

סימנא מילתא

The Symbolic Foods of Rosh Hashanah

It is traditional to use round *hallot* for Rosh Hashanah as a symbol of the cyclical nature of the calendar, and to include the consumption of a new fruit -- one we have not tasted in at least 30 days -- at the meal on the second evening of the holiday.

In addition, we dip apples in honey at each meal of Rosh Hashanah to express the hope that God will renew us for a good and sweet year. There are also a number of other symbolic foods customarily eaten on Rosh Hashanah. This practice, known as *Simana Milta* (which means "Omens of Things") is first found in the Babylonian Talmud (*Horayot* 12a). Some of these foods symbolize sweetness because of their taste, others signify abundance because of the way in which they grow. Still others are eaten because their names can be used as puns to symbolize our hopes for the coming year. The consumption of each food is followed by a corresponding wish associated with that item.

I have rewritten parts of the traditional *Simana Milta* liturgy to reflect a more contemporary sensibility and the hopes that we have for living in a world in which hatred is eradicated, evil vanquished, one in which we protect and safeguard nature, God's great gift to all humankind.

-Rabbi Jonathan Lubliner

At the Rosh Hashanah dinner table, *Kiddush* is recited. After washing one's hands ritually and reciting *Ha-motzi*, the blessing over bread, pass apples and honey around the table. Continue as indicated below:

After dipping a piece of apple in honey recite the following blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam borei pri ha-etz.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe,
who has created the fruit of the tree.

Before finishing the piece of apple dipped in honey recite the following wish:

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ

שֶׁתְּחַדֵּשׁ עֲלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה.

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu
sh't'hadesh aleinu shanah tovah u'metukah.*

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

No additional blessings are said before eating any of the symbolic foods listed below or on the other side. After tasting each, the corresponding wish is then recited.

For carrots:

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ שִׁיגְזֹר גְּזֵרָה עַל גְּזַעְנוֹת.

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu
sh'yigzor g'zeirah al gizanut.*

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, to decree an end to bigotry.

For leek or cabbage:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁתִּכְרַת כָּל-הַרְשָׁעָה כְּלָה כְּעָשָׁן תִּכְלֶה.

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu
sh'tikaret kol ha-rishah kulah k'ashan tikhleh.*

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that you wipe away all wickedness; may it vanish like smoke.

For beets:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁתִּסְתַּלֵּק שְׂנֵאת חִנָּם מִכָּל-יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל.

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu
sh'tistalek sinat hinam mikol yoshvei tevel.*

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors,
that you remove baseless hatred from all who dwell on earth.

For dates:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁיִּתְמוּ חַטָּאִים מִן-הָאָרֶץ, הַמַּשְׁחִיתִים הַיָּם, הַיַּבְּשָׁה, וְרִקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם.

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu sh'yitamu hata'im min
ha-aretz, ha-mash-hitim ha-yam, ha-yabashah, v'r'kiya ha-shamayim.*

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that you cause transgressions of earth to cease, the pollution of sea, land, and air.

For figs:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ
שֶׁתִּסִּיר תְּאַנְיָה מֵעֵלֵינוּ.

Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu sh'yasir ta'aniyah mei-aleinu.

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that you erase sorrow from our midst.

For pomegranate:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁנִּרְבֶּה זְכוּיֹת כְּרִמּוֹן.

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu,
sh'nirbeh zikhuyot k'rimon.*

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors,
that our merits increase as the seeds of a pomegranate.

For fish heads (including candy fish heads):

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֲמוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁנִּהְיֶה לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב.

*Yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei Avoteinu v'Imoteinu,
sh'ni-yeh l'rosh v'lo l'zanav.*

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our ancestors, that we be as the head and not as the tail.