

## FALL HOLIDAYS AND SOCIAL ACTION

Sharon Morton

### SESSION SUMMARY

This session allowed participants to gain familiarity with themes for the fall holidays, some life milestones, and some social action opportunities that accompany them. They discussed ways children can become young philanthropists. Participants learned how to create grids with related social action opportunities for any occasion. They discussed texts related to this topic, and a new curriculum designed to give families the knowledge and skills to share values with children and instill the desire in them to be philanthropists and social action activists.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sharon Morton, R.J.E., was a social action advocate during her 32 years as Education Director at Am Shalom, and Director of Social Justice Religious Resource Network. She founded Grandparents for Social Action, helping grandchildren become philanthropists and social action activists. She is director of the "Gifts" program for the Jewish Federation of Chicago, teaching generosity, inspiration, family, *Tzedakah*, service to the younger generations.

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### Fall Holidays and Social Action

This is a workbook full of information about the Jewish holidays and ways to make them a source of social action. It is meant as a jumping-off point for you and your children and grandchildren as you seek ways you can help make the world a better place – to do your part for *Tikkun Olam*, (repairing the world). Not every idea is for every person—but we hope the ideas inside this packet will inspire you.

The contents of this guide to holiday-based social action are based on information from [areyvut.org](http://areyvut.org), an org. that enables Jewish youth to infuse their lives with the core Jewish values of *chesed* (kindness), **tzedakah** (charity), and *tikkun olam* (social justice).

The guide was then modified and published on the Grandparents for Social Action website, an org. that helps elders to teach youngsters to be philanthropists and social action activists.

The document was then further modified to reflect the GIFTS curriculum, a Federation program that helps grandparents teach children about generosity, inspiration, family, *tzedakah* and service. The GIFTS program was supported by the Breakthrough Fund: An Innovation of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, in collaboration with Grandparents for Social Action and InterfaithFamily/Chicago. The holiday basics pages were provided by [InterfaithFamily.com](http://InterfaithFamily.com), an org that supports interfaith families and helps them to explore Jewish life.

To learn more about Areyvut, visit [areyvut.org](http://areyvut.org)

To learn more about the GIFTS program visit [www.juf.org/gifts](http://www.juf.org/gifts).

To learn more about grandparents for social action programming, go to [grandparentsforsocialaction.org](http://grandparentsforsocialaction.org) and sign up for a free monthly newsletter.

To learn more about the work of Interfaith family, go to [interfaithfamily.com/chicago](http://interfaithfamily.com/chicago)

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# Rosh HaShana Basics

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- **Hebrew name means:** Head of the year—idiomatically, New Year.
- **What's It About?** A solemn holiday beginning the calendar year with repentance and the hope of renewal.
- **Pronounce it:** rohsh ha-shah-nah.
- **When is it:** Usually in mid-to-late September, but sometimes in early October. Jewish holidays follow the lunar calendar and therefore does not correspond to the solar calendar.
- **Foods:** Apples and honey, round hallah with raisins, honey cake, pomegranates, and other round foods, sweet foods.
- **Activities:** Most Jews attend synagogue services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. One special activity is the sounding of the shofar, or ram's horn. At home, a special activity is eating apples dipped in honey. Many Jews send Jewish New Year's cards for this holiday. Probably the most important activity associated with this holiday comes between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: trying to repair relationships and make apologies for bad behavior in the previous year.
- **Symbols of Holiday:** The shofar or ram's horn, apples and honey.
- **Greeting?** You can say Happy New Year, or try the Hebrew version, Shanah Tovah. If you want to give a more complete version of the greeting, try L'shanah tovah tikatevu, May you be inscribed for a good year (in the book of life). Yiddish-speaking Jews say "Gut yontev."

# Ideas for Rosh HaShana

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- a) Organize a *Rosh Hashanah* dinner through your synagogue for people who may not have family or friends with whom to share the holiday.
- b) Make a New Year's resolution relating to improving yourself.
- c) As a family, determine an organization that you would like to support and have everyone in the family make a contribution.
- d) As the prayers discuss life and death, sign up for a CPR course in your area so that you will have the ability to save someone's life.
- e) Go apple picking and donate the apples with honey to nursing home residents.
- f) Make a resolution to stay in closer contact with your grandparents, relatives living overseas, etc.
- g) Make *tzedakah* boxes and give *tzedakah* on a regular basis.
- h) Set up a location where everyone in your congregation can donate a can of food before the start of Yom Kippur that will later be donated to a food pantry.



## My Notes

## Notes from my Grandchild

“You shall be Holy for I, Adonai your God am Holy (Lev. 19:1)

## Yom Kippur Basics

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- **Hebrew name means:** Day of Atonement.
- **What's It About?** A fast day of prayer and collective confession.
- **Pronounce it:** yohm kee-poor.
- **When is it:** Ten days after Rosh HaShana.
- **Foods:** It's a fast day! Families do have traditions about what to eat when the fast is over, like a dairy meal, but there's nothing universal. A large festival meal is typically served the evening before the fast begins, before sundown. Children under age 13 and other people whose health might be harmed don't fast.
- **Worship:** For a lot of Jews, Yom Kippur is special because it's the day they go to memorial services, called Yizkor, to honor dead relatives.
- **Symbols of Holiday:** Prayer book and Shofar
- **Greeting?** You can say Happy New Year or "have an easy fast." Some say Shanah Tovah, which is Hebrew for Happy New Year or Gamar hatimah tovah-May you be sealed for a good year.

# Ideas for Yom Kippur

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- a) Sponsor a meal before or after the fast.
- b) Make a resolution for the coming year.
- c) Contribute the money you would have spent on food for that day to a food pantry.
- d) Choose one person and do something nice for them everyday for the next week
- e) Call elderly friends after the fast to check in on them.
- f) Get in touch with your out-of-town friends or reacquaint yourself with old friends.
- g) Make a resolution for the upcoming year and commit to becoming a volunteer.
- h) Host a food drive for those who are not only hungry on fast days.
- i) \_\_\_\_\_

## My Notes

## Notes from my Grandchild



There are three types of sounds we blow with the shofar: a *tekiah*, a steady blast; a *shevarim*, a broken note; and a *teruah*, a shattered quavering note. They symbolize our prayers on Rosh Hashanah.

## Sukkot Basics

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- **Hebrew name means:** Booths or tabernacles. The singular is sukkah.
- **What's it about?** In ancient times when the Temple stood in Jerusalem, this was a pilgrimage holiday to celebrate the harvest. In our time it still coincides with the harvest.
- **Pronounce it:** sue coat
- **When is it:** Five days after Yom Kippur.
- **Foods:** Fruits and vegetables from the Harvest.
- **Activities:** Before the holiday, communities and some individual families build a sukkah or hut in the back yard or on the back porch. The sukkah is open to the elements. During the holiday an important activity is eating in the sukkah. There is also a ritual involving blessing and waving the etrog—a citron—and the lulav—a palm branch bound with myrtle and willow.
- **Symbols of Holiday:** The sukkah, the lulav and the etrog.
- **Greeting?** Hag Sameach (Happy holiday) You may also hear "gut yontev," which is Yiddish for happy holiday.

# Ideas for Sukkot

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- a) Promote homelessness awareness in your community
- b) Help a neighbor build their *Sukkah*
- c) Offer to share your *lulav* and *etrog* with someone who does not have one
- d) Arrange a *Sukkah* decorating event for your synagogue
- e) Use this as an opportunity to study environmental issues and encourage recycling
- f) In the spirit of the *Ushpizin*, the tradition of inviting one of the seven biblical leaders (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David) to our *sukkah* each night of *sukkot*, invite people who would otherwise eat alone
- g) Plant an indoor garden at a shelter, nursing home, hospital or synagogue
- h) \_\_\_\_\_

## My Notes

## Notes from my Grandchild



The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. Elie Weisel

## Important Jewish Words Defined

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- **Tzedakah:** Righteousness
- **Philanthropy:** Love of humankind
- **Chesed:** Kindness
- **Gemilut Chasidim:** Acts of Lovingkindness
- **Tikkun Olam:** Repairing the World
- **Oseh Shalom:** Make Peace
- **Hachnassat Orchim:** Welcoming the guest.
- **Bikkur cholim:** visit the sick

- **Tefillah:** Prayer

- **Kibud av v'em - honor your father and mother**

