



JFS Jewish Journal

Engaging Your Jewish Residents



High Holidays

The High Holidays: The Holiest Days



The Holiest Days of the Jewish Year

Fall is an important and sacred season in the Jewish calendar, marked by a series of meaningful and reflective holidays known as the High Holidays. **Rosh Hashanah** (pronounced Rohsh Ha-Sha-Nah), the Jewish New Year, is a time for introspection, gratitude, and setting intentions for the year ahead. Ten days later is **Yom Kippur** (pronounced Yome Key-Poor), the Day of Atonement. It is considered the holiest day of the Jewish year, dedicated to fasting, prayer, and seeking forgiveness.

Together, these holidays create a powerful opportunity for spiritual reflection and renewal, inviting individuals and communities to pause, examine their actions, and commit to personal growth in the year to come.



JFS is Here & This is How We Help

Jewish Family Services (JFS) enriches lives and strengthens the community by providing compassionate support and resources to individuals and families from all backgrounds. Guided by Jewish values, JFS specializes in supporting older adults' safety and independence, assisting families with resources and guidance, providing private transportation to appointments, offering expert counseling and care management, and more. You can learn more about JFS and our chaplaincy program on *page 8*.

In This Issue

<i>The High Holidays</i>	2
<i>How to Celebrate</i>	3
<i>Links to Services</i>	4
<i>More Fall Holidays</i>	5
<i>Bubbe's Corner</i>	6
<i>Coloring Page</i>	7
<i>About JFS</i>	8

The High Holidays

Rosh Hashanah



Rosh Hashanah, which translates literally to “head of the year,” is a two-day celebration of the Jewish new year. Depending on religious observance or upbringing, some Jews celebrate only the first day.

Yom Kippur



While Rosh Hashanah is a celebratory holiday, Yom Kippur is a solemn one. Known as the Day of Atonement, it is a time to reflect on the past year and commit to doing better in the new year. The Hebrew word for repentance, *teshuvah*, also means “returning”—returning to our truest selves while recognizing the good we have done and carrying it forward. It is customary to fast for the whole day,* beginning with a special prayer service called *Kol Nidre* (Kohl Nee-dray). Yom Kippur is considered the holiest day of the Jewish year.

**Many residents may not be able to fast due to medical conditions or medications. In Judaism, preserving one's health comes first—if fasting would be harmful, it is not required and is, in fact, prohibited. As JFS Jewish Chaplain Rabbi Adam Lautman teaches, residents should prioritize their health (unless their personal rabbi has advised otherwise). Fortunately, there are many other meaningful ways to observe the holiday.*

The Days of Awe



The 10 days between the two holidays are a time for self reflection and collection of thoughts before the Yom Kippur fast.

Traditional High Holiday Foods & Their Symbolism



Apples & Honey

Sliced apples dipped in honey are the most popular Rosh Hashanah tradition, symbolizing hopes for a sweet new year. Many dishes include this combo, like apple kugel, honey cake, apple cake, and applesauce.

New Fruit & Pomegranate

To celebrate the new year, it's traditional to try a new or seasonal fruit—like star fruit or dragon fruit—as a symbol of gratitude for life and the world's abundance. In Judaism, the pomegranate is popular for its many seeds, said to represent the 613 commandments in the Torah.



Round Challah

Jews eat braided challah bread all year round, but at Rosh Hashanah, they opt for a challah that is braided into a circle rather than a loaf. This represents the cyclical nature of the year. The challah is often dipped in honey to symbolize the hope for a sweet new year.

Celebrate the High Holidays with Your Residents

Cast Away Your Sins



On the afternoon on Rosh Hashanah there is a ceremony called *Tashlich* (tosh-likh), which is performed by “casting off” or throwing crumbs of food, usually bread, into a body of flowing water such as a lake or pond. This symbolizes casting away sins from the previous year and starting anew. Take your residents to a nearby pond or fountain and give them stale bread to participate in this Rosh Hashanah tradition.

Host a Break-Fast



Though many of your residents probably will not be able to truly fast on Yom Kippur, breaking the ceremonial fast with a meal at the end of the day commemorates the end of the holiday. After sundown, prepare a spread with classic and easily digested Jewish foods like bagels, tuna fish, egg salad and grape juice.

Light a Memorial Candle



Yom Kippur is both a day to atone and a day to commemorate the loss of loved ones. Jews traditionally light small candles called *yahrtzeit* (yard-zite) candles on sad days such as death anniversaries and solemn holidays. The candles burn for a full 24 hours. Electronic *yahrtzeit* candles can be used for safety purposes, and they can be found at most local synagogue gift shops.

Listen to the Sounds of the *Shofar* and Traditional Music



For the Jewish month of *Tishrei* (Tish-Ray), which begins on Rosh Hashanah, it is traditional to listen to the blasts of the *shofar*, a ram’s horn that is used like a trumpet. Hearing the *shofar* on the two High Holidays is considered a great *mitzvah* (Mitz-Vah), or holy commandment.

The crying sounds remind listeners to be introspective and repent any sins from the previous year. Traditionally, the *shofar* is sounded every day during the month of *Elul* (except on Shabbat). Whether listening to the *shofar* or other tunes for the High Holidays, familiar melodies can bring memories and excitement for the future.

- ✓ [Sounds of the shofar](#)
- ✓ [Shofar for Rosh Hashanah](#)
- ✓ [Avinu Malkeinu](#) - recited from the beginning of *Elul* (the month before) through Yom Kippur
- ✓ [Dip Your Apple](#) - a modern Rosh Hashanah song set to the tune of Shakira’s *Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)*



Links to High Holiday Services & Streamings

Albany

Reform

- [Congregation Beth Emeth](#)
- [B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation](#)

Conservative

- [Temple Israel](#)
- [Congregation Ohav Shalom](#)

Schenectady/Niskayuna

Reform

- [Congregation Gates of Heaven](#)

Conservative

- [Congregation Agudat Achim](#)

Troy

Reform

- [Congregation Berith Shalom](#)

Conservative

- [Temple Beth El of Troy](#)

Saratoga County

Reform

- [Temple Sinai](#)

Conservative

- [Congregation Beth Shalom of Clifton Park](#)
 - Call (518) 371-0608 for Zoom link
- [Congregation Shaara Tfilie of Saratoga Springs](#)
 - Call (518) 584-2370 for Zoom link

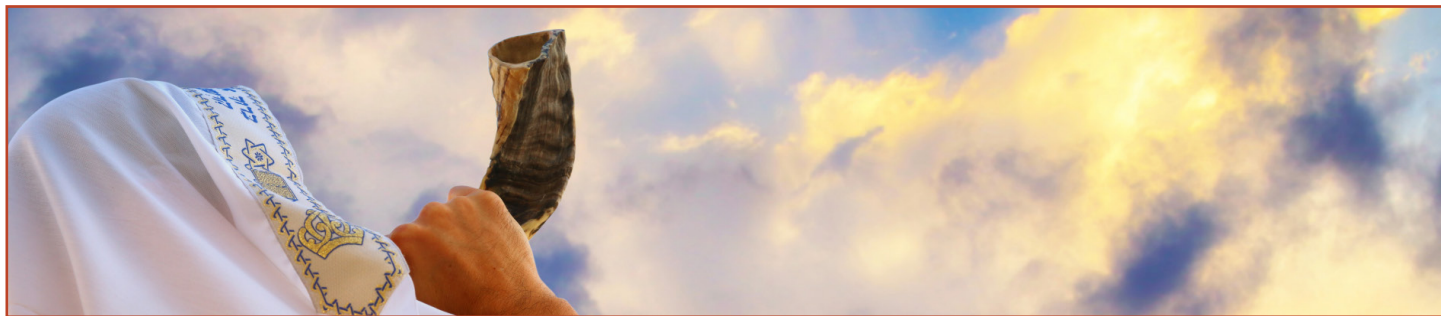
Columbia & Greene Counties

Reform

- [Temple Israel of Catskill](#)

Conservative

- [Anshe Emeth of Hudson](#)



Hebrew ...	It is pronounced ...	It means ...	When it is said ...
<i>Chag Sameach</i>	Hog sah-may-ach	Happy holidays!	Any holiday except for Yom Kippur
<i>Shanah tovah</i>	Sha-nah toe-vah	Happy New Year!	Any time during the High Holidays
<i>Shanah tovah u'metukah</i>	Sha-nah toe-vah ooh mehtoo-kah	Have a sweet and happy new year	On Rosh Hashanah and before Yom Kippur
<i>G'mar chatimah tovah or G'mar Tov</i>	G-mar ha-ti-mah toh-vah or G-mar tov	May you be sealed in the Book of Life or a good sealing	Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
<i>Machzor</i>	Makh-zore	Prayer book specific to the High Holidays	A resident may say, "I want to use my <i>machzor</i> to pray."
<i>Gut yontif</i>	Good yon-tiff	Good holiday in Yiddish	Appropriate for any holiday

More Fall Holidays

Sukkot

Sukkot (Soo-coat) begins on a full moon at nightfall on the 16th of the Jewish lunar month of *Tishrei* (Tish-ray). During Sukkot, Jews build a *sukkah* — a structure that has a cover made from greenery harvested from the ground. The *sukkah* is meant to become a second home during the holiday. Jews traditionally eat meals, study, schmooze and some even sleep in the *sukkah*, where only the light greenery separates the sky.

Each day of Sukkot (except for Shabbat), blessings are made with a *lulav* and *etrog* (see left). A *lulav* is a bundle of specified four greens and an *etrog* is a citron. If you are looking for these for your facility, please contact JFS: (518) 482-8856 or info@jfsnyny.org.



Celebrate with Your Residents by Hosting an Edible Sukkah Decorating Contest

Using graham crackers, pretzels, candy, and other treats, residents will build their own mini sukkahs—symbolic booths that traditionally have at least three walls and a see-through or natural roof (sechach) that allows sunlight and starlight to shine through. This hands-on activity is a fun and meaningful way to connect with the holiday's themes of shelter, harvest, and tradition. Display the finished creations and invite staff and fellow residents to vote for their favorites!

Get inspiration for the sukkahs [here](#).

Discover the meaning and symbolism of the sukkah [here](#).

Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah

After Sukkot is Shemini Atzeret which means “the eighth [day] of assembly.” The second day of Shemini Atzeret is called Simchat Torah. On this day, Jews conclude, and begin again the annual Torah (bible) reading cycle. The event is marked with great rejoicing.



Bubbe's Corner

You can always count on Bubbe (Yiddish for “grandmother”) for her wisdom and stories. Every Jewish community and family has its own High Holiday traditions unique to their lives and experiences. Be sure to ask your residents about what special things their families do to celebrate, and try to make them feel as at home as possible!

Traditionally, people break the fast at the end of Yom Kippur with food that is easy to digest like simple soups, eggs, bagels, lox, cream cheese, fruit or whitefish salad.

During the High Holidays, families use honey instead of salt to flavor their challah to symbolize the wish for a sweet new year.

Israeli and Persian Jews typically break the fast with tea and cookies and then move on to soup and simple foods.

During Sukkot, it is customary for kids to sleep in their *sukkah* (temporary huts).

Every year for the High Holidays, my family would add money to our *tzedakah* box and pick a charity we want to donate to. **Please consider JFS.** We can only provide services like chaplaincy support through the generosity of our community.

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About JFS

Jewish Family Services of Northeastern NY provides counseling, promotes independence, aging well, and access to basic needs, mitigates food insecurity and social isolation.

Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals and families from all backgrounds and strengthen the community by providing compassionate, collaborative human services, guided by Jewish values. This is amplified by volunteers and sustained by donors to ensure support for our community is within reach.

Our staff has expertise in:

- Helping older adults maintain their safety and independence
- Providing resources and guidance to older adults and their families
- Offering private transportation to medical appointments and synagogue services
- Counseling and care management (JFS is part of major insurance networks, including Medicare)

Support Our Chaplaincy Program

JFS provides spiritual connection and support for Jewish residents in long-term and elder care in the Capital Region.

Online: jfsneny.org/donations

Call: (518) 516-1102

Thank you!

For all Jewish Journals and this year's holiday dates, visit jfsneny.org/chaplaincy-support.



Connect with Us!

 **518-482-8856**

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Jewish Federation
of Northeastern New York

**The Jewish Community
Endowment Fund**

The Theodore Strauss Endowment Fund