

Rosh Hashanah Blessings

A Simplified Guide for Christians



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Rosh Hashanah Blessings

Home Ceremony for Celebrating the New Year

בַּתְּרֵשֶׁת הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַתֶּר לַחֹדֶשׁ יְהִי לָכֶם שַׁבָּתוֹן זְכוֹרֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא-קֹדֶשׁ

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. – Lev. 23:24

The home ceremony for Rosh Hashanah takes place at sundown, just before the start of Tishri 1. The main event of this holiday consists of a special festive meal, similar to a Friday evening Shabbat meal. The Rosh Hashanah celebration begins with the lighting of candles (*hadlakat nerot*), symbolizing the transition from profane to sacred time, and the recitation of the blessing thanking God for enabling us to reach this season (the *shehecheyanu*). Other customs such as eating apples dipped in honey are enjoyed.

Here’s what you’ll need for a Rosh Hashanah *simchah* (celebration):

1. **A festive kosher dinner**
2. **A least two candles**
3. **Wine (or grape juice) in a Kiddush cup**
4. **A Round Challah loaf (“Crown Challah”)**
5. **Fresh apples and honey**
6. **A plate with carrots, leeks, beets, dates, pomegranate, and fish**
7. **A shofar (“ram’s horn”)**
8. **A pomegranate (for the second night)**



Remembering the Akedah

Rosh Hashanah is also referred to as *Yom HaZikkaron*, the Day of Remembrance, since in Leviticus 23:24 it is referred to as “a memorial” (*zikkaron*) day. [Reading: Genesis 22]

As Yom HaZikkaron, Rosh Hashanah recalls the story of Isaac's near-sacrifice (said by Jewish tradition to have occurred on Tishri 1) when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his “only begotten” son (בֶּן יְחִיד) as an offering (this is known as the *Akedah*). Abraham obeyed God's command, built an altar, and prepared to sacrifice Isaac, but at the very last minute was stopped by the Angel of the LORD. The Angel pointed out a ram caught by its horns in a nearby bush and told Abraham to sacrifice it in place of Isaac. Here again is a clear picture of the sacrifice of the Son of God by the Father performed on behalf of those who trust in Him.



Since Rosh Hashanah is about *teshuvah* (תשובה) or returning to God through repentance, the Akedah is retold to remind us that submission to God is the way to demonstrate a repentant attitude before the LORD.

Candle-Lighting Blessing

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, about 18 minutes before sundown, the following blessing is recited while kindling the holiday candles:



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

ha'olam me-lekh elo-heinu Adonai at-tah ba-rukh
the universe king (of) our God Lord are you Blessed

אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק

le-hadlik v'tsivanu be-mits-votav kid-de-sha-nu a-sher
to kindle and with his sanctified us who
commanded us commandments

נֵר שֶׁל (שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל) יוֹם הַזִּכְרוֹן.

haz-zik-ka-ron yom v'shel shabbat shel ner
the day of remembrance (and of of sabbath) the candles of

*Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
who sanctifies us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle
the lights of (*Sabbath and of) Yom Zikkaron.*

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kideshanu
bemitzvotav, lehadlik ner shel yom ha-zikkaron.*

Note: If Rosh Hashanah occurs on a Shabbat, the reading ends:

“shel shabbat ve-Yom Ha-Zikkaron.”



The Shehecheyanu Blessing

The *Shehecheyanu* blessing is said to thank God for enabling us to reach this season:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם.

ha'·o·lam me·lekh e·lo·hei·nu Adonai at·tah ba·ruk
King of the universe our God LORD You Blessed

שֶׁהַחַיֵּינוּ וְקִיַּמָּנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְן הַזֶּה. [אָמֵן].

a·mein haz·zeh laz·ze·man ve·hi·gi·'a·nu ve·ki·ye·ma·nu she·he·che·ya·nu
Amen to this season and has and has who has kept
brought us sustained us us alive

*Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season. Amen.*

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
she-hecheyanu ve-ki-ye-manu ve-higianu lazman ha-zeh. (Amen)*

Note: It is customary to bless the children at this time, as well as to offer up spontaneous prayer and thanks to God.

Kiddush and HaMotzi



After this, the holiday is sanctified by reciting *Kiddush* (the blessing over wine) for Rosh Hashanah and, before eating the holiday meal, by reciting the *HaMotzi* (the blessing over bread).

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן הָאֱמִיתִית – יֵשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ.

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei pri ha-gafen
ha'amiteet – Yeshua Ha-Mashiach.*

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe,
Creator of the true fruit of the vine – Yeshua the Messiah.”



Since Rosh Hashanah celebrates the cyclical passage of time and the recurring progression of holidays of the New Year, it is customary to recite the *HaMotzi* blessing over round loaves of challah (symbolizing the revolving seasons or the Crown of God). Often these are sweetened with raisins for the holiday. To wish that the coming year will be an especially sweet one, the pieces of challah are drizzling with honey just before eating them.



בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמוֹצִיא אֶת לֶחֶם הַחַיִּים מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם.

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
ha-motzi et lechem ha-chayim min ha-shamayim.*

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe,
who brings forth the living bread from heaven.”

Thanking God for the Appointed Times

Just as the spring festivals (Passover, Firstfruits, and Shavuot) have been perfectly fulfilled in the first coming of Yeshua as Mashiach ben Yosef, so the fall festivals (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot) will be fulfilled in His second coming as Mashiach ben David. Since the first advent fulfilled all of the spring mo'edim to the smallest of details, we believe that His second advent portends similar fulfillment as revealed in the fall mo'edim. Let us thank God for His great plan of salvation revealed in the festivals:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָנוּ חַגִּים, חֻקֹּת, וּמוֹעֲדִים לְשִׂמְחָה,
לְכַבוֹד יֵשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ אֲדוֹנֵינוּ, אֹר הָעוֹלָם.

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
asher natan lanu chaggim, chukkot, u'mo'adim le-simchah
likhvod Yeshua ha-Mashiach Adoneinu, or ha-olam.*

“Blessed art You, LORD our God, King of the universe,
who has given to us holidays, customs, and seasons of happiness,
for the glory of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, the light of the world.”



The Simanim Service



Some people actually have *two* seders during the year: one in the spring (i.e., the Passover seder), and another in the fall for Rosh Hashanah. A Rosh Hashanah seder will include *simanim* (סימנים), “symbolic foods” served at the beginning of a Rosh Hashanah meal that are used as an occasion to symbolically bless the New Year.

After lighting the yom tov candles and performing kiddush, it is customary to recite a short blessing and prayer about the symbolism of different foods before eating them for the first time in the New Year. The order is not important, though the following blessings and rituals are often included in the service.

Apples Dipped in Honey

It is also customary to eat apples dipped in honey during this meal. Why? It is a tradition to eat a newly ripened fruit for the first time during that fruit’s harvest season, and since Rosh Hashanah falls around the beginning of apple season, the apple has become the “first fruit.” This provides the opportunity to recite the blessings both over the fruit of the tree (*bore pri ha'etz*) as well as another Shehecheyanu. Before eating the apple dipped in honey, we ask God “to renew this year for us with sweetness and happiness.”



Blessing over the Fruit

We dip our apples in honey and recite the following blessing *before* eating:



בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ.

Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei pri ha-etz.

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe,
Creator of the fruit of the trees.”



We then recite together:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁתַּחַדֵּשׁ עִלֵּינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה בְּאֲדֻנֵּינוּ יֵשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that you renew for us a good and sweet year in our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.”

Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu velohei avoteinu, she-techadesh aleinu shanah tovah u'metukah ba'Adoneinu Yeshua Ha-mashiach.

Eating Carrots (rubya)

We eat carrots as a play on the word *rubya*, a word that resembles the Hebrew word for increase (i.e., may God increase our merits). We begin, however, by first blessing the fruit of the earth (*ha-adamah*):



בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כֹּלֵךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָרֶזָה.

Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei pri ha-adamah.

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe,
Creator of the fruit of the earth.”

We then eat some carrots. Before finishing we say:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שִׁירְבוּ זְכוּתֵינוּ

Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve'lohei avoteinu, she-yirbu zekhuyoteinu.

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers,
that our merits increase.”



Eating Leeks (karsi)

We eat leeks, called *karsi* in Aramaic, as a play on the Hebrew word *karat* - to cut down - i.e., “May our enemies be cut down.” Note that we do not repeat the *ha-adamah* blessing (see above) before eating since we've already recited this. After eating, however, we add:



יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שִׂיכָרְתוּ שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve'lohei avoteinu,
she-yikartu soneinu.*

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers,
that those who hate us be cut away” (yikartu – play on *karsi* – “leeks” in Aramaic).

Eating Beets (selek)

We eat beets as a play on word *selek*, which reminds us of the Hebrew word *lesalek* – to remove (i.e., our enemies). Note that once again we do not repeat the *ha-adamah* blessing before eating since we've already done so previously. After eating, however, we add:



יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שִׂיסְתַּלְקוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve'lohei avoteinu,
she-yistalku oyveinu.*

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that
our enemies be taken away” (*yistalku* – from *selek*, “beets” in Aramaic)



Eating Fish (dag)

The fish symbolizes that we teem and multiply. First we recite the appropriate blessing for eating fish (the *she-hakol* blessing):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרֹךְ.

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
she-hakol niyah bidvaro.*

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe,
Who by His Word brings about all things.”

Before finishing eating the fish we say:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁנִּפְרָה וְנִרְבָּה כְּדָגִים

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve'lohei avoteinu,
she-nifreh v'nirbeh ke'dagim.*

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers,
that we be fruitful and multiply like fish.”



We then look at the head of the fish and say:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁנִּהְיָה לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve'lohei avoteinu,
she-niyeh lerosh ve'lo le'zanav.*

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers,
that we be the head and not the tail” (Deut 28:13)



Eating Dates (tamar)

Dates are another sweet food often associated with Rosh Hashanah. We have fun making the connection between the word for date (tamar) that reminds us of the Hebrew word for “an end” (i.e., may evil end in our lives). After eating the dates, we recite:



יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שִׂיתָמוּ שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve'lohei avoteinu,
she-yitamu shoneinu.*

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that those who hate us be ended” (yitamu – from *tamar*, dates in Aramaic)

Eating Pomegranate (rimon)

Eating a pomegranate reminds us of the sweetness of the Torah. May the new year be good and sweet for us all, and may our righteous deeds increase, like the many seeds of the pomegranate (1 John 2:29). Again, since we've already recited *ha-etz* blessing, we do not need to repeat it. After eating the pomegranate, however, we add:



יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁנֶּרְבָּה זְכוּיֹת כְּרִמּוֹן

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve'lohei avoteinu,
she-narbeh ze'khuyot ke'rimon.*

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that our merits be numerous as the seeds of a pomegranate.”

We now go on to enjoy our festive Rosh Hashanah meal...



Grace After the Meal

After the meal, it is customary to recite the *birkat hamazon*, the “grace after meals,” including special additions marking the festival of Rosh Hashanah. A shortened version of the blessing is provided here:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הֵיזָן אֶת הָעוֹלָם כְּלוֹ בְּטוֹבוֹ, בְּחֵן בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה הֵיזָן אֶת הַכֹּל. אָמֵן.

*Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
hazzan et ha-olam kullo b'tuvo, b'chen, b'chesed, uv'rachamim.
Barukh attah Adonai, hazzan et ha-kol. Amen.*

“Blessed are you, LORD our God, master of the universe,
Who nourishes the whole world in goodness, with grace, kindness, and compassion.
Blessed are You, LORD, who nourishes all. Amen.”

Hodu La-Adonai ki Tov

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ

hodu la'Adonai ki tov! ki le'olam chasdo!

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!”

L' Shanah Tovah
Have a sweet year!





Listening to the Shofar

If you have a *shofar* (ram's horn), you may want to fulfill the *mitzvah* of listening to its sound by blowing it at this time. The one who blows the shofar recites the blessing:

							
בְּרוּךְ	אַתָּה	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	מֶלֶךְ	הָעוֹלָם,	אֲשֶׁר	קִדְּשָׁנוּ
kid-de	sha-nu	a-sher	ha-'o-lam	me-lekh	E-lo-hey-nu	Adonai	at-tah ba-ruk
sanctified	us	who	the universe	king (of)	our God	Lord	are you Blessed
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,	וְצִוָּנוּ	לְשִׁמּוֹעַ	קוֹל	שׁוֹפָר			
sho-far	kol	lish-mo-a	ve'tzi-va-nu	be-mitz-vo-tav			
the voice of the	shofar	to hear	and	with his			
		commanded us	commandments				

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us with His commandments and commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar.

Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, asher kideshanu be'mitzvotav ve'tzivanu lishmo'a kol shofar.

The Second Day of Rosh Hashanah

Since Rosh Hashanah is a two-day festival, all of these ceremonies are repeated on the second evening as well, except that there is a tradition to use a different newly ripened fruit of the season, such as a pomegranate. This fruit is a popular since it is mentioned as native to the land of Israel and because there is a legend that there are 613 seeds in each fruit (corresponding to the number of commandments in the Torah). Most do not dip the pomegranate in honey, however, since its seeds are already sweet enough by themselves.



Eating a pomegranate reminds us of the sweetness of the Torah.

