

10 Life Lessons: Rosh Hashanah - Jewish New Year



Shana Tova U'Metuka
Festival greetings to Jewish friends for Rosh Hashanah,
and a wish for all the goodness and sweetness of the new year.

As this blog post is being written, Jewish communities have entered the festival of Rosh Hashanah - Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashanah celebrates the 'birthday of the world'. Front and centre is the conviction that God, Creator and Sovereign of the world, continues to renew creation and calls human beings to account for their decisions and actions. Despite the fragility of our lives, we are expected to live the gift of each day to the fullest. Thus, the sound of the *shofar* (ram's horn) on Rosh Hashanah might be described as a 'wake-up' call. Rosh Hashanah leads into an extended period of introspection and self-examination, known as the Days of Awe or Days of Repentance, which climaxes ten days later with Yom Kippur ('Day of Atonement'), a solemn day of fasting and repentance, girded by a deep trust in God's mercy.

So, what are some of the key messages of Rosh Hashanah? What insights from Jewish tradition can also inspire other peoples of faith and good will?

The late [Rabbi Jonathan Sacks](#) (1948-2020), an English rabbi, scholar and author - widely respected as a faith leader by people of many traditions - articulated the following Ten Themes.

According to the teaching of Jonathan Sacks, Rosh Hashanah instils an awareness that:

1. Life is short,

2. but it is a gift from God,
3. to be lived as a free response to the God of freedom.
4. Life is inherently meaningful,
5. however life is not easy and too often involves immense suffering.
6. Yet, because God never leaves us, life can still be sweet;
7. and what we create with our lives is our greatest work of art.
8. In life, we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.
9. God asks great things of us and, by responding to this call, we discover our own greatness.
10. Paradoxically, human beings are both dust and spirit. We are formed from the dust of the earth and the living breath of God (Genesis 2:7).

This brief summary is gleaned from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "What Rosh Hashanah says to us", at [The Rabbi Sacks Legacy](#) website. The [link](#) takes you to a family-friendly version of his teaching that lends itself to a meaningful discussion around a family or community dining table. In a spirit of interfaith solidarity, perhaps this is something Christians could undertake this week, mindful of this Jewish festival period and how much Christians can learn from their Jewish brothers and sisters and their traditions.

A closing prayer

May the memory and work of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who was an internationally acclaimed faith leader, continue to bless the world and be a beacon of moral guidance.

And we pray for Jewish people everywhere during their High Holy Days - for continuing vitality and strength in their covenantal life with God, and for safety, health and happiness for their families and communities.

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