

FACT FILE: ROSH HASHANAH

What is Rosh Hashanah?

Jewish people have many holy days and festivals, but Rosh Hashanah is one of the most important because it gives people a chance to say sorry for bad things they have done, and try to begin again. Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish new year and also the celebration of God's creation of the world. For many Jews it is a two-day festival (although there are some who only celebrate it for just one day). It falls in September or October each year.

As the beginning of a new year, Rosh Hashanah is a time for thinking back on good and bad deeds over the year that has just passed. It is also time for thinking ahead and trying to figure out how to do better in the coming year. Additionally, it is believed to be the beginning of the time in which God starts to judge the actions of every living Jew.

Many Jewish people are taught that at this time of year, people who are good are written into the Book of Life and those who are wicked are recorded in the Book of Death. The tenth day of the new year is called 'Yom Kippur', and it is the day on which God makes the final judgements on which people go into each book before closing the books for another year.

What do Jewish people do on Rosh Hashanah?

Preparing for Rosh Hashanah

Throughout the month before Rosh Hashanah, lots of Jewish people say prayers for forgiveness, and say sorry for anything they have done wrong. They might ask for help from their rabbi (this is a Jewish teacher) on how to make up for bad things they have done that year.



Blowing the shofar

On Rosh Hashanah, the shofar is blown 100 times. The shofar is a ram's horn that makes a loud sound. Often, Jews say that the sound of the shofar is like an alarm! Its loud sound wakes them up and reminds them that they must be sorry for anything they have done wrong, and try to be better next year.

Gathering at the synagogue

On Rosh Hashanah, Jews often spend time together in the synagogue, praying and listening to readings from the Torah, their holy book. They are also reminded that their actions, prayers and being truly sorry can influence how they will be judged by God.



Eating special food

Sweet foods like honey cake and apples dipped in honey are eaten. These are to show that people hope for a sweet new year ahead.

Challah is eaten. This is special bread, baked in a circle shape, symbolising the cycle of the year.



Often, pomegranates are placed on the dining table. They are full of lots of seeds, which remind Jewish people of the many rules in the Torah. The seeds are also a reminder of the many good deeds that can be done throughout the year to come.