



HIGH HOLIDAY

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur,
Sukkot, Simchat Torah

HANDBOOK



THE ALEPH INSTITUTE

Foreword

The Jewish New Year is almost here—sweet honey, kind wishes, sincere prayers, and an ancient plaintive sound that dissolves the deepest indifference. Rosh Hashanah begins at sunset on **Monday, September 6**, and its two days launch us into a fresh year with brighter, more meaningful goals.

Some communities welcome Rosh Hashanah eve by reciting “Achoth Ketanah,” a thirteenth-century poem composed in Gerona. Its chorus implores, “May the year and its woes end!”—until its final stanza, which entreates, “May the year and its blessings commence!” We can appreciate the unknown author’s message: We all endured some hardship during the past year—physical, emotional, financial, or spiritual. But with Rosh Hashanah, we optimistically turn the page and await blessings in our path ahead.

Our teacher, the Rebbe—Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson—once commented about the shortcomings of this poem. In truth, we ought to carefully review the outgoing year and highlight the *wonderful things* it contained. We should delight in those, praise G-d for them, and then ask Him for even greater blessings in the future. Rather than focusing on woes to frame our dreams for the future, we should lovingly appeal, “May the year *and its blessings* end, so that the new year with its *far greater* blessings can commence!”

This captures our wish for you and your loved ones: certainly, we pray that current difficulties cease with the turn of the year, but far beyond that, we bless you that the positive elements and experiences of this past year pale in comparison with the welcome material and spiritual growth that you achieve in the months to come.

To begin this season with inspired focus, we are delighted to offer you this High Holiday Handbook geared to enhance your holiday experience. It delivers fascinating and inspirational insights into the diverse natures of the upcoming festivals, with practical guidance for facilitating a meaningful and productive new year.

Best wishes for a meaningful, joyous holiday experience!
May you and yours be inscribed for a good and sweet year!

Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel

Contents

10



High Holiday Flowchart: Human-Driven Initiative **4**

Rosh Hashanah Observances and Customs **8**

Rosh Hashanah Foods **10**

Rosh Hashanah Recipes **11**

The Shofar **12**

Rosh Hashanah Prayer **14**

Tashlich **16**

Yom Kippur **17**

Preparing for Yom Kippur **18**

Teshuvah **20**

Kol Nidrei **21**

The Medieval German *Machzor* **22**

Yom Kippur Finale **24**

Sukkot **25**

The Sukkah **26**

Sukkah Specs **27**

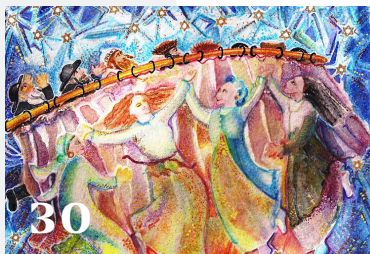
The 4 Kinds **28**

Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah **30**

26



30



This booklet contains sacred writings. Please do not deface or discard.

High Holiday Flowchart: Human-Driven Initiative

Our sages describe the month of Tishrei as “sated” with occasions of celebratory importance. Its diversity of auspicious dates, beginning with the High Holidays, allows us to stockpile spiritual resources necessary to live meaningfully throughout the coming year.

Chabad mysticism draws a contrast between Tishrei (High Holiday season) and Nisan (Passover season). The Exodus was a series of divine initiatives that rained down from Above. Not so Tishrei. Here, we must take the initiative and work our way upward toward G-d.

Presented here are descriptions of Tishrei’s special occasions, followed by insights on the theme of human initiative, as presented in the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory. A pattern emerges in which our personal efforts forge a series of steady steps on a ladder that begins within our deepest selves and stretches to the profoundest heavens.



Elul

AUGUST 9–SEPTEMBER 6, 2021

Elul is the final month of the expiring Jewish year. It is a time for introspection and contemplation, for an honest reckoning of missed opportunities, and careful consideration of ways to advance during the coming year.

MONTH OF MORTAL INITIATIVE

Song of Songs 6:3 alludes to the month of Elul by way of acronym. The initials of *ani ledodi vedodi li* (אני לדודי ודודי לי)—“I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine”—spell “Elul” (אלול). The verse depicts the Jewish nation as G-d’s romantic bride, and she sings of the mutual devotion she shares with G-d. However, a closer look reveals that she, the Jewish nation, must make the first move. Her song begins with “I am my Beloved’s”—I must make the first move toward the love of my soul during the preparatory month of Elul.

Rosh Hashanah

SEPTEMBER 7-8, 2021

Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve. It is the launch of the human story. On this date each year, we remind ourselves that G-d created us in His image to fulfill a critical mission of partnering with Him to perfect His creation.

CORONATION BY HUMAN EFFORT

The Talmud reveals that through sounding the shofar and reciting the accompanying Rosh Hashanah prayers, we coronate G-d as king, reaccepting His rule over us. The language of the Talmud underscores that G-d doesn't impose Himself as king; it is we humans who have the choice and privilege to coronate Him, thus underscoring the theme of human-based initiative.



Ten Days of Repentance

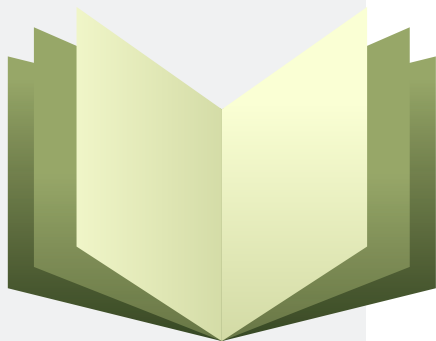
SEPTEMBER 7-16, 2021

Maimonides taught, "Although *teshuvah* (returning to G-d) and calling out to G-d are desirable at all times, during the ten days of repentance these activities are even more desirable and will be accepted immediately."

CHANGE FROM WITHIN

Maimonides composed a careful list of the Torah's 613 commandments, but he did not include *teshuvah* as one of them. That's because genuine return is not imposed and cannot be commanded. True *teshuvah* must spring from deep within an individual. And the supreme time for *teshuvah* is these ten days of unlocking one's truest self.

continue the journey →



Yom Kippur

SEPTEMBER 16, 2021

The Torah informs us (Leviticus 16:30) that *the presence of this date itself* and the divine disclosure that it conveys atones for our sins. Nevertheless, the sages of the Talmud clarify that this atonement depends on *teshuvah*—our return to G-d through sincere regret for shortcomings and a sincere commitment to doing better.

ACTIVATED VIA MORTAL ACHIEVEMENT

Despite the fact that Yom Kippur delivers a powerful measure of atonement, the Talmud insists that we must also engage in the process of *teshuvah*. Yom Kippur then raises us on the wings of our own *teshuvah* and transports us to a far deeper place within ourselves and within G-d's passionate embrace. Even when Yom Kippur itself delivers atonement, the work must be done by us mortals for it to be activated.

Sukkot

SEPTEMBER 21–27, 2021

Sukkot is an extraordinarily joyful festival, as the Torah urges us: “Be joyful on your festival . . . and you will experience only joy” (Deuteronomy 16:14–15). When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, it hosted major public celebrations of sacred song and inspired dance during Sukkot.

THE JOY OF OUR RETURN

The great joy of Sukkot results from the human-driven *teshuvah* we completed on Yom Kippur. This can be understood by reflecting on human nature: When a couple lives together in harmony, their mutual passion flows in measured intensity. By contrast, when they are forced to spend time apart and are subsequently reunited, they experience passion that far outranks ordinary harmony, and this leads to immense joy. Similarly, our imperfect choices struck distance into our relationship with G-d, so when we draw close during the ten days of repentance, we fall into a tight embrace. This reunion after a period of distance inspires the tremendous joy of Sukkot.





Shemini Atzeret

SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

Sukkot lasts for seven days. The subsequent day is a stand-alone festival called Shemini Atzeret. Its name is self-explanatory: *shemini* means “eighth”—it is the eighth day from the start of Sukkot—and *atzeret* means (among other things) to gather—it is a day to gather in sacred celebration.

INTERNALIZATION

Humans are adept at experiencing without internalizing, relating only superficially to an event. We can even experience substantial joy without internalizing it. During Sukkot, we rejoice in our repaired relationship with G-d, but that joy needs to become part of us, so that we are changed as a result. Shemini Atzeret is the designated time to gather in (*atzeret*) and internalize our Sukkot experience.

SOURCES

Introduction: *Pesikta DeRav Kahana* 23:9; *Sefer Hamaamarim* 5736, p. 41.

Elul: *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 128:1; *Torat Menachem* 54, p. 140.

Rosh Hashanah: *Zohar*, vol. 1, p. 221b; Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 16a; *Sefer Hamaamarim* 5736, pp. 40–41.

Ten days: Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 18a; *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Repentance 2:6; *Sefer Hamaamarim Melukat* 1, p. 223; *Likutei Sichot* 38, p. 23.

Yom Kippur: Talmud, Shavuot 13a; *Likutei*

Sichot 4, pp. 1149–1150.

Sukkot: *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Emor* 654; *Torat Menachem* 48, p. 107.

Shemini Atzeret: *Targum Yonatan*, Numbers 29:35; *Torat Menachem* 32, p. 120.

Simchat Torah: Rashi, Exodus 33:11; *Torat Menachem* 5748, 1, pp. 359–360.

Simchat Torah

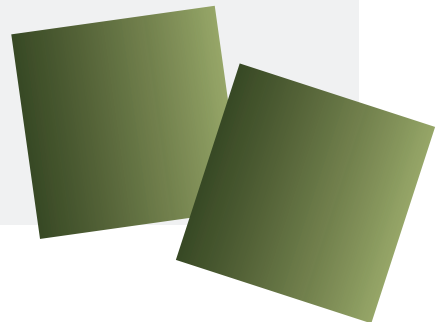
SEPTEMBER 29, 2021

On each Shabbat, another portion of the Torah is read publicly from a Torah scroll in synagogues around the world. On Simchat Torah, the annual cycle is completed, which is cause for tremendous rejoicing—hence the name Simchat Torah, the joy of the Torah.

AN EARNED TORAH

G-d presented the Jews with two sets of tablets. The original tablets (which we celebrate on Shavuot) were shattered by Moses when our ancestors sinned. He then inspired the people to repentance, implored G-d to reconcile with us, and returned bearing the second tablets and tidings of atonement on Yom Kippur. This is why we decline to complete the Torah on Shavuot but celebrate this joyous occasion in the days following

Yom Kippur. When we received the first tablets, we were righteous. Conversely, we received the second tablets as sincere returnees. The human initiative demanded for such a process raised us to a degree that outranked our pre-sin state. A Torah experience that is earned through human toil is far deeper and elicits the truest joy.



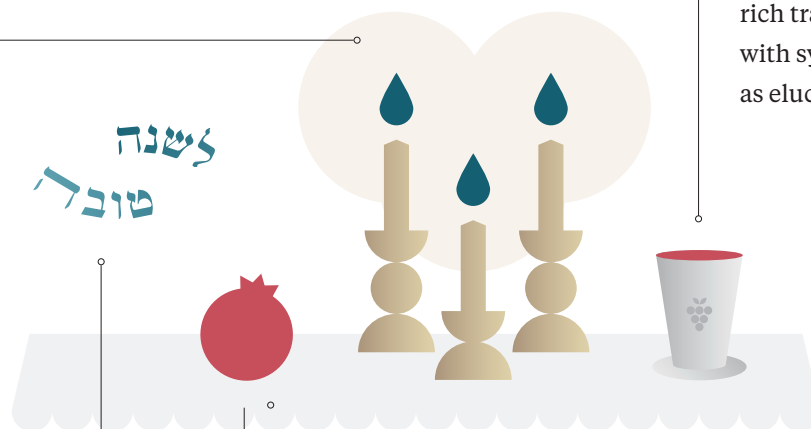
Observances and Customs

CANDLES

We welcome the birth of a new year by lighting distinctive candles or oil lights to mark the onset of Rosh Hashanah. Glowing flames generate an atmosphere of reverence that reflects the divine dignity of this day and increases our sensitivity to its palpable sanctity. This ritual, primarily the privilege of Jewish women and girls, has survived in an unbroken chain from ancient times and permits us to forge a tangible link with our Jewish ancestors. **See the back of this booklet for local candle lighting times.**

CELEBRATORY MEALS

We celebrate Rosh Hashanah with several lavish meals. The traditional meal begins with the recital of Kiddush over wine and includes challah, a fish course, and a meat or chicken course. The dinner served on the first night of Rosh Hashanah features a rich tradition of foods imbued with symbolic meaning, as elucidated on p. 12.



BEST WISHES

On Rosh Hashanah eve, it is customary to bless those around you with, “May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year!” (Hebrew: *Leshanah tovah tikatev vetechatem!*). It is worth bearing in mind a tradition of our ancient sages (Megilah 15a): “An ordinary person’s blessing should not be regarded dismissively.”

NEW FRUIT

A unique custom for the second night is to eat a new fruit immediately after Kiddush. A new fruit is defined as one that you have not yet enjoyed since it came into season.

This custom is rooted in a halachic uncertainty about the propriety of reciting the *Shehecheyanu* blessing at the conclusion of Kiddush on the second night of Rosh Hashanah: If Jewish law regards the second day of Rosh Hashanah as a continuation of the first, the blessing cannot be recited, because it was already recited on the previous night. But if the second day is distinct, it deserves a *Shehecheyanu* blessing. Our solution is to find an unquestionable way to recite the blessing—by associating the *Shehecheyanu* with the opportunity to eat a new fruit.

PRAYERS

We offer many special prayers on Rosh Hashanah to project two general themes: (a) our acceptance of G-d as sovereign, and (b) our request that G-d inscribe us for a good year. These themes blend in a unified synthesis: G-d desires to be intimately present and felt in our physical experience. Our souls sense G-d's desire, and we are moved to beseech G-d for material blessing to enable its fulfillment—turning this world into G-d's home. We might not be conscious of this inner significance to our drive for material success, but if we train ourselves to listen well, we may begin to hear echoes of the soul's footprints in our personal requests.

TASHLICH

Tashlich, or “casting,” is a popular custom for the first day of Rosh Hashanah: we stroll to a nearby brook, pond, well, ocean, or similar body of water to recite a short prayer. (Contrary to common myth, feeding fish is not part of the ritual.) This custom invokes the prophet Micah's depiction of G-d removing our sins—“You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea!” We quote this verse and others beside the body of water. See further, p. 16.

SHOFAR

Each Jewish holiday has its special mitzvah deserving of special attention. Rosh Hashanah's primary mitzvah is to hear the sound of the shofar, which prompts us to reflect on the awesome themes of this day (as explained on pp. 12–13). As you prepare to celebrate Rosh Hashanah this year, be sure to plan to **hear the shofar in person on Tuesday, September 7, and then again on Wednesday, September 8**, the second day of the holiday. If you cannot attend a synagogue to hear the shofar during prayers, be sure to hear the shofar at some other point during the day.



ALERT

Even though napping on Shabbat is a proper way to celebrate the day of rest, the Code of Jewish Law states that on Rosh Hashanah we make a point of not napping. It is important to use the time constructively, such as by reciting Psalms, performing *mitzvot*, studying Torah, or sharing Judaism's insights.



Rosh Hashanah Foods

The meal served on the first night of Rosh Hashanah features a rich tradition of foods imbued with symbolic meaning. Here are some famous examples.



HEAD OF THE FISH

That we be a head,
not a tail.



POMEGRANATE

That our merits be as numerous
as the seeds in a pomegranate.



ROUND CHALLAH

For a year in which blessings
continue without end.



APPLE DIPPED IN HONEY

For a sweet new year.



BEETS

That our foes be
removed. (Beets in
Aramaic is *silka*,
which also means
“to remove.”)



CARROTS

To multiply.
(Carrots in Yiddish
is *merin*, which
also means “to
multiply.”)



SQUASH

That our merits be
read and noticed.
(The Hebrew word
for squash is *kara*,
which also means
“to be read aloud.”)

BEFORE WE EAT THE APPLE DIPPED IN HONEY,
WE RECITE A BLESSING AND SHORT PRAYER:

ברוך אתה אדוני, אלהינו מלך
העולם, בורא פרי העץ.
יהי רצון מלפניך, שתחדש עלינו
שנה טובה ומתוקה.

**Baruch atah Ado-nai, Elo-heinu
melech ha'olam, borei peri ha'ets.**

**Yehi ratson milfanecha, she-tichadesh
aleinu shanah tovah umetukah.**

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the
Universe, Who creates the fruit of the tree.

May it be Your will to renew for us a
good and sweet year.

Rosh Hashanah

Streusel Challah

Dough

3 packets active dry yeast
 2½ cups lukewarm water
 1 cup sugar
 4 eggs
 ½ cup oil
 8–9 cups flour
 1½ tbsp. salt
 ½ cup raisins (optional)

Egg wash

1 egg yolk
 1 tbsp. water
 1 tsp. vanilla sugar

Streusel topping

6–7 tbsp. margarine or oil
 1 cup flour
 1 cup sugar

Prepare the Dough

Place the sugar, yeast, and warm water in the bowl of an electric mixer or any large bowl if mixing by hand. Let the yeast proof for 15–20 minutes.

Add oil, eggs, and flour. Add the salt as a dough begins to form, and knead it on medium speed for seven to eight minutes.

(Optional) Add the raisins and knead on low speed for one more minute, just until incorporated.

Place about one teaspoon of oil in the center of a large bowl. Transfer the dough into the bowl and flip it to coat completely with the oil. Cover the dough and let it rise for one hour.



Shape and Bake

Divide dough into 4 equal parts and roll into long ropes. Beginning at the end, spiral the rope on itself creating a round loaf. Pinch the end in on the bottom to make sure the spiral doesn't come loose.

Combine the ingredients for egg wash and brush it on the dough. Let the dough rise for another 45 minutes to one hour. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 375°F.

Mix together the streusel ingredients with your fingers until a crumbly consistency forms. Sprinkle on top of the challah.

Bake for 30 minutes or until golden on top and bottom.

The Torah teaches that when preparing a batch of dough for baking, we are to set aside a portion of it for a Kohen—one of the priestly descendants of Aaron. Today, the custom is to burn this portion of the dough before enjoying the rest of the soon-to-be baked goods. To learn more about this special mitzvah, visit: www.chabad.org/363323.

Honey Cake Hack

1 box Duncan Hines Spice Cake
 1 cup water
 3 eggs
 1 cup oil
 1 cup honey



Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

Combine all ingredients and pour into greased 9x13-inch pan.

Bake for 23–28 minutes or until toothpick inserted comes out clean.



The Shofar

“The primary mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah is the shofar.”

Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 3:3

The central Rosh Hashanah observance is hearing the shofar blasts on both days of the holiday, September 7–8. There are many laws governing the proper way to observe this mitzvah, which is why we make every effort to hear the shofar from someone who is well versed in these laws and who sounds the shofar properly.

Jewish sages throughout the ages offered numerous insights into the import and deeper meaning of the shofar—all, of course, in addition to the underlying fact that this is G-d’s mitzvah and is thus the way to connect with Him on this sacred day.

WAKE-UP CALL

Although the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a G-dly decree, it also serves as an important wake-up call. The shofar’s sound is saying, “Wake up, you sleepy ones, from your slumber. Inspect your deeds, repent, and remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth devote their energies to vanity and emptiness that yield no benefit. Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds. Abandon your evil path and thoughts.”

Maimonides (1135–1204)

Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 3:4

CORONATION

Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of Creation, when G-d became king over the world that He created. When a king is coronated, trumpets and horns are sounded to



proclaim the beginning of his reign. We do the same for G-d on this day.

Rabbi Saadia Ga’on (882–942)
Cited in *Abudraham, Seder Tefilot Rosh Hashanah*

REVELATION

The shofar reminds us of the scene at Mount Sinai, when the Torah was



given. As it says (Exodus 19:16), “Then on the third day, in the morning, there were thunderclaps and lightning flashes, and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and an exceedingly loud sound of the shofar.”

Rabbi Saadia Ga’on, *ibid.*

REDEMPTION

The sound of the shofar reminds us of the future ingathering of the exiles and stirs us to yearn for it.

As it says (Isaiah 27:13), “It shall come to pass on that day, that a great shofar shall be sounded, and those lost in the land of Assyria and those exiled in the land of

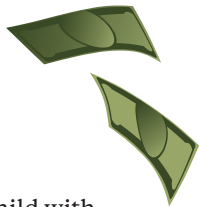


Egypt shall come, and they shall prostrate themselves before G-d on the holy mount in Jerusalem.”

Rabbi Saadia Ga’on, *ibid.*

A CRY FROM DEEP WITHIN

A king had an only child who was very bright and much adored. The king and prince decided together that it would be best for the prince's growth and development if he traveled to different countries to master different fields of wisdom and experience various cultures. So the king supplied his child with servants and valuables and sent him off.

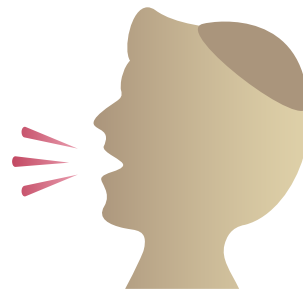


However, during his travels, the son squandered all the money on the pleasures he was so used to having in the palace; in fact, being away from home, he spent money on many additional pursuits that were not befitting a prince, until he was left completely destitute. He eventually reached a foreign land where his father's name was unknown and no one believed that he was a prince.

After many years of having absolutely nothing, the prince resolved to return to his father's house. However, he had been away for so long that he forgot his native tongue. When he returned to

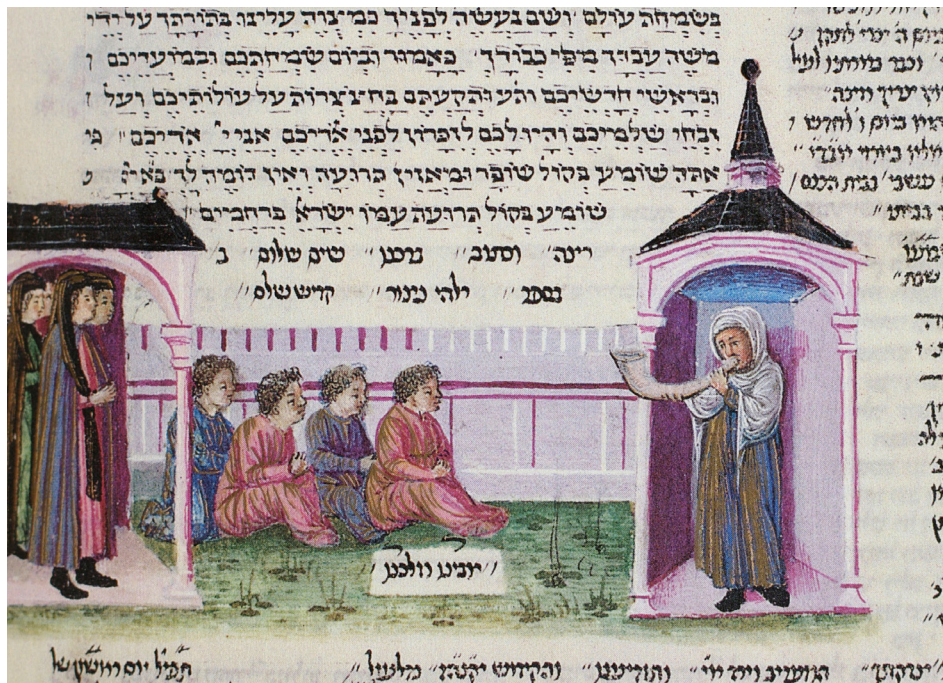
the palace, he couldn't communicate with the guards. He attempted to signal that he was the prince, but the guards laughed at him. In utter despair, he cried out in a loud voice. The king recognized his son's voice and went out to investigate, whereupon they hugged and kissed.

The meaning of the parable: The king is G-d. The prince is the Jewish people. The king sends a soul down to this world in order to fulfill the Torah and *mitzvot*, which can propel the soul to new heights. However, we get distracted by the pleasures of the physical life. We forget who we really are. So we utter a simple cry to our Father in Heaven. This is the blowing of the shofar, a cry from deep within, expressing regret for the past and determination for the future. This cry elicits G-d's mercies, and He demonstrates His abiding affection for us and forgives us.



The Baal Shem Tov
(1698–1760)

Keter Shem Tov, addenda 194



Detail from the Rothschild Miscellany, a strikingly elegant Hebrew manuscript comprised of thirty-seven distinct texts accompanied by masterful artwork, crafted in northern Italy between 1460–1480. Presented here is the shofar blessing recited in *musaf* of Rosh Hashanah alongside a drawing of someone sounding the shofar for his fellow Jews. (Israel Museum, Jerusalem)

Rosh Hashanah Prayer

“From the depths I have called to You.”

Rosh Hashanah Morning Prayer
(from Psalms 130:1)

RENEWAL THROUGH PRAYER

An elementary question about prayer was first asked long ago: The events of our lives are not random but the direct outcome of G-d's desire. If G-d determined that we should undergo certain experiences, it would seem that nothing could alter that. What, then, is the purpose of prayer?

However, once we recognize that G-d is limitless, we can easily observe the frailties of this question. For the infinite G-d could surely choose to create the world in such a way that prayer can effect change and alter one's destiny.

Nevertheless, one answer provided

*“Prayer
is an inner
journey that
never fails to leave
its mark.”*

by Jewish thinkers resonates profoundly on Rosh Hashanah, when we seek inner renewal. According to this answer, when we pray in a mindful way—“From the depths I have called to you”—we experience a fundamental shift. Praying reduces our spiritual sloth and intensifies our consciousness of and connection to G-d, so much so that, in a sense, we become a new person. G-d's original plan never pertained to the new person we became through prayer.

Accordingly, prayer is an inner journey that never fails to leave its mark on our identities.

In the traditional *machzor*, there are many Rosh Hashanah prayers that provide us with multiple entry points to experience this voyage of renewal.



THREE BLESSINGS OF NOTE

The Amidah for *musaf* features three unique blessings that convey three fundamental tenets of the Jewish faith. In each of these blessings, ten biblical verses on the relevant theme are quoted: three from the Pentateuch, three from Psalms, three from the Prophets, and one final verse from the Pentateuch.

THEME OF BLESSING 1



MALCHIYOT • KINGSHIP

G-d created the world at large, and each of us in particular, for a purpose.

Passage from the blessing:

וַיֵּדַע כָּל פֶּעוּל כִּי אַתָּה פָּעַלְתָּ וַיְבִין
כָּל יֵצוּר כִּי אַתָּה יִצְרָתוֹ.

Let all that has been made know that You made it;
Let all that has been created know that You created it.

THEME OF BLESSING 2



ZICHRONOT • REMEMBRANCE

G-d is involved in each aspect of His world, thus knowing and remembering all that transpires. Our choices matter.

Passage from the blessing:

כִּי זֹכֵר כָּל הַנִּשְׁכָּחוֹת אַתָּה הוּא מַעֲלֵם
וְאֵין שִׁכְחָה לְפָנֶי כִסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ.

For you are One Who remembers forever all forgotten things,
and there's no forgetting before the throne of Your glory.

THEME OF BLESSING 3



SHOFAROT • SHOFAR BLASTS

G-d revealed Himself at Mount Sinai following a strong shofar blast and instructed for all time how we ought to live.

Passage from the blessing:

אַתָּה נִגַּלְתָּ בְּעָנַן כְּבוֹדְךָ עַל עַם קִדְשְׁךָ לְדֹר עָמָם . . .
בְּכַתוּב בְּתוֹרָתְךָ: וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְּהִיִּת הַבָּקָר וַיְהִי
קֶלֶת וּבְרָקִים וְעָנָן כָּבֵד עַל הָהָר וְקוֹל שֹׁפָר חָזָק מְאֹד.

You revealed yourself in a cloud of Your glory to your holy nation, to speak with them. . . . As it is written in Your Torah, “Then on the third day, in the morning, there was thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and an exceedingly loud sound of the shofar.”

Tashlich

Tashlich, or “casting,” is a popular Rosh Hashanah custom, whereby we walk to a brook, pond, well, or any other body of water, and recite a short prayer. (Contrary to what some believe, feeding the fish is not part of the *Tashlich* ritual.) This year, the custom is practiced on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, Tuesday, September 7.

THE ORIGINS OF *TASHLICH*

When the prophet Micah fervently described how G-d forgives iniquity, he said (Micah 7:18–19):

Who, G-d, is like You,

**Who pardons iniquity and
forgives the transgression of
the remnant of His heritage?**

**He does not remain
angry forever,**

**But delights in loving-
kindness.**

**He will again have
compassion on us, hide our
iniquities, and cast into the
depths of the sea all their sins.**

To invoke the imagery of this final verse, we stand near a body of water to recite this passage, along with some additional prayers.



INVOKES CREATION

By standing where water meets dry land, we remind ourselves of the third day of Creation, when G-d separated the water from the dry land (Genesis 1:9). Invoking Creation prompts us to remember that we are created beings and, therefore, obliged to the task for which we were created.

**Rabbi Moshe Isserlis,
Torat Ha'olah 3:56**

DIVINE KINDNESS

Water, the prerequisite for life, represents G-d's kindness. We recite a prayer near water to represent our wish for a year of kindness.

**Rabbi Shne'ur Zalman
of Liadi, *Siddur***

WATCHFUL EYE

Unlike other animals, most fish do not have eyelids, so they don't close their eyes to sleep. Standing near a body of water with fish reminds us of the Almighty's watchful eye that neither sleeps nor slumbers.

**Rabbi Yeshayahu Horowitz,
Shenei Luchot Haberit,
*Tractate Rosh Hashanah***

Yom Kippur

“On this day, G-d will atone for you, to purify you.”

Leviticus 16:30



Decorated initial word panel for *Kol Nidrei* (presenting the first word: “kol”) from a *Machzor* for the High Holidays according to the Western Ashkenazi rite. MS. Michael 619, created in Germany, ca. 1322 (Bodleian Library, University of Oxford).

Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, begins at sunset on Wednesday, September 15, and ends at nightfall on Thursday, September 16. On this Day of Atonement, we abstain from eating and drinking, bathing or anointing our bodies, wearing leather shoes, or engaging in marital relations. (The fast begins and ends at the times noted on the back cover). Refraining from these everyday comforts emphasizes that we can be more than creatures of impulse and that we must endeavor to nourish our souls as we do our bodies.

The history of this solemn day takes us back to the

generation that received the Torah at Mount Sinai. Not long after this climactic event, some Jews engaged in an idolatrous practice, which our sages compared to a bride committing adultery at her wedding. Moses pleaded with G-d to forgive the people he had led out of Egypt. On the tenth day of Tishrei, the day that would become Yom Kippur, G-d forgave the Jewish people. Since then, Yom Kippur has served as the annual Day of Atonement.

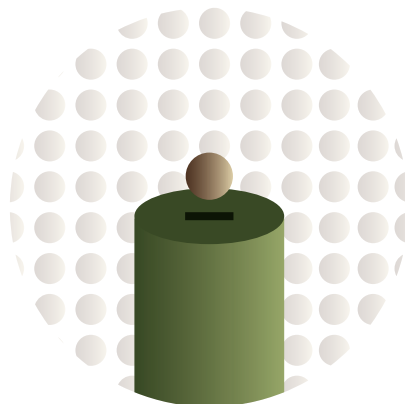
Preparing for Yom Kippur

Wednesday, September 15, the day preceding Yom Kippur, is treated as a holiday. Several observances on this day help prepare us for the awaited Day of Atonement.

FESTIVE MEAL

The Talmud (Berachot 8b) teaches that when we partake in a festive meal on the day preceding Yom Kippur and then fast on Yom Kippur itself, we are credited as though we fasted for two days. Practically, the festive meal is important because it lends us the strength to endure the subsequent fast and its many hours of immersive prayer. In addition, by celebrating the ninth of Tishrei, we demonstrate our eagerness for the renewal that Yom Kippur

provides. In fact, Yom Kippur is a day most worthy of celebration, and in Judaism we usually celebrate with a festive meal. Because no festive meal can occur on Yom Kippur itself, we fulfill this missing aspect of the Yom Kippur celebration on the preceding day.



TZEDAKAH

It is important to donate extra charity on this day. Earnings are the product of planning, creativity, effort, and investment—and with a single act of charity, all of these areas of personal investment are spiritually elevated and synced to the Divine purpose of bringing Heaven down to earth.

FORGIVENESS

Yom Kippur atones for transgressions between an individual and G-d. It does not atone for transgressions between one person and another—unless the offender has placated the victim. For that reason, Jewish law urges us, in the run-up to Yom Kippur, to request forgiveness from whomever we may have aggrieved. Only through the human interaction of the offender appeasing the victim and the victim granting forgiveness can the victim achieve full internal healing, while the wrongdoer achieves the profoundest internal change.

HONEY CAKE

On this day, it is customary to request—from a parent, rabbi, or friend—a piece of honey cake (known in Yiddish as *lekach*) to symbolize our wish for a sweet year. We verbally request the slice of cake so that if it has been decreed that we will resort to requesting a handout during the year, we should preemptively fulfill the unsavory decree by verbally requesting a delectable slice—and not have to plead for further assistance during the entire coming year.





DRESS

Before the fast begins we remove any leather footgear, which may not be worn on Yom Kippur.

It is customary to wear a white garment on

Yom Kippur to reveal our potential for achieving purity; it also reminds us of a shroud—inspiring the humility and self-accounting that arrives from reflecting on our mortality. It is also customary to avoid wearing anything made of gold, to avoid invoking the sin of the Golden Calf.

CANDLES

We kindle holiday lights in the moments prior to the commencement of Yom Kippur, just as we do for any Shabbat and festival. **See the back of this booklet for local candle lighting time.**



In addition, before Yom Kippur begins, many kindle a special candle in honor of the Yizkor prayers that they will recite the next day.

BLESSING CHILDREN

It is customary for parents to bless their children individually—young children and adult children alike—before the onset of Yom Kippur. Some have the custom to recite the blessing while their hands are placed over the head of the child. The common custom is to invoke the notable blessings mentioned in the Torah:

For a son (from Genesis 48:20)

יְשִׁימֶךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאַפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה.

“May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe!”

For a daughter (based on Genesis, ibid., and Ruth 4:11)

יְשִׁימֶךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּסָרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה.

“May G-d make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah!”

It is also customary to recite, for both a son and daughter, the blessings recorded in the Torah in Numbers 6:22-27.

Naturally, parents should add additional heartfelt wishes in their own words.

Teshuvah

The central theme of Yom Kippur is *teshuvah*, commonly translated as “repentance,” but more accurately meaning “return.” Judaism teaches that *teshuvah* can be performed by any individual, for any act, at any time. However, Yom Kippur is particularly conducive for *teshuvah* because the sacredness of the day itself achieves atonement for those who tap into its potential by engaging in *teshuvah*.

THE “HOW” OF TESHUVAH

Teshuvah occurs when transgressors abandon their transgressions, remove them from their thoughts, and resolve in their hearts never to commit them again. This is the message of the verse—“Let the wicked forsake their ways, and the unrighteous their thoughts” (Isaiah 55:7). It is also important to regret the past, as the verse states, “After I returned, I regretted” (Jeremiah 31:18).

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Teshuvah 2:2

WHAT YOM KIPPUR CANNOT DO

“You will be purified of all your transgressions before G-d” (Leviticus 16:30). With this the Torah implies that Yom Kippur atones only for transgressions between an individual and G-d. It cannot atone for wrongs inflicted by one person against another until the offender placates the victim.

Mishnah, Yoma 8:9

LOFTY STATION OF PENITENTS

In the place where penitents stand, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand! This is alluded to in the verse, “Peace, peace to those distant and those near” (Isaiah 57:19). Greetings of peace are extended first to those who were distant spiritually but have since repented, and only then to those who were *always* spiritually close to G-d, never having tasted sin.

Talmud, Berachot 34b

TRANSGRESSIONS INTO MERITS

Great is the power of *teshuvah*, for it transforms willful transgressions into merits!

Talmud, Yoma 86b

INSPIRING OTHERS

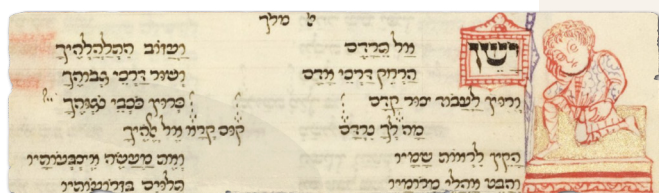
As part of their own *teshuvah*, each returnee should also inspire others to do *teshuvah*, teaching and instructing them to follow the correct path.

Rabbi Elazar of Worms, *Yoreh Chata'im* 58

BETWEEN TESHUVAH AND REPENTANCE

“Repentance” involves regret for sins or omissions, whereas the Torah emphasizes *teshuvah*, “return.” Repentance means becoming a good person; *teshuvah* is reclaiming the purity that shines at our core. Repentance asks us to construct something new, imposing perfection on a flawed human, which is difficult. *Teshuvah* restores our original purity by shedding the alien imposition of sins, empowering our souls to guide us in our daily life.

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Likutei Sichot* 2, p. 409



Detail from the Rothschild *machzor*, composed in Italy in 1490. It presents a liturgical poem recited by Italian Jews on the morning of Yom Kippur, composed by Rabbi Yehudah Halevi (1075–1141), opening with the words, “Sleeper! Do not slumber / Abandon your madness.” Illustrating this line is a crouching, sleeping young man. (JTS Library, New York)

Kol Nidrei

The most famous segment of High Holiday liturgy is undoubtedly Kol Nidrei, a passage composed in ancient Aramaic that inaugurates the Yom Kippur services, chanted solemnly in a moving melody with keen emotional appeal.

AVOIDING FUTURE TRANSGRESSION

Kol Nidrei is a legal formula rather than a prayer. Through it, we preemptively void vows we may utter during the coming year. (It is limited to *personal* vows not involving commitments to others.)

Judaism regards vows as implicitly directed to G-d, even if this is not explicitly stated. It therefore strongly discourages vow taking, for if the vow is not kept, the individual has sinned against G-d. In case we do end up taking a vow, the Kol Nidrei proclamation serves to void it. Kol Nidrei is therefore a preemptive measure to avoid sin.

Having demonstrated our eagerness to avoid *future* transgression, we are empowered to approach G-d and plead forgiveness for our past failings.

REVERENCE FOR OUR PURPOSE AND FOR G-D

In Jewish thought, humans are described as *medaber*—"articulate creatures." Among a range of possible designations, Judaism zeroed in on the attribute of speech. Accordingly, if G-d created everything in His world for a deliberate purpose, the speech by which we are identified must lie at the heart of the human purpose. Thus, when we wield our words in improper ways, we undermine our humanity in a particularly acute manner. We have failed to take ourselves and our purpose seriously.

One of the misapplications of speech that severely damages our purpose on earth is the utterance of a vow—deemed an automatic commitment to the Creator—that we fail to uphold. We thereby deploy a key human function in a manner that diminishes our appreciation for the Creator, for we have neglected to take G-d seriously.

Kol Nidrei is therefore our declaration that we seek to align ourselves with the purpose for which G-d created us, and that we are earnest in our reverence for G-d. With this, we have appropriately set the tone for the Yom Kippur service.

SYMBOLIC MEANING

According to Chabad Chasidism (*Likutei Torah*, Matot 85a), the preemptive release from our vows on Yom Kippur represents our soul's release from our body's default habits and its pursuit of material gratification. For most of the year, our corporeal tendencies chain our divine souls, taking them captive. The Yom Kippur *teshuvah* (return to G-d) releases our souls from this captivity, and we become free to be who we are at our essence—divine souls pursuing spiritual aspirations, fueled by boundless love for G-d.

The Medieval German *Machzor*

Prior to the genesis of the printing press, the *machzor* (lit.: cycle), which presented the prayers for the yearly cycle of Jewish festivals, was painstakingly handcrafted. Jews invested heavily in these handwritten productions, commissioning calligraphers to produce elegant scripts and, occasionally, artists to illustrate the liturgy. Presented here are several samples of the medieval *machzor* from Germany.



MUNICH *MACHZOR*

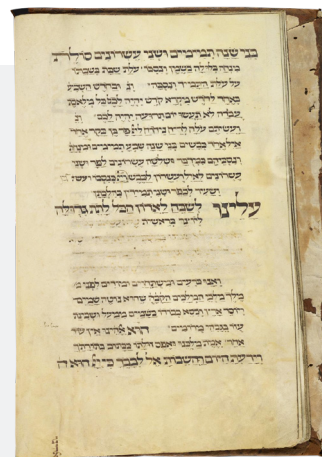
Created: late thirteenth century

Featured Prayer: *HaMelech*
("The King"—in reference to G-d),
from the Rosh Hashanah morning
prayers.

➊ The calligrapher employed red and green inks to highlight the names of our patriarch Isaac and matriarch Rebecca that appear via acronym within this prayer. Rosh Hashanah is a

day of intense prayer, and the Torah depicts this righteous couple engaged in particularly fervent prayer to be blessed with children.

Folio 53r, Cod. Hebr. 86, Bavarian State Library, Munich



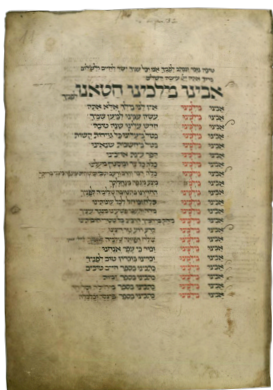
MACHZOR MINHAG ASHKENAZ

Created: ca. 1275–1325

Featured Prayer: *Aleinu leshabe'ach*
from the Rosh Hashanah *musaf*
service.

➋ As can be seen by the lacuna on the page, part of this prayer was intentionally erased. The censored sentences expose the vanity and falsehood of idolatry. During the Middle Ages, Christians regularly accused the Jews of mocking Christianity with these lines, and due to direct orders from the authorities, or to preempt (often fatal) trouble, Jews were forced to erase them.

Folio 8v, CAJS Rar Ms 382, Penn Libraries, Philadelphia



WORMS *MACHZOR*

Created: 1272

Featured Prayer:
Avinu Malkeinu ("Our Father,
our King"), from the Rosh
Hashanah morning service,
with red ink emphasizing
"our King," as per the theme
of Rosh Hashanah.

➌ This *machzor* was used by the cantors in the community of Worms until the synagogue's destruction during Kristallnacht, November 1938. On one of its pages, a scribe penned a rhymed blessing in Yiddish for whoever carried this heavy volume from its owner's house to the synagogue: "Let a good day shine for he who carries this *machzor* to the synagogue!" This is the oldest dated Yiddish text known to us.

Heb. 4781/1, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem

ULM MACHZOR

Created: 1459

Featured Prayer: First blessing prior to the Shema, Yom Kippur morning service.

➊ In the morning service, the recital of Shema is preceded by two blessings, the first of which praises G-d's creation of light. On Yom Kippur, according to the ancient Ashkenazi rite, an addition to this blessing describes G-d as "He Who opens for us the gates of mercy and who enlightens the eyes of those who await Him." This blessing is presented here alongside an artistic rendering of an open ark that contains three Torah scrolls, each bedecked in a unique color. The illustration captures the practice of opening the synagogue's ark for this blessing.

Fol. 48, Cod. Hebr. 3/1, Bavarian State Library, Munich



MICHAEL MACHZOR

Created: 1258

Featured Prayer: Kol Nidrei, from the Yom Kippur eve service, presented inside a full-page illustrated frame.

➋ This version of Kol Nidrei offers worshippers the ability to annul their vows of the *past* year. Rabbi Yaakov Tam (1100–1171) objected to this practice on halachic grounds and advocated for amending the liturgy to nullify *future* vows instead. Until today, divergent versions of Kol Nidrei persist; however, the custom preserved in this manuscript is no longer common.

Folio 48r, MS. Michael 627, Bodleian Library, Oxford

ESSLINGEN MACHZOR

Created: 1290

Featured Prayer: *Unetaneh tokef*, from the Rosh Hashanah *musaf* service.

➌ This text deviates slightly from today's standard. It states that G-d decides on Rosh Hashanah "who shall be raised up and who shall be cast down; who shall grow rich and who shall turn poor." In the centuries that followed, the order was deliberately inverted so that the negative options precede their positive counterparts, presumably in keeping with a Jewish tradition to always conclude on a positive note. The prayer then closes with the legendary declaration—offset here with a pattern of circles—"Repentance, prayer, and charity annul the severity of the decree!"

Folio 16v, MS 9344, JTS Library, New York



Yom Kippur Finale

FIVE LEVELS OF THE SOUL

Jewish mysticism reveals that the divine soul within us is multilayered, each rung equipped with another variation of a relationship with G-d:

| NAME | RELATIONSHIP WITH G-D THROUGH . . . |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Nefesh</i> | Action |
| <i>Ru'ach</i> | Emotion |
| <i>Neshamah</i> | Intellect |
| <i>Chayah</i> | Will |
| <i>Yechidah</i> | Oneness |

The kabbalists explain that the first three soul layers are fully available on the average day. By contrast, the deeper soul layers (*chayah* and *yechidah*) transcend our conscious psyche and are excluded from our regular experience.

There is a further distinction between the first four layers and *yechidah*: Even when we dedicate ourselves to G-d using the four layers—deploying our action, emotion, intellect, and will—we remain distinct from G-d. That is due to these four layers recognizing themselves as independent spiritual entities. Not so the fifth level. Our *yechidah*, our deepest core, recognizes that it is a *part* of G-d. Its profound longing for G-d is similar to self-love, although it never focuses on itself but is locked in a perpetual bond with G-d.

For the majority of our daily living, our conscious minds experience a degree of separation from G-d, even while we engage our powers of action, emotion, intellect, and desire to relate to G-d. On Yom Kippur and, more specifically, during the final moments of this sacred day, a fundamental shift occurs. In these climactic moments, our *yechidah* shines through and we can become conscious of our inherent unity with G-d.

In the closing hour of Yom Kippur, we pray the *ne'ilah* (“closing”) service. We seek to complete our Yom Kippur journey by expressing in prayer the profound oneness with G-d that is available to us overtly at this special time.

POTENT STATEMENTS OF FAITH

At the finale of *ne'ilah* itself, we declare with all our power three most potent statements of our eternal faith:

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, ה' אֶחָד.

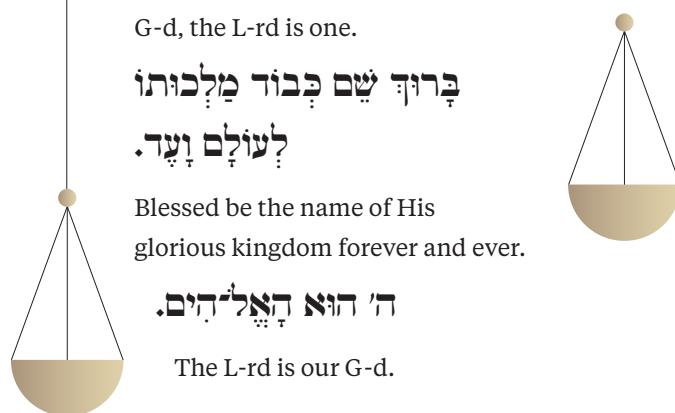
Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our
G-d, the L-rd is one.

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

Blessed be the name of His
glorious kingdom forever and ever.

ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.

The L-rd is our G-d.



JOY AND HOPE

The Chabad custom is to conclude the Yom Kippur service with boundless joy and exuberant song, demonstrating our confidence that our *teshuvah* has been accepted and that we will indeed be inscribed for a year filled with physical and spiritual goodness.

In the synagogue, the shofar is sounded after the recitation of the above verses, and we then proclaim loudly in unison:

לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם!

Next year in Jerusalem!



Sukkot

“Celebrate the festival of Sukkot for seven days. . .
Be joyful in your festival. . . And you will have only joy.”

Deuteronomy 16:13–15



Detail of *Piskei Rabbi Yeshayah* Acharon, a halachic compendium by Rabbi Yeshayah of Trani (d. 1280), created in northern Italy in 1374. Presented alongside the laws of the sukkah is a miniature of a man in profile holding a *lulav* branch and an *etrog* positioned below a botanical sukkah furnished with a bench. (MS. Oriental 5024, British Library, London)

The joyous festival of Sukkot will begin in the evening of **Monday, September 20** and extend until the evening of Monday, September 27. The first two days are the festival's primary days: we kindle festival lights in the evening (for precise timing, see the back of this booklet), enjoy festive meals preceded by Kiddush, refrain from work and restricted activities, and recite special festival prayers. The remaining days are known as *chol hamo'ed*, “the weekdays of the festival.” Throughout the seven days of Sukkot, we eat our meals in the sukkah, a hut of temporary construction with a roof comprised of detached

branches, and (except on Shabbat) we recite a special blessing while holding four specific plant species.

We place a major emphasis on joy during this holiday. Our joy is derived from reflecting on the many blessings in our lives, both physical and spiritual—and realizing that these gifts demonstrate that G-d is caring for us, loving us, and providing us with our needs.

THE Sukkah



CONNECTION TO THE SEASON

The Torah refers to Sukkot as the “Festival of the Ingathering,” for in the Land of Israel this holiday coincides with the

farmers bringing their harvested crop into their homes and storehouses. It is precisely at this juncture, when farmers witness the success of their toil, that they are most vulnerable to overlooking their dependence on G-d. Through removing themselves from the comfort of their homes—into which they have just delivered an abundance of grain—they are prompted to recall that their success was not inevitable, for G-d is the source of all of their blessings. They are reminded to bear this truth in mind even as they feel secure and satisfied with their labors.

Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam), Leviticus 23:43



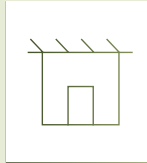
A MESSAGE FOR LIFE

The mitzvah of sukkah is unique in the sense that it encompasses our entire lives. According to Jewish law,

throughout the festival we are supposed to eat in the sukkah, sleep in the sukkah, and to spend the maximum possible time there. In short, we bring our entire lives into the mitzvah of sukkah.

This imparts a critical message about our faith: Judaism is not just a minor facet of our lives. Judaism is designed to sanctify and guide the entirety of our lives, including superficially meaningless and mundane activities. Even such endeavors can be infused with sanctity.

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Torat Menachem 4, p. 32



THE MITZVAH

For seven days you shall live in temporary shelters. Every resident among the Israelites shall live in such

shelters. This will remind each generation that I had the Children of Israel live in temporary shelters when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the L-rd your G-d.

Leviticus 23:42–43



TALMUDIC DEBATE

“I had the Children of Israel live in temporary shelters”: Rabbi Eliezer taught that this refers to the miraculous

clouds of glory that sheltered the Jews as they dwelt in the wilderness. Rabbi Akiva explained it literally: the Jews made actual shelters for themselves during that period.

Talmud, Sukkah 11b

EXPLAINING THE DEBATE

The first view understands the function of Sukkot as a means of commemorating G-d’s special protection and care for our ancestors during their journey through the wilderness. We replicate their experience by dwelling in our own sukkot for the sake of reliving the loving care that G-d displayed to our ancestors—and that He continues to extend to us today.



The second view understands the function of Sukkot as a means of experiencing the contrast between our ordinary, relatively prosperous living

conditions and the primitive desert dwellings of our ancestors. We are thereby inspired to express gratitude for the positive blessings in our lives, which leads to a sense of joy and indebtedness to G-d. It is an exercise in escaping the all-too-human vice of taking our blessings for granted.

Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel, Leviticus 23

Sukkah Specs

Jewish law sets forth specific guidelines for the appropriate observance of the mitzvah of sukkah. Here are some of the notable building specifications.



SECHACH

The sukkah's most important feature is its natural roof,

referred to as *sechach*—"covering" in Hebrew. Only nonedible plant matter that is detached from the ground and remains in its raw state (not having been developed into any tool, processed item, or the like) may be used to create the roof. Common examples include bamboo poles, evergreen branches, and palm fronds. Enough foliage must be present to ensure that the shade is greater than the sunlight that reaches inside the sukkah through its roof.



POSITION

A sukkah must be positioned directly under the

sky. It cannot be situated under a tree or overhang.



WALLS

A sukkah must have at least three walls. Any

material is satisfactory for the walls, provided the results are sturdy enough to withstand an ordinary gust of wind without swaying.



Copper engraving of a Jewish family eating a festive meal in a lavishly decorated sukkah, featured in the first volume of Bernard Picard's *Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses de Tous les Peuples du Monde* (Amsterdam, 1723). Picard worked hard to learn about the customs of the Sefardic Jewish community residing in Amsterdam. The resulting engravings are now considered among the best sources for early eighteenth-century Dutch Jewish life.

The Blessing

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ
מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בְּסוּכָה.

During the Sukkot festival, when we are inside the sukkah and about to eat a meal (defined as eating a species of grain or drinking wine), we recite (a) the blessing specific to the kind of food or beverage, and then (b) the following sukkah blessing:

**Baruch atah Ado-nai,
Elo-heinu melech ha'olam,
asher kidshanu bemitzvotav,
vetzivanu leishev basukkah.**

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to dwell in the sukkah.

THE 4 Kinds

“You shall take for yourselves, on the first day [of Sukkot], the fruit of the citron tree, an unopened palm frond, myrtle branches, and willows of the brook; you shall rejoice before G-d for seven days.”

Leviticus 23:40

THE BENEFITS OF UNITY

An *etrog* (yellow citron) represents one type of Jew: just as the *etrog* has a taste and aroma, so does Israel include those who have both Torah learning and good deeds.

A *lulav* (unopened palm frond), taken from the date palm, represents a second type of Jew: the date has a taste but no aroma; so does Israel include those who have Torah but do not have good deeds.

A *hadas* (myrtle) represents a third type of Jew: the *hadas* has an aroma but no taste; so does Israel include those who have good deeds but no Torah.

An *aravah* (willow) represents a fourth type of Jew: just as an *aravah* has no taste and no aroma, so does Israel include those who do not have Torah or good deeds.

Says G-d, “Let them all bond together in a single bundle and atone for each other. And when you do so, I will be elevated, for G-d is elevated when the people of Israel come together as one.”

Midrash, Vayikra Rabah 30:12



SPECS

We take the four species in our hand on each day of Sukkot (except for Shabbat). The four kinds are:

- A** *Etrog*—citron
- B** *Lulav*—an unopened palm frond
- C** *Hadas*—myrtle (a minimum of three is required)
- D** *Aravah*—willow (two)

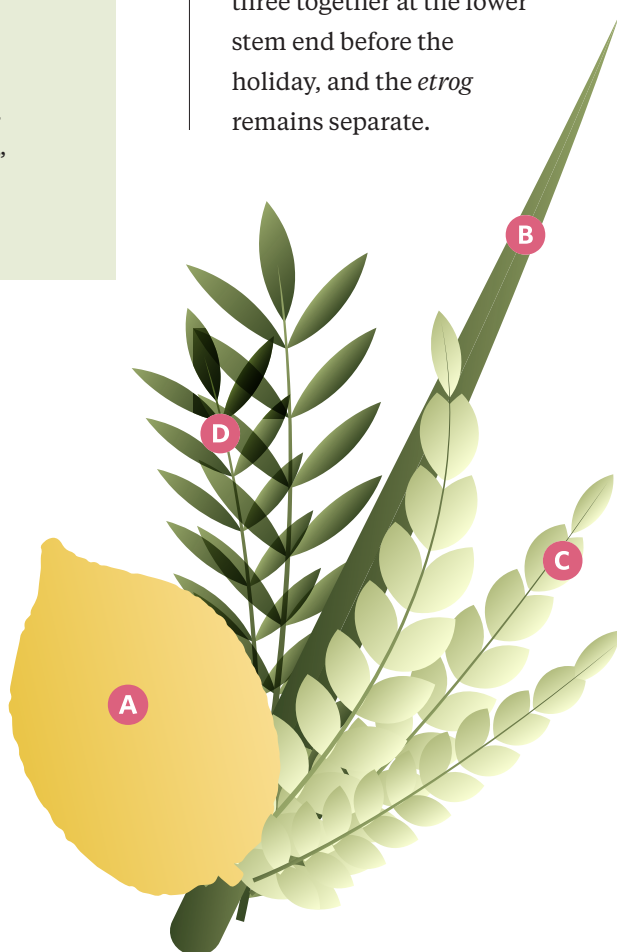
It is customary to tie the latter three together at the lower stem end before the holiday, and the *etrog* remains separate.

GRATITUDE FOR VEGETATION

The four species are a symbolic expression of our rejoicing over our ancestors leaving the wilderness, an uninhabitable place, and entering a country full of fruit trees and rivers. To remember this, we take the *etrog*, a most pleasant-looking fruit; the myrtle, a most fragrant plant; the *lulav*, which has the most beautiful leaves; and the *aravah*, one of the best plants.

These four kinds also have the following three qualities: They are found aplenty in the Land of Israel so that everyone can obtain them. They look pleasant, and the *etrog* and *hadas* have a pleasant aroma while the other two have neither a good nor bad smell. Thirdly, they keep fresh and green for seven days, which is not the case with many other fruits.

Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed 3:43



THE RITUAL

On each day of the holiday, preferably in the morning, we perform the mitzvah as follows:

1 Hold the *lulav* (with the *hadasim* and *aravot* attached to it) in your dominant hand. The *etrog* should be within reach on the table.

2 Recite the blessing on the *lulav*.

3 Lift the *etrog* with your other hand.

4 If this is the first time this year that you are performing this mitzvah, recite a second blessing (*Shehecheyanu*). On the remaining days of Sukkot, skip this step.

5 Bring the *etrog* and *lulav* together and ensure that they touch while each remains in its respective hand. This accomplishes the mitzvah.

6 It is customary to add movement to the ritual. Gently move the species together three times to and fro in the following manner: to the right, to the left, in front of you, in an upward motion, in a downward motion, and behind you (by turning somewhat to the right).

BLESSING 1

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ
הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וַיְצַונוּ עַל נְטִילַת לֻלָּב.

**Baruch atah Ado-nai, Elo-heinu
melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu
bemitzvotav, vetzivanu al netilat lulav.**

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe,
Who has sanctified us with His commandments and
commanded regarding taking the *lulav*.

BLESSING 2

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

**Baruch atah Ado-nai, Elo-heinu melech
ha'olam, shehecheyanu, veki'yemanu,
vehigi'anu lizman hazeh.**

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe,
Who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us
to reach this occasion.

➔ Detail from the Rothschild Miscellany (about which, see p. 13). On the left, a man adorned in his *talit* waves the “four kinds.” To the right, a decorated initial-word panel introduces a prayer to be recited while holding the *lulav*. It presents two equestrian youths jousting with lances (a common medieval sports contest). This invokes a teaching in the Midrash (*Vayikra Rabah* 30:2) that compares the Jew's taking of the *lulav* on Sukkot to the victor's displaying his lance after victory.



Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

The festival of Sukkot leads directly into another two-day festival: Shemini Atzeret, which begins the evening of Monday, September 27, and Simchat Torah that begins the next evening, Tuesday September 28. The most familiar feature of this festival is the universal custom to complete the yearly Torah cycle on the day of Simchat Torah, which infuses the two-day holiday with incredible joy.

THE THEME OF SHEMINI ATZERET

“The eighth day shall be a time of restraint [*atzeret*]” (Numbers 29:35). This means, “Restrain yourselves from leaving.” With this command, G-d implores the Jewish people, “Although you have been with Me throughout the seven-day Sukkot festival, please remain with Me a little longer.” It expresses G-d’s affection for Israel. It is comparable to children about to take leave of their father, who tells them, “It is difficult for me to part with you! Please stay just one more day!”

Rashi (1040–1105), Numbers 29:35–36



CONCLUDING THE TORAH

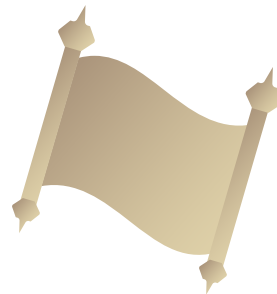
On the final day of the festival, we conclude our annual public Torah reading cycle. It is customary to sing several liturgical poems and praises about the Torah and to promote joyfulness on this day. This day has become known as Simchat Torah. . . It has been our longstanding custom that even the elder members of the community participate in the dancing while the Torah’s praises are sung.

**Rabbi Yitzchak ibn Ghaya (1038–1089),
Hilchot Lulav, p. 199**

RESTARTING THE TORAH

It is appropriate to rejoice when we complete the Torah. It is also customary to begin the cycle again immediately, reading from the very beginning of the Torah right after completing it. This prevents anyone from alleging that we consider ourselves having finished with the Torah and that we do not want to study it anymore. . . . We partake of joyous festive meals on this day in honor of completing the Torah, and to express our delight at having begun it anew.

**Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher (1269–1343),
Tur, Orach Chayim 669**



DANCING WITH THE TORAH

The Torah longs to dance around the synagogue’s reading table on Simchat Torah. But the Torah has no feet. Therefore, on Simchat Torah, the Jews themselves become the Torah’s dancing feet.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880–1950), cited in *Likutei Sichot* 4, p. 1169

AT THE BEGINNING

When we complete the Torah, we immediately begin the cycle again, reading, “In the beginning, G-d created . . .” (Genesis 1:1). Our message is clear: True, we studied the entire Torah. Nevertheless, we are still at “the beginning” of our studies. If we continue studying, we will see for ourselves that all the knowledge we gained until now is truly insignificant relative to the fresh depths of insight waiting for us within the Torah.

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), *Torat Menachem* 10, p. 237





Simchat Torah
Chana Helen Rosenberg

Customs and Observances

CANDLES

We welcome both evenings of this two-day holiday by lighting the distinctive candles or oil lights. See the back page for local candle lighting times.

THE SUKKAH

The Talmud (Sukkah 47a) guides us to eat in the sukkah on Shemini Atzeret (without reciting a blessing on this mitzvah). However, there are divergent customs as to whether this applies to all or just some of the meals on Shemini Atzeret. Chabad custom calls for eating in the sukkah throughout this festive day.



YIZKOR

Yizkor, a special memorial prayer for the departed, is recited during the Shemini Atzeret morning service.



PRAYERS FOR RAIN

As we enter the rainy season, we insert into the *musaf* prayer of Shemini Atzeret special prayers that the coming rainfall engender blessing, life, and plenty.



HAKAFOT

We conclude the Torah reading cycle during the day of Simchat Torah. Before doing so, we engage in joyous dance and song while circling the synagogue's Torah-reading lectern. These are called *hakafot*—"encirclings." (So immense is this joy that we begin it earlier, on the *previous* evening—dancing the *hakafot* following the evening services on the eve of Simchat Torah. In fact, some have the custom to dance the *hakafot* on the night *before that* as well—on the eve of Shemini Atzeret.)

CHAZAK!

Chazak—"Be strong!" This ancient Hebrew wish is exclaimed aloud in unison and with great joy by the entire congregation immediately after the Torah's final verse is read. The significance: Congratulations on completing this great mitzvah! May G-d grant you the strength to complete many more *mitzvot*!

A CALL TO ACTION

It is customary in some synagogues to mark the conclusion of Simchat Torah with a cryptic announcement: *VeYaakov halach ledarko* ("Jacob went on his way"—Genesis 32:2). The implication is that our multi-festival season has now ended and we are empowered by the radiance and spirituality of the diversity of sacred occasions to leap into the year ahead with fully stocked reserves of faith, joy, insight, and determination.



Tishrei 5782/September 2021

Times for Pittsburgh, PA

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SHABBAT |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| | 6 29 Elul at 7:25 PM | 7 1 Tishrei after 8:22 PM* Rosh Hashanah | 8 2 Tishrei Holiday Ends 8:21 PM Rosh Hashanah | 9 3 Tishrei | 10 4 Tishrei at 7:18 PM | 11 5 Tishrei Shabbat Ends 8:16 PM |
| 12 6 Tishrei | 13 7 Tishrei | 14 8 Tishrei | 15 9 Tishrei at Fast Begins 7:10 PM | 16 10 Tishrei Fast Ends 8:07 PM Yom Kippur | 17 11 Tishrei at 7:07 PM | 18 12 Tishrei Shabbat Ends 8:04 PM |
| 19 13 Tishrei | 20 14 Tishrei at 7:02 PM | 21 15 Tishrei after 7:58 PM* Sukkot | 22 16 Tishrei Holiday Ends 7:57 PM Sukkot | 23 17 Tishrei Sukkot (Chol Hamoed) | 24 18 Tishrei at 6:55 PM Sukkot (Chol Hamoed) | 25 19 Tishrei Shabbat Ends 7:52 PM Sukkot (Chol Hamoed) |
| 26 20 Tishrei Sukkot (Chol Hamoed) | 27 21 Tishrei at 6:50 PM Hoshanah Rabah | 28 22 Tishrei after 7:47 PM* Shemini Atzeret | 29 23 Tishrei Holiday Ends 7:45 PM Simchat Torah | * LIGHT FROM A PREEXISTING FLAME. | | |



Shabbat and Holiday Candle Blessings

Baruch atah Ado-nai, Elo-heinu melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu bemitsvotav, vetsivanu lehadlik ner shel

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| FOR SHABBAT Shabbat Kodesh. | FOR ROSH HASHANAH Yom Hazikaron. | FOR YOM KIPPUR Yom Hakippurim. | FOR SUKKOT, SHEMINI ATZERET, AND SIMCHAT TORAH Yom Tov. |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| FOR SHABBAT light of the holy Shabbat. | FOR ROSH HASHANAH light of the Day of Remembrance. | FOR YOM KIPPUR light of Yom Kippur. | FOR SUKKOT, SHEMINI ATZERET, AND SIMCHAT TORAH Yom Tov light. |
|--|--|---|--|

ON ALL HOLIDAY EVENINGS DURING TISHREI, ADD A SECOND BLESSING:

Baruch atah Ad-onai, Elo-heinu melech ha'olam, shehecheyanu, veki'yemanu, vehigi'anu lizman hazeh.

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

BLESSING 1

ברוך אתה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------|
| FOR SUKKOT, SHEMINI ATZERET, AND SIMCHAT TORAH יָוֵם טוֹב. | FOR YOM KIPPUR יָוֵם הַכִּפּוּרִים. | FOR ROSH HASHANAH יָוֵם הַזִּכְרוֹן. | FOR SHABBAT שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשׁ. |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------|

BLESSING 2

ON ALL HOLIDAY EVENINGS DURING TISHREI, ADD A SECOND BLESSING:

ברוך אתה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנָן הַזֶּה.

THE ALEPH INSTITUTE

412-421-0111

INFO@ALEPHNE.ORG

WWW.ALEPHNE.ORG

