

ימים נוראים

A High Holiday Guide

Part One

Laws of the Jewish Calendar
in a Simple and Concise Language

- ❖ **Elul** - The month leading up to Rosh Hashanah
- ❖ **Erev Rosh Hashanah** - The day before Rosh Hashanah
- ❖ **Rosh Hashanah**
- ❖ **Aseres Yemei Teshuvah** - The Ten Days of Penitence
- ❖ **Tzom Gedalyah** - A fast commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem
- ❖ **Shabbos Shuvah** - The Shabbos designated for repentance

Designed for "Becoming Religious" and "Experienced Religious" stages



By R' Yochanan Schnall

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בס"ד

אשירה לד' כי גמל עלי

I am indebted to my wife for all the patience and support she continues to have for me.

Thank you my dear reader, for without your interest this pamphlet would not exist.

Much thanks as well to the Minneapolis Community Kollel for their resources.

The purpose of this pamphlet is to be a quick review of some pertinent laws relevant to this time of year.
It was formulated for those who do not have the opportunity or resources to study the laws in detail.

Many of these laws are drawn from the sefer:
שליט"א by R' Moshe Mordechai Karp הלכות חג בחג

If you have any feedback please share it with me at yochanan.schnall@gmail.com.

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Elul 5772

❖ **Elul** - The Month leading up to Rosh Hashanah

- Beginning the first day of Elul two items are added to the daily prayers:
 - The shofar is blown after shacharis¹. This continues until, but not including, the day before Rosh Hashanah².
 - It is customary to say the 27th chapter of Psalms twice daily- after shacharis and after mincha or ma'ariv (depending on custom). This continues through Shmini Atzeres (the eighth day of the Sukkos holiday)³.

Selichos

Additional prayers called selichos are recited on the days leading up to Rosh Hashanah⁴. These prayers are not in the siddur but in a specific book called a "selichos". These books are usually available at the synagogue but if you prefer a translated version, you will likely need to bring your own.

- Selichos recital always begins on a Saturday night or early Sunday morning⁵. In many communities, there is a special service for this first time shortly after the middle of the night.
 - This year selichos begin September 9th.
- After the first time, selichos are usually recited just before dawn. If this is not practical, they are recited any other time during the day- preferably before the shacharis prayers⁶.
- Be aware that many communities do not recite every prayer in the selichos-book and some communities occasionally deviate from its order. Before selichos, ask a knowledgeable person which ones will be recited and if anything will be skipped.
- The daily Torah blessings must be recited before selichos⁷.
- When selichos are recited before dawn, the morning netilas yodayim is performed twice- once upon arising and again after dawn. The blessing is only recited after the first washing⁸.
- The earliest time to wear a tallis is forty minutes before sunrise⁹. If selichos are recited before then, only the chazzan wears a tallis. It should be a borrowed one and worn without a blessing¹⁰.
- It is proper to stand for the entire selichos. At the very least, one should stand for three parts: the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the paragraph recited before it, and the viduy- confession that is recited near the end of selichos¹¹.
- It is more appropriate to recite fewer selichos with understanding and meaning, than to read many of them quickly and thoughtlessly.
- If selichos are recited without a minyan, the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and the paragraph before it are omitted¹².

❖ **Erev Rosh Hashanah** -The Day Preceding Rosh Hashanah

- Selichos on Erev Rosh Hashanah are much longer than usual. Expect them to last at least an hour or two.
- There is a custom to fast today¹³. Most communities only fast until midday¹⁴.
 - As with most customs, it is advisable that those who fast have in mind not to accept this practice as a vow. Otherwise, it will become one after fasting for three consecutive years¹⁵.
- All men go to the mikvah today¹⁶. It is customary for boys to go as well.
- Remember to buy the different symbolic foods that are customarily eaten on Rosh Hashanah evening (see your machzor for a list of them). Additionally, be sure to obtain a new fruit, which will be used on the second night of Rosh Hashanah.

- Additionally, you may want to obtain a machzor. This is a siddur especially formulated for the holidays that is published in a number of different formats and styles. Taking the time to find one that appeals to you can make all the difference for meaningful Rosh Hashanah prayers. Consult with someone knowledgeable to ensure that the one you choose follows the customs of your tradition or synagogue (e.g. Ashkenaz, Sefard, Ari or Eidus Hamizrach).

Annulling Vows

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, we annul our vows after shacharis. It is done with a group of four men. One stands in turn before the other three (the "court") who are seated. He declares his wish for annulment and they respond in kind. The specific texts can be found in most siddurim.

- For proper annulment, it is necessary to understand what is being said. The declaration and response may be recited in any language that is understood by the reciter and the listeners¹⁷.
- Although women do not do this procedure, wives should ask their husbands to represent them. In this case, before the husband begins his turn he should state that he is also representing his wife¹⁸.
- The benefit of this annulment is limited to vows that have been made and since forgotten¹⁹. One who is aware of a particular vow and wishes to annul it must consult a rabbi²⁰.

❖ Rosh Hashanah

- As mentioned above, many of the Rosh Hashanah prayers are only found in a machzor.
- After evening prayers, we extend special greetings to each other²¹. These greetings are found in the machzor and in most communities they are only shared on the first night of Rosh Hashanah²².
- The way we act on Rosh Hashanah influences our judgment. Therefore, one should try very hard not to get angry throughout the holiday²³. Additionally, one should try not to nap during the daytime of Rosh Hashanah at least until midday²⁴.

Meals

There is an obligation to have a festive meal each evening and day of Rosh Hashanah²⁵.

- During the meals, the challah is customarily dipped in honey²⁶. Customs vary if this is a substitute or an addition to salt.
 - This custom continues through Shmini Atzeres (the eighth day of the Sukkos holiday).
- At the evening meal, symbolic foods are eaten and each food is accompanied with a specific prayer²⁷. A list of the foods with their appropriate prayers can be found in a machzor.
 - It is important to note that even though the *Ha'motzee* over bread has been recited, the blessing of *Ha'etz* is still necessary before eating the first symbolic fruit²⁸. Immediately after the blessing, a bit of the fruit is eaten before continuing with its specific prayer²⁹.
 - If any of the seven species is present, (such as a date or pomegranate,) it should be eaten first so that the *Ha'etz* blessing is primarily recited over it³⁰.
 - The symbolic vegetables do not require a blessing if they are a type of food that is often eaten during a meal³¹.
 - There are varying customs whether these foods are eaten and their prayers recited on the second night of Rosh Hashanah³².

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- It is customary not to eat nuts³³ or sour foods³⁴ throughout Rosh Hashanah.
 - Since these food restrictions are just customary, if you are eating at a meal where these foods are served it is completely permitted to eat them if there is a possibility that you might otherwise offend the host/hostess.
 - No restrictions apply if these foods are merely a secondary ingredient in a prepared food³⁵.

Hearing the Shofar

One hundred shofar blasts are blown in shul on each day of Rosh Hashanah: thirty before the musaf prayers, thirty during musaf and forty after musaf³⁶.

- Men and boys over bar mitzvah have a Torah obligation to hear the shofar on Rosh Hashanah³⁷.
- For one who is unable to come to shul, one set of thirty blasts is sufficient³⁸.
- Although women do not have the same obligation to hear the shofar as men do, they should still try if at all possible to hear at least one set of thirty blasts³⁹.
- Children under bar/ bas mitzvah that are old enough to comprehend the concept of hearing the shofar must be taught to perform this mitzvah⁴⁰.
- **Children who could become disruptive are not to be brought to shul at this time⁴¹.**
- It is important to pay attention while the blessings are recited. While listening to the blasts one should have in mind to fulfill the Torah commandment to hear the shofar.
 - Someone who did not hear the blessings as they were recited, should recite them on his or her own⁴².
- Throughout the second set of shofar blasts (those blown in the middle of musaf) all who are physically capable must stand without leaning on anything. It is proper to stand for the other blasts as well⁴³.
 - Similarly, one who is listening to only thirty blasts must try to stand for them⁴⁴.
- This mitzvah may not be interrupted with unnecessary speech starting from the recitation of the blessings before the first set of shofar blasts through the very last blast⁴⁵.
- Men may not eat a meal before hearing the shofar⁴⁶; women may eat a meal if it is difficult for them to wait⁴⁷.
- Other than for the mitzvah purpose, it is prohibited for adults to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah just as is prohibited to play any instrument on Shabbos and Yom Tov⁴⁸.

Tashlich

Tashlich is a unique prayer that we recite while standing next to a body of water⁴⁹. It is customarily said on the first day of Rosh Hashanah during the afternoon (unless it is Shabbos). Many synagogues say it after mincha⁵⁰.

- Some have a custom to recite tashlich specifically next to a body of water that contains fish⁵¹. Note that it is forbidden to feed these fish on Yom Tov⁵².
- Although there are many additional supplications written in the machzor, the main verse that is recited is "*Mi keil kamocha...v'sashlich b'mitzulos yam kol chatosam*". Who is a G-d like You who pardons sins... and You will cast into the depths of the sea all their sins."

Preparations for the Second Day

It is forbidden to do activity on the first night/day of Rosh Hashanah that is clearly in preparation for the second night/day⁵³. Some examples of preparing are washing dishes, setting a table, cooking, and lighting the Yom Tov candles. Only after the first day concludes- at least fifty minutes after sunset- are these activities permitted.

- If this is difficult, a rabbi may be able to suggest some methods that avoid this prohibition⁵⁴.

❖ The Second Day of Rosh Hashanah

It is noteworthy to mention that the second day of Rosh Hashanah is not merely a repetition of the first. Kabbalah teaches us that on each day of Rosh Hashanah different aspects of the world are judged. In fact, the judgment that affects us most as individuals occurs on the second day⁵⁵.

New Fruit

On the second night of Rosh Hashanah, a new fruit is eaten⁵⁶. This is a seasonal fruit or vegetable that one enjoys eating and has not yet tasted it since its season began⁵⁷. The new fruit should be placed on the table before the candles are lit and the Kiddush is recited. This way, the blessing of *Shehechyanu* that is recited over these activities will refer to the fruit as well⁵⁸.

- The fruit is eaten right after the challah⁵⁹. Even though the *Hamotzee* over bread has been recited, the *Ha'etz* (or *Ha'adomah*) blessing is still required⁶⁰.
- Even when a new fruit is unavailable, the *Shehechyanu* blessing is still recited in Kiddush and candle lighting⁶¹.

Havdalah

Rosh Hashanah concludes no less than fifty minutes after sunset⁶². Havdalah is then recited over a cup of wine⁶³.

- This havdalah is much simpler than the one recited after Shabbos. It does not have the usual introductory sentences and it consists of just two blessings: "*Ha'gafen*" and the final "*Hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol...*"⁶⁴.

❖ Aseres Yemei Teshuvah The Ten Days of Penitence

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the balance of Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. It is an auspicious time to make amends for all we have done wrong. Since Hashem only forgives interpersonal sins if the injured party also grants forgiveness, it is essential for people to seek forgiveness from each other as well. It is also important to increase in Torah study during this time as this is the most effective way to connect with Hashem.⁶⁵

Changes in Prayers

Special changes and additions are made to the Shmoneh Esrei (Amidah) during these days.

- The third blessing concludes differently than usual.
 - If this was forgotten, one must repeat the Shmoneh Esrei⁶⁶. Of all the changes during this time, only this mistake could require one to repeat the Shmoneh Esrei.
 - One who is unsure what was said should assume that a mistake was made unless he or she was praying from a machzor⁶⁷.
- The eleventh blessing also concludes differently than usual⁶⁸.
- Phrases are added to the first two and last two blessings of *Shmoneh Esrei*. When the chazzan repeats the *Shmoneh Esrei*, these phrases are said aloud by the congregation⁶⁹.
- During the weekdays, *avinu malkeinu* is recited after *Shmoneh Esrei* of shacharis and mincha⁷⁰.
- Before the *borchu* that is said in shacharis, some communities recite psalms 130.⁷¹

❖ Tzom Gedalyah

The day following Rosh Hashanah is a fast day that commemorates the final blow in the destruction of Jerusalem⁷².

- This fast day begins at dawn and should ideally conclude fifty minutes after sunset. If necessary, it may be concluded forty-one minutes after sunset.⁷³
- Tasteless medicine may be taken with whatever amount of water is necessary. Regarding medicine that has a taste, a rabbi should be consulted.⁷⁴
- Pregnant, nursing, elderly or infirm people that find it difficult to fast should speak to a rabbi for possible leniencies.⁷⁵
 - Those who are exempt from fasting may still not eat particularly tasty foods or treats.⁷⁶

❖ Shabbos Shuvah

On the Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it is customary for the rabbi of the synagogue to deliver a sermon focused on repentance⁷⁷.

¹ Rema 581:1

² Rema 581:3

³ Mishna Berura 581:2

⁴ Rema 581:1

⁵ Rema 581:1

⁶ See Hilchos Chag B'chag 2:2-3

⁷ Mishna Berura 46:27

⁸ Shulchan Aruch and Rema 4:14

⁹ Igros Moshe volume 4 #6

¹⁰ Mishna Berura 581:6

¹¹ Mateh Efrayim 581:18

¹² Mishna Berura 581:4

¹³ Shulchan Aruch 581:2

¹⁴ This is the common custom. The closest source to this that I am aware of is the Machatzis Hashekel 581 "Ain Tzorich Lehashlim"

¹⁵ Mishna Berura 581:19

¹⁶ Rema 581:4

¹⁷ Chayei Adam 138:8

¹⁸ See Hilchos Chag B'chag 4:8

¹⁹ See Hilchos Chag B'chag 4:8

²⁰ Rema Yoreh Daiya 211:1

²¹ Rema 582:9

²² See Mishna Berura 582:25

²³ Mishna Berura 583:5

²⁴ Rema 583:2, Mishna Berura 583:9

²⁵ See Mishna Berura 597:1

²⁶ Mishna Berura 583:3

²⁷ Shulchan Aruch and Rema 583:1

²⁸ Mishna Berura 583:3

²⁹ Mishna Berura 583:4

³⁰ Shulchan Aruch 211:1

³¹ See Hilchos Chag B'chag 6:10

³² Mateh Efrayim 600:14; Elef Hamagen (9)

³³ Rema 583:2

³⁴ Mishna Berura 583:5

³⁵ Shiurei Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder

³⁶ Shulchan Aruch 585:2; Rema 592:1; Rema 596:1

³⁷ Rambam Tekias Shofar 1:1

³⁸ Shulchan Aruch 589:3

³⁹ See Hilchos Chag B'chag 10:1

⁴⁰ Mishna Berura 343:3

⁴¹ Mishna Berura 587:16

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- ⁴² Rema 589:6
⁴³ Mishna Berura 585:2
⁴⁴ Mishna Berura 585:2
⁴⁵ Shulchan Aruch and Rema 592:3; Chayei Adam 141:9
⁴⁶ Mateh Efrayim 588:2; Mishna Berura 692:15; see Hilchos Chag B'chag 8:25
⁴⁷ Chayei Adam 141:7
⁴⁸ Rema 596:1
⁴⁹ Rema 583:2
⁵⁰ Mishna Berura 583:8
⁵¹ Mishna Berura 583:8
⁵² Mateh Efrayim 598:5; Shulchan Aruch 496: 2
⁵³ Shulchan Aruch 503:1
⁵⁴ See Shulchan Aruch and Mishna Berura 503 and 667
⁵⁵ See Michtav M'Eliyahu volume II page 76
⁵⁶ Shulchan Aruch 600:2
⁵⁷ Shulchan Aruch 225:6
⁵⁸ Mishna Berura 600:4
⁵⁹ See Hilchos Chag B'chag 16:9; Shiurei Halacha of Rabbi Shmuel Felder
⁶⁰ Similar to Mishna Berura 583:4
⁶¹ Shulchan Aruch 500:2
⁶² Iggros Moshe Volume 3 #62 (page 94)
⁶³ Shulchan Aruch 601:1
⁶⁴ Shulchan Aruch 601:1
⁶⁵ See Mateh Efrayim 603:4-5; Chayei Adam 143
⁶⁶ Shulchan Aruch 582:1
⁶⁷ See Mishna Berura 582:4
⁶⁸ Shulchan Aruch 582:1
⁶⁹ Mishna Berura 582:15
⁷⁰ Rema 602:1
⁷¹ Mishna Berura 54:4
⁷² Rema introduction to 602
⁷³ Iggros Moshe volume 4 #64
⁷⁴ Laws of Daily Living: The Three Weeks page 16
⁷⁵ See Shulchan Aruch 550:1
⁷⁶ Mishna Berura 550:5
⁷⁷ Mateh Efrayim 602:42