

# Webquest: Rosh Hashanah

by Karen Kovacs

**Level:** Intermediate +

**Target age:** Teenagers / Adults

**Time needed:** 60 minutes

**Key skills:** Reading, speaking

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student

## Introduction

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year, but it represents much more than that. In this webquest, your students will investigate this holiday and see what it can teach them about Jewish culture.

## Activities

Depending on the size of the class, students can work individually or in groups. You can assign topics or let the students decide which topic or topics they are most interested in. The length of the reports will depend on the students' level of English and the amount of time you wish to dedicate to the reports. They could run from a few sentences to a more formal report including images and maybe even a PowerPoint presentation. The questions provided on the worksheet will point the students in the right direction but there is much more information on the websites for students to use to go into as much detail as they want.

**Possible answers (the websites contain more details):**

### Activity 1

1. The Jewish calendar is based on the moon's cycle, so the Jewish calendar loses about 11 days compared to the Gregorian calendar used in the west, which is based on the sun's cycle. It makes up the lost days by adding another month every two to three years. Jewish holidays are on the same

day every year according to the Jewish calendar, but the date alters according to the Gregorian calendar.

2. The Jewish calendar is based on the moon's cycle.

3. 29 September, 2019

### Activity 2

1. Rosh Hashanah begins with a family dinner. Religious ceremonies at the synagogue take up a lot of time. There are many customs associated with food and greetings. No work is permitted on Rosh Hashanah.

### Activity 3

1. The Days of Awe are the ten days between the New Year and Yom Kippur.

2. During this time, people reflect on their past sins and repent. Jews believe that what God has written for them in his books can be altered by their actions at this time, especially by prayer, repentance and acts of charity.

### Activity 4

1. Tashlikh is an old tradition where people walk to the waterside and empty their pockets of crumbs or bread scraps into the water. This symbolizes the casting off of sin in preparation for the New Year.

### Activity 5

1. The shofar is a ram's horn.

2. It sounds like a trumpet.

3. It is very important to hear the horn played in the synagogue at this time. 100 notes are played on it each day in different arrangements. It symbolizes a call to repentance and reminds the Jewish people of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac to God.

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## Activity 6

<b>type of food</b>	<b>what the food symbolizes</b>
head of a fish	being on top during the year ahead, rather than at the bottom (i.e. doing well)
pomegranates	plenty of health and happiness
carrots	more (of all good things in life)
apples dipped in honey, honey cake, challot bread	a sweet year ahead

## Activity 7

**Greetings** – Jews wish each other 'Shanah Tovah' (a good year), and between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur it is usual to add 'may you be inscribed and sealed for a good year,' which refers to the belief that God is writing in his books what will happen in the next year.

**New Year cards** – Sending cards is a popular tradition, and people use it as a chance to catch up with family news. Children often get involved in the making and writing of the cards.

**Candle-lighting** – On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, at sunset, the family gathers together and the festival is welcomed with the lighting of two candles. Two special prayers are said.

**Remembering the dead** – Many families visit the graves of loved ones. They remember the dead and honour them through lasting tributes such as donations to charity.