

How to Celebrate Rosh Hashanah 5787

Friday, September 11 through Sunday, September 13, 2026 | Thornhill, Ontario

PRACTICAL HALACHAH GUIDE - ROSH HASHANAH 5787

5787 Thornhill Zmanim at a Glance

Date / Occasion	Key Times
Friday, September 11 - Erev Rosh Hashanah	Halachic midday 1:13 PM; mikveh from 12:13 PM; tenth halachic hour 4:24 PM; earliest candle lighting/Kiddush 6:16 PM; candle lighting 7:17 PM
Shabbos, September 12 - First Day	Latest Shema (GRA/Baal HaTanya) 10:03 AM; second-night preparations and candle lighting after 8:23 PM
Sunday, September 13 - Second Day	Latest Shema (GRA/Baal HaTanya) 10:03 AM; Havdalah after 8:21 PM

Times verified for Thornhill using MyZmanim. Times are rounded for practical publication.

Erev Rosh Hashanah - Friday, September 11, 2026

1. It is customary [but not mandatory] to fast until halachic mid-day. **[1:13 PM]**
2. Additional Selichos are said in the morning.
3. No Tachanun is said during the morning service.
4. We do not blow the Shofar after the morning service.
5. One should nullify his / her vows before 3 people in a language that you understand. See Artscroll Siddur pg. 762. This procedure helps for vows and good deeds that one may have committed to do, ***that one does not remember having made.***
6. Women can appoint their husbands as their agents to nullify their vows for them. Other women rely on the Kol Nidrei ceremony to nullify their vows.
7. It is customary to visit the cemetery.
8. One should spend time doing Teshuvah, giving charity, learning, and asking forgiveness from other people. Before Rosh Hashanah actually begins, one should resolve to strive to focus on improving a specific area of conduct during the New Year.
9. One should be well groomed in honor of the Yom Tov.
10. One should preferably take a shave and haircut before halachic midday. **[1:13 PM]**
11. Men should immerse in the Mikveh no earlier than one hour before halachic Mid-day. **[12:13 PM]**
12. One should familiarize oneself with the Machzor.
13. One should wear festive clothing, but in moderation. Save new clothing for the second night of Yom Tov.
14. It is customary to bake or purchase Challah in the form of a circle, ladder, or bird.

15. One should be careful not to display anger or even become angry during these special days.
16. Unlike Shabbos, food may be cooked or baked on the second day of Rosh Hashanah from a pre-existing flame, subject to the applicable halachic requirements. **You need not have all your food cooked before Yom Tov.** Consult with your Rabbi to learn more about the details involved.
17. It is preferable to refrain from eating a proper meal once the tenth *Halachic* hour of the day begins (4:24 PM), in order to properly enjoy the *Yom Tov* meal at night. However, one may snack in small quantities.
18. It is preferable and practical to light a long-burning candle, such as a **48-hour yahrzeit candle**, before Yom Tov. This provides a pre-existing flame that will remain available after **8:23 PM on Saturday night** for second-night candle lighting and permitted Yom Tov cooking.

First Evening - Friday, September 11, 2026

1. Because the first night is also Shabbos, women should light candles by **7:17 PM**. The blessings are *Lehadlik Ner Shel Shabbos v'Shel Yom Hazikaron*, followed by *Shehecheyanu*. Candles may be lit as early as **6:16 PM** when the requirements for accepting Shabbos early are observed.
2. If one mistakenly recited *Yom Tov* instead of *Yom Hazikaron*, this is acceptable. However, if one mistakenly omitted either *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov* entirely - if she realized within the time frame it takes to say three words, she corrects her mistake. Otherwise, there is a debate whether to repeat the *Brocho*, and how. One should take great care to avoid this dilemma in the first place. If one forgot *Shehecheyanu*, she should have in mind to be *Yotzei* during *Kiddush*.
3. If a woman did not light before Shabbos began, she may not light later that evening, even from a pre-existing flame. She should consult the Rabbi regarding what to do.
4. Men should daven Minchah with a Minyan and everyone should say Minchah with extra concentration, as it is the final prayer of the year **5786**.
5. The earliest time to either light candles or make *Kiddush* is after **6:16 PM**.
6. In addition to the insertions for Shabbos, 4 insertions are made in the Maariv Amidah [and for all Amidahs through Yom Kippur], which are found in the Artscroll Machzor on pages 62, 64, 66, and 72. One need not repeat the Amidah if one forgot to say any or all of the insertions.
7. We change the ending of the third blessing from "Ha-el Hakadosh" to "Hamelech Hakadosh." One must repeat the Amidah if one forgot to insert "Hamelech Hakadosh."
8. Special greetings are given to friends and family members after Maariv and before *Kiddush*. "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year [immediately, for a good life and for peace]." See Artscroll Machzor pg. 90 for the Hebrew text. This greeting should only be said on the first night. Greetings for the remainder of Rosh Hashanah should be limited to "Shana Tova", "Happy New Year", "Chag Samayach", or "Good Yom Tov."
9. After saying "Vayichulu", and the special Yom Tov *Kiddush* and washing our hands, we make a *Brocha* over two Challahs, and cut the top Challah.

10. Challah is dipped in honey [some have the custom to dip the Challah into salt as well].
11. Symbolic foods are eaten at the evening meal. See Artscroll Machzor pg. 96-98. The first symbolic fruit to be eaten should be the date. You should make the blessing "Borei Pri Ha'etz" on that fruit, keeping in mind the other fruits you will be eating on this night. Eat a little of it, followed by the special "Yehi Ratzon" prayer, and then finish the date. There are no other blessings made on the symbolic foods. One does say the special "Yehi Ratzon" prayer before eating each of the symbolic foods.
12. It is optimal to eat symbolic foods, that normally would require the blessing of "Borei Pri Ha'adamah, during the course of your meal, to avoid the doubtful necessity of making that blessing during the meal.
13. If one is not able to eat any of the symbolic foods, one may look at them and say the special "Yehi Ratzon" prayer.
14. Some have a custom to avoid eating sour or bitter foods and nuts.
15. One should not say the blessing of Borei Pri Ha'etz on fruits that one eats for dessert if one had dessert in mind when one made the blessing on the symbolic fruits at the beginning of the meal.
16. Remember to make the proper insertions during the Birchah Hamazon.
17. It is a custom to learn one Chapter of Mishnayos from Tractate Rosh Hashanah after each of the Yom Tov meals.

First Day - Shabbos, September 12, 2026

1. Men should come on time to Shul and say the Amidah with a Minyan.
2. The Shema (GRA/Baal HaTanya time) should be recited before **10:03 AM**.
3. Although there is no obligation to stand when the Aron Hakodesh is opened during the prayers, there is a Mitzvah to stand if one has the strength to do so.
4. There is no shofar blowing this year on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, because it is Shabbos.
5. Avinu Malkeinu is not recited on the first day because it is Shabbos; it is recited on Sunday.
6. During the Musaf Amidah, one should bow when saying "Modim" in the "Aleinu" prayer.
7. If one chooses to kneel on the floor during Aleinu of the repetition of the Musaf Amidah, one should put some material between their face and the floor.

First-Day Kiddush and Refreshments

1. Before Musaf and the Rabbi's drash, Westmount will serve light refreshments in the shul. After hearing Kiddush, one should eat at least a *kezayis* of mezonos so that Kiddush is *b'makom seudah*. A *kezayis* is approximately **1 1/3 fluid ounces (40 mL) by volume** - generally one average rugelach or one small potato boureka; if the pieces are unusually tiny, take two. These are refreshments, not a full meal.

2. *Al Hamichyah* will be led slowly. Everyone who ate a *kezayis* should recite it. If you are unable, listen carefully to every word; both the leader and listener must intend that the leader's recitation discharge the listener's obligation.

Afternoon - Shabbos, September 12, 2026

1. One should leave Shul feeling relaxed and confident that Hashem has accepted his prayers with mercy.
2. One is obligated to eat Challah and have a meal on both days of Rosh Hashanah.
3. One should not sleep in the afternoon. [One may be lenient on the second day.] A person who is very tired should sleep a little, rather than sit around idly and waste time.
4. It is not the custom to visit friends in the afternoon.
5. One must eat Shalosh Seudos, because it is Shabbos. If possible, one avoids eating the meal after the beginning of the tenth *Halachic* hour (4:24 PM), so that one has an appetite for the *Yom-Tov* meal of the second night.
6. Any free time in the afternoon should be spent learning Torah or doing Teshuvah or doing acts of kindness. It is not a time for idle chatter.

Second Evening - Motzaei Shabbos, September 12, 2026

1. One should pray Mincha before sunset, and the Evening service preferably should be said after the stars come out, or at least after sunset.
2. One may not make any Yom Tov preparations for the second night, light candles, or make Kiddush until after **8:23 PM**.
3. There are lenient opinions who permit asking a non-Jew to make preparations for the second night, that do not involve actual work (e.g., setting the table) that can be relied on, especially when necessary.
4. *Vatodi'einu* is inserted in the Saturday-night Maariv Amidah. Anyone who has not recited *Vatodi'einu* must say *Baruch Hamavdil bein kodesh lekodesh* before lighting candles, cooking, or making any other preparations for the second night.
5. Second-night candles must be lit from the pre-existing flame. One may transfer a flame on Yom Tov, but may not create a new fire or extinguish a flame.
6. Saturday-night Kiddush incorporates Havdalah in the order known as *Yaknehaz*: wine, Kiddush, flame, Havdalah, and *Shehecheyanu*. No spices are used. See Artscroll Machzor pp. 94-96.
Practical tip: Buy a *Yaknehaz* candle before Yom Tov - a single candle with two wicks avoids joining and separating two candles for Havdalah. Light it after 8:23 PM from a pre-existing flame and let it burn out on its own. Ask Sobeys or Olive Branch about local availability; call ahead.
7. One should wear a new garment for candle lighting / Kiddush at the second evening meal. Have this in mind when making the "*Shehecheyanu*" blessing.
8. It is questionable as to whether one can make a "*Shehecheyanu*" blessing on any fruits. The only fruit that one, who lives in Toronto, can definitely say the "*Shehecheyanu*" blessing is on eating pumpkins and Ontario Concord grapes for the first time this season.

9. If you do have such fruit, it should optimally be eaten immediately after Kiddush, before washing for the bread.
10. No one else besides the one who lights candles and / or makes Kiddush says the "Shehecheyanu" blessing.
11. Some people have the custom to eat the symbolic foods and recite the special prayers at this meal as well.

Second Day - Sunday, September 13, 2026

1. The Rosh Hashanah prayers and customs are generally similar to the first day, but Sunday is not Shabbos: the Shabbos additions and Shalosh Seudos do not apply. We blow the shofar and go to Tashlich on Sunday.
2. The Shema (GRA/Baal HaTanya time) should be recited before **10:03 AM**.

Second-Day Kiddush and Refreshments

1. Before the Rabbi's drash, Westmount will serve light refreshments in the shul. After hearing Kiddush, one should eat at least a *kezayis* of mezonos so that Kiddush is *b'makom seudah*. A *kezayis* is approximately **1 1/3 fluid ounces (40 mL) by volume** - generally one average rugelach or one small potato boureka; if the pieces are unusually tiny, take two. These are refreshments, not a full meal.
2. *Al Hamichyah* will be led slowly. Everyone who ate a *kezayis* should recite it. If you are unable, listen carefully to every word; both the leader and listener must intend that the leader's recitation discharge the listener's obligation.

Shofar

1. One should optimally listen to 100 blasts of the shofar on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. 30 are blown before Musaf. 30 are blown during the repetition. 40 are blown at the end of the service.
2. Men are obligated to hear the Shofar. Women are technically exempt from hearing the Shofar; however, it has become customary for women to hear at least 30 blasts of the Shofar. If possible, they should hear both the 30 blasts before Musaf and the 30 blasts during the repetition of the Amidah.
3. If you are not able to go to Shul, you should hear a minimum of 30 blasts blown privately for you. The listener should preferably make the blessings on the Shofar.
4. Children, who are old enough to silently listen to the Shofar, should be encouraged to do so. Little children, who will disturb the service, may not be brought to Shofar blowing.
5. It is forbidden to talk while the Shofar is being blown. ***One should not speak from the time that the blessings on the Shofar are made until after hearing the 100th and final note.*** Only under extenuating circumstances may one talk after hearing the first 30 blasts. Women may be more lenient in this matter after hearing 30 blasts.

Tashlich

1. After Minchah, it is customary to go to Tashlich.
2. If necessary, Tashlich may be recited before Mincha or anytime through Hoshana Rabbah.
3. The custom is to recite Tashlich preferably at a body of running water [i.e. a river or stream] where fish are found. If that is not possible, one can say it by any body of water - even a well.
4. When reciting the word "Vesashlich", it is customary to shake out the corners or pockets of your outer garments, which are empty.
5. ***It is forbidden to throw any crumbs of food into the water.*** [or to feed the ducks]
6. ***Tashlich was not designed to be a venue for socializing.*** [One is permitted to invite guests for meals and should make an effort to keep the discussions focused on the theme and spirit of Rosh Hashanah.]
7. We make Havdalah after **8:21 PM** by saying the blessing "Borei Pri Hagofen" and "Hamavdil" at the conclusion of Yom Tov.

Rosh Hashanah: Yehi Ratzon - Symbolic Foods Text and Instructions

All of the Yehi Ratzons start out the same way:

"Yehi Ratzon Mil'fa'necha, Ad-noi El-heinu Ve'i'l-hai Avosainu..."

(The omitted letter "o" avoids writing the Divine Name in full.)

"May it be your will, Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers..."

Listed below are the various foods and the endings, which are appropriate to them:

For dates: "...She'yitamu son'ainu." "...that our enemies be consumed."

For pomegranate: "...she'nirbeh ze'chu'yos k'rimon"

"...that our merits increase like (the seeds of) a pomegranate."

For the apple in the honey: "...she'tichadesh aleinu shana tova u'm'tuka."

"...that you renew us for a good and sweet year."

For fenugreek (or carrots - as the Yiddish word for carrots - Mehren - can also mean "to increase," this Yehi Ratzon is appropriate as well):

"...She'yir'bu ze'chuyo'sainu." "...that our merits increase."

For leek or cabbage: "...She'yikar'su son'ainu." "...that our enemies be decimated."

For beets: "...She'yistalku oy'vainu." "...that our adversaries be removed."

For gourd: "...She'yikora g'zar de'nainu v'yikaru l'fanecha zechu'yosainu."

"...that the decree of our sentence be torn up and may our merits be proclaimed before you."

For fish: "...She'nif'reh v'nir'beh ki'dagim." "...that we be fruitful and multiply like fish."

For the head of a fish or sheep: "...She'ni'hiyeh l'rosh v'lo l'zanav."

"...that we be as the head and not as the tail."

All of these Yehi Ratzons are said on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, after Kiddush has been made, after the blessing over the Challos (breads) has been made and the bread has been eaten. (There are those who have the custom to eat these foods and recite the Yehi Ratzon on the second night as well.) After the bread has been eaten, one should take the date, make the blessing that one would normally make on fruit ["Borei Pri Ha'etz'], and then take a bite of the date. Before one has eaten the whole date, one should recite the Yehi Ratzon. After the date, one can then have all, none, or some of the other foods.