



Jewish Life

Milwaukee's Jewish community is vibrant and diverse, and the JCC is right at the center of the action. Creating an inclusive Jewish gathering space means celebrating the values and traditions that unite us. No matter if you grew up Jewish or are new to the community, you always have a home here. Family programs, youth education, and holiday celebrations fill our calendar and make Jewish tradition, practice, and exploration accessible to all families.

jccmilwaukee.org/programs/jewish-life

Chai-Five: 5 Fun Facts about the High Holidays

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are known as the High Holidays and are sometimes referred to as the Days of Awe. This 10-day period, which begins this year at sundown on September 29 and continues through Yom Kippur on October 9, is a time of personal reflection, family gathering, and communal engagement for Jews throughout the world. As an inclusively Jewish community center that welcomes people with varying degrees of knowledge on Jewish holidays, we put together some fun information you may or may not know about the High Holidays to get you to start thinking about the holiday season.

1. The '80s are back!

On Rosh Hashanah, we will end the Hebrew year 5779 and begin the year 5780. Does this mean you should dust off your neon legwarmers and go get a perm? Only you can decide, but since high-waist jeans and fanny packs are already back, anything can happen.

2. Rosh Hashanah is only 1 of 4 Jewish New Years on the Hebrew calendar.

Rosh Hashanah is literally translated to mean the head of the year. But there are three more dates on the Hebrew calendar that are considered new years as well. In the Book of Exodus, the beginning of the year was set as the 1st of Nisan, the month in spring that contains Passover. Jewish tradition also marks Tu B'Shvat, the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat, as the new year for trees and the 1st of Elul, usually in late summer, as the new year for the tithing of animals.

3. A shofar doesn't always smell so good.

The key commandment of Rosh Hashanah is to hear the sounding of the shofar. A shofar is an instrument made out of an actual ram's horn, so it is going to have a certain natural aroma to it. If someone tells you that they can sell you a shofar that doesn't have any smell, then you are probably not getting a genuine ram's horn shofar. How can you make a new shofar less stinky? Rinsing it out with a solution of baking soda and vinegar should do the trick.

4. Kol Nidre is translated to mean "All Vows."

On Yom Kippur evening, in synagogues all over the world (and by Neil Diamond in "The Jazz Singer") the Kol Nidre prayer is chanted 3 times. This prayer cancels any oaths that were made directly with God in the prior year so that we can start over and have a clean slate. For example, if you promised to do a better job at controlling your temper, and then continued to lose it repeatedly over the past year, you will annul that oath so that you aren't starting the new year with that same broken promise in place. Kol Nidre does not, however, cancel out promises made with other people. To make peace with others, you need to seek forgiveness directly.

5. Eating a big meal before you fast is not the best idea.

Traditionally, the meal eaten before sundown on Erev Yom Kippur is large and festive. However, eating extra food — particularly in one last-minute feast — will not keep you going for 24 hours. Nutritionists suggest eating small amounts of carbohydrates (bread, potato, rice, pasta), some protein like fish or chicken, and fruit before beginning your fast on Yom Kippur.



As you prepare for the holidays, be sure to check the JCC's holiday hours and special events on the next two pages. We wish you all a *Shanah tovah um'tukah*, a good and sweet new year, and *g'mar chatimah tovah*, may you be inscribed for good in the Book of Life!