



September 2007

Happy New Year!



Dear IX readers! We would like to send warm greetings on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah. May your year be sweet & full of blessings!

Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah, the holiday that marks the beginning of the Jewish year, is in the Hebrew month of Tishrei, which coincides with late September and early October. This year Rosh Hashanah will be celebrated on 13-14 September. As you may notice, unlike the other holidays, which have one holy day on which businesses are closed, Rosh Hashanah is a two-day holiday, and businesses are closed on both days. The holiday is two days according to tradition started in the Diaspora when the onset of the new moon – which traditionally was decreed by the High Court in Jerusalem – was not known.

According to Jewish tradition, Rosh Hashanah commemorates the culmination of the creation of the universe and acceptance of God's sovereignty over the world. These are also the days on which God judges people's deeds throughout the year and decides their future for the coming year - death for the sinners, life for the pious and a repentance period until Yom Kippur for people whose status is uncertain.

The period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called "The Ten Days of Repentance," during which people have the opportunity to atone for their sins.



Holiday customs

Prayer - Religious Jews attend synagogue services, and recite special prayers and liturgical songs written over the centuries. The versions of the prayers and liturgical songs vary slightly from one ethnic group to another.

Selichot - special penitential prayers - During the week (or month, depending on the ethnic group) prior to Rosh Hashanah there are special "Selichot" prayers, requesting forgiveness and expressing remorse and repentance.

The blowing of the shofar (ram's horn) - On Rosh Hashanah, 100 (or 101, depending on the ethnic tradition) shofar blasts are sounded in the synagogue, in single, triple and nine-blast groupings. The shofar blasts are intended to symbolize God's sovereignty over the world, to remind Jews of the giving of the commandments on Mt. Sinai, of Abraham and Isaac's devotion to God, to arouse people to repentance and to herald the Day of Judgment and the coming of the Messiah.



Apple and honey - At the evening meal on Rosh Hashanah it is customary to eat an apple dipped in honey and other sweet foods to symbolize a sweet new year.

Tashlich - On Rosh Hashanah afternoon it is customary to walk to a river or lakeshore or other open body of water, to shake out one's pockets and symbolically cast one's sins into the water. If you come to Israel during this period, it is interesting to see religious Jews performing this custom.

New year greetings - Until a few years ago Jews in Israel (and around the world) used to send "Shana Tova" greeting cards to their friends and relatives wishing them health, happiness and prosperity for the new year. Today this custom has lessened, as many Israelis prefer to use the telephone or e-mail. One way or the other, it is customary for Jews to wish everyone they meet during this New Year period a "Shana Tova" - a good new year.

Holiday meal - even secular Jews who do not go to synagogue services have a holiday meal on the Rosh Hashanah evening, with fine wine, apple dipped in honey and other sweet dishes. It is customary to eat pomegranate, as a symbol of a plentiful year, the head of a fish, symbolizing the desire to keep ahead, and other symbolic foods.

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ISRAEL IN AZERBAIJAN

Israeli experts teach Azerbaijani colleagues how to save lives

Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society and Israel's Magen David Adom carried out a joint training program on 29 August in Baku. Israeli experts Boris Kozokin and Amir Namyot led first aid training for their colleagues from the Red Crescent Society and young Azerbaijani volunteers.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the program, Novruz Aslanov, President of the Red Crescent Society, stressed the importance of such joint efforts. He believes that an experience of the Israeli experts will be very useful for them. "The 4-day training that will take place here is not just a sign of good cooperation between our societies. It is a clear evidence of warm relations between Azerbaijan and Israel", he said.

Arthur Lenk, Ambassador of Israel to Azerbaijan, called the event as "a first practical step in Red Crescent Society-Magen David Adom cooperation". He added "I hope that this training will grow into larger cooperation in the future. Everybody in the world regardless of their nationality and faith needs to develop an expertise in first aid. Today, we won't talk about politics. Today, we'll talk about how to save lives", he said.

This training was conducted on the basis of a memorandum signed between the Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society and Magen David Adom during the visit of Red Crescent Society officials to Israel on 20 April, 2007. After the training program, certificates signed by the Israeli experts, Ambassador Lenk and the President of the Red Crescent Society were presented to the young volunteers.

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Did You Know?



- A portable electrocardiograph machine developed by Israeli company SHL can transmit highly detailed data on heart activity to physicians by mobile phone (to read more click [here](#)).
- The Israeli film "Sweet Mud" won the jury prize for world cinema at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival (to read more click [here](#)).

Israeli film 'The Band's Visit' lights up the crowd at Telluride



It may seem an unlikely premise for a hit film, but patrons of the esteemed Telluride Film Festival in Colorado confirmed what filmgoers at the Cannes Film Festival and Sony Films executives realized earlier this year - the Israeli film *The Band's Visit* is a keeper.

Written and directed by first-timer Eran Kolirin, the whimsical tale follows a band of Egyptian musicians who end up lost in a small town in the Israeli desert, focusing on the human interaction between the two sets of people.

In May, the film, competing at Cannes for the Un Certain Regard prize, which awards young talent and encourages innovative and audacious works, won the 'Coup de Coeur du Jury'. *The Band's Visit* also won the prestigious Fipresci award given by the International Federation of Film Critics, and the Cinefil award given by cinematog-

raphy students. As a result, the film was acquired by Sony Pictures Classics in Cannes, and is slated to be shown in 35 US cities beginning later this year.

The film, starring Saleh Bakri, Ronit Elkabetz and Sason Gabay, tells the story of a small Egyptian police orchestra that comes to Israel in the early '90s. They come in order to play a concert in the opening ceremony of an Arab culture center which is located in the central city of Petah Tikva. But due to a snafu, the band - left at the border, and on its own - find their way to Beitha Tikva, a fictional, small town in the Negev.

Interacting with the locals, the night the orchestra spends in Beitha Tikva becomes a strange and funny night that changes all of the characters' lives, in a small but important way. By pic's end it's not just that the Israelis and Egyptians have learned something about each other, they've learned something about themselves. Mastering these lessons without becoming artificially rosy-eyed would defeat a lesser talent, but both in script and direction Kolirin proves he's more than up to the task.

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Official web page of Israel's Ministry of Tourism

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Israel's tennis great Shahar Pe'er advances in US Open



Shahar Pe'er became the first Israeli woman tennis player to reach the US Open quarterfinals when she won her fourth-round match against Agnieszka Radwanska, 6-4, 6-1, before a capacity crowd in New York.

Seeded 18th, the 20-year-old Pe'er has been enjoying the best season of her career. She reached the Australian Open quarterfinals, losing in three sets to eventual champion Serena Williams. She made it to the fourth round of the French and the third round of Wimbledon, and the fourth round of the 2006 Open. She won three tournaments at lower levels of the WTA Tour last year.

"I go on court and I feel like I'm playing in Israel or something. It's so much fun," she said after the quarterfinal match in New York, referring to the vocal support she was receiving from fans in the crowd.

Peer said she often sees Israeli flags in the stands at Flushing Meadows and hears shouts of encouragement in Hebrew.

Before her victory, she had beaten Meilen Tu, Bethanie Mattek and Nicole Pietrangeli in a strongly contested three-set match Saturday night. Pietrangeli was the 13th seed and a difficult test for Peer. Her next match is against Anna Chakvetadze, a 6-1, 7-5 winner over Tamira Paszek.

"She's a fighter who plays out every point," Pe'er's coach Jose Higueras said. "She can beat almost everybody on the planet when she's playing her best.

Peer said it would be a "huge" accomplishment if she could beat Chakvetadze and become the first Israeli woman to make the semi-finals of a grand slam event. But, she told the media: "I have to not think about those things and just play my game and go out there and give everything I have."

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