

Jewish New Year means repenting, self-examination

By Mary Jo Howe

Happy New Year and welcome to 5738 in the month of Tishrei.

That's right, it's time to be sending out those New Year cards again—if you're a member of the Jewish community.

Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, began at sunset Monday. It is the first part of the "10 days of awe" or the high holy days which will culminate on Sept. 22 with the day of atonement, Yom Kippur.

"This is the most important holiday for Jews, other than the Sabbath," said Howard Wax, president of the Hillel Foundation of UNL. Hillel is a Jewish student organization.

But observing the holiday at a largely non-Jewish school can be a problem, he said.

The holiday is a time of self-examination, repentance for past wrongs and rededication to a more righteous future.

5738th year

Rosh Hashana, calculated by the old Jewish lunar calendar, marks the legendary 5738th year since creation, but the occasion is celebrated as a "new year" of con-

science rather than a chronological measuring point, Wax said.

Services are held morning and evening in the two Lincoln synagogues and according to traditional Jewish law, students must attend the services rather than school, Wax said.

"We're (Jewish UNL students) supposed to be exempt from classes and exams," Wax said. "But that makes it hard to keep up with school work."

"According to the laws, we aren't even supposed to study, Wax said. Jewish students are not supposed to write, drive a car, or read, unless the reading is for enjoyment not for study.

This abstinence from classes and studying lasts only for the first two days of the holiday and the last day, Yom Kippur. But that means there will be a lot of cramming done Wednesday night, Wax said.

Many students will probably go to classes rather than observe the holiday, he added. In Jewish communities, the schools close.

Solemn celebration

The Jewish New Year is more solemn than the regular New Year's celebrations, Wax said. The blast of the shofar, Hebrew for ram's horn, the world's oldest wind

instrument, marks the start of the holiday.

All Jews are required to hear the horn at the synagogue, Wax said. It signifies that the new year has begun, and alerts the people to repent.

Services consist of individual prayers and a sermon. Following the Monday night service is a traditional, festive meal.

Hillel started a home-hospitality program this year where UNL students are invited to the homes of Jews in Lincoln for the meal following the service, Wax said.

The traditional meal begins with a yiddish wine, a blessing over the meal, a piece of bread to signify the meal has begun, and then a piece of apple dipped in honey to symbolize the sweetness of the year. But that's only the preliminaries, Wax said. A 14-course meal of chicken soup, fish, and vegetables usually follows.

Other than the services and sending New Year's cards, the holiday is mainly a personal observance, Wax said. Some people will make resolutions and follow all the traditional laws, and others may not observe them at all, he said.

The holiday will conclude with Yom Kippur with a 24-hour fast.

ASUN agenda

ASUN will meet at 6:30 tonight in the Nebraska Union.

I. Roll call and approval of minutes

II. Senate committee reports

III. Open forum
—Doug Zatechka, housing director

IV. Old business

—Swear in Charles McGrath, Student Court

V. New business

—Committee appointments

VI. Announcements

VII. Adjourn

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