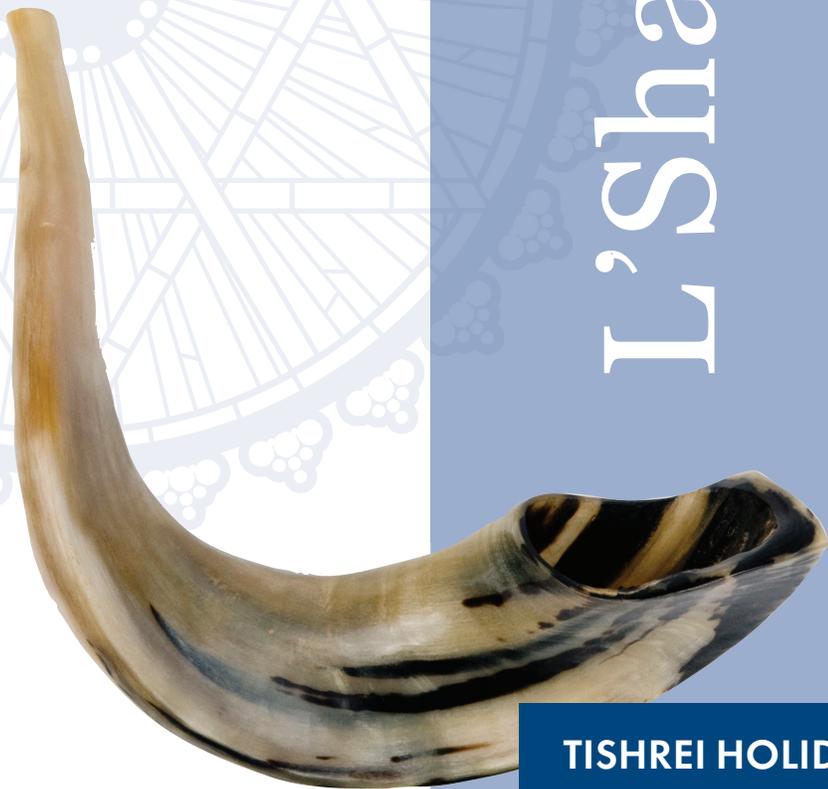




Park Avenue  
Synagogue ק"ק אגודת ישרים

# L'Shanah tovah



TISHREI HOLIDAYS GUIDE





## Tishrei, a month of holidays

**A** classic rabbinic commentary offers an imaginative explanation why there are so many holidays packed into one month. Rabbi Levi said:

*God wanted to give the children of Israel a festival for each of the spring and summer months. So God gave them Pesah in Nissan, Pesah sheni in Iyyar; and Shavuot in Sivan. Just as God was about to give them a holiday in Tammuz, the Israelites made the golden calf, and as a consequence, God took away the festivals intended for the months of Tammuz, Av and Elul. God made up for Israel's being deprived of the festivals intended for those months by assigning them all to the following month, Tishrei. Rosh Hashanah on the 1st, Yom Kippur on the 10th, and Sukkot on the 15th. Then God said, "since Tishrei has been used to make up for the other months and has not been given a festival of its own, let it be given its own day." Thus, Shemini Atzeret.*

---

# Yamim Nora'im

*the Days of Awe, are the ten days from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur.*

---

## ROSH HASHANAH

...In the seventh month, on the first of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion, a remembrance with shofar blasts.

– Leviticus 23:24

**R**osh Hashanah is both a solemn and a festive occasion. The solemnity of Rosh Hashanah is centered in the synagogue, with the blowing of the shofar, with liturgy focused on God's remembrance and God's kingship and prayers that invite soul-searching and renewal. The festivity emerges at home, with meals featuring symbolic foods, and in the community with the ceremony of Tashlikh.

In Jewish tradition the color white symbolizes purity and joy. In the synagogue, the parohet (curtain in front of the ark) and the covers of the Torah scrolls are white, and those leading the service wear white. At home, many families set the table with a white tablecloth.

### Symbolic foods

After candle lighting and Kiddush on the night of Rosh Hashanah, the meal begins with apples, symbolizing a full round year, dipped in honey, for a sweet year. The hallot used for the ha-motzi blessing are also round to represent the year, and often have raisins for a sweet year.

In the Sephardi tradition families eat additional symbolic foods that express wishes for the new year. The custom of the Seder Rosh Hashanah is becoming known among Ashkenazi Jews as well. For a wonderful introduction to this tradition, see *Apples and Pomegranates: A Family Seder for Rosh Hashanah* by Rahel Musleah.

---

See *Blessings for Rosh Hashanah Evening* under Holiday Resource Guides.

## THE FAST OF GEDALIAH

**T**he day after Rosh Hashanah (or on Sunday, if the day after Rosh Hashanah is Shabbat) is a minor fast day commemorating the assassination of Gedaliah, the Jewish man appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar to govern the Jews remaining in Palestine after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE.

## SHABBAT SHUVAH

**T**he Sabbath that falls between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called Shabbat Shuvah from the Haftarah portion for that day, which begins with the word *shuvah*, "return" (repent). Shabbat Shuvah is generously endowed by Menachem Z. Rosensaft and Jean Bloch Rosensaft in loving memory of his parents, Hadassah & Josef Rosensaft.

## YOM KIPPUR

Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial... It is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the Lord your God...

– Leviticus 23:26-28

**Y**om Kippur is the one holiday that is observed entirely in the synagogue. The *se'udah ha-mafseket*, the meal that precedes the fast, is a special occasion, even though it is not a holiday meal. Our sages have said that it is as praiseworthy to honor Yom Kippur by eating well on the day before as to honor it by refraining from eating on the day itself. Plan to sit down early, so that there is time to finish eating, light memorial candles and holiday candles, exchange blessings and apologies and still be in the synagogue before sundown.

### Kapparot

The ritual of kapparot is a symbolic transfer of misdeeds from the person who did them to some other creature or object. Formerly, most people used a chicken (eaten subsequently at the pre-Yom Kippur meal); today it is common to use money, which is contributed to tzedakah, in recognition of the pronouncement made in the liturgy, *u-teshuvah, u-tefillah, u-tzedakah ma'avirin et roa ha-g'zeirah*, "repentance, prayer, and tzedakah transform the harshness of our destiny." The money is wrapped in a cloth and

circled over the head of the individual as the words are recited: "This is in my stead. May this be my substitute. This money will go to tzedakah, that I may enter the path to a good, long life and to peace."

---

See *Blessings for the Eve of Yom Kippur* under Holiday Resource Guides.

### Fasting

For many people, fasting is the primary observance of Yom Kippur. However, Jewish law and tradition state that the maintenance of life and health is a prime religious duty. If you are ill or weak or pregnant or nursing, Jewish law requires that you consult a physician on the wisdom of fasting.

Although children are not obligated to fast until they are Bar/Bat Mitzvah age, it is a tradition for them observe the fast in part, a little more each year as they grow older. Some children fast until lunchtime. Other children eat meals but no snacks, and eat only simple foods, no treats. Discuss with your children in advance how they will "grow into" the tradition of fasting on Yom Kippur.



# Sukkot & Simhat Torah

## Prayer and Repentance

Repentance is the major task of Yom Kippur. It is a personal process and relies on each individual to assume responsibility for misdeeds. The synagogue service includes formulaic confessions for wrongdoing. These recitals are expressed in the plural, as are almost all Jewish prayers, and are recited in unison, yet the sages implied that each individual should concentrate specifically on those misdeeds which he or she has done. Self awareness of shortcomings in our behavior towards God and towards other people is the first step in a process of repentance. The next step is asking forgiveness. In prayer we ask forgiveness from God for transgressions which are only between us and God. God does not forgive us for what we have done to hurt others, until we have made up with the offended parties. This is also why it is a mitzvah not only to ask forgiveness, but to forgive those who request to be forgiven. The process of repentance has several other steps, all of which culminate in not repeating a misdeed the next time one finds oneself in a similar situation.

## Tzedakah

In the haftarah on the morning of Yom Kippur, the prophet Isaiah tells us that God is not interested in an outward show of repentance – fasting, hours in synagogue, recitals of misdeeds – without behavior that shows we care about justice and the needs of the community. Yom Kippur is also an opportunity to pledge to perform actions which demonstrate compassion, concern and real help for people or worthy institutions in need.

At Park Avenue Synagogue, congregants are particularly asked to consider the needs of the synagogue at the Kol Nidre Appeal. Dues alone are insufficient to enable PAS to offer the broad array of religious and cultural experiences that our members depend on for their intellectual and spiritual lives. In fact, dues represent less than 40% of the budget. The synagogue depends on the generosity of members for the financial security and stability that allows us to provide worship, study, and companionship to everyone in the community.

In addition, our High School students spearhead a major Yom Kippur food drive to benefit the Yorkville Common Pantry, New York City's largest community-based food pantry. This institution in our immediate neighborhood provides culturally appropriate and nutritionally-balanced food to between 1,600 and 1,800 needy families every week.

## SUKKOT

*Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of the Lord... You shall live in sukkot (booths) seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God.*

- Leviticus 23:39, 42-43

## The Sukkah

The festival of Sukkot derives its name from the sukkah, the temporary dwelling or booth built especially for the holiday. The rabbis disputed whether the term sukkah refers to actual booths or to the clouds of glory which made a Divine roof over Israel in the desert. Tradition combines these two views by making it a mitzvah to build an actual booth, and stating that the booth represents Divine protection.

Many Jews “live” in the sukkah for seven days by eating all of their meals there. Some people also sleep in the sukkah, as our PAS youth group members do for one night every year. Leaving our permanent homes for a flimsy booth reminds us that everyone is equal under God's care, regardless of the difference in luxury between our year-round homes. Sukkot is also the fall harvest festival. The sukkah recalls the temporary booths that ancient Israelite farmers put up in the fields so they would not lose

harvesting time by returning to their houses every night. It is customary to decorate the sukkah with fruits and vegetables to celebrate the harvest. A Kabbalistic custom is to invite spiritual guests, Ushpizin, to join us in the sukkah. (The Aramaic word *ushpiz* comes from the same root as the English word “hospice.”) Traditionally, the seven ushpizin are all men. The Conservative prayer book *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals* pairs the men with women: Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Rebecca, Jacob & Leah, Joseph & Rachel, Moses & Miriam, Aaron & Deborah, David & Ruth. Today families often invite more than seven ushpizin and include other Biblical characters, figures from Jewish history and their own family's ancestors.

At Park Avenue Synagogue, the Ritter Sukkah, named in memory of Gerald and May Ellen Ritter, is constructed on the roof and decorated by Congregational School students under the guidance of the Parents' Association. There is a Kiddush in the Ritter Sukkah following every service during Sukkot, and dinner is served there almost every night of Sukkot.



# Sukkot & Simhat Torah

## The Four Species, Arba'at ha-minim

*On the first day you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.*

- Leviticus 43:40

The four species, consist of

- etrog (pri etz hadar, that is, the product of hadar trees),
- lulav (a palm branch)
- hadassim (3 stems of myrtles, “leafy trees”)
- aravot (2 stems of willows).

Together the four species are called “lulav,” since the palm branch is the largest and most prominent. Even though the brakhah, the blessing over the four species, refers to “waving the lulav,” it refers to all four species taken together.

During Sukkot, the lulav is used during the morning service every day except Shabbat. At the end of the Amidah, before the Hallel psalms of praise, we say the brakhah for waving the lulav. We then hold the lulav during Hallel, and during two of the psalms, we wave it in all six directions – east, south, west, north, up and down. At the end of the service, everyone who has a lulav makes a procession and marches around the room singing Hoshanot, verses of praise.

According to a rabbinic interpretation, taste represents learning, and smell represents good deeds. The etrog has both taste and smell; the lulav has taste but not fragrance; the myrtle has smell, but no taste; and the willow has neither. Each represents a different kind of person. Some people have learning and do good deeds; some people have one but not the other; and some have neither. The rabbis teach that a real community is one where all types of people are bound together like the four species.

Another rabbinic midrash says that the four species taken together represent parts of our bodies with which we may serve God. The lulav represents the spine; the oval leaves of the myrtle are the eyes, the long, narrow leaves of the willow are the lips, and the etrog is the heart.

See *Blessings for Sukkot* under Holiday Resource Guides.

## HOL HA-MOED, THE INTERMEDIATE DAYS OF THE FESTIVAL

The first two days of Sukkot are observed as major festival days. The next five days are Hol ha-Moed, the intermediate days of the festival. These days are half-holidays; except on Shabbat, work is permitted, but daily prayers include Hallel, Torah reading, and Hoshanot, and we continue to eat meals in the sukkah. The seventh day of Sukkot is called Hoshanah Rabbah. The liturgy for that day includes elements of weekday prayers, festival prayers and a reprise of themes from the High Holy Days.

## SHEMINI ATZERET AND SIMHAT TORAH

The “eighth day of Sukkot” is actually a separate holiday, Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day of Assembly. We are no longer required to eat in the sukkah, although some families do so without the blessing “commanded us to live in the sukkah.” Because this is the end of the fall harvest and the beginning of the rainy season in Israel, prayers for rain are added to the musaf amidah, and from this day until Pesah, we include in every amidah the words *mashiv ha-ruah u-morid ha-gashem*, who causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall. Yizkor, The memorial service, is also recited on Shemini Atzeret.

Shemini Atzeret is followed by the joyous festival of Simhat Torah, “Rejoicing in the Torah.” The evening service for Simhat Torah features seven hakafot, circuits of the Sanctuary dancing with the Torah scrolls. At the end of the dancing, three people are honored with aliyot, because it would be disrespectful to take the Torah scrolls from the Ark and not read from them. It is the only time of the year when the Torah is read at night in traditional congregations.

The next morning, there are again seven joyous hakafot. Everyone who wants an aliyah has an opportunity to come to the Torah. When all have had a turn, we read the last verses of the Torah and then turn immediately to the beginning and begin reading the Torah again, a bold demonstration of our belief that the study of Torah is neverending. Each year, Park Avenue Synagogue honors people who have made significant contributions to the life of our synagogue and to the Jewish community with these two special aliyot, the Hatan (Kallat) Torah, the “bridegroom (or bride) of the Torah” for the reading that ends the cycle of Torah reading and the Hatan (Kallat) B’reishit, honored with the first reading from the Torah as we begin the cycle for the new year.





