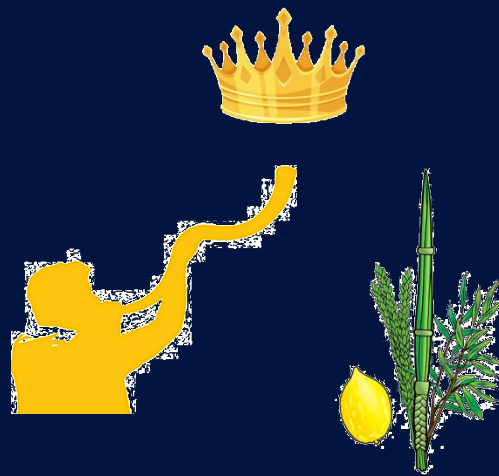


# High Holy Days Guide



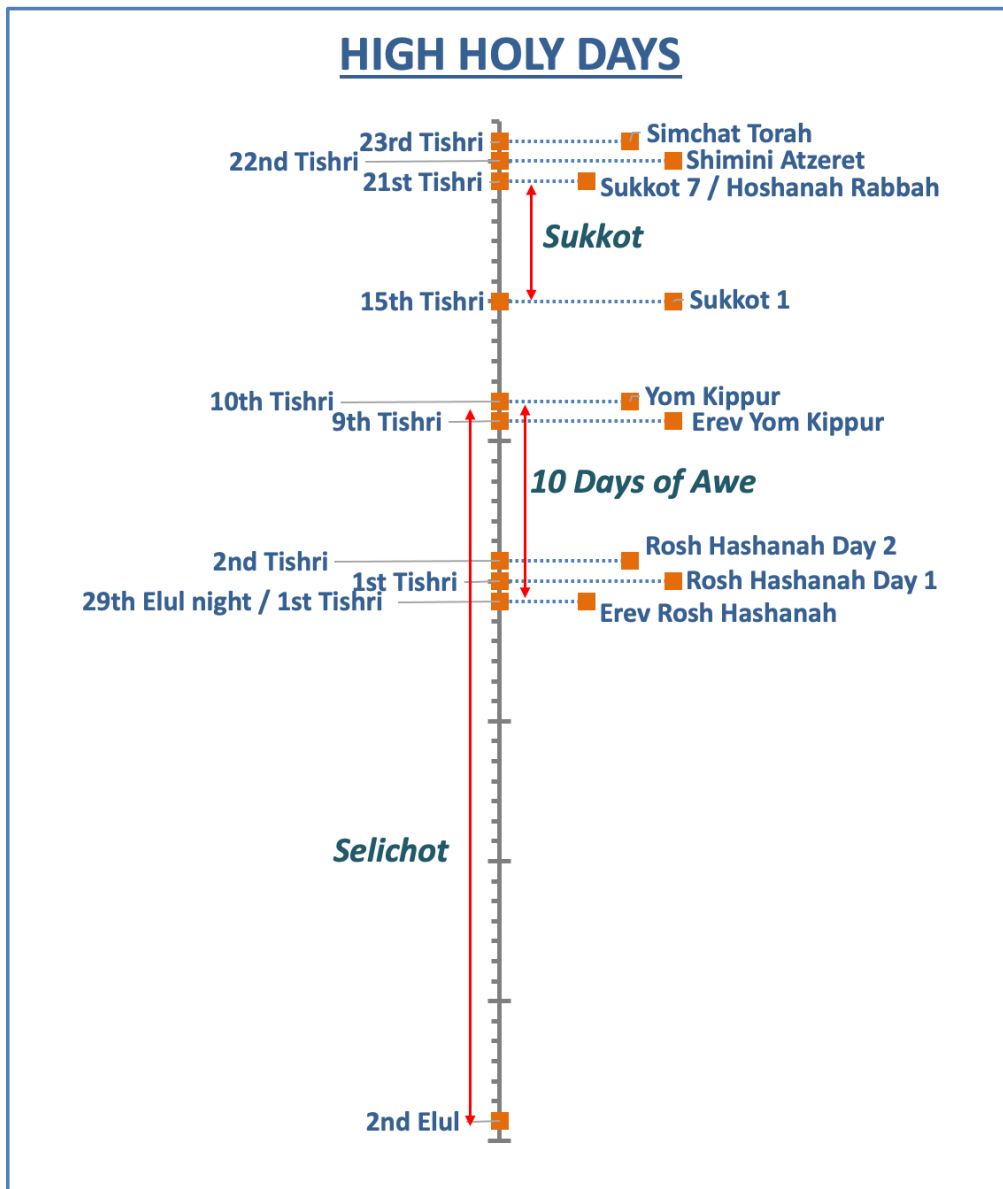
**Derech  
HaMashiach**  
Messianic Community

# The High Holy Days

The Jewish High Holy Days are the peak spiritual season of the Jewish calendar. During this period, we engage in the inner work of change, of returning to our essence and our highest potential as holy human beings.

The High Holy Days covers a series of G-d's Appointed Times (Moedim), as outlined in Va'yikra (Leviticus) 23:23 – 44, and include the Month of Elul, Rosh Hashanah (Head of the Year – Jewish New Year, aka Yom Teruah – Feast of Trumpets), the Ten Days of Awe (aka the 10 Days of Repentance or Time of Jacob's Trouble), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Sukkot (Festival of Booths), Hoshanah Rabbah (Great Salvation), Shemini Atzeret (Eighth Day of the Solemn Assembly) and Simchat Torah (Joy of Torah).

## Timeline Highlights



## ***Shadows of The Messiah***

While the Moedim, Appointed Times, are direct Commandments (Mitzvot) by G-d, HaShem has partnered with the Children of Israel as to how these Mitzvot are to be carried out. This has resulted in Halachah (Jewish law – the way we walk out the Mitzvot of Torah) and Minhag (Jewish customs). In order to distinguish between Halachah and Minhag, Halachah is denoted with \* in this guide, and Mitzvot direct from Torah are denoted with \*\*. Everything else described in this guide fall under the category of customs, they are not required by Jewish Law, halachah.

Jewish customs are unique because, unlike much of Judaism, they were not mandated by G-d but developed by humans. They celebrate the human initiative in the G-d-human relationship, and they provide a window into how our forefathers interpreted religious events.

Just as with Pesach (Passover), Yeshua the Messiah can be seen in so many of the symbolism, prayers and concepts associated with the High Holidays. The following is a very brief outline, and each requires a detailed study in itself to gain a full understanding:

- A time of Repentance: Yeshua said, “Repent and believe, for the Kingdom of G-d is at hand.”
- The coming of the King of the world: Hit’Galut (Revelation) 19:11 – 16.
- Yeshua will judge all mankind: “The Father does not judge anyone but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.” (CJB)<sup>1</sup>
- Yeshua is our Redeemer. His Name is embedded in the Siddurim (Prayer Books) of Judaism (Yeshua the Angel/Minister of the Face).
- Yeshua is the hope of our resurrection and will facilitate in the Ingathering of His People: 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4:16.
- Yeshua said on the last day of Sukkot (Hoshana Rabbah): “If anyone is thirsty, let him keep coming to me and drinking!” (Yochanan (John) 7:37) (CJB)<sup>1</sup>

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## The Month of Elul

As the final month in the Jewish calendar year, Elul is traditionally a time for reflection. Elul provides an opportunity to assess the progress of the previous year and plan new spiritual endeavours for the year ahead, similar to a business analysing their profits and losses. Elul then transitions into the month of Tishri (or Tishrei), the first month in the Jewish calendar which is celebrated with Rosh Hashanah.

Historically, the month of Elul is associated with divine forgiveness. After the Children of Israel sinned by worshipping the golden calf on the 17th of Tammuz, 2 months prior, Moshe ascended Mt. Sinai to seek G-d's forgiveness (the second 40-day period).

A little over a month later, on the first of Elul, Moses went back up onto Mount Sinai to receive the second set of Tablets and this is when G-d revealed to Moshe His "Thirteen Attributes of Mercy", as recorded in Sh'mot (Exodus) 34:6 – 7. Thirteen Attributes are the key to divine forgiveness – intimating that He had begun to forgive the Jewish people for their sin. G-d's complete forgiveness was granted 40 days later, on Yom Kippur.

When Moshe went up (now the third 40-day period), a shofar was blown throughout the camp to let the people know that Moshe was going up the mountain and that they should not make the same mistake that led to the sin of the Golden Calf.

To commemorate this today, it is customary (not halakhah) to blow the shofar throughout the month of Elul, which serves as a reminder for us also to stay away from sin. Hearing the shofar during Elul is also not a halachic obligation, but rather a custom. However, due to the association of the shofar blast with arousing one to do teshuvah (repentance), many make a point to hear the shofar blast during this period.

It is also customary to recite the selichot (selichah means "forgiveness") after hearing the shofar. Jewish tradition tells of a story:

"When King David prophetically foresaw the destruction of the Holy Temple and the cessation of the offering of the sacrifices, he wondered; "Without the daily sacrifices, how will the Jews atone for their sins?" G-d replied, "When suffering will befall the Jews because of their sins, they should gather before Me in complete unity. Together they shall confess their sins and recite selichot and I will answer their prayers."



## *Shofar*

- **How to:**

Our It is customary to blow the shofar (ram's horn) after morning services every weekday, during the month of Elul, except for Shabbat and the day before Rosh Hashanah. One can blow a condensed version of the full sequence blown on Rosh Hashanah, or simply blow the first segment:

One long blast, three mid-sized blasts (with a little tiny blast), nine short blasts, one long blast.

One long blast, three mid-sized blasts (with a little tiny blast), one long blast.

One long blast, nine short blasts, one long blast.

A shofar can be purchased in most Judaica stores in Australia or overseas.

- **Meaning:**

The daily shofar blasts serve as a spiritual wake-up call. Every morning it reminds us, "The month of Elul is here. Today is an opportunity for reflection and improvement. Make the most of this opportunity".

## *Selichot*

- **How to:**

In the weeks leading up to the High Holidays it is customary to say selichot – communal prayers for divine forgiveness. Sefardic tradition (which Derech HaMashiach follows in most cases) commences saying selichot from the 2nd of Elul. Ashkenazi traditions starts from the Saturday night just before Rosh Hashanah. This continues until Yom Kippur. Selichot is usually recited in the morning before the Shacharit (Morning) prayers. Selichot is not recited on Shabbat.

The text of the Selichot can be found in any Machzor, a prayer book for the High Holidays. Derech HaMashiach uses the Selichot prayers outlined in *100 Gates 100 Shofarot*, by Ahavat Ammi, or the Koren Sacks editions of the Machzor.

- **Meaning:**

Selichot are a collage of Torah verses and Hebrew prayers in poetic form. Formalised in the 9th century by Rabbi Amram Gaon and his contemporaries, we use these prayers to ask G-d to forgive us on a personal and communal level. "G-d's Thirteen Attributes of Mercy" are the centrepiece of the selichot and are recited on numerous occasions throughout. The daily shofar blasts serve as a spiritual wake-up call. Every morning it reminds us, "The month of Elul is here. Today is an opportunity for reflection and improvement.



## ***Hatarat Nedarim***

- **How to:**

Following Shacharit prayer on the last day of Elul, it is customary to annul vows that one may have made throughout the year. This ceremony is known as Hatarat Nedarim and must be conducted in the presence of three witnesses, who act as judges and annul the vows. We express regret for making any vows throughout the year in defiance of what G-d expects of us. (See Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:34)

The text for the annulment of vows is also found in the Machzor, the High Holidays Prayer book.

- **Meaning:**

The Torah attributes great significance to the words that we speak. In Jewish law a person is legally bound to keep a verbal promise; doing otherwise is considered “disgracing one’s words”.

As the year ends, we seek to annul any commitments that we may have made but were unable to uphold. To do so we convene a panel of three judges who annul our promises.

## ***Psalms 27***

- **How to:**

It is customary to recite Psalms 27 from the start of Elul all the way to the last day of Sukkot, which falls in the month after Elul.

- **Meaning:**

The Psalm mentions G-d’s name 13 times. In some sense, we plead with G-d, as Moshe did, to show us his “13 Attributes of Mercy” and to keep us from an evil decree as He judges us this time of the year.



## Greetings

The general greeting for most of the Appointed times is *Chag Sameach*, which literally means “happy holiday”. It can be Chag Pesach Sameach (Happy Passover Holiday), for Pesach for example. But the High Holidays also have specific greetings:

Before Rosh Hashanah, people generally wish each other: “A good inscription and sealing [in the Book of Life].” In Hebrew:

“*Ketivah v’chatima tovah*”. (כתיבה וחתימה טובה)

On Rosh Hashanah eve, as we return from synagogue service, it is traditional to greet one another with: “May you be written and sealed for a good year.” In Hebrew:

For a male: “*Leshana tovah tikatev v’tichatem*”. (לשנה טובה תכתב ותחתם)

For a female: “*Leshana tovah tikatevee v’tichatemee*”. (לשנה טובה תכתבי ותחתמי)

From noon on Rosh Hashanah, when our fates are already written, until Yom Kippur, when our fates for the coming year are to be sealed, we wish each other: “A good final sealing.” In Hebrew:

“*Gemar chatimah tovah*”. (גמר חתימה טובה)

Note: It is **not** standard to wish someone a “happy Yom Kippur”, but it is perfectly acceptable to wish them a **meaningful one**.



## Rosh Hashanah

The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah translates to “Head of the Year” and is two days long, but both days are said to be just one really long day. Of the seven main moedim, this one is the only one that doesn’t have an exact starting time. This moed (Appointed Time) begins only when two witnesses see the edge of the moon and report their sighting to the Sanhedrin. This requirement introduces slight variable time to its inception. Israel celebrates what is supposed to be the first day of the seventh month, Tishri, according to Va’yikra (Leviticus) 23:23 – 25, over a two-day period because it is “the day no one knows the day or hour.” For this very reason, Yom Teruah was, and still is, referred to as “the moed that no one knows the day or hour of!”

Just like the head controls the body, our actions on Rosh Hashanah have a tremendous impact on the rest of the year. Rosh Hashanah is a day of prayer; a time to ask the Almighty to grant us a year of peace, prosperity and blessing. But it is also a joyous day when we proclaim G-d as King of the Universe. The Chasidic masters teach that the continued existence of the universe depends on G-d’s desire for a world, a desire that is renewed when we re-accept His kingship each year on Rosh Hashanah.

There are various names for this Holiday:

- The most common name for this holiday is Rosh Hashanah.
- The Torah in B’midbar (Numbers) 29:1 refers to this day as Yom Teruah (The Day of Shofar Blowing)
- In our prayers, we often refer to it as Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance) and Yom Hadin (Day of Judgement) since this is the day when G-d recalls all of His creations and determines their fate for the year ahead.
- Together with Yom Kippur (which follows 10 days later), these days are called the Yamim Nora’im (The Days of Awe, or the High Holidays).

- **Symbols**

The Rosh Hashanah dinner meal (seder) is symbolic with culinary customs, many of them thousands of years old. The two most widely observed customs are to eat round challahs and apple dipped in honey. The night’s culinary customs are filled with symbolism:

**Round challahs:** The round challahs are reflective of the cyclical nature of the New Year and its four seasons. The spiral hints to the progress and growth we hope to experience throughout the year. Indeed, the Hebrew word for year (shanah) is etymologically linked with the concept of change (shinui).

**Apple dipped in honey:** One of the names that the Zohar (the primary book of Jewish mystical tradition) uses to refer to Paradise is the “holy apple orchard”. This is because apples are the “perfect” fruit: sweet, round, and smooth, with a pleasant smell. On this auspicious night we wish for a year of paradise-like perfection.





Other customs include:

**Pomegranates and Carrots:** They are both associated with quantity. Pomegranates have hundreds of seeds, while merren, the Yiddish word for carrots, means “more”. These foods reflect our hope for a year full of meaningful actions.

**Fish head or Sheep head:** Many people eat parts of the head of a fish or a ram, while proclaiming a wish that “we be a head and not a tail”.

It is customary to avoid nuts as well as vinegar-based, sharp foods, most notably the horseradish traditionally eaten with gefilte fish, symbolising our hope to avoid a bitter year.

- **Scripture Readings**

- **Day One of Rosh Hashanah:**

B'reishit (Genesis) 21:1 – 34; B'midbar (Numbers) 29:1 – 6

Sh'mu'el Alef (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel) 1:1 – 2:10

Yochanan (John) 1:1 – 14

- **Day Two of Rosh Hashanah:**

B'reishit 22:1 – 24; B'midbar 29:1 – 6

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 31:1 – 19

Mattityahu 25:31 – 46

- **Additional Readings**

It is useful to study the tractate of the Talmud on Rosh Hashanah before or during Rosh Hashanah, to gain a deeper understanding of this Appointed Time. The Torah itself has very little to say about Rosh Hashanah. In fact, there it is called Yom Teruah (The Day of Sounding the Shofar) and that it is at the beginning of the seventh month, Tishri.

Studying the binding of Itzhak (Isaac) at this time is also recommended, especially from a Messianic perspective. The story of the Binding of Itzhak represents the greatest story of “mesirut nefesh” (Self-sacrifice to the point of death) in the scriptures that points the way to Messiah.

Both studies are available in the back of the Ahavat Ammi Machzor, “100 Gate, 100 Shofarot”.



## ***Shofar***

There are two mitzvot in the Torah regarding the shofar. To blow the shofar and to hear the shofar (Va'yikra 23:24, B'midbar 29:1). \*\*

When Israel received the Ten Words (Ten Commandments) from G-d on Mount Sinai, we heard a very loud blast of the shofar. We are commanded to blow the shofar not only on Rosh Hashanah, but also at the beginning of the Jubilee year. Shofars were also blown by warriors in battle, and by musicians in the Temple.

The sound of the teruah, a note blown on the shofar during Rosh Hashanah, is both earthly and Divine. Even though the shofar is made from a horn of an animal, a ram, it makes the same sound that was heard on the top of Mount Sinai when G-d addressed the people. While music can be celebratory, the sound of the shofar is more than just a sound of jubilation. It is the sound of the presence of G-d, and the sound we use to cry out to G-d when we need G-d's intervention.

Consequently, it is our desired to honour and respect the purpose and significance of the shofar blast, and therefore we limit the use of the shofar to the prescribed occasions, and of course personal practice to achieve proficiency in its use.

In the Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16a, we read:

“R. Abbahu said: Why do we blow a ram's horn? The Holy One, blessed be He said: Sound before Me a ram's horn so that I will remember on your behalf the binding of Isaac, the son of Abraham, and to account it to you as if you had bound yourselves before me.”

Rabbi Abbahu is claiming that the shofar is an allusion to the ram we read about in the story of the binding of Isaac, which is the Torah reading for Rosh Hashanah. The shofar reminds us of the sacrifice Abraham made, and we use it to remind G-d of that same sacrifice, so that He may credit their (Abraham and Isaac) good actions to us, today. In the end of that story, Abraham sees a ram and sacrifices it instead of Isaac. We also know this is a shadow of the Messiah, Who ultimately singly gave His live on behalf of Israel, and all the human race.

The shofar is not blown on Rosh Hashanah when the first day falls on a Shabbat.

### ***100 Shofar Blasts***

The Shofar blast at Rosh Hashanah consists of 100 blasts. The blasts are made up of three different sounds, played in different orders.

- The teruah is a broken-sounding blast which resembles a cry.
- The tekiah is an unbroken blast.
- The shevarim is a moan-like sound.



Together, they make up the 100 blasts as follows. The man of each blast is said before each blast:

Tekiah, Shevarim, Teruah, Tekiah.  
Tekiah, Shevarim, Teruah, Tekiah.  
Tekiah, Shevarim, Teruah, Tekiah.

Tekiah, Shevarim, Tekiah.  
Tekiah, Shevarim, Tekiah.  
Tekiah, Shevarim, Tekiah.

Tekiah, Teruah, Tekiah.  
Tekiah, Teruah, Tekiah.  
Tekiah, Teruah, Tekiah Gedolah.

Rabbi Saadia Gaon, a leading Iraqi Rabbi in the 10th century, enumerates ten symbolic allusions of the Shofar:

### **1. Return of the King**

On Rosh Hashana, the anniversary of creation, G-d renews the creative energy that sustains our world. Once more, He is crowned as King of the Universe. Just as trumpets are sounded at a coronation; the shofar announces G-d's continued kingship.

### **2. The Great Alarm Clock**

On Rosh Hashana, the first of the Ten Days of Repentance, we awake from our spiritual slumber. The Shofar is like an alarm that calls on us to examine our deeds and correct our ways, as we return to G-d.

### **3. The Reminder**

The Shofar was blown at Mt. Sinai when the Torah was given. On Rosh Hashana, we blow the shofar to remind us to rededicate ourselves to Torah study-and to remind G-d of our original commitment and sincerity.

### **4. The Voice**

The shofar reminds us of the voice of the prophets, who like the blast of the shofar called upon us to correct our ways, follow G-d's commandments and act properly with others.

### **5. The Tears**

The shofar's cry reminds us of the cries and tears shed for the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, galvanising us to hasten the coming of Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple.



## 6. The Sacrifice

The shofar, made of a ram's horn, reminds us of the binding of Isaac and the ram G-d provided as a sacrifice in his place. By blowing the shofar, we remember the faith of the Patriarchs and our own capacity for self-sacrifice.

## 7. The Awesome

The shofar fills us with awe and humility as we contemplate the true infinitude of G-d, how He fills all space and time.

## 8. The Introspection

The shofar will be blown on the Day of Judgment when Messiah comes. We blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah to remind us to examine our deeds and contemplate how we can improve them.

## 9. The Celebration

The shofar blast will signal the return of the Jewish people when Messiah comes. We blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah to remind us to examine of G-d's salvation in our own lives.

## 10. The Unity

The shofar blast when Messiah comes will herald a time of universal understanding and recognition of G-d's unity. We blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah to remind us of G-d's unity.

## *Tashlich*

It is customary to go to a natural body of water containing fish on Rosh Hashanah afternoon and recite a short prayer upon throwing bread or stones into the water. This ceremony is known as tashlich. If one of the days of Rosh Hashanah falls on the Sabbath, the Tashlich ceremony is done on the day when it is not a Sabbath\*. The tashlich prayer can be found in the Machzor prayer book for the High Holidays.

The core of the tashlich prayer is a collection of verses from scripture that express G-d's endless forgiveness. By reciting these prayers, we ask G-d to help us rid (tashlich in Hebrew) ourselves of our negative habits.

Why water, stones or bread and fish? In Chassidic tradition, water, which naturally flows to the lowest point, is a symbol for G-d's far-reaching kindness. Fish, who usually do not have eyelids, are representative of G-d's constant providence. Also, man cannot escape God's judgment any more than fish can escape being caught in a net; we are just as likely to be ensnared and trapped at any moment as is a fish. The stone, which represents our sin, sink to the bottom of the water, disappearing from sight, just as our sins are cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19, Tehillah (Psalm) 118 and 130). Alternatively, the bread floats away, and



may even be snapped up by the fish, representing that they can disappear as quickly as we repent.

### ***Points to Ponder***

Throughout the temptations of daily life, we sometimes pick up negative habits. These come to us in times of despair or due to acts of arrogance. We purchase them in fits of anger or digest them in moments of weaknesses. We might own them. We might carry them. And we might even relish some of them. But they never become us. They never become who we are. And they definitely aren't what we really want to be. They are always a separate entity that can be disowned, disavowed and cast away at any time. The symbolic act of throwing away our sins brings that message home in a dramatic, concrete manner.



## Ten Days of Repentance

The period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is fused with particular spiritual potency and is an apt time for prayer, self-reflection, Torah study and increased positive activity. These ten days are known collectively as the Ten Days of Repentance, The Days of Awe, or the Time of Jacob's Trouble.

### *Fast of Gedaliah*

The day following Rosh Hashanah is a fast day, known as the Fast of Gedaliah. It is one of the fasts mentioned in Zechariah 8:19\*\*.

After destroying the first Temple and exiling most of Israel's Jews in 423 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon installed Gedaliah as governor over Israel's remaining population of Jews. Under Gedaliah's benevolent rule the Jewish population regained semi-autonomy, but in 339 BCE a jealous political rival murdered Gedaliah along with many of his confidants. Faced with chaos, Israel's remaining Jews fled the country, marking the end of Jewish settlement in Israel until the Second Temple Period.

The story of Gedaliah can be read in M'lakhim Bet (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings) 25:22 – 26, Yirmeyahu 39:13 – 14, and 40:1 – 41:18.

### *Shabbat Shuvah:*

The theme of Returning – the central theme of these ten days – is reflected in the haftorah reading of Shabbat Shuvah. Taken from the prophet Hosea, the haftorah begins with the words "Return (shuvah) Israel to your G-d". The Shabbat is therefore called Shabbat Shuvah and is an opportune time to pray, study, reflect and give to others. in fits of anger or



## Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year, when we are closest to G-d and to the essence of our souls. Yom Kippur means “Day of Atonement,” as Va’yikra 16:30 states, “For on this day, atonement will be made for you to purify you; you will be clean before Adonai from all your sins.” (CJB)<sup>2</sup>

For nearly 26 hours we “afflict our souls”: we abstain from food and drink, do not wash or apply lotions or creams, do not wear leather footwear, and abstain from marital relations. Instead, we spend the day in synagogue, praying for forgiveness.

After Israel sinned with the golden calf, Moshe ascended Mount Sinai and prayed to G-d to forgive them. After two 40-day stints on the mountain, full Divine favour was obtained. The day that Moshe came down the mountain (the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei) was to be known forevermore as the Day of Atonement — Yom Kippur.

### *Erev Yom Kippur*

- **Kapparot:**

On the morning of the day before Yom Kippur, many communities have the custom to perform kapparot (atonement) – a ritual that helps atone for our sins through charity.

As part of this custom, some wave a chicken, a fish or some money, whilst saying a traditional prayer found in a Yom Kippur Machzor. The symbolic meaning behind this is that we are redeeming our life with the kappara (the thing that makes atonement). For most people using money would be the most practical way of fulfilling the ritual. After the ceremony, make sure to donate the money to a charitable cause.

Yeshua has made atonement for us, through His death on the Execution Stake. Note, Kapparot is a minhag (custom) and not halakhah (Jewish law).

- **Malkut:**

Before praying the Mincha (Afternoon) prayer on the day before Yom Kippur, it is customary for men to receive symbolic “lashes” – by having another person softly “whipping” them on the back for the sins they may have committed over the past year. Though only symbolic, receiving the malkut helps engender feelings of humility and repentance.

The recipient of the lashes kneels on the ground, facing north. The “whipper” taps the belt on the recipient’s right shoulder, then the left shoulder, and then the middle under the shoulder blades 13 times on each point which leads to a total of 39 taps. This represents

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the 40 lashes minus one. Forty lashes typically being the amount that most people would not be able to survive.

Again, Malkut is a minhag (custom) and not halakhah (Jewish law).

- **Mikvah:**

Many have the custom to immerse in a mikvah (ritual baptismal pool) on the day before Yom Kippur.

- **Meals:**

Just as it is a mitzvah to fast on Yom Kippur, it is considered a mitzvah to eat on the day before Yom Kippur\*. We cannot honour the day of Yom Kippur itself with festive meals, instead we do so the day before. It is customary to have at least two meals on the day: one in the early afternoon and the second immediately before beginning the fast.

- **Blessing Children:**

Due to the spiritual potency of the time, it has become a widespread custom for parents to bless their children before Yom Kippur begins. The traditional blessings can be found in a Yom Kippur Machzor. Be sure to also add your own personal blessings as you bless your children at these most opportune moments.

### ***Yom Kippur Day***

On Yom Kippur, the Torah instructs us to “afflict” ourselves by abstaining from an assortment of physical pleasures\*\*. There are two reasons given for this:

- a) On this holy day, when our connection to G-d is most prominent, we are similar to angels who have no physical needs.
- b) We afflict ourselves to demonstrate regret for our past misdeeds.

There are five types of pleasure that we avoid on Yom Kippur – from sundown on the eve of the holiday until the conclusion of Yom Kippur the following night (after sundown).

- Eating or drinking\*.
- Wearing leather footwear\*.
- Bathing or washing\*.
- Applying ointment, lotions, or creams\*.
- Engaging in any form of marital intimacy\*.

We also abstain from all activities generally forbidden on Shabbat such as work and pursuing our own interests\*.

It is customary not to wear gold jewellery on Yom Kippur, as gold is reminiscent of the sin of the Golden Calf. On the Day of Atonement, we do not want to “remind” the prosecutor (satan) of our previous sins.





- **Fasting:**

Fasting on Yom Kippur is of utmost importance<sup>\*\*</sup>. All females over the age of 12 and all males over the age of 13 are encouraged to fast, unless it may cause a danger to someone's life. Therefore, people who are ill, post-partum, diabetic, currently taking medication and any who may just find it difficult or dangerous to fast, should consult a health professional before choosing to fast.

An ancient High Holiday prayer book suggests that someone who is ill and seemingly exempt from the fast should recite the following prayer before eating:

*"Behold I am prepared to fulfil the mitzvah (commandment) of eating and drinking on Yom Kippur, as You have written in your Torah: "You shall observe My statutes and My ordinances, which a man shall do and live with them. I am G-d." In the merit of fulfilling this mitzvah, seal my fate and that of all the ill of Your nation Israel, for a complete recovery. May I merit next Yom Kippur to once again fulfil the mitzvah of "you shall afflict yourselves on Yom Kippur." May this be Your will. Amen."*

- **Leather footwear:**

In ancient times, leather shoes were generally associated with luxury and wearing them were seen as an act of showing off. Therefore, it has become halakhah that shoes or slippers containing any leather at all, whether in their uppers, soles, heels or in an insert, should not be worn.

The prohibition applies to footwear only. Wearing a leather belt, kippah or jacket presents no problem whatsoever. Children should also wear non-leather footwear.

- **Washing and bathing:**

Even though washing our bodies is considered against the spirit of this holy day, there are many exemptions to this rule including:

- Hand sanitizing for health reasons.
- Washing hands after using the bathroom.
- It is permitted to wash any area of the body that has become soiled.
- Upon awakening in the morning, one may wash their hands.
- Before the Priestly Blessing is administered, the one reciting the blessing may wash their hands.
- It is permitted to wash hands before handling food (for those who are permitted to eat).
- Bathing or washing for health reasons.

- **Wearing white:**

It is customary to wear white on Yom Kippur, because on this day, we try to dress like the angels. White is also a colour associated with purity and is symbolic of G-d having washed our sins away as in Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 1:18.



- **Kol Nidrei:**

Kol Nidrei is a peculiar declaration in which, before G-d and His heavenly court, we annul in advance any promises that we may make in the future year. Incorporated into the liturgy sometime in the 10th century, its composer remains a mystery.

- **Scripture Readings:**

Va'yikra (Leviticus) 16:1 – 34; B'midbar (Numbers) 29:7 – 11

Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 57:14 – 58:14

Mattityahu (Matthew) 25:32 – 46

- **Prayers\***

There are many prayers that are recited on Yom Kippur, all of which can be found in a Yom Kippur Machzor. Each of these prayers are ripe with meaning and entirely about asking for forgiveness and coming closer to G-d, in relationship and in character.

- **Shofar**

It is customary to blow one long blast of the Shofar once Yom Kippur ends at sunset and announce *Lshanah habaah Bi Yerushalayim* (Next year in Jerusalem)!

- **Sukkah**

It is customary to start building your Sukkah as soon as Yom Kippur is over, that very night. See Sukkot for more details.



## Sukkot

When the Jewish people left Egypt to go to the desert, G-d sheltered them in huts (Sukkot), as the Torah says. The Elders of Israel offered two interpretations as to the nature of these huts: they were either human-made structures, or G-d's miraculous cloud-like protection. According to both opinions, the Jews lived as nomads in the desert, relying on G-d's protection, from the elements as well as enemies.

By sitting in the Sukkah, a makeshift hut under the stars, we remind ourselves of G-d's great kindness to our ancestors and of our ultimate reliance on Him, despite the comfort of our modern lives. We also look forward to the Messianic Kingdom, which is represented by Sukkot, the Festival of Ingathering, where all the Nations join Israel, to worship the G-d of Israel together.

### *Pre-Sukkot Preparations*

On Sukkot we gather the four species as commanded in Va'yikra (Leviticus) 23:40\*\*, and build a hut, known as a Sukkah. In order to have a stress-free Sukkot, it is encouraged to order your Four Species and Sukkah materials before it gets too close to the festival, preferably a month early. The roof of a Sukkah should be made out of a material that grows from the ground but have been detached from the ground\*. A quick google search for "buy sukkah Australia" should show plenty of websites that will sell the Four Species and materials for Sukkah roofing.

- **How to:**

A simple guide to building your own Sukkah:

**Walls\***: The walls of a sukkah can be made of any material, provided that they are sturdy enough that they do not move in a normal wind. You can use wood or fiberglass panels, waterproof fabrics attached to a metal frame, etc. You can also use pre-existing walls (i.e, the exterior walls of your home, patio or garage) as one or more of the sukkah walls. An existing structure that is roofless or has a removable roof can also be made into a sukkah by covering it with proper sechach.

**Roof Covering\***: The sukkah needs to be covered with sechach — raw, unfinished vegetable matter. Common sukkah roof-coverings are: bamboo poles, evergreen branches, reeds, corn stalks, narrow strips (1×1 or 1×2) of unfinished timber, or special sechach mats. Mats made of bamboo, straw or other vegetable matter can be used only if they were made for the purpose of serving as a roof covering.

**Lighting**: If your sukkah is built close to an outlet, purchase a lightbulb with a rain protection cover and electrical cord.

**Chairs and Tables**: You will be eating your meals in the sukkah for the duration of the festival. It is also a special mitzvah to invite guests to share your sukkah.



**Decorations:** Many communities decorate the sukkah with colorful posters depicting holiday themes, by hanging fresh fruits or other decorations from the sechach beams, or both.



### ***Sukkot Week***

Throughout the week of Sukkot, it is a Mitzvah to eat our meals in the Sukkah<sup>\*\*</sup>. This is especially important on the very first night of Sukkot<sup>\*</sup>.

Before eating a meal in the Sukkah, we say the following blessing:

*“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.”*

- **Meaning:**

The sukkah is the only Mitzvah that we can physically ‘enter’.

Another feature of the Sukkah is that it can simultaneously hold multiple people, reflecting the theme of peace and harmony, and the Ingathering of the Messianic Kingdom.

### ***The Four Species (Lulav and Etrog)***

- **How to:**

On each day of Sukkot, we hold the Four species in our right hand<sup>\*\*</sup>, facing east, and say the blessing:

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

When it’s the first time you waved the Four species this year on Sukkot, we add the shehechyanu blessing:

*“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.”*



Then bring the Four Species together in your hands and wave them in all six directions: right, left, forward, up, down, and backward.

- **Meaning:**

The etrog (citron) has both a taste and an aroma; so too do the people of Israel include individuals who have both Torah learning and good deeds.

The lulav (date) frond has a taste but does not have an aroma; this represents those individuals who learn Torah but do not perform good deeds.

The hadas (myrtle) has a beautiful aroma but has no taste; similarly there are people who spend their lives helping others and doing good but neglect the Torah.

The aravah (willow) has no taste and no aroma; so too do the people of Israel include individuals who do not have Torah and do not have good deeds.

Says G-d: "Let them all bond together in one bundle and atone for each other."



In Nehemiah 8:13 – 17, we read of a fifth species, the "wild olive" ("êts sheh'-men" – vs 15), that is collected when Israel had reassembled Jerusalem, after returning from captivity. We know that Rav Shaul (Apostle Paul) equates the G-d Fearing Gentile to the wild Olive Branch, that is grafted in to the Native Olive Tree, representing Israel. This is a shadow of what will be fulfilled in the Messianic Era, when Israel is finally gathered back to Israel together with those who are Grafted In.

- **Scripture Readings:**

- **Day I of Sukkot:**

Va'yikra (Leviticus) 22:26 – 23:44; B'midbar (Numbers) 29:12 – 16

Z'kharyah (Zechariah) 14:1 – 21

Yochanan (John) 7:1-13.

- **Day II of Sukkot:**

Va'yikra 22:26 – 23:44; B'midbar 29:12 – 16

Sh'mu'el Alef (1st Samuel) 8:2 – 8:21

Yochanan 7:14 – 31

- **Prayers**

It is customary to recite Hallel during the week of Sukkot, which are Tehillim (Psalms) 113 – 118.



## Hoshana Rabbah

Hoshana Rabah – meaning the “Great Salvation” – is the seventh and final day of Sukkot. It is the day on which G-d places His final seal of judgment regarding the upcoming year. Additionally, G-d decides the upcoming year’s rainfall throughout Sukkot. Hoshanah Rabah, the last day of Sukkot, is when that decision is finalized. The day is therefore marked with special customs.

Each day of Sukkot in the Temple, the people would circle the altar with the Four Species in their hands. During the procession, they would pray for G-d’s blessing, punctuating each phrase of the prayer with the word – hoshanah– – “please save”. On the final day of Sukkot, the people would circle the altar seven times. This is why the day came to be called Hoshana Rabbah, The Great Hoshanah.

- **Night Learning**

In preparation for Hoshanah Rabbah, many have the custom to spending the evening before learning Torah. Some read the book of D’varim (Deuteronomy) and Tehillim (Psalms).

- **Prayers\***

Due to the spiritual potency of the day, many prayers are added in the shacharit prayer, found in most normal weekday Siddurim and also in a High Holiday Machzor.

- **Beating the willow**

It is customary to beat a bundle of willow twigs on the ground 5 times. This ancient custom is associated with the rain theme of Sukkot; willows typically grow by the water.

- **Festive Meal\***

As the day is a holiday and the last day of Sukkot, it is customary to have a festive meal with bread in the Sukkah.



## Shemini Atzeret

Shemini Atzeret (Eighth Day of the Solemn Assembly) is the culmination of the entire High Holiday season and is celebrated with great joy. It is celebrated the day after Hoshanah Rabbah, Seventh Day of Sukkot, but is not necessarily part of Sukkot. The Shemini Atzeret prayers feature special prayers for rain, officially marking the start of Israel's rain season.

Jewish tradition describes Shemini Atzeret as G-d's farewell party with the Jewish people:

“A king invited his children to a feast for a number of days. When the time came for them to leave, he said: My children! Please, stay one more day; it is difficult for me to part with you!”

A final meal in the Sukkah is done on this day<sup>\*</sup>, however we do not recite the blessing for sitting in the Sukkah as we did for the last 7 days.

- **Scripture Readings**

D'varim 14:22 – 16:17; B'midbar 29:35 – 30:1

M'lakhim Alef (1<sup>st</sup> Kings) 8:54 – 66

Hit'Galut (Revelation) 21



## Simchat Torah

Simchat Torah (Joy of Torah) is the day on which we conclude studying the five books of Moshe and begin again from the beginning of B'reishit (Genesis); both causes for celebration, for scholar and layman, young and old alike. Though we may all appreciate the Torah differently, through studying it we all connect with the same G-d and common Jewish tradition.

Traditionally, Simchat Torah is celebrated with joyous community meals and dancing, while rejoicing with the Torah in synagogues\*. We dance to celebrate this occasion, which enables us to overlook our differences and sense the ultimate truth in which we can all celebrate, as equals

- **Scripture Readings**

D'varim 33:1 – 34:12; B'reishit 1:1 – 2:3; B'midbar 29:35 – 30:1

Y'hoshua (Joshua) 1:1-18

Hit'Galut 22

Parshat Vezot ha'Bracha, and the entire Torah, ends by telling us what a great person Moshe was:

"There arose not a prophet since in Israel like Moshe, whom G d knew face to face... and in all the mighty hand and the great awesome things which Moshe did before the eyes of all Israel."

As soon as we finish reading the parshah, we immediately begin again from the beginning, reading from B'reishit about how G d created the world.

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Acknowledgement: This guide is a compilation of information from various sources, including Chabad, My Jewish Learning and Aish, as well as guidance from our own Rabbis, Rabbi Dr Bernstein, and Rabbi Dr Shapira (authors of *100 Gates 100 Shofarot*). We gratefully thank them for having this information freely available.

