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ROSH HASHANAH

Rosh

Hashanah ([Hebrew](#): ראש השנה), literally meaning "head [of] the year", is the [Jewish New Year](#).

The [biblical](#) name for this holiday is **Yom Teruah** (יום תְּרוּעָה), literally "day of shouting or blasting", and is also more commonly known in English as the **Feast of Trumpets**. It is the first of the Jewish [High Holy Days](#) (יָמֵי נוֹרָאִים *Yamim Nora'im*.

"Days of Awe") specified by [Leviticus 23:23–32](#) that occur in the early autumn of the Northern Hemisphere.

Rosh Hashanah is a two-day celebration that begins on the first day of [Tishrei](#), which is the

seventh month of the [ecclesiastical year](#). In contrast to the ecclesiastical [lunar new year](#) on the first day of the first month [Nisan](#), the spring Passover month which marks Israel's exodus from Egypt, Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the civil year, according to the teachings of Judaism, and is the traditional anniversary of the creation of [Adam and Eve](#), the first man and woman according to the Hebrew Bible, and the inauguration of humanity's role in God's world.

Rosh Hashanah customs include sounding the [shofar](#) (a cleaned-out ram's horn), as prescribed in the [Torah](#), following the prescription of the Hebrew Bible to "raise a noise" on *Yom Teruah*. Its rabbinical customs include attending

CONTENT

- ABOUT THIS EVENT
- ORIGIN
- SIGNIFICANCE

synagogue services and reciting special liturgy about [teshuva](#), as well as enjoying festive meals. Eating symbolic foods is now a tradition, such as apples dipped in honey, hoping to evoke a sweet new year.

ORIGIN

The origin of the Hebrew New Year is connected to the beginning of the economic year in the agricultural societies of the [ancient Near East](#).^[8] The New Year was the beginning of the cycle of sowing, growth, and harvest; the harvest was marked by its own set of major agricultural festivals.^[8] The Semites generally set the beginning of the new year in autumn, while other ancient civilizations chose spring for that

purpose, such as the [Persians](#) or [Greeks](#); the primary reason was agricultural in both cases, the time of sowing the seed and bringing in the harvest.^[8]

In Jewish law, four major New Years are observed, each one marking a beginning of sorts. The lunar month [Nisan](#) (usually corresponding to the months March–April in the [Gregorian calendar](#)) is when a new year is added to the reign of Jewish kings, and it marks the start of the year for the [three Jewish pilgrimages](#).^[9] Its injunction is

expressly stated in the Hebrew Bible: "This month shall be unto you *the beginning of months*" (Exo. 12:2). However, ordinary years, [Sabbatical years](#), [Jubilees](#), and dates inscribed on legal deeds and contracts are reckoned differently; such years begin on the first day of the lunar month [Tishri](#) (usually corresponding to the months September–October in the Gregorian calendar). Their injunction is expressly stated in the Hebrew Bible: "Three times in the year you shall keep a feast

unto me... the feast of unleavened bread ([Passover](#))... the feast of harvest ([Shavuot](#))... and the feast of ingathering ([Sukkot](#)) which is *at the departing of the year*" (Exo. 23:14–16). "At the departing of the year" implies that the new year begins here.^[10]

The reckoning of Tishri as the beginning of the Jewish year began with the early Egyptians and was preserved by the Hebrew nation,^[11] being also alluded to in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 7:11) when describing the [Great Deluge](#) at the time of Noah. This began during the "second month"

([Marheshvan](#)) counting from Tishri, a view that has largely been accepted by the Sages of Israel

SIGNIFICANCE

The [Mishnah](#) contains the second known reference to Rosh Hashanah as the "day of judgment" (*Yom haDin*).^[13] In the Talmud [tractate on Rosh Hashanah](#), it states that three books of account are opened on Rosh Hashanah, wherein the fate of the wicked, the righteous, and those of the intermediate class are recorded. The names of the righteous are immediately inscribed in the [book of life](#) and they are sealed "to live". The intermediate class is allowed a respite of ten days, until Yom Kippur, to reflect, repent and become righteous;^[14] the wicked are "blotted out of the book of the living forever".^[15]

Some [midrashic](#) descriptions depict God as sitting upon a [throne](#), while books containing the deeds of all humanity are opened for review, and each person passes in front of Him for evaluation of his or her deeds.^[16]

"The Holy One said, 'on Rosh Hashanah recite before Me [verses of] Sovereignty, Remembrance, and Shofar blasts (*malchiyot, zichronot, shofrot*): Sovereignty so that you should make Me your King; Remembrance so that your remembrance should rise up before Me. And through what? Through the Shofar.' (Rosh Hashanah 16a, 34b)"^[17]

This is reflected in the prayers composed by classical rabbinic sages for Rosh Hashanah found in traditional Ashkenazi [machzorim](#) where the theme of the prayers is the "coronation" of God as King of the universe, in preparation for the acceptance of judgments that will follow on that day