Days and times of the year.

Rosh Hashana is the celebration of the 1st and 2nd day of the month of Tishrei. This is the only holiday which appears in the Torah which lasts two days in Israel. For those two days the Synagogue is open all day.

It is strange though, that Rosh Hashana (literally meaning, beginning of the year) occurs during the 7th month of the Jewish calendar (Lev. 23:24). Let’s explain this paradox. The name Rosh Hashana does not appear in the Tanag (Bible) but in the Midrash (oral interpretation of the Tanag).

Since the beginning of the period of the Prophets, with Moses and until the Talmudic period, the tendency among those who were forging Jewish concepts was to shift the centre of the human life from nature to history. In the Tanah, the first month is Nisan, which is the month of spring. This corresponds to an approach of the Universe which was mostly related to Nature and Life: the world comes to life again in spring after having been inactive during winter. Tishrei, on the other hand, is the beginning of autumn. Therefore it is logical that our sages of the Mishna chose this date as Rosh Hashana to prove that the important thing was not the rebirth of the earth, but to remember a fundamental fact. Following this trend of thought it is also understandable that the 1st day of Tishrei is thought as being the anniversary of Creation (Haiom Harat Olam), meaning that the first day of Rosh Hashana set the beginning of History itself. It is strange though, that Rosh Hashana occurs during the 7th month of the Jewish calendar.

The Different Names of the Holiday

Rosh Hashana is only one of the different names that this holiday has. It is also known as Iom Trua (day of Shofar Sounding), Iom Hadin (day of Judgement) and Iom Hazikaron (day of Remembrance).

A) Iom Trua: the Shofar sounds. It greets us as a clock which wakes us from our sleep. Its deep sound takes us back to the depths of our conscious. It makes us deterour from our daily routine.

B) Iom Hadin: this is a Human life which is the development of our actions, good or bad. This is the day when good actions are inscribed in the Book of Life and the bad actions are “blotted out of the book of the living”. It is said that this is a day of judgement. This is connected to the important fact that a new year starts following the previous year’s actions. It is also a day of atonement (Haiom Harat Olam), meaning that the first day of Rosh Hashana set the beginning of History itself.

A) Iom Terua: the Shofar sounds. It greets us as a clock which wakes us from our sleep. Its deep sound takes us back to the depths of our conscious. It makes us deterour from our daily routine.

B) Iom Hadin: this is a Human life which is the development of our actions, good or bad. This is the day when good actions are inscribed in the Book of Life and the bad actions are “blotted out of the book of the living”. It is said that this is a day of judgement. This is connected to the important fact that a new year starts following the previous year’s actions. It is also a day of atonement (Haiom Harat Olam), meaning that the first day of Rosh Hashana set the beginning of History itself.

The Most Important Days of Rosh Hashana

A) Iom Terua: the Shofar sounds. It greets us as a clock which wakes us from our sleep. Its deep sound takes us back to the depths of our conscious. It makes us deterour from our daily routine.

B) Iom Hadin: this is a Human life which is the development of our actions, good or bad. This is the day when good actions are inscribed in the Book of Life and the bad actions are “blotted out of the book of the living”. It is said that this is a day of judgement. This is connected to the important fact that a new year starts following the previous year’s actions. It is also a day of atonement (Haiom Harat Olam), meaning that the first day of Rosh Hashana set the beginning of History itself.

Costumes Related to the Day of Rosh Hashana

A) Round Challah: for each Shabbat, it is a costume that we have two regular challot, for Rosh Hashana the challah is always round. One of the explanations for this is that it is the shape of the earth as we see it in the Diaspora. Today was get to feel a little under the weather, but we shouldn’t lose our optimism, maybe next year, the events of life shall take us straight to the top. Or maybe it is exactly the other way around. Nobody should have and arrogant attitude when they are in a troubled situation.

B) Other costumes related to food: apart from the round challah, people also include sweet vegetables to their tables. The best known example of this is the apple with honey. After the Hamotzi people take the apple with honey and say: May you be in a good position.

C) Kartissei Bracha (greeting cards): according to the Talmud, three books are opened on Rosh Hashana: those who are righteous are immediately inscribed in the Book of Life, those who are wicked are “blotted out of the book of the living”, and those who are in-between are written in the book of the dead. Some others don’t eat walnuts as the numeric value of the word in Hebrew, egoz, is the same as jet (sin, mistake).

D) Rosh Hashana: a spiritual renovation. After self-evaluation it’s time to prove ourselves that we are able to be brave and truly embrace who we are. Rosh Hashana is the beginning of a new time, a time for spiritual renovation.

Shana Tová Tikatevu Vetijatemu! (Have a good and sweet New Year.)