

Rosh Hashanah at Home Guide

Congregation Beth El of Montgomery County
Bethesda, Maryland



Rosh Hashanah: The Head of the Year

The Rabbinic Sages teach that in our tradition, there are four new years—one falls upon the first day of the spring month of Nisan (the month in which we celebrate *Pesach*); another, usually around February, that is the new year of the trees, Tu B'Shvat; one falls in late summer signifying the annual renewal of tithing of cattle, on the first of Elul; and the fourth is Rosh Hashanah. Arriving in early autumn on the first day of the month of Tishrei, this is the most familiar of these new years. It is a holiday on which many find themselves in synagogue, spiritually awakening to the call of the shofar, taking stock of the past year, and readying themselves for the year ahead.

Rosh Hashanah at Home Guide

Since Jewish holidays begin at sunset, most home rituals take place in the evening. The central home ritual for Rosh Hashanah is a festive holiday meal, during which families often use their nicest china and place settings. The following is a step-by-step guide for home observance of Rosh Hashanah.

The Order of the Home Service/Ritual

1. Lighting Candles
2. Reciting Kiddush (sanctifying the day with a blessing over the wine)
3. Washing Hands
4. Chanting Hamotzi (a blessing over the bread)
5. Blessing for eating apples and honey
6. The Meal
7. After the Meal



Candlelighting for Rosh Hashanah

Nearly all Jewish holiday begin with lighting candles, and so this one will, too. After we light the candles we wave our hands in three big horizontal circles to symbolically bring the light closer to us, and then cover our eyes while we say the blessing. When the blessing is over take a moment of silent reflection with your eyes covered, and then open your eyes and enjoy the beauty of candlelight, bringing you into the new year.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שְׁלִיּוֹם טוֹב.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel yom tov.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with commandments, and commanded us to light festival candles.

After lighting the candles, you say **Shehecheyanu** to thank God for enabling us to reach this season.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, Shehecheyanu v'kimanu v'higi-anu laz'man hazeh.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, for keeping us alive, for sustaining us, and for helping us to reach this season.



Full Kiddush for Rosh Hashanah Evening

Wine or grape juice are also standards of nearly every Jewish holiday. Before we eat we take a moment to say a blessing over a glass of wine. In this special version, Rosh Hashanah is called Yom HaZikaron, the Day of Remembering, and Yom Truah, the Day of Calling Out. Tonight during our meal we will do some remembering, and some calling out. We will also focus on the gratitude we feel for the past year, and all of the blessings that it contained. L'chaim!

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם וְרוֹמַמְנוּ מִכָּל לָשׁוֹן,
וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו. וְתַתֵּן לָנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה אֶת (יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה וְאֶת) יוֹם
הַזִּכְרוֹן הַזֶּה. יוֹם (זִכְרוֹן) תְּרוּעָה (בְּאַהֲבָה), מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ זִכָּר לִיְצִיַּאת מִצְרַיִם.
כִּי בָנוּ בְּחֵרָתְךָ, וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים. וְדִבַּרְךָ אֱמֶת וְקִיָּם לָעַד.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל-הָאָרֶץ מִקְדָּשׁ (הַשַּׁבָּת וְ) יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיוֹם הַזִּכְרוֹן.



Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam, borei peri ha'gafen.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher bakhar banu m'kol am, v'romemanu m'kol lashon v'kidishanu b'mitzvotav. Vatiten lanu Adonai Eloheinu b'ahava et (Yom HaShabbat ha'zeh v'et) Yom HaZikaron ha'zeh. Yom (zichron) teruah (b'ahava) mikra kodesh, zekher le'yitziat mitzrayim. Ki vanu vakhartav v'otanu kidashtav m'kol ha'amim, u'devarkha emet v'kayam la'ad. Barukh atah Adonai melekh al kol ha'aretz, mekadesh (haShabbat) v'Yisrael v'Yom HaZikaron.

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

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has chosen us from among all peoples and sanctified us with God's commandments. And You gave us, Adonai our God, in love this Sabbath day and this Day of Remembrance. It is a Day of Remembrance a day for recalling with love the sounding of the Shofar, a sacred convocation, a commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt. For You chose us and sanctified us from among all peoples, and Your word is truth and endures forever. Blessed are You, Ruler over all the earth, who sanctifies the Sabbath and Israel and the Day of Remembrance.

Washing Hands

The ritual washing of hands has nothing to do with physical cleanliness. While the hands are obviously to be clean of dirt before food is eaten, even hands that are physically clean should be ritually washed before sitting down to eat. This ritual, originating in Temple times, has continued on the grounds that the ideal of holiness demands a special ritualistic washing of the hands – this act is seen as the introduction of holiness into the everyday life of a Jew. It is just another way, like lighting candles and saying *kiddush*, that we separate special days like Shabbat and Rosh Hashanah, from the rest of the week.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav vtzvivanu al n'tilat yadayim.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with commandments and has commanded us to wash our hands.



HaMotzi - Blessing for Challah

Before eating dinner we recite *HaMotzi*, the blessing over bread. Just like on Shabbat, we say this blessing over challah, however, because Rosh Hashanah celebrates the cyclical passage of time and the fullness of the year that is coming, it is customary to use a round, sweet loaf of challah. Many people eat raising challah on Rosh Hashanah and drizzle honey on top to ensure the coming year is extra sweet.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam,
Hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe,
Who brings forth bread from the earth.



Apples and Honey - Blessings for a Sweet Year

The quintessential Rosh Hashanah treat is apples and honey. Take a sweet, crisp, apple and dip it in some honey. Before eating we say a mini-blessing, hoping that the year to come will be tova umetukah, good and sweet! Pick up a slice of apple, dip it in honey, and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
שֶׁתְּחַדֵּשׁ עָלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה.

Y'hi ratzon mil'fanecha, Adonai Eloheinu veilohei avoteinu, Shet'chadeish aleinu shanah tovah um'tukah.

May it be Your will, our God and God of our ancestors to renew for us a good and sweet year.