



Identify: Who am I?

Rosh Hashanah, marking the start of the Jewish calendar, translates to “head of the year.” It is a time of celebration, reflection, and preparation. It is a moment when each Jew is asked to consider who they are and who they want to be. This process of reflection, called *teshuva*, renewal or return, allows us to always be looking for ways to improve. We want to be the best versions of ourselves, but to do so takes work.

How do you reflect?

Through the month of Elul, leading up to Rosh Hashanah, the *shofar* is blown each morning. The cry of the *shofar*, a ram’s horn, serves as a wake-up call. Are you ready to be introspective? Are you prepared for the process? Every day for a month Jews are reminded of what is to come, showcasing just how important and significant Rosh Hashanah is.

As Rosh Hashanah arrives, we spend two days in thoughtful contemplation. We recognize the aspects of ourselves that have been less than honorable. We feel remorse for those we have hurt. We resolve that we want to act differently in the coming year, and we reaffirm our commitment to make positive change in ourselves.

What makes our new year SWEET?

When we commit ourselves to *teshuva*, wonderful things await us in the coming year and as such we have a sweet outlook on our future. We improve our own lives, and the lives of others.

We **eat apples and honey** to remind us of the sweetness to come, and **pomegranates**, which have 613 seeds, to increase our observance and study. **We give to others, so that they may partake in the same foods and have the same sweet start to the new year.**

Traditional greetings for Rosh Hashanah include:

Shana tova u'metuka – A good and sweet new year.

Leshanah tova tikatevu v'techatemu – may you be inscribed and sealed (in the book of life) for a good year.





Why do you reflect?

Our Sages told us to practice אהבת הברייות (*ahavat ha'briyot*), love of all G-d's creations.

We shouldn't separate ourselves from the world. To make ourselves better is to make the WORLD better, as our actions have influence well beyond us. We ask ourselves, what kind of person do I want to be? What kind of world do I want to live in? How must I act to make that happen?

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think our new year is focused on reflection and *teshuva* rather than just celebration?
2. Why do you think we place such an emphasis on having a "sweet" new year?
3. This year our Mockingjay pre-screenings will be preceded by a Can-tribute challenge. How does Rosh Hashanah inspire you to make the most of the Can-tribute challenge?
4. What are the things you most want to work on as you try to become the best version of yourself?
5. At what other times in your life have you found yourself in reflective preparation?





Connect: Who are we?

While the process of reflection and introspection may be individual, there are many elements to Rosh Hashanah that are enhanced by our community.

How do we do *teshuva*?

The build up to Rosh Hashanah takes much introspection, so we need to turn thought into action. The practice of *tashlich*, coming from the word, “to cast,” is our opportunity to put physical practice to the reflective process in which we have engaged. We throw pieces of bread into a river or stream, often with other community members as a symbol of casting away our sins and preparing to repent. It is a moment to come together as a community and participate in the act of preparation together. Not only is it your opportunity to physically let go of all you’ve been holding in, but by doing it with others you outwardly show your willingness to move forward and do more good in the world.

How do we Stand UP at this time of year?

Once our reflections are complete and we have cast away our previous sins we are ready to move ahead with a sweet year of positive action and commitment. However, this process and the celebration of it should not be exclusionary. Creating an opportunity for those in need to participate in their own way is of high importance to communities around the world.

Organizations like [Maot Chitim](#) exist all over North America, providing holiday food to families in need. People from all over the community, young and old, volunteer and donate in whatever way they can. Last year, in just one community, over 5000 Rosh Hashanah packages were distributed to support over 24,000 people who wanted to create a meaningful new year for themselves and their families.

Do your friends think there isn’t a need to support members of the Jewish community at this time? Raise awareness that the current hunger crisis can affect anyone in the community, and ask your friends to join you in gathering support for local food pantries.

Do you already know of organizations that are collecting donations and providing food? Look to support the community in a different way. Ask a synagogue or community center to donate space for free High Holy Day services. The cost of attending services can be prohibitive for some families, and others may not feel comfortable asking for financial aid. A publicized free service can put many at ease and allow many to observe the holiday in new ways.

Are the nearest rivers or streams inaccessible by public transportation? Ask a bus company if they would donate school busses for free to allow groups to participate in the act of *tashlich*.





Improve: For whom are we responsible?

Many of the rituals associated with Rosh Hashanah are done through synagogues, local Jewish Federations, or community centers, but adopting some of these practices in your chapter is a great way to bring in the New Year with your BBYO family.

As chapters, returning from summer break and being intentional about the start of a new year is critical. Have you honored every member of your chapter? Are there things you want to change for the New Year? How does your chapter go through the process of reflecting, , and renewing so that it can be a positive contributor to your community?

Chapter Meetings:

- Learning to blow a shofar – see if any members of your chapter know how and can teach others. Or bring someone in to a meeting to teach everyone. Process what members feel when they hear the sound of the shofar, and what the shofar cry inspires them to focus on their reflections.
- Begin a meeting by asking each member what the New Year mean to them. This is a great opportunity to have new members get to know everyone and start to learn things about their Brother Alephs or Sister BBGs.
- Use the process of reflection and renewal as a starting point for your BBYO Stand UP campaign conversations. See what inspires your members and develop a campaign that can get going with some Rosh Hashanah inspired advocacy and work.

Chapter Programs:

- Chapter *tashlich* – Begin by having each member consider the things for which they want to repent. Have the chapter come to a consensus on the things they would like to improve upon as well. Organize an outing to a nearby river or stream and have members toss bread away, both for themselves and as a group to inspire action for the coming year.
- Apples, honey, and challah sale – Approach local businesses about donating apples, honey, and challah for a community sale. Then use the proceeds from your sale to donate to local organizations that provide holiday food for families in need.
- Rosh Hashanah inspired dinner – Have dinner at a members' home and celebrate the New Year together. Make it a potluck and have every member bring a dish that reflects their family's traditions during the holidays.

