



Four Names for Rosh Hashanah

Topic

Rosh Hashanah, Four Names for the Jewish New Year

Grade Level

The activities described here can be adapted for both primary and intermediate grade levels. After reviewing the materials, you can choose which aspects of the lesson that will work best with your age group. Suggestions are noted.

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will be able to...

- Recite the four names for Rosh Hashanah.
- Explain background for each of the four names.

Materials needed

- [4 Names for Rosh Hashanah Signs](#) (available on JTeach.org)
- White Board/Cork Board
- Push Pins or Tape
- Printed [Pictures of Rosh Hashanah and non-Rosh Hashanah](#) items (available on JTeach.org)
- [Poster of the 4 Names of Rosh Hashanah](#) (recommended for intermediate students, available on JTeach.org)

Technology needed

For those with iPad familiarity, the picture sorting component of this lesson could be done using the iPad app [Popplet Lite](#) (free, iTunes App Store) or [Popplet](#) (\$4.99, iTunes App Store). If you have questions on how to use Popplet, please email us at mindy@bjechicago.org.



Four Names for Rosh Hashanah

Background

Tradition teaches us that the holiday that falls on the 1st day of Tishrei, traditionally known as the Jewish New Year, has four names that represent four different aspects of the day. This lesson will explore those four names, their origins, and what the different names tell us about the meaning of the day.

- Rosh Hashanah (Head of the Year)
 - Mishnah Rosh Hashanah (1:1) tells us that there are four new years on the Jewish calendar.
 - The first of Tishrei is the new year for counting years (among other important demarcations).

- *Yom Tru'ah* (Day of Blasting the Horn)
 - The Torah (Bemidbar 29:1) tells us that the first of Tishrei is to be a day of blasting. We understand that the blasting is done with a shofar.
 - The shofar announces the beginning of the new year.
 - There are many understandings of what the blasts of the shofar mean for us. Some understandings include:
 - A wake-up call to do *teshuva* (repent)
 - A reminder of God giving the Torah at Sinai
 - *Akeidat Yitzchak* (the Binding of Isaac)

- *Yom Hazikaron* (Day of Remembrance)
 - The Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 16a) explains that God tells us to recite verses from the Tanach (Bible) on Rosh Hashanah. Among these verses are verses related to remembrance.
 - The Talmud (ibid.) teaches that we recite these verses so that God remembers us favorably.
 - There is also a connection between the blasting of the shofar (*Yom Tru'ah*) and God remembering us favorably through *Akeidat Yitzchak*.

- *Yom Hadin* (Day of Judgment)
 - The Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 16b) teaches us that Rosh Hashanah is the time that God judges people to be written in the Book of Life.
 - Keep in mind that the books are not necessarily meant to be taken literally.



Four Names for Rosh Hashanah

Description of Activities

BEFORE STUDENTS ARRIVE:

1. Place the printed Rosh Hashanah and non-Rosh Hashanah pictures around the classroom. Students will gather these as part of the activity.
2. Label a white board/cork board with two columns. One column should read “Rosh Hashanah.” The other should read “Not Rosh Hashanah.”
3. **For intermediate students** also post the signs of the 4 names for Rosh Hashanah, one name in each corner of the room.

ACTIVITIES

1. Ask students what they know about Rosh Hashanah. Students do not need to come up with every aspect of the *chag* (holiday). There will be time to explore later.
4. Ask students to collect the pictures posted around the room and place them in either the “Rosh Hashanah” or “Not Rosh Hashanah” column. Some of the things they mentioned in the initial discussion may be in the pictures that they see around the room.
2. When pictures have been collected and sorted, ask students to explain why they put the pictures where they placed them.
3. Explain to students that there are actually four names given to Rosh Hashanah.
 - a. Rosh Hashanah (The Head of the Year)
 - b. *Yom Tru'ah* (Day of the Shofar Blast)
 - c. *Yom Hadin* (Day of Judgement)
 - d. *Yom Hazikaron* (Day of Remembrance)
4. Ask students if they would change where they placed any of the pictures. At the end, the shofar, gavel, finger-with-string, and calendar pictures should be in the “Rosh Hashanah” column.

For primary students, we recommend you skip to the Wrap Up Section.

For intermediate students, continue with Step 5 and the activities on the next page.



Four Names for Rosh Hashanah

5. Show students the “4 Names of the New Year” poster with the names posted on it and ask about what each name represents. Sample responses are listed here.
 - a. **Rosh Hashanah**
 - i. The day begins the new year.
 - ii. You may choose to explain that there are four new years on the Jewish calendar.
 - iii. You may choose to explain that Tishrei is actually the seventh month on the Jewish calendar but that Rosh Hashanah traditionally is thought to be the day that Creation began (though there are some that say it is the day that people were created) and that the day begins the planting cycle.
 - b. **Yom Tru’ah**
 - i. This is the day that we blow the shofar.
 - ii. The shofar announces the beginning of the new year.
 - iii. You may choose to ask students why we would use a shofar (as opposed to something else) to announce the beginning of the new year.
 - iv. You may choose to mention the ram’s horn being connected to *Akeidat Yitzchak* (the Binding of Isaac). This can also be connected to *Yom Hazikaron* (as mentioned below).
 - c. **Yom Hazikaron**
 - i. God remembers God’s people for *good*.
 - ii. You may choose to connect *Yom Hazikaron* to *Yom Tru’ah* through the ram’s horn and God’s remembering *Akeidat Yitzchak* (the Binding of Isaac), when God sent a ram to be offered to God in Yitzchak’s place.
 - d. **Yom Hadin**
 - i. This begins the time that God judges people to be written in the Book of Life.
 - ii. You may choose to have a discussion about whether we are meant to understand that these books literally exist, or why we would use the image of the Book of Life if it is not meant to be taken literally.
6. Show students the four sources that explain why each of the four names is used.
7. Ask students to match the sources to the appropriate name on the poster. As they match the names, ask students to explain what the connection is between each source and the name to which it applies.
 - a. Torah – *Bemidbar* (Numbers) 29:1 → *Yom Tru’ah*
 - i. You shall have a day of blasts.
 - ii. This is the day that we blow the shofar.
 - b. Talmud – Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1 → Rosh Hashanah
 - i. There are four new years.
 - ii. This is one of the new years.



Four Names for Rosh Hashanah

- c. Talmud – Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16a → *Yom Hazikaron*
 - i. We read verses from the Tanach (Bible) related to remembrance.
 - ii. We want God to remember us for good.
- d. Talmud – Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16b → *Yom Hadin*
 - i. God judges us for the Book of Life.
 - ii. We want to be written in the Book of Life.

WRAP UP

For primary students- Teach students hand gestures to remember the four names of the New Year, and then use the hand gestures and names in a call and response game. Suggested gestures are:

- a. Rosh Hashanah- Tap one hand gently on the top of your head
- b. Yom Hazikaron- Use one finger to gently tap on your temple
- c. Yom Tru'ah- Use your hands to make a shofar shape by clasping your hands and extending your thumbs and pinkies to be the mouth and end of the “shofar”
- d. Yom Hadin- Make a fist and gently tap into the palm of your other hand

Conclude by asking students to share a wish or prayer for the start of the new year.

For intermediate students- Refer to the names of Rosh Hashanah that you posted in each corner of the room.

- a. Explain to students that you will ask them a question connected to the names of Rosh Hashanah. Explain that they will walk to the answer that they think most applies for them. You might want to emphasize that it is OK to like more than one answer, but that they should choose the one answer that they think is best for them.
- b. Ask: With which name of Rosh Hashanah do you connect with the most?
- c. Students walk to their answers and discuss within their groups why they chose the sign at which they congregated.
- d. Ask each group to create a Rosh Hashanah prayer/wish based on their discussions.
- e. Each group shares the prayer/wish with the class.
- f. If there is time, you might want to ask each group what elements of their discussions led them to write their particular prayers/wishes. The groups should emphasize how the particular name of the day influenced their ideas.