

# The HINDA Institute

Helping Individuals Ascend  
Monthly Newsletter



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## High Holidays 2017

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### High Holiday Guide

By Rabbi Tzvi Freeman

Think of your year as a kind of space odyssey: You take off, fly around—and occasionally get lost. There could be lots of excitement, but then there's the collateral damage—at times, even grand mess-ups.

So now it's time to come back home. There you'll get your gear back in tune, reset your sightings, refuel and then take off again—with renewed strength to do things even better this time.

Where is home? Home is your inner self, that invincible, pristine core, never scathed, ever intact. Torah is your way to get back in touch with that place—and to keep the connection solid.

*What are the High Holidays?* The High Holidays are a period of special days at the onset of the new Jewish year, at the cusp between summer and autumn.

*What's so high about the High Holidays?* You are.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah—these are days for you to get more spiritual, more connected, more fulfilled and in tune with your divine inner self.

Some days are set aside for reflection and soul-searching, others for joy and celebration. They are filled with meaningful customs and beautiful rituals—especially meaningful and beautiful when you understand what's going on.

Which is why we put together this short guide.

**ELUL:** You're coming in for landing. Home base is sending out a clear, powerful signal. It's Elul, the last month of the Jewish year and to amplify that signal, we blow the shofar every morning. The month reaches a climax with the days of selichot when Jews gather in the early morning hours for extra, intensified prayers.

You need to establish a connection with that signal. How? Here are some suggestions:

-Join a Torah study group.

-Grab some more mitzvahs—like mezuzahs, tefillin, Shabbat candles, charity and volunteering.

-If you already have mezuzahs and tefillin, it's customary to have them checked by a scribe at this time.

-It's also a good time to make an inventory: What went right, what went wrong, what new habits need to be installed, what needs repair—and what needs to be thrown out of your spaceship. In

fact, it doesn't hurt to start on some of those alterations right away.

*The Details:* The shofar is blown every morning except for the eve of Rosh Hashanah. The first selichot are said on Saturday night shortly before Rosh Hashanah after midnight, and continue every morning until Rosh Hashanah.

**ROSH HASHANAH:** You're in range. You're tuned into the signal. At this point, home base asks that you identify yourself.

It's Rosh Hashanah, a day for saying, "I am a Jew, I belong with this people, I connect, I identify." Once that's established, you can go to the next step, taking on more, learning more, getting yourself into better shape. But everything starts with your idea of who you are.

*Shofar* - Rosh Hashanah is called "the birthday of the universe." It's the day that the Grand Programmer of All Things sits back to consider whether this universe is really worth playing and then reboots the system. In fact, "Rosh Hashanah," actually means, "Head of the Year": Like a head contains all the switches for every part of the body, Rosh Hashanah is the time when every day of the year is initialized into the system. It's a crucial stage, when every moment must be filled with good thoughts, words and deeds.

Precisely when is reboot? You guessed it: At the first blast of the shofar.

Rosh Hashanah has a unique mitzvah: To hear the shofar, a simple ram's horn. After the Torah reading—usually around noon—30 blasts of the shofar are sounded in a prescribed pattern. Later come another 70 for a total of 100 blasts.

*Synagogue*—When the Master of the Universe is dealing with global issues, why bother Him with our prayers?

Without our prayers, He directs the universe as a king, with strict, impersonal judgment. Our job is to bring a two-way dimension into that relationship, closer to a warm and healthy parent-child model. In fact, the sounds of the shofar are meant to emulate the pleading cries of a child.

That's what's behind the prayer, "Our Father, Our King!"

There are always prayer books with translation. G-d is fluent in all languages, as long as it comes from the heart.

*Festive Meal*—We're so solid about our relationship with The Boss that we start celebrating a good year even before it's begun. Each day of Rosh Hashanah, we make both lunch and dinner a festive meal.

The strategy is simple: When a father sees his children have confidence in him, he usually follows suit. The same applies to our Father Who Runs the Universe.

These feasts are rich with symbolism. We start with kiddush and sweet challah. On the first night, the meal begins with an apple dipped in honey, as we say, "May it be Your will that this year be good and sweet." All the foods are sweet, nothing bitter.

On the second night, we eat a new seasonal fruit right after kiddush.

*Work*—As with every Yom Tov, we don't go to work, drive, write or switch on or off electric devices. We are permitted to cook and to carry outdoors.

*Tashlich*—On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, late in the afternoon, we walk to a body of water containing live fish and recite a prayer that G-d, out of His great compassion, will toss our past failures into the sea.

**THE TEN DAYS:** Now that you know who you are, it's time to come in for landing. That's why the days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur are known as the Ten Days of Teshuvah.

Teshuvah is too often mistranslated as "repentance." Repentance implies that you were bad and now have to become good. Teshuvah means simply to return. Meaning that you were always essentially good, just that certain behaviors may have been somewhat off base—and now all you have to do is rediscover your true place and your true self and return to there.

This is the most spiritual season of the year, a time when our souls are closer to heaven than to earth, whether we notice it or not. On any day of the year, the soul can reach high. On these days, it can touch its essence. Spend these days in meditation, prayer and study of Torah.

**YOM KIPPUR:** Your spaceship has been landed and towed into the hangar for repair. But how do you fix a soul?

Screwdrivers won't help. What you need is glue.

You see, fixing a soul is much like fixing a relationship: You need a bond so powerful that all flaws are overlooked and no one has any desire but the good of the other. That's why Yom Kippur is called The Day of At-One-ment: The day that we are at one with our Source Above.

*Feasting*—Eat two good meals the day before Yom Kippur—it's a mitzvah. In fact, feast today and fast tomorrow and it's counted as though you fasted for two days.

Take lots of fluids and avoid heavy foods. Avoid nuts and other edibles that stick in your teeth.

If you have children, place your hands on each child's head, one at a time, and give each one a blessing.

*Forgiving*—If someone feels you've wronged him or her, try to make up before the fast. At the same time, forgive the misdemeanors of others against you. According to how you forgive others, that's how G-d forgives you.

*Kol Nidre*—As the sun kisses the horizon, the cantor's voice pierces our souls with the Kol Nidre. But the most vital prayer—repeated eight times over the 25 hours—is the Vidui. That is when we accept responsibility for every possible human mess-up we may have

made, ripping out their residue from within us. It's not easy to remember all of them, so the prayer book provides a list in alphabetical order.

With each Vidui, the soul is freed and climbs higher and higher, until the ultimate high with Neila, which is recited as Yom Kippur is about to come to an end, as the Gates of Heaven begin to close.

On Yom Kippur, after the Torah reading, Yizkor is recited to remember the souls of the departed. We pledge charity on behalf of parents and beloved ones now in the "world of truth." However, the charity cannot be given on Yom Kippur itself, since we do not handle money or write checks on this day.

At the conclusion of Neila, the entire congregation cries out the Shema Yisrael and the shofar is sounded to usher the holiness of the day back to its place—and to announce the incoming holiday (more on that soon).

*Fasting*—Some think Yom Kippur is a sad day. But how could the highest day of the year possibly be sad?

It's just that dealing with physical needs on this day would be the biggest downer, unplugging that connection and hurling us back into the mundane world.

That's also why we dress in white on this day, to remind us that today we are as high as the angels, who need neither food nor drink. And yet higher.

*Finishing*—As soon as Yom Kippur is over, we return home for a joyous feast. We wish each other "Good Yom Tov!" According to the Baal Shem Tov, we are now in the purest day of the year, since all the souls are clean and shiny like new.

**THE SUKKAH:** *Basic Sukkot Information:* Sukkot is an eight-day holiday with three special mitzvahs:

-To dwell in a sukkah

-To hold the Four Species (see The Four Kinds for more on this)

-To be happy (yes, that's also a mitzvah)

The first two and the last two days are Yom Tov, when work is forbidden. During the five days in between, for the most part work is permitted, albeit with certain restrictions.

*The Sukkah*—"For seven days, all Jewish people should live in sukkahs, in order that all your generations will remember that I had the Jewish People living in sukkahs when I took them out of Egypt." —*The Five Books of Moses, Book III (Leviticus)*

"The sukkahs were the clouds of glory that surrounded and protected us."—*The Talmud*

Now your spaceship's bright and spiffy and ready to fly. But in order to stay connected during this year's odyssey, best you first rehearse the steps in a controlled environment.

That's the sukkah; an all-encompassing, embryonic, virtual world where whatever you do is a mitzvah. Eat, you're doing a mitzvah. Talk, you're doing a mitzvah. Just sit there—you're powerfully connected from head to toe.

Upon release from this immersive environment, you'll treat the big world the same way: Discovering how everything you do is another way to connect to the Infinite. Which is the whole idea of Torah.

*How to do the sukkah thing:* Before Sukkot, construct a temporary, 3–4 walled structure directly under the sky—no trees or overhang above. For roofing, toss on any cut, inedible vegetation that will last for seven days. Favorites are western cedar, bamboo and corn husks (without the corn). Use enough to provide more shade than sunlight. Time-hungry? There are pre-fab sukkah kits that go up in a matter of minutes—just make sure your walls are secure and firm. Check with a salted sukkah-dweller for more details.

For seven days, make the sukkah your official home. Don't panic: As long as you eat your meals there, you're okay. But try to include anything else that you would normally do in the house—like reading a book or talking with a friend.

Fill your sukkah with guests, enjoy great meals, sing songs, tell stories and speak words of Torah wisdom. Every night of Sukkot invite one of the Seven Shepherds of Israel, in this order: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David.

On the first night of Sukkot, regardless of weather conditions, make Kiddush and eat at least part of the meal in the sukkah. The rest of Sukkot, if the weather gets awful, you can leave the sukkah. After all, you would leave your own house if the roof were leaking buckets, wouldn't you?

Each time you leave the sukkah and return to eat a grain-based meal, say the blessing *Leshev Basukkah*.

**THE FOUR KINDS:** "On the first day, take the fruit of the etrog tree, unopened fronds of the date palm, myrtle branches and willows of the brook and rejoice before G-d, your G-d for seven days." —*The Five Books of Moses, Book III*

Each one of us discovers a small corner of some galaxy, but together we perceive the wonders of an entire universe. So now, get networked—with your Arba Minim ("Four Kinds") device.

Here, four very diverse floras create one integral whole. If one is missing—even a humble willow branch—the circuit is broken. Just like us, the Jewish People: Regardless of knowledge or observance, each individual is unique and essential.

*How to do the Arba Minim thing:* Easier than eating cake: The lulav (palm branch) comes wrapped with three myrtle branches and two willow bush branches. Hold those in your right hand and say the blessing *Al Nitilat Lulav*.

Now pick up the etrog (stem down) in your left hand.

First time this year? Then say the blessing for new things—*Shehechianu*.

Hold the etrog together with the other three species. You did it. Repeat every day of Sukkot excluding Shabbat.

The custom, however, is to wave the arba minim three times in all six directions: Face east and wave three times to the south, three to the north, three east, three up, three down and finally, three west (over your shoulder).

**Hoshana Rabba** The seventh day of Sukkot is when the global rain factor is set. We circle the Torah reading table in the synagogue seven times with the arba minim while reciting special prayers, and then beat a bundle of five willow branches on the floor. You have a better way to make it rain?

**SHMINI ATZERET:** "On the eighth day will be a withholding for

you. You shall do no burdensome work." —*The Five Books of Moses*

Why is it called a with-holding? Because G-d is like a king who hosts a seven-day party. When everyone is about to leave, he holds back his closest friend and says, "It's hard for us to part. Stay another day and we'll party with whatever is left." —*The Talmud*

What drives a Jew to take on the entire world and be different no matter what? Guilt can be pretty powerful, but as we have seen today, it's not always effective. The Baal Shem Tov revealed a far better fuel: The power of joy.

That's why, for Chassidim, the greatest celebration of the year is the last two days of the High Holiday season, Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah, days dedicated to the joy of being a Jew.

*Details:* One more day to eat in the sukkah—but without the Leshev BaSukkah blessing. We make a holiday kiddush and enjoy a festive meal at night and by day. Shemini Atzeret begins the prayer for rain. Yizkor is also said.

On the first night of Shemini Atzeret, we do hakafot (explanation coming up). As with every holiday, we do no work.

**SIMCHAT TORAH:** Now to the control room for a debriefing. That's when you get called up to the Torah and we read from its final verses. Then, for instructions on your upcoming mission, we begin reading the Torah again from "In the beginning"—to remind you that whatever you see out there, all of it extends from a single oneness called G-d.

*Hakafot*—The Five Books of Moses are divided into 53 portions, called parshas. Each week, we read one parsha, completing the entire scroll every year. The cycle begins on the last Shabbat of the month of Tishrei and ends on Simchat Torah.

To celebrate, on the night of Simchat Torah, we take out all the Torah scrolls from their ark, parade with them around the reading table seven times—and dance and sing with them. The next morning, we call everyone for a turn at as we conclude the Torah reading. Then we sing and dance with the Torah again.

Go find another people that dances with a book. But for Jewish people, Torah is not just a book to study, it is life. For over 3300 years, we have held tight to it, despite all odds, and it has kept us in existence. On Simchat Torah, they say, the Torah itself wants to rejoice—and we provide the legs.

**EPILOUGE:** Tishrei, the High Holiday month, is one long, grand high. But it's just a preparation. Your mission begins now, as you blast off into the everyday, workaday world.

It's going to be a different world now. Because Tishrei has left you a different person. You're connected, so your world is going to be connected. And that's the point of our entire mission: All together, we're going to make a whole new, plugged-in world.

[http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template\\_cdo/aid/565382/jewish/1-What-Are-The-High-Holidays.htm](http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/565382/jewish/1-What-Are-The-High-Holidays.htm)

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# The HINDA Institute

Helping Individuals Ascend

9401 Margail Avenue  
Des Plaines, IL 60016

Phone: 847-296-1770  
Email: chabad@chabadandfree.com



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## NOTICES:

Please make a request to your Chaplain that you would like a visit from a Rabbi in OCTOBER.

**HINDA Family Division** Connect your family member (parent, spouse, sibling, child etc.) with our Family Division! Please contact us for more information.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** All mail sent to the Hinda Institute should be addressed to our Inmate Advocate. Letters should NOT be addressed to Rabbi Scheiman. Please use this mailing address to contact us by mail:

Inmate Advocate  
The Hinda Institute  
9401 Margail Ave  
Des Plaines, IL 60016

**Housing Resource:** For any families trying to find a rental for their loved one to parole to up-

on release. Contact Mr. Marcus. This applies even to register with the state upon release. There is a fee for his services. Don Yosef Marcus—(847) 361-7770

## Upcoming Holidays:

**Rosh Hashanah:** Begins sunset of Wednesday September 20, 2017—Ends nightfall of Friday, September 22, 2017.

**Tzom Gedalia:** Sunday, September 24, 2017.

**Yom Kippur:** Begins sunset of Friday, September 29, 2017—Ends nightfall of Saturday, September 30, 2017.

**Sukkos:** Begins sunset of Wednesday, October 4, 2017—Ends nightfall of Wednesday, October 11, 2017.

**Simchas Torah:** Begins sunset of Wednesday, October 11, 2017—Ends nightfall of Friday, October 13, 2017.

Contact your Chaplain for guidance how to observe these holidays.

## Jewish Story

One Simchat Torah, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem told his disciples:

On Simchat Torah everyone sleeps in a little, because of the hakaftot and the festivities of the previous evening. The heavenly angels, however, don't say lchaim on Simchat Torah, and they arose for the morning prayers at the usual time. But the angels found themselves with nothing to do: as the Talmud tells us, the angels cannot sing G-d's praises in the heavens until Israel sings G-d's praises on earth. So they decided to do some cleaning up in heaven in the meantime.

They found heaven littered with strange objects: torn slippers and broken heels. The angels are accustomed to finding tzitzit, tefillin, and similar

things up there, but they had never come across the likes of these. They decided to ask the angel Michael, the supernal advocate of the Jewish people, if he knew what this was all about.

"Yes," admitted Michael, "this is my merchandise. These are the remains of last night's hakaftot, at which Jews danced with the Torah. Michael proceeded to sort the tattered shoes by community: these are from Kaminkeh, these are from Mezeritch, etc.

"The archangel Metat," boasted Michael, referring to the most prestigious angel in the heavenly court, "ties crowns for G-d out of Israel's prayers. Today, I shall fashion an even more glorious crown for the Almighty out of these torn shoes."

## Jewish Joke

The Hebrew School lesson had just finished and the rabbi asked if the children had any questions...

Little David quickly raised his hand. "Yes, David? What question would you like to ask?"

"I have four questions to ask you, Rabbi: Is it true that after the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they then received the Ten Commandments?"

"Yes, David."

"And the children of Israel also defeated the Philistines?"

"Yes, David, that's also true."

"And the children of Israel also fought the Canaanites and fought the Amalekites and built the Temple?"

"Again you are correct, David."

"So my last question is, Rabbi.. WHAT WERE THE GROWN-UPS DOING ALL THIS TIME?!"