



## Trumpet call into the Presence of God

September brings new beginnings for many. It is also the time of the biblical new year festival of Rosh Hashanah.

What can we learn from this celebration which can help us in our new beginnings?

Rosh HaShanah literally means 'Head of the Year' in Hebrew. It is the beginning of **ten days** of earnest reflection and prayer. The festival is first mentioned in the bible in Leviticus 23,23-5 and can also be found described in Numbers 29.1-6. The Israelites were commanded to gather for worship, to do no work and to hold a day for the blowing of trumpets.

Other names for Rosh Hashanah include: **Yom Teruah** - The Day of the Blowing (of the trumpets). **Yom haZikaron** - The Day of Remembering and **Yom haDin** - The Day of Judgment.

Rosh haShanah falls on the 1st day of Tishrei, which is the seventh Hebrew month (this will be in September or October of the secular year). Jewish days start in the evening so this year Jews will celebrate Rosh Hashanah on 13th-14th September.

Jewish people also think of Rosh haShanah as the birthday of the world, the birthday of Adam, the day on which Sarah first learned that she would have Isaac, and the day Isaac was born



Four main theme of Rosh Hashanah are.....

the Kingship of God

God's sovereignty over creation

God's judgement of all our doings

God's promise to make all things new

## WELCOME

Serve cut up apples with a honey dip. This is the traditional starter for a Jewish Rosh Hashanah meal today. They symbolise the hope of a good and sweet year ahead. As you eat, discuss what would a sweet year look like for you. (Another traditional food you could try is challah - shaped bread often containing raisins which is also often dipped in honey.)

End this time by praying the traditional blessing: Blessed are you, Lord our God, creator of the fruit of the tree. May it be your will, Lord, our God that you renew for us a good and sweet year. Amen.

## WORD

### Read Leviticus 23.23-5

In the Old Testament, trumpets (or the shofar horn) are used in several important ways: as a wake up call.

- to remind the people to obey God's command (Numbers 10)
- to announce a time of rejoicing (Leviticus 25)
- to announce God's presence among his people (Exodus 19)
- to alert people to danger (Ezekiel 33)

### Discuss and pray about the following:

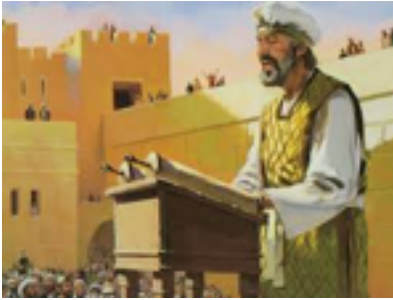
What acts as a trumpet call to remind you to enter God's presence?

In what ways are we as Christians to act as a trumpet call to wider society?

In what ways are we to be like apples and honey, bringing sweetness to our communities?

### If time, read Nehemiah 8.1-12

This is the story of the first celebration of Rosh Hashanah after the return from exile and rebuilding of Jerusalem. It begins with the first public reading of the Torah (first 5 books of the bible)



1. How did the people respond to this reading? (verses 6 and 9)
2. Why do you think there was this mixture of responses?
3. What do you learn from the fact that the leaders ordered the people to rejoice and celebrate?
4. What can this biblical example of a new beginning, teach us about how to handle new beginnings in our lives today?

### PERSONAL CHALLENGE

For Jews, Rosh Hashanah is the first of 10 days of Awe leading up to Yom Kippur. Try reading one of the commandments a day for 10 days. You can find them in Exodus Ch 20

Each day pray about how you can better apply that command in your life. Then make a loud noise to be your wakening "trumpet call"!

### WORSHIP

In post biblical times it became a custom to go to the nearest source of running water for repentance and prayer. People throw stones or bread symbolising their sins into the running water -They read verses from the bible and pray as they do so. This is called "taschich"

Hand out some pebbles and spend some time quietly calling to mind things for which you need to repent. Listen to Micah 7.18-20 and cast your stones into a bowl of water.

Praise God for his gift of forgiveness

### WITNESS

**Pray each other at this new beginning after the summer holidays. Pray particularly for those starting new jobs, new schools, new projects.**

**Pray for any ways in which the trumpet awakening us to the presence of God needs to sound in your life or in your community**

Share out who is going to lead the Welcome, Word, Worship and Witness sections next week.

# YOM KIPPUR




Yom Kippur (the day of atonement) is the holiest day of the year the "sabbath of sabbaths".

It is the tenth day of the days of reflection and prayer which began on Rosh Hashanah and on it sacrifices were offered for the atonement of sins. Today, Jews fast and pray for 24 hours, focussing on repentance and forgiveness.

## WELCOME

Yom Kippur is the "day of atonement" or "day of covering". Does "atonement" mean anything to you? What about "forgiveness"?

## WORD

**Read Leviticus 16.21-34 and Hebrews 10.11-25**

Read the two passages and each share with each other:-

- Your favourite verse or line
- Something which raises questions or that you don't understand
- Something which challenges you to be put into practice

**In what ways could you see the day Jesus died as The day of Atonement?**

## WORSHIP

Spend some time worshipping Jesus for the work of atonement on the cross. You may wish to listen or sing songs such as Nothing but the blood of Jesus, See his love, When I survey...

Pray for each other that you will be certain of God's forgiveness and compassion towards you.

## WITNESS

*Forgiveness says you are given another chance to make a new beginning.*  
*Desmond Tutu*

Are there any ways in which you may have the opportunity to witness to God's forgiving love this week? Pray for each other about this.

