



UNDERSTANDING ROSH HASHANAH & YOM KIPPUR

What is Rosh Hashanah?

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, marks the first of the Jewish High Holy Days and begins the Ten Days of Awe, a period of prayer, self-reflection, and repentance that leads up to Yom Kippur. Commemorating the creation of the world, the holiday celebrates the head of the new year and involves both joy and prayer.

In 2019, Rosh Hashanah begins at sunset on September 29 and lasts until nightfall on October 1. The holiday starts on the first day of Tishrei, the first month of the Jewish civil year.

What is Yom Kippur?

Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement or the Day of Remembrance, takes place on the 10th day of Tishrei. It's a time for renewing the sacred covenant with God through repentance and self-reflection. Tradition teaches that on Rosh Hashanah the Book of Life is written and on Yom Kippur one's decree or judgment for the New Year is sealed.

In 2019, Yom Kippur begins the evening of October 8 and ends on the evening of October 9.

What do Jews do for these holidays?

Throughout the High Holy Days, there are several traditions that mark the festivities and days of remembrance.

For Rosh Hashanah, many go to synagogue where they hear the sound of the shofar, the ram's horn. They say prayers and blessings for a good new year. And they eat sweet foods, especially apples dipped in honey and pomegranates, to symbolize wishes for a sweet new year.

Yom Kippur is a time for introspection and an "accounting of the soul." This is practiced through repentance, prayer, and charity. To focus attention on spiritual rather than physical matters, many fast from food and drink for 25 hours and refrain from wearing leather, washing, applying lotions, and sexual relations. They also wear white, light candles, and remember loved ones. They may go to synagogue for prayer services.

Are there holiday greetings?

On Rosh Hashanah, you can wish your Jewish friends and colleagues "**L'Shanah Tovah**" which means "For a Good Year" in Hebrew. For Yom Kippur, you can wish "**Tzom Kal**" for an easy fast or "**G'mar Hatimah Tovah**," or "May You Be Written in the Book of Life."

What can I do to create an inclusive & supportive space?

Be mindful of the significance of this holiday.

Be sensitive to the fact that the people who make up your company or organizational community may observe a variety of holidays that could limit their participation in events or require certain days off. Don't schedule big company events and, if avoidable, project deadlines during this time.

Allow for time off.

Many Jewish people observe Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as Sabbath days for which they refrain from work. Others may continue to work, but still fast. They may appreciate working from home or a flexible schedule so they can balance their work with their religious observance.