

# ROSH HASHANAH

ראש השנה

## SOME BACKGROUND

21<sup>st</sup> September 2017 in the Jewish calendar is *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year. On this day Jews remember God's creation of the world and the first human beings, the birth and binding of Isaac, and the call to serve God in every moment of their lives.



*Rosh Hashanah* is celebrated every year on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> days of the Hebrew month *Tishri*. The festival is celebrated over two days which in practice are regarded as one long day. *Rosh Hashanah* means 'head of the year'. Greeting cards are exchanged, special prayers are offered, and sweet foods eaten (in the hope of a good new year).

Some examples of foods are:

- Apples and *challah* (a form of bread) dipped in honey in expectation of a sweet new year.
- Pomegranates symbolising the intention to perform many good deeds and to live according to God's commandment.

*Rosh Hashanah* is linked to *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement). So, even as Jews celebrate New Year, there is an awareness of a call to repentance and renewal. One practice that illustrates this is *Tashlikh* (casting off) where Jews walk near flowing water in the afternoon of the first day with small pieces of bread or pebbles in their pockets. As they walk they throw the bread or pebbles into the water symbolically unburdening themselves of the sins of the previous year. Another practice is the blowing of the *shofar* (ram's horn) to remind people to return to God.



From *Rosh Hashanah* through to *Yom Kippur*, nine days later, Jews review the life they have lived over the previous year, examine their deeds, ask for forgiveness for their sins, and pray that their lives will be found inscribed in the Book of Life. This introspection is linked to the seeking of forgiveness and reconciliation with the members of the (Jewish) community that is carried out on *Yom Kippur*. Prayer is also offered for Israel and all Jews around the world.

## PARALITURGY FOR ROSH HASHANAH



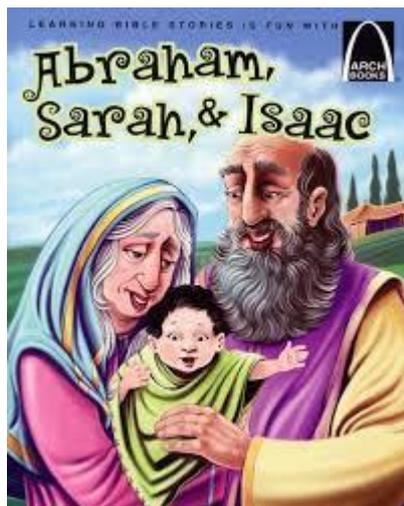
**Leader:** Let us all remember that we are in the Holy presence of God. (Pause)  
Glory be to God, the creator of heaven and earth, who has revealed to us the Law that calls us to be a light to all the nations.

**All:** Amen

**Leader:** Brothers and sisters today is the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2014. For our Jewish brothers and sisters it is the first day of their New Year, or Rosh Hashanah, meaning ‘head of the year’.

**Leader:** Today we will listen to excerpts from their chosen readings for the day. As these are read, let us hold our lives and those of our Jewish brothers and sisters before God in prayer.

### FIRST READING: GENESIS 21: 1 - 7



*Yahweh dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised her. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth. Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born to him. Then Sarah said, ‘God has given me cause to laugh; all those who hear it will laugh with me’. She added, ‘Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children! Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.’*

**SECOND READING: HANNAH'S PRAYER**  
**I SAMUEL 2:1 - 10**

**Response:** Yahweh gives death and life, he humbles and exalts

*'My heart exults in Yahweh,  
 my horn is exalted in my God,  
 my mouth derides my foes,  
 for I rejoice in your power of saving. (R)*

*There is none as holy as Yahweh,  
 (indeed, there is no one but you)  
 no rock like our God.(R)*

*Do not speak and speak with haughty words,  
 let not arrogance come from your mouth.  
 For Yahweh is an all-knowing God  
 and his is the weighing of deeds. (R)*

*The bow of the mighty is broken  
 but the feeble have girded themselves with strength.  
 The sated<sup>1</sup> hire themselves out for bread  
 but the famished cease from labour;  
 the barren woman bears seven fold,  
 but the mother of many desolate. (R)*

*Yahweh gives death and life,  
 brings down to sheol<sup>2</sup> and draws up;  
 Yahweh makes poor and rich,  
 he humbles and also exalts. (R)*

*He raises the poor from the dust,  
 he lifts the needy from the dunghill  
 to give them a place with princes,  
 and to assign them a seat of honour;  
 for to Yahweh the props of the earth belong,  
 on these he has poised the world. (R)*

*He safeguards the steps of his faithful  
 but the wicked vanished in darkness  
 (for it is not by strength that man triumphs).  
 The enemies of Yahweh are shattered,  
 the Most High thunders in the heavens. (R)*

*Yahweh judges the ends of the earth,  
 he endows his king with power,  
 he exalts the horn of his Anointed.' (R)*

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<sup>1</sup> Full

<sup>2</sup> The place of the dead

## SUGGESTIONS FOR A SHORT ADDRESS

Here are some thoughts you might wish to bring to the attention of the school community:

*Today, our Jewish brothers and sisters celebrate the beginning of their New Year. But through Abraham both Christians and Muslims share a common ancestor in their faith with their Jewish brothers and sisters. So, Jews, Christians and Muslims are all spiritual children of Abraham. But there is too much suspicion between us. Yet we are all called to the same task - to be a light to the nations and to be a source of blessing to the world. What, then, can we do to bring this about?*

Alternatively, you may wish to address the students on a particular topic that is relevant to your situation and context

## SHORT SILENT REFLECTION

### CLOSING PRAYER

We pray that God will be with our Jewish brothers and sisters who on this day celebrate Rosh Hashanah. We ask God to bless them and strengthen their faith. We pray, too, for ourselves, for all Christians, and for our Muslim brothers and sisters, that together, with our Jewish brothers and sisters, we will learn, as spiritual children of Abraham, to become a source of blessing for the world.

This we ask  
through Jesus Christ Our Lord,  
who lives and reigns  
with You and the Holy Spirit,  
One God,  
forever and ever.  
Amen