are described in the attached pamphlet.
- Men and boys customarily use the mikvah today.<sup>4</sup>

## Hataras Nedarim

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, we annul our vows after shacharis. This is done with a group of four men. One man stands in turn before the other three (the "court") who are seated. He declares his wish for annulment and they respond in kind. The specific texts can be found in most siddurim.

- For proper annulment, it is necessary to understand what is being said. The declaration and response may be recited in any language that is understood by the reciter and the listeners<sup>5</sup>.
- The benefit of this annulment is limited to vows that have been made and since forgotten<sup>6</sup>. One who is aware of a particular vow and wishes to annul it must consult a rabbi<sup>7</sup>.
- Although women do not do this procedure, wives should ask their husbands to represent them. In this case, before the husband begins his turn he should state that he is also representing his wife<sup>8</sup>.

## ❖ Rosh Hashanah

- As mentioned above, many of the Rosh Hashanah prayers are only found in a machzor.
- After maariv, specific timely greetings are extended to each other.<sup>9</sup> These are found in the machzor.
  - In most communities, these greetings are only shared the first night of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>10</sup>
- Since the way we act on Rosh Hashanah influences our judgment, one should try very hard not to get angry throughout the Yom Tov.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, one should try not to nap during the daytime of Rosh Hashanah at least until midday.<sup>12</sup>

## Meals

There is an obligation to have a festive meal each evening and day of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>13</sup>

- During the meals, the challah is customarily dipped in honey<sup>14</sup>. Customs vary if this is a substitute, or an addition to, the usual salt. This custom continues through Shmini Atzeres (the eighth day of Sukkos).
- At the evening meal, symbolic foods are eaten and each food is accompanied by a specific prayer.<sup>15</sup> A list of the foods with their appropriate prayers can be found in a machzor.
  - It is important to note that even though the *Ha'motzee* over bread has been recited, the blessing of *Ha'etz* is still necessary before eating the first symbolic fruit.<sup>16</sup> Immediately after the blessing, a bit of the fruit is eaten before continuing with its specific prayer.<sup>17</sup>

- If any of the seven species is present, (such as a date or pomegranate,) it should be eaten first in order that the *Ha'etz* blessing is recited primarily over it.<sup>18</sup>
  - The symbolic vegetables do not require a blessing if they are a type of food that is often eaten during a meal.<sup>19</sup>
- It is customary to avoid eating nuts<sup>20</sup> or sour foods<sup>21</sup> throughout Rosh Hashanah.
  - No restrictions apply if these foods are an insignificant ingredient in a prepared food.<sup>22</sup>
  - Since these food restrictions are customs and not actual obligations, one who is eating at a meal where these foods are served is permitted to eat them if the possibility exists that the host/hostess may otherwise be offended.

## Hearing the Shofar

One hundred shofar blasts are blown in shul each day of Rosh Hashanah: thirty before the musaf prayers, thirty during musaf and forty after musaf.<sup>23</sup>

- For someone who is unable to come to shul, one set of thirty blasts is sufficient.<sup>24</sup>
- Men and boys over bar mitzvah have a Torah obligation to hear the shofar on Rosh Hashanah<sup>25</sup>.
- Although women do not have a strict obligation to hear the shofar, they should still try (if at all possible) to hear at least one set of thirty blasts.<sup>26</sup>
- Children under bar/ bas mitzvah that are old enough to comprehend the concept of hearing the shofar must be trained to fulfill this mitzvah in manner similar to an adult.<sup>27</sup>
- **Children who could become disruptive are not to be brought to shul at this time.**<sup>28</sup>
- It is important to pay attention while the blessings are recited. While listening to the blasts one should have in mind to fulfill the Torah commandment to hear the shofar.
  - One who did not hear the blessings as they were recited by the shofar-blower says them on his or her own prior to hearing the shofar.<sup>29</sup>
- Throughout the second set of shofar blasts (those blown in the middle of musaf) all who are physically capable must stand without leaning on anything. It is proper to stand for the other blasts as well.<sup>30</sup>
  - Similarly, one who is listening to only thirty blasts must try to stand for them.<sup>31</sup>
- This mitzvah may not be interrupted with unnecessary speech starting from when the blessings are recited before the first set of shofar blasts through the very last blast.<sup>32</sup>
- Men may not eat a meal before hearing the shofar<sup>33</sup> but women may eat a meal if it is difficult for them to wait.<sup>34</sup>
- Other than for the mitzvah purpose, it is prohibited for adults to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah (just as is prohibited to play any instrument on Shabbos or Yom Tov).<sup>35</sup>

## Tashlich

Tashlich is a unique prayer that we recite while standing next to a body of water.<sup>36</sup> Various explanations that are given for it can often be found in a machzor.

- It is customarily said on the first day of Rosh Hashanah during the afternoon. Many synagogues say it after mincha.<sup>37</sup>
- Some have a custom to recite tashlich specifically next to a body of water that contains fish.<sup>38</sup> (Note that it is forbidden to feed these fish on Yom Tov.<sup>39</sup>)
- Although there are many additional supplications written in the machzor, the main verse that is recited is "*Mi keil kamocha...v'sashlich b'mitzulos yam kol chatosam*". Who is a G-d like You who pardons sins... and You will cast into the depths of the sea all their sins."

- When the first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos, tashlich is customarily pushed off to the second day of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>40</sup>

### Preparations for the Second Day

It is forbidden to do activity on the first night or day of Rosh Hashanah that is clearly in preparation for the second night or day.<sup>41</sup> Some examples of preparing are washing dishes, setting a table, cooking, and lighting the Yom Tov candles. Only after the first day concludes - at least fifty minutes after sunset - are these activities permitted.

- If this is difficult, a rabbi may be able to suggest some methods of preparation that are permitted.<sup>42</sup>

## ❖ The Second Day of Rosh Hashanah

The second day of Rosh Hashanah is not merely a repetition of the first. Kabbalah teaches us that on each day of Rosh Hashanah different aspects of the world are judged. In fact, the judgment that affects us most as individuals occurs on the second day.<sup>43</sup>

- There are varying customs whether the symbolic foods are eaten and whether the accompanying prayers are recited on the second night of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>44</sup>

### New Fruit

On the second night of Rosh Hashanah, a new fruit is eaten.<sup>45</sup> This is a seasonal fruit or vegetable that one enjoys eating and has not yet tasted it since its season began.<sup>46</sup> The new fruit should be placed on the table before Kiddush. This way, the blessing of *Shehechianu* that is recited will refer to the fruit as well.<sup>47</sup>

For those who have the custom to recite *Shehechianu* during candle lighting, the fruit should be present while it is recited.

- The fruit is eaten right after the challah.<sup>48</sup> The *Ha'etz* (or *Ha'adomah*) blessing is said before eating it (even though a *Hamotzee* was already said over the challah).<sup>49</sup>
- When no new fruit is available, the *Shehechianu* blessing is still recited in Kiddush and in candle lighting (for those who recite it then).<sup>50</sup>

### Havdalah

- This year, Rosh Hashana concludes on Friday night and therefore havdalah is not recited for Rosh Hashana.
  - The Friday night services are also much shorter than usual.

## ❖ Aseres Yemei Teshuvah - The Ten Days of Penitence

The days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the balance of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. They are an auspicious time to make amends for all we have done wrong. Since Hashem only forgives interpersonal sins if the injured party also grants forgiveness, it is essential for people to seek forgiveness from each other as well. It is also important to increase in Torah study during this time as this is the most effective way to connect with Hashem.<sup>51</sup> In addition, there are some changes we make during these important days:

### Pas Yisroel

Two basic laws apply to the type of bread and pastries that a Jewish person may eat: They must be made from kosher ingredients, and they must also be baked by a Jewish person (referred to as *pas yisroel*).<sup>52</sup>

As long as it is clear that only kosher ingredients are used, a leniency exists that permits pastries baked by a non-Jew if they are baked commercially (referred to as *pas palter*).<sup>53</sup> This leniency is commonly relied upon throughout the year<sup>54</sup>, but it should not be relied upon during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. Therefore, barring extenuating circumstances, commercially baked pastries may only be consumed during this time if in addition to being kosher certified, they are also *pas yisroel*. (This is almost always indicated on the packaging.)

## Changes in Prayers

Special changes and additions are made to the Shmoneh Esrei (Amidah) during these days:

- The third blessing concludes differently than usual.
  - If this change was forgotten, the Shmoneh Esrei must be repeated.<sup>55</sup> Of all the changes during this time, only this mistake requires one to repeat the Shmoneh Esrei.
  - One who is unsure what was said should assume that a mistake was made unless he or she was praying from a machzor.<sup>56</sup>
- The eleventh blessing also concludes differently than usual.<sup>57</sup>
- Phrases are added to the first two and last two blessings of *Shmoneh Esrei*. When the chazzan repeats the *Shmoneh Esrei*, these phrases are said aloud by the congregation.<sup>58</sup>
- During the weekdays, *avinu malkein* is recited after *Shmoneh Esrei* of shacharis and mincha.<sup>59</sup>
- During shacharis, some communities recite psalm 130 before Borchu.

## ❖ Tzom Gedalyah

Tzom Gedalyah is a fast-day that commemorates the final blow in the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdosh (Temple), roughly 2,500 years ago.<sup>60</sup>

- The fast begins at dawn and should conclude no earlier than fifty minutes after sunset. In instances of significant need, it may be concluded forty-one minutes after sunset.<sup>61</sup>
- Tasteless medicine may be taken with whatever amount of water is necessary. Regarding medicine that has a taste, a rabbi should be consulted.<sup>62</sup>
- Pregnant, nursing, elderly or infirm people that find it difficult to fast should consult a rabbi.<sup>63</sup>
  - Even those who are exempt from fasting may not eat particularly tasty foods or treats.<sup>64</sup>
- Prayers on a fast day are longer than on a usual day. At the synagogue shacharis, be prepared for a Torah reading, and mincha is twice as long as usual and it includes both a Torah and a Haftarah reading.
  - During the Torah readings, specific verses are recited aloud by the congregation in advance of the reader.

## ❖ Shabbos Shuvah

On the Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it is customary for the rabbi of the synagogue to deliver a sermon focused on repentance.<sup>65</sup>

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אשירה לד' כי גמל עלי

I am indebted to my wife for all the patience and support she continues to have for me.

Thank you my dear reader, for without your interest this pamphlet would not exist.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to be a quick review of some pertinent laws relevant to this time of year.

It was formulated for those who do not have the opportunity or resources to study the laws in detail.

Many of these laws and sources are from the seforim:

שליט"א by Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Karp הלכות חג בחג

קונטרס שיעורי הלכה מתוך שיעורים של רב שמואל פעלדער

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Feel welcome to make copies of this pamphlet for free distribution

Elul 5777

- <sup>1</sup> Shulchan Aruch 581:2
- <sup>2</sup> See Machatzis Hashekel 581 "Ain Tzorich Lehashlim" and Mishna Berura 129:10
- <sup>3</sup> Mishna Berura 581:19
- <sup>4</sup> Rema 581:4
- <sup>5</sup> Chayei Adam 138:8
- <sup>6</sup> See Hilchos Chag B'chag 4:8
- <sup>7</sup> Rema Yoreh Daiya 211:1
- <sup>8</sup> See Hilchos Chag B'chag 4:8
- <sup>9</sup> Rema 582:9
- <sup>10</sup> See Mishna Berura 582:25
- <sup>11</sup> Mishna Berura 583:5
- <sup>12</sup> Rema 583:2, Mishna Berura 583:9
- <sup>13</sup> See Mishna Berura 597:1
- <sup>14</sup> Mishna Berura 583:3
- <sup>15</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 583:1
- <sup>16</sup> Mishna Berura 583:3
- <sup>17</sup> Mishna Berura 583:4
- <sup>18</sup> Shulchan Aruch 211:1
- <sup>19</sup> See Hilchos Chag B'chag 6:10
- <sup>20</sup> Rema 583:2
- <sup>21</sup> Mishna Berura 583:5
- <sup>22</sup> Shiurei Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
- <sup>23</sup> Shulchan Aruch 585:2; Rema 592:1; Rema 596:1
- <sup>24</sup> Shulchan Aruch 589:3
- <sup>25</sup> Rambam Tekias Shofar 1:1
- <sup>26</sup> See Hilchos Chag B'chag 10:1
- <sup>27</sup> Mishna Berura 343:3
- <sup>28</sup> Mishna Berura 587:16
- <sup>29</sup> Rema 589:6
- <sup>30</sup> Mishna Berura 585:2
- <sup>31</sup> Mishna Berura 585:2
- <sup>32</sup> Shulchan Aruch and Rema 592:3; Chayei Adam 141:9
- <sup>33</sup> Mateh Efrayim 588:2; Mishna Berura 692:15; see Hilchos Chag B'chag 8:25

- <sup>34</sup> Chayei Adam 141:7
- <sup>35</sup> Rema 596:1
- <sup>36</sup> Rema 583:2
- <sup>37</sup> Mishna Berura 583:8
- <sup>38</sup> Mishna Berura 583:8
- <sup>39</sup> Mateh Efrayim 598:5; Shulchan Aruch 496: 2
- <sup>40</sup> Birkei Yosef 583:6 see also Pri Megadim 583
- <sup>41</sup> Shulchan Aruch 503:1
- <sup>42</sup> See Shulchan Aruch and Mishna Berura 503 and 667
- <sup>43</sup> See Michtav M'Eliyahu volume II page 76
- <sup>44</sup> Mateh Efrayim 600:14; Elef Hamagen (9)
- <sup>45</sup> Shulchan Aruch 600:2
- <sup>46</sup> Shulchan Aruch 225:6
- <sup>47</sup> Mishna Berura 600:4
- <sup>48</sup> See Hilchos Chag B'chag 16:9; Shiurei Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
- <sup>49</sup> Similar to Mishna Berura 583:4
- <sup>50</sup> Shulchan Aruch 500:2
- <sup>51</sup> See Mateh Efrayim 603:4-5; Chayei Adam 143
- <sup>52</sup> Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Dayah 112:1
- <sup>53</sup> Shulchan Aruch, Rema Yoreh Dayah 112:2
- <sup>54</sup> Note that many communities only rely on this leniency when no Pas Yisroel bread is available - see Aruch Hashulchan Yoreh Dayah 112:17
- <sup>55</sup> Shulchan Aruch 582:1
- <sup>56</sup> See Mishna Berura 582:4
- <sup>57</sup> Shulchan Aruch 582:1
- <sup>58</sup> Mishna Berura 582:15
- <sup>59</sup> Rema 602:1
- <sup>60</sup> Rema introduction to 602
- <sup>61</sup> Igros Moshe volume 4 #64
- <sup>62</sup> Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks page 16
- <sup>63</sup> See Shulchan Aruch 550:1
- <sup>64</sup> Mishna Berura 550:5
- <sup>65</sup> Mateh Efrayim 602:42