



## ROSH HASHANAH SEDER

The year 2020 has been a strange and difficult one for all of us. As we begin the Jewish year of 5781, we are faced with situations that most could never have dreamed of. While we pray that the year ahead will be one of blessing and happiness, we face the reality that our celebration of Rosh Hashanah will be different from any we have experienced.

As we have looked for ways to enhance our Rosh Hashanah celebration, we have found an in-home Jewish tradition that will be new to many of us, although it has long been a part of Sephardic tradition: the Rosh Hashanah Seder.

Like the Passover Seder, the Rosh Hashanah Seder features symbolic foods (*Simanim*), each with its own special blessing. (Unlike the Passover Seder, it can be as brief as you would like). *Simanim* is the Hebrew word for “symbols” or “signs”. Each symbolic food has a special blessing. For some, such as pomegranates or apples & honey, the blessing is based on a characteristic of the food. For most, the blessing reflects a play on the Hebrew or Aramaic word for the food.

In some Sephardic families a great deal of time is devoted to cooking those foods which are part of the Rosh Hashanah Seder, for others they may simply lift up or point to those foods, which would need to be cooked to be eaten. We encourage you to make this as simple or complex as you like.

The eight food elements that are included in this seder are dates, beans, leeks (chives or scallions), B

beets or spinach leaves, gourd (or squash or pumpkin), pomegranate, apples and honey, and a head of lettuce or cabbage that substitutes for the more traditional head of a ram or fish.

We hope that you will find meaning in this new/old ritual, to expand and enhance your family’s celebration of the New Year. Share it with the immediate family around your dining room table or invite friends or family, via computer, to share it with you. Make it *your* family tradition.

***Shanah tova!***

This year, Rosh Hashanah begins falls on Shabbat, beginning on Friday evening. For those of you who wish to enhance your Erev Rosh Hashanah dinner with the seder, we have included the blessings for the Shabbat candles and the Shabbat kiddush.

If you choose to celebrate the seder on Saturday after services or as part of a second-day Rosh Ha-Shanah celebration, please omit the candle blessing and use the short (non-Shabbat) form of kiddush.

### **Blessing over candles (if Shabbat evening)**

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר  
שֶׁל שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל יוֹם הַזְּכָרוֹן

*Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel(Shabbat v'shel) Yom Tov.*

Blessed are You, our God, Ruler of the world, who sanctifies us with mitzvot and calls upon us to kindle the lights of (Shabbat and) the Festival day

**Blessing over wine** (for erev Shabbat recite the whole blessing, for any other time recite only the first line)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְרָצָה בָנוּ וְשַׁבָּת  
קִדְּשׁוּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחִילָנוּ זְכָרוֹן לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית. כִּי הוּא יוֹם תְּחִלָּה  
לְמִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ זְכוֹר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. כִּי בָנוּ בְּחַרְתָּ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל  
הָעַמִּים וְשַׁבָּת קִדְּשָׁתָּ בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן הִנְחִילָתָנוּ  
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי מְקַדֵּשׁ הַשַּׁבָּת וְהַזְּכָרוֹן.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, borei p'ri hagafen.*

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'ratzah  
vanu, v'Shabbat kodsho b'ahavah uv'ratzon hinchilanu, zikaron l'maaseih v'reishit. Ki  
hu yom t'chilah l'mikra-ei kodesh, zecher litziat Mitzrayim. Ki vanu vacharta, v'otanu*

*kidashta, mikol haamim. V'Shabbat kodsh'cha b'ahavah uv'ratzon hinchaltanu. Baruch atah, Adonai, m'kadeish haShabbat v'yom tov.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who finding favor with us, sanctified us with *mitzvot*. In love and favor, You made the holy Shabbat our heritage as a reminder of the work of Creation. As first among our sacred days, it recalls the Exodus from Egypt. You chose us and set us apart from the peoples. In love and favor You have given us Your holy Shabbat as an inheritance. Blessed are You, Adonai, who sanctifies Shabbat and the Festival.

### Blessing over Bread

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ :

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, haMotzi lechem min haaretz.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who brings forth bread from the earth.

**Reading:** Your Book of Life doesn't begin today, on Rosh HaShanah. It began when you were born. Some of the chapters were written by other people: your parents, siblings, and teachers. Parts of your book were crafted out of experiences you had because of other people's decisions: where you lived, what schools you went to, what your homes were like. But the message of Rosh HaShanah, the anniversary of the creation of the world, is that everything can be made new again, that much of your book is written every day—by the choices you make. The book is not written and sealed; you get to edit it, decide what parts you want to emphasize and remember, and maybe even which parts you want to leave behind. *Shanah tovah* means both a good year, and a good change. Today you can change the rest of your life. It is never too late.

Rabbi Laura Geller

### Simanim

**Dates** (*tamar*): *tamar* resembles the Hebrew for “end” (*yitamu*).

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׂיִתְמוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ וְשׂוֹנְאֵינוּ וְכָל  
מִבְּקָשֵׁי רְעֵיתָנוּ

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'eilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu she-yitamun son'einu.

May it be your will, Eternal God, that enmity will end.

**Beans** (*rubia*): *rubia* resembles the Hebrew for “increase” (*yirbu*)

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׂיִרְבוּ זְכוּיֹתֵינוּ וְתִלְבַּבְנוּ

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'eilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu she-yirbu zechuyoteinu.

May it be your will, Eternal God, that our merits may increase.

**Leeks, chives or scallions** (*karti*): *karti* resembles the Hebrew for “cut” (*yikartu*)

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׂיִכָּרְתוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ וְשׂוֹנְאֵינוּ וְכָל  
מִבְּקָשֵׁי רְעֵיתָנוּ.

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'eilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu she-kartu son'einu.

May it be your will, Eternal God, that hatred be cut out of the hearts of all.

**Beets or spinach leaves** (*selek*): *selek* resembles the Hebrew for “retreat” (*yistalku*).  
English speakers have added the play on “beet.”

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׂיִסְתַּלְקוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ וְשׂוֹנְאֵינוּ  
וְכָל מִבְּקָשֵׁי רְעֵיתָנוּ

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'eilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu she-yistalku oyveinu. \*

May it be your will, Eternal God, that hatred will depart and that we may beat a path to a better world.

**Gourd or pumpkin** (*k'ra*): *k'ra* resembles the words for both “tear apart” and “proclaim.”

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שְׂתִקְרַע רוּעַ גִּזְרֵ דֵינָנוּ, וְיִקְרָאוּ  
לְפָנֶיךָ זְכוּיֹתֵינוּ

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'eilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu she-yikra g'zar dineinu,  
v'yikr'u l'fanecha zechuyoteinu

May it be your will, Eternal God, that evil decrees are torn apart and our merits and blessings are proclaimed.

**Pomegranate:** A midrash claims that pomegranates have 613 seeds – one for each mitzvah.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁנְּהַיָּה מִלְּאִים מִצְוֹת כְּרִמּוֹן

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'eilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu sheyirbeh zechuyot kerimon.

May it be your will, Eternal God, that we may be as filled with mitzvot as a pomegranate is with seeds.

**Apple:** May it be your will, Eternal God, to renew for us a good and sweet year.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁתְּחַדֵּשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה  
וּמְתוּקָה כְּדָבָשׁ

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'eilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu she-tehadesh aleinu shanah tovah umetukah.

May it be your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that you renew us for a good and sweet year.

**Head of Lettuce or cabbage** (in place of a head of a ram or a fish)

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁנְּהַיָּה לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Adonai Eloheinu v'eilohei avoteinu v'imoteinu she-nih'yeh l'rosh v'lo l'zanav.

May it be your will, Eternal God, that we may be as the head, and not the tail

May it be your will, Eternal God, that those in positions of leadership be granted wisdom and compassion in the coming year.

Each participant may add a prayer as to what she/he/they hopes God will let us achieve in the coming year.

## **Reading: It Is Never Too Late**

The last word has not been spoken,  
the last word has not been written,  
the final verdict is not in.

It's never too late  
to change my mind,  
my direction,  
to say no to the past  
and yes to the future,  
to offer remorse,  
and to ask and give forgiveness

It's never too late  
to start over again,  
to feel again,  
to love again,  
to hope again....

Rabbi Harold M. Shulweis