

SEDER ACHILATH HASIMONIM:
THE ROSH HASHANAH
'SYMBOLIC FOODS OF LIFE' *SEDER*¹

Fourteen 'Symbolic Foods of Life' from Ashkenazic, Sephardic and Talmudic Traditions.²

brought down by Rabbi R. Karpov, Ph.D.

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1 *Seder*: This procedures-guide - the word '*seder*' means order - includes:

- Directions for procedures
- Explanations of symbols
- Interpreted accretions of poetico-religious literature

This text represents an extension of a body of accumulated tradition. Here, traditional Sephardic and Ashkenazic usages are re-interpreted in English. These sacred ways have been brought down from those of generations past as their gifts to help us attain a perspective on the universe.

2 Traditional Symbolic Foods of Life include:

- *Halah* in honey
- Apple in honey
- Pomegranates
- Dates; leeks; spinach/swiss chard
- *Karah*; chick-peas
- Black-eyed peas; carrots
- White figs and/or other white fruits
- Fishes
- Head of vegetable, sheep, or fish

These ceremonial acts' validity may be determined by their ultimate power to arouse, to encourage, and to continue to demonstrate their practitioner's sense of connection between the *n'shomoh*, the Spirit That Is Great Within Us; and the workings of *HaShem Yithbarakh* our Creator, the Undistributed Power Of The Universe.

At this time of year in particular, when the gates of forgiveness are particularly open, we have the power to change our consciousness and our world. By ceremonially partaking of these Symbolic Foods of Life, with these *kavvanoth*, these sacred intentions, we can begin to change our lives.

These ceremonial ways have come to us from *Hazal* and from our other teachers of the Jewish tradition. Most of these teachers have been called back into Spirit are now among us only through these shared voices. If you want to participate in the *mitzvos*, the sacred duties, of helping to keep these teachings alive, that would be wonderful. Please share them for good purposes with others who can use them with respect and in a good way.

Our efforts continue to exist through generous donations. You may photocopy as many copies of this text as you want, but please show respect by assuming the ethical responsibility of sending for each, at minimum, the current local price of photocopying, to:

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The Talmud warns us that if our prayer is fixed, our supplication bears no fruit. So we encourage you to use this book to strengthen your own *minhag hamakom*, your local custom.

We pray that this book and others will help to strengthen the ritual and the *kavanah*, the sacred intention, of your own religious practice. We pray for you that the prayers you will share with *HaShem Yithbarakh* our Creator will be good ones; and that your *kavvanoth* should ascend directly and be heard. The voice of your own *n'shomah*, the Spirit That Is Great Within You, is more on the cutting edge of prayer than any written language could be. This text is intended to be just a beginning.

We are convinced with the *rabonim* of our tradition, that '*Gam eilu v'eilu div'rei Elohim Hayim*' - both these and also those are the words of the Living Creator. Not only is there more than one way to be right, but there are probably more ways to be right than there are people to imagine them.

So *y'hi ratzon*, may it be Our Creator's Will, that this book and the others will help encourage you to share that spirit in true *Ahavas Yisroel* - love for one another.

Available as companion-volumes to each *seder-siddur* is a cookbook derived from both Sephardic and Ashkenazic sources. You are free to use your own *minhagim*, and also to order one of these as well.

* (1742 is the year R" Hayyim ben Jacob Abulafia established his Etz Chayim Synagogue in Tiberias.)

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MAY WE BE ENLIGHTENED
THROUGH SAYING THESE BLESSINGS³

AND MAY WE ASK FOR THESE THINGS FERVENTLY
AND WITH A WHOLE HEART⁴

Preliminary Gesture of Blessing:⁵

WE BLESS THE HOME

We go about the house with a dish of honey and a feather⁶. With the feather, we daub a bit of honey into each corner of the house.

We murmur:

May we have a sweet year.

We *bentsch n'tilath yadayim*, the blessing over washing the hands, in preparation for the bread.

Y'HI RATZONES BLESSINGS

3 These blessings: *Hazal*, -- some of our Jewish Sages, May Their Memory Be For A Blessing -- suggest that '*simanah miltah*' -- a symbol has significance.

Some of the teachers of Jewish tradition encourage us on *Rosh HaShanah* to partake of a variety of foods suggestive of prosperity and happiness. This usage is alluded to in the directive of the prophet Nechemiah to the assembly: 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet ...' (Nechemiah 8:10). Our *kavvanoth* -- sacred intentions -- are that these Symbolic Foods Of Life are to help us effect a good coming year.

At *Rosh HaShanah*, our Sages suggest that we eat sweet dishes and avoid sour dishes, including salads. This gesture is mentioned as early as the Responsa of the *G'onim*, and has continued through the centuries. Some scholars believe that the Jewish gesture of eating special foods at the beginning of the year to influence future events, as documented talmudically, derives from Roman usage. *Hazal* favoured the introduction of gestures for the *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe, serving as symbolic suggestions of a happy year to come. Abaye (4th century C.E.) enumerated several food items recommended for *Rosh HaShanah* usage because of their Aramaic names' connoting a continuity of good fortune and a cessation of misfortune (*Horyot* 12a).

All of these have parallels in universal shamanistic convention, that every activity calls forth its counterpart. This influence may be effected through the similarities between the symbols and the gestures enacted upon them, and the parts of the natural world that ceremonial participants wish to influence.

Our *kavvanoth* here are primarily to incur continued sweetness throughout the year. The tradition of the Ashkenazim, the European Jews, suggests *lekakh*, honey-cake. The traditions of the Sepharadim, the Spanish and Oriental Jews, suggest other sweets.

4 Traditional Blessing: From *Sh'nei Lukhos HaBris* - Two Tablets Of The Covenant, by the late-sixteenth-century kabbalist Rabbi Isaiah Hurwitz, *zikhrono liv'rakhah* -- may his memory be for a blessing. Rabbi Hurwitz wrote, 'May humanity be enlightened in *t'shuvah* - returning to the right path - in saying these invocations; and may these things be fervently asked for with a whole heart.'

5 Preliminary Blessing With Feather and Honey: This gesture blessing the sacred circle of our home was brought down by those of generations past from the European *shtetl* (ghetto).

Frum (traditionally observant) people in Brooklyn and elsewhere still practice this.

6 Feather: The feather of a *yonah* -- any bird in the dove or pigeon family -- is preferred.

ATZILUTH - 'NEARNESS',

The Light-Filled World Of Spirit

ḤALAH⁷ IN HONEY⁸

(Keter, Crown)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart,
for a sweet year

7 Halah: The word *halah* now generally signifies a loaf of festival bread. Originally, this word was applied to the share of the kneaded dough thrown into the fire. This practice was observed both in early times and also at the time of the *Baith HaMikdosh*, the Holy Temple. The account in *Mishnah, Ḥalah IV, 8* suggests that this was done to propitiate the evil spirits.

At the time of the *Baith HaMikdosh*, the first of the dough was given to the *kohen*, the priest. In post-exilic usage, the practice of throwing the piece of dough into the fire assumed the symbolic meaning of its being a substitute for the piece that would have been given to the *kohen*, were the *Baith HaMikdosh* yet standing (Heinrich Lewy, '*Kleine Beitræge zu Bibel und Volkskueche*' in *Mitteilungen zur Juedischen Volkskunde*, 18. Jahrgang, Heft 1-2).

8 Honey: This honey, together with the other sweets eaten during this festival season, suggests the longed-for sweetness of the coming year. The table is to contain on it a small jar or dish of honey on:

- Rosh HaShanah
- *Erev Yom Kippur* - the day before *Yom Kippur*
- Sukkoth

We dip into the honey the first piece of bread with which each of these meals commences. This is to suggest the future's desired sweetness.

Shapes for *halot* for *Rosh HaShanah* traditionally include:

- Round loaves and rings⁹
- Ladders¹⁰
- Birds or wings¹¹

9 Round Loaves and Rings: In the U.S., the most common shape is that of a round loaf swirling upwards to a peak. The alternate ring-shaped or wheel-shaped loaf, the ladder, and the bird are more commonly found in traditional European usage.

Interpretations of round loaves include:

- As simply a round loaf, a representation of our fervent desire:
 - for a full, round year
 - for the coming year to complete its cycle, smoothly and without grief
- As a crown, a representation of divine sovereignty - one of the dominant image-obsessions of Days of Awe liturgy.
- As a wheel, a reminder of our all being bound to the wheel of divine mandate.

10 Ladders: The ladder, together with the ring-shaped loaf and the bird, are more traditionally found in European usage. The shape of the ladder may either:

- Comprise the entire loaf
- Be formed across the top of the round loaf - particularly for the semi-feast preceding the Yom Kippur fast.

Interpretations of the ladder include:

- A representation of our fervent desire that our supplications ascend directly to Heaven and be heard.
- A suggestion of the ladder connecting earth and heaven in the dream of Yaakov, Jacob (B'reishis, Genesis, 28:10-22), a connection that we long to re-establish or strengthen during this period.
- A reminder of the chanciness of divine decree. This is expressed in the liturgical imagery giving the sense that on *Rosh HaShanah*, the Source of Life forms 'ladders' by raising this one and lowering that one. In particular, the *Un'thaneh Tokef* informs us that 'On *Rosh HaShanah* it is written, and on *Yom Kippur* it is sealed ... who shall be lowered and who shall be exalted'.

11 Birds or Wings: The bird, or wings, together with the ring-shaped loaf and the ladder, are more traditional European usage.

Interpretations of the bird or of wings include:

As a bird:

- A symbol of Divine Mercy, because of Divine Mercy's being extended even upon birds (Epstein, p. 24).
- A reminder of the spirits of our departed loved ones who tradition informs us are especially near on this *Yom HaZikaron*, Day of Remembrance. The pious sometimes 'renew themselves' (reincarnate) 'as birds, and sing and praise and pray on our behalf'.
- Here, or for the feast immediately preceding the *Yom Kippur* fast, symbolizing the sheltering presence of the Source of Life, as per Isaiah 31:5, where divine protection of Jerusalem is described as being 'as birds hovering'.

As wings, here or for the feast immediately preceding the *Yom Kippur* fast, a representation of either:

- Humanity's aspiration and opportunity 'to attain the level of the angels'
- Our resembling on *Yom Kippur* the *s'rafim* (angels of fire), of whom Isaiah 6:2 informs us that 'each one had six wings'.

Bird-symbolism occurs elsewhere in this festival's sacred gesture. The *kapparoth* ritual consists of first transferring the potential of Divine severe judgment away from oneself and onto a hen or rooster, and then ceremonially sacrificing the animal, the meat of which is donated to the poor. In universal shamanistic usage involving fowls, hens and roosters are most commonly used. Their presence is commonly associated with deterring evil spirits, either by their live presence or as ritual sacrifices.

We tear pieces¹² at least 'k'zayis' (the size of an olive)¹³ from the *halah*.

We dip each into honey, and distribute the pieces so that each of us present has at least one.

We *bentsch*, bless, *Hamotzi*, the blessing over bread;¹⁴ and then immediately *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*, as follows:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVAARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth.
Blessed are You Who bring out bread from the earth.¹⁵

Kavvanoth:¹⁶

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of those of generations past, from before Torah was given from Sinai;
and for all those who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*,
whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that the image of these round loaves enable our longing for a full, round year.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that the image of these crowns enable our continued vision of Your Divine Sovereignty.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that the image of these wheels help us realize our connection to our being bound to the wheel of Your Divine Mandate.

12 Tearing of bread: Bread, mentioned frequently in Hebrew Scriptures and containing a set of symbolisms far beyond its material essence, has been considered sacred to most Middle Eastern peoples. The custom of 'breaking bread', tearing it into pieces that are distributed to all those present, is connected to a sense that cutting bread would be like cutting life itself.

13 'K'zayith', the size of an olive: *Hazal* suggest this as a measure of a minimum amount of food over which one may say a *b'rochah*, a blessing.

14 *HaMotzi*: The traditional rabbinic invocation in Classical Hebrew, thus: 'Blessed are You, *HaShem* our Creator, King of the world, Who brings out bread from the earth.'

According to Abudraham, the text of this benediction is derived from Psalm 104:14, '*l'hotzi lekhem min ha-aretz*', 'to bring out bread from the earth'. Other benedictions, such as those recited over fruits of the earth, also derive from phrases found in Hebrew Scripture.

15 Brings out bread: The poetic image of the loaves' being brought out from the earth is that of their being, conceptually, already imminent in it. This phrasing implies that in the paradigm of the rabbinic author of this benediction, essence does precede existence, suggesting a sense of cosmic order that Existentialism does not provide us.

The image is also reminiscent of Michelangelo's creating his sculpture of David from a particularly recalcitrant piece of stone. He did so simply by chipping away from the outside of the David existant within the rock, everything that was not David.

16 *Kavvanoth*: Here and throughout, to be said either silently, in an undertone, or aloud, at the practitioners' discretion.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that the image of these ladders empower our fervent desire that our supplications may ascend directly before the Throne of Your Glory, and be heard,
our vision of connection between earth and heaven as in the dream of *Yaakov* our Father that we wish now to strengthen,
and our awareness of the chanciness of Your Divine Decree.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that the image of these birds remind us of Your Divine Mercy, of Your sheltering Presence that *Isaiah* Your Prophet described as being 'as birds hovering', of the strengthening spirits of our departed loved ones whose presence we feel especially near us on this *Yom HaZikaron*, Day of Remembrance,
and of the pious who our tradition tells us sometimes 'renew' themselves as 'birds', and sing and praise and pray on our behalf.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that the image of these wings strengthen our attaining the level of the spirit-beings,
and of our learning to resemble the *s'rafim*, the spirit-messengers of fire.

We *bentsch* *Y'hi Ratzon*:

You Who send Your *K'turah*, Your Crownship, into the Worlds -
Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that as we break this bread and eat it together with honey - so should the sweetness that is with us now continue with us throughout the coming year.
And *Y'hi Ratzon*, May it be Your Will, that our hungers be answered.

* * *

We have *bentsched*, invoked the blessing, '*HaMotzi*' at the beginning of the meal. Varying *minhagim*, customs:

Consider the saying of *HaMotzi* to supercede the need for these other individual *b'rochos*, blessings, preceding each fruit and vegetable. This is more commonly an Ashkenazic interpretation.

Encourage us to also say the individual blessings usually preceding each fruit, *borei p'ri ho-eitz*; and vegetable, *borei p'ri ho-odomoh*. This is more commonly a Sephardic interpretation.

These decisions are left up to the discretion of *minhag hamakom*, the local custom; and to the individual.

B'RIAH – 'CREATION', The World Of Thought

APPLE¹⁷ IN HONEY¹⁸

(*Hokhmah*, Wisdom; and *Binah*, Understanding)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart,
for a year that is sweet and good

We cut pieces at least '*k'zayith*' - the size of an olive - from the apple(s).

We dip each piece into honey, and distribute the pieces such that each of us present has at least one.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*, as follows:

Kavvanoth:

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of those of generations past, from before *Torah* was given from Sinai;
for the poets of *Shir HaShirim*, Song of Solomon;
for *Hazal* our Sages, for the kabbalists, and for the author of *Kol Bo*;
and for all those who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*,
whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that this apple should remind us of Your Holy *Shekhinnah*, Your Holy Spirit, to whom Kabbalistic literature refers as an Apple Orchard.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that as this apple is round, so should our year go full circle.

17 Apples In Sacred Gesture And Myth: Ancient Near Eastern texts include apples in the sacred usage of those of generations past before *Torah* was brought down on Sinai.

Shir HaShirim, Song of Solomon, mentions apples and the apple-tree repeatedly. Some scholars read this text as deriving from the alternative Jewish cults and rites associated with nature-worship. This involved the enactment of the *hieros gamos*, the Divine Marriage between the Eternal Feminine and the Eternal Masculine principles of agriculture and the universe. Apples are mentioned in the rites of love in 2:3, where the feminine persona informs us of her beloved, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." Two verses later in 2:5, the feminine persona supplicates, 'Stay me with dainties, comfort me with apples; for I am love-sick.' (This parallels the Sumerian goddess Uttu's including apples among the gifts that she demands of her suitor, the god Enki.) In *Shir HaShirim* 7:9, the masculine persona compares the smell of the feminine persona's face to apples. In 8:5, the feminine persona reminds her beloved, and informs us as audience, 'Under the apple-tree I awakened you'.

Post-exilic Jewish usage associates the apple further with the Eternal Feminine, through the kabbalistic literature, which is that of medieval Judaism's gnostic, esoteric cult. The apple's kabbalistic connotations involve its symbolizing the *Shekhinnah* (*Turei Zahav*, ch. 583). The *Shekhinnah* is the Divine Presence as apprehended through our senses - the Divine Hypostasis, the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Feminine. Kabbalistic literature refers to that *Shekhinnah* as an 'apple orchard'.

The appearance of apples in *Rosh HaShanah* ritual may have begun as their being used as the new fruit on which to say the *Shehecheyanu*. The *Shehecheyanu* is the invocation blessing *HaShem* 'Who has kept us alive and strengthened us and enabled us to reach this season'. Scholars derive this hypothesis from the fact that in many parts of Europe, apples ripened around the time of *Rosh HaShanah* (Behrman, *When A Jew Celebrates*, p. 223).

18 Apple In Honey: The gesture of dipping a slice of sweet apple into honey at the *Rosh HaShanah* dinner is recorded, among other places, in *Kol Bo*. *Kol Bo* suggests it 'that the new year may be prosperous and happy', and to symbolize our hope for a 'sweet year'.

We bentsch *Y'hi Ratzon*:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth.
You Who send Your *Hokhmah*, Your Wisdom, and Your *Binah*, Your Understanding, into the
Worlds -
Y'hi Ratzon, may it be Your Will,
that as we eat these apples together with honey,
so should the sweetness that is with us now continue with us throughout the coming year.¹⁹

We eat the apple in honey. We then say to one another, as though it were a toast:

May *HaShem Yithbarakh* Our Creator renew upon us a year that is good and sweet.

Many accompany all meals during the *Yamim Noraim*, the 'Days of Awe', with apples and honey. This is in the same desire '*b'leiv shaleim*', with a whole heart, for a year that is good and sweet.

19 *Y'hi Ratzon*: The traditional rabbinic invocation in Classical Hebrew, thus: 'May it be Your will Our Father Who Is In Heaven that You will renew upon us a year that is good and sweet.'

The phrase 'Our Father Who Is In Heaven', standard usage in most of the traditional invocations for this ritual meal, was standard usage during the time of *Hazal* when *Targum Onkelos* was written and codified. From this common usage, it found its way into early Christian usage, as in the 'L-rd's Prayer'.

YETZIRAH - 'FORMATIONS',

The World Of Feelings

RIMONIM, POMEGRANATES²⁰

(Hesed, Lovingkindness)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart,
that our merits shall increase

If it is:

- The first night of *Rosh HaShanah*, and we are to use the pomegranates as the ritual first new fruit of the season over which we *bentsch Shehekheyanu* on the second night of *Rosh HaShanah*²¹ ... then, we reserve the pomegranates and here proceed to the next Symbolic Foods Of Life - those of *G'vurah*.
- The second night of *Rosh HaShanah*, and we are to use the pomegranates as the ritual first new fruit of the season over which we *bentsch Shehekheyanu* ... then, we *bentsch Shehekheyanu*, as follows:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth. Blessed are You Who have caused us to live and have sustained us and have caused us to arrive to this time.²²

We break from the pomegranate clusters at least '*k'zayith*' - the size of an olive. We distribute them so that each present has at least one.

20 Pomegranates In Sacred Usage: Pomegranates are one of the Five Fruits by which Hebrew Scripture praises *Eretz Yisroel*, the Land of Israel. *D'vorim* - Deuteronomy - 8:8, lists as among her attractions the abundance of 'vines and fig-trees, and pomegranates'. Pomegranates, which contain hundreds of seeds, were widely regarded as a fertility-symbol. According to the evidence of ancient Egyptian carved reliefs, Egyptian religious gesture included pomegranates among the fruits offered as gifts to their deities.

In later Jewish usage, the divine fiat in *Sh'moth* - Exodus - 28:34 instructs that the hem of the garment of the *Kohen Godol*, the High Priest, is to have embroidered upon it 'a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate'. I Kings 7:18, 20 indicates that pomegranates were one of the primary artistic motifs of the temple of Solomon the King. The pomegranate-flower, used as the design for the crown of Solomon the King, has remained the archetypal form for all royal crowns, as bourn out elsewhere in Greek myth.

During the time of the *Beith HaMikdosh*, the Holy Temple, were dried and then used as a condiment, or to flavour foods. Pomegranate-juice was popular as a cooling drink, and also as an ingredient in spiced wine. This is mentioned in *Shir HaShirim*, Song of Songs, 8:2, where the feminine persona tells her beloved, 'I would cause you to drink of spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate.'

Throughout *Shir HaShirim*, pomegranates are mentioned repeatedly in the dialectic of love. Some scholars read this text as associated with the alternative Jewish cults and rites involving nature-worship and the myth of the *hieros gamos*, the Sacred Marriage between the Eternal Feminine and the Eternal Masculine principles of agriculture and the universe. In addressing his feminine counterpart, the masculine persona says, 'Your temples are as a pomegranate split open behind your veil' (4:3, 6:7). Later, he says, 'Your shoots are a park of pomegranates' (4:13). Elsewhere, he informs her, 'I went down into the garden of nuts ... to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower' (6:11). And she responds, 'Let us see whether the vine has budded, ... and the pomegranates be in flower; there I will give you my love' (7:13).

21 Ritual First New Fruit Of The Season: The two days of *Rosh HaShanah* are legally considered 'one long day'. Jewish practice was therefore faced with needing to overcome the difficulty of whether to say *Shehekheyanu* on the second night, as though it were legally the beginning of a second day. By putting a new fruit on the table, the first of the season, and reciting the *b'rochah*, the benediction, over it, we are able to again *bentsch Shehekheyanu* - the benediction over an occurrence of an event for the first time during a given year.

22 Traditional Invocation: The traditional Classical Hebrew invocation, thus:

We bentsch *Y'hi Ratzon*, as follows:

Kavvanoth:

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of those of generations past, from before Torah was given from Sinai;
for who suggested the *rimonim*, the pomegranates, on the hem of the garment of the *Kohen Godol*, the High Priest;
for who suggested the *rimonim*, the pomegranates, on the *Beith HaMikdosh*, the Holy Temple of Solomon the King;
for the poets of *Shir HaShirim*, Song of Solomon, who mentioned them;
and for all those who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*, whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

Y'hi Ratzon, may it be Your Will, that as we eat these pomegranates, by which Your Holy *Torah* praises *Eretz Yisroel*, the Land of Israel,
so should the sense of purity of descent that is with us now, continue with us throughout the coming year.

We bentsch *Y'hi Ratzon*:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth.
You Who send Your *Hesed*, Your Lovingkindness, into the Worlds -
Y'hi Ratzon, may it be Your Will -
to increase our merits²³ so that they may be as numerous as the seeds of the pomegranate.²⁴

T'MARIM, DATES²⁵

KARTI, LEEKS²⁶

SILKA, SPINACH/SWISS CHARD²⁷

23 Increase our Merits: Pomegranates contain hundreds of seeds. An alternate form of invocation is phrased, '...increase our merits as the pomegranate', possibly alluding to the fact that pomegranate-trees over 200 years old have been known to bear fruit.

24 Traditional Invocation: The traditional rabbinic invocation in Classical Hebrew, thus: 'May it be Your will Our Father Who Is In Heaven that our merits shall increase as the pomegranate.'

25 T'marim - Dates In Sacred Gesture And Myth: Sumerian clay tablets of around 2,000 B.C.E. chronicle dates as having been offered as gifts to the deities, and also as 'provisions for the house of the king'.

In later Jewish usage, dates are one of the five fruits by which Hebrew Scripture praises *Eretz Yisroel*, the Land of Israel. The Temple of Solomon the King, according to the account in I Kings 6:29,32, was decorated with carved figures of *k'rovim* - cherubim, palm-trees, and open flowers, 'within and without'. So were the two olive-wood doors of the *Baith HaMikdosh*, the Holy Temple, whose similar carvings were overlaid with gold.

The date-palm is associated with continuing sacred gesture in the *Sukkoth* festivities, where it symbolizes the harvest season, and in whose rites its branches are carried.

The appearance of dates in *Rosh HaShanah* 'Symbolic Foods Of Life' appears to be transmitted through Sephardic usage only.

26 Karti, Leeks: The appearance of *karti*, leeks, in *Rosh HaShanah* 'Symbolic Foods of Life' appears to be transmitted through Sephardic usage only.

27 Silka: The appearance of *silka* in *Rosh HaShanah* 'Symbolic Foods of Life' appears to be transmitted through Sephardic usage only.

(G'vurah, Strength)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart,
that our enemies and those who violate us
yitamu, shall cease;²⁸
yikartu, shall be cut off;
yistalku, shall be removed.

We distribute at least one portion of each, at least 'k'zayis' - the size of an olive - to each present.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*, as follows:

Kavvanoth:

Eloheinu Shebashamayim Uva'aretz, Our Creator Who is in the skies and in the earth. We thank You for Bruria our teacher, who guides us to envision not the death of the vicious, but only that they should cease to violate.

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of those of generations past, from before *Torah* was brought down from Sinai;
for those who suggested the palm-trees carved on the *Baith HaMikdosh*, the Temple of Solomon the King;
for the poets of *Shir HaShirim*, Song of Solomon, who mentioned them;
for those who used palm-trees in the festivals of *Hag Ho-Osif* and of *Sukkoth*;
for Abaye our teacher and for the others who suggested their use here in *Horyot* and elsewhere;
and for all those Ashkenazic and Sephardic who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*, whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will,
as we eat these *t'marim*, these dates by which your Holy *Torah* praises *Eretz Yisroel*, the Land of Israel,
so *yitamu hata'im*, may the wicked of the earth cease;
as we eat this *karti*, these leeks,
so *yikartu oy'vekha*, may Your enemies be cut off;
and as we eat this *silka*, this spinach or swiss chard,
so *yistalku oy'vekha*, may Your enemies be removed.

28 *T'marim, Dates/Yitamu, They Shall Cease*: Apparently recommended because of the punning similarity between the words *t'marim* (dates) and *tam* (to cease, to become perfect, to become simple). This parallels other symbolic food items that Abaye, 4th century C.E., recommends because of their Aramaic names' punning similarity to attributes of a continuity of good fortune and a cessation of misfortune (*Horyot*, 12a).

The traditional rabbinic invocation simply includes a fervent desire that 'our enemies and those who hate us shall cease'. The traditional rabbinic invocation in Classical Hebrew, thus, 'May it be Your will Our Father Who Is In Heaven that our enemies and those who hate us shall cease.'

Elsewhere, the tradition instructs us that the Source of Life desires, not the death of the errant one, but only that the errant one should change his or her behaviour and cease to do wrong.

Rabbi Hillel is quoted in *Pirke Avos* 1:12 as having admonished us to 'Be of the disciples of Aharon (Aaron), loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow-creatures ...'. This is an instruction to love, so far as possible, all creatures. That includes not only Jewish people but all other human beings, and also the animals whom we are instructed repeatedly as a duty of primary importance, to spare any unnecessary pain. In rabbinic legend, *Aharon* was the great peace-maker (Malachi 2,6). Elsewhere, the author of Proverbs 15:1 instructs us that 'A soft answer turns away wrath, but a grievous word stirs up anger.'

We would do well to have the courage to examine our own behaviour to determine what our role may have been in incurring causeless strife, and how we may modify our behaviour so as to encourage peace. We would also do well to have the courage to not passively allow ourselves or others to be violated, which is considered participation in the sin of violating that the violator is perpetrating.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth.
You Who send Your *G'vurah*, Your Strength, into the Worlds -
Y'hi Ratzon, may it be Your Will, that our violators and those who hate us shall cease to oppress
us,
and that we shall better resist being violated.

KARAH²⁹ - GOURD, SQUASH, OR PUMPKIN
(Stuffed with Chick-Pea³⁰ Hummus)
(*Tifereth*, Beauty)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart,
that the voices of severity *yikartu*, shall be cooled down
and that the voices of favour shall increase

We distribute the *karah* so that each of us present has a piece at least '*k'zayith*' - the size of an olive.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*, as follows:

Kavvanoth:

Eloheinu Shebashamayim Uva'aretz, Our Creator Who is in the Heavens and in the Earth. We
bless You for the holinesses with which You come to ravish us through our senses.
We ask You Creator to strengthen us that we may be worthy of these sacred visionings.

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of those of generations past, from before
Torah was given from Sinai;
for our teacher Pinchas the Rebbe of Karetz who suggested these chick-peas for the increase of
merit and favour;
and for all those Ashkenazic and Sephardic who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*,
whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

Y'hi Ratzon, may it be Your Will, that as we eat these chick-peas, so may the voices of merit and
favour be increased;
and as we eat this *karah*, this pumpkin, gourd, or squash,
so may the voices of stern judgment become *kar*, cooled down,
and so *yikaru l'fanekha z'khuyotheinu* - may our merits be called out before You.

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth.
You Who send Your *Tif'ereth*, Your Beauty, into the Worlds -
Y'hi Ratzon, may it be Your Will,
that the voices of stern judgment *yikaru*, be cooled down,
and that the voices of merit and favour be increased.

We eat the *karah* stuffed with hummus.

29 *Karah/Kar, Cooling*: Apparently recommended because of the punning similarity between the words *karah* (gourd, squash, or pumpkin) and *kar* (cold). The word *karah* apparently implies their being cold, *kar*, on the inside. They were eaten on the evenings of *Rosh HaShanah* to signify the 'cooling down' of divine severity. This parallels other symbolic food items that Abaye, 4th century C.E., recommended for this occasion because of their Aramaic names' punning similarity to words for attributes of a continuity of good fortune and a cessation of misfortune (*Horyot*, 12a).

30 *Chick-pea*: Apparently recommended by Pinchas, Rebbe of Karetz. According to him, their association with the increase of 'merit and favour' originated in the belief that it was moonlight that caused them to grow. Because of the moon's association with the flow of water, it was also associated with 'merit and favour'. Their appearance in *Rosh Hashanah* 'Symbolic Foods of Life' usage appears to derive from Eastern European usage only.

ASSIYAH -

'THE WORLD OF ACTION
IN MATERIAL EXISTENCE'

RUVIYAH - BLACK-EYED PEAS³¹
MEREN - CARROTS³²

(*Netzach*, Eternity)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart,
that our merits *yir'bu*, shall multiply³³

We distribute portions of the *ruviah*, the black-eyed peas, and of the *meren*, the carrots. Each of us present receives an amount of each at least *k'zayis*, the size of an olive.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*, as follows:

Kavvanoth:

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of those of generations past, from before *Torah* was given from Sinai,
for Abaye and the others who suggested the *ruviah*, the black-eyed peas, in *Horyot* and elsewhere;
for the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazim who suggested the *meren*, the carrots;
and for all those who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*,
whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

Y'hi Ratzon, May it be Your Will, that as we eat this *ruviah*, these black-eyed peas, and this *meren*, these carrots,
so should our merits *yir'bu*, increase; and *meren*, they should have increase.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth.
You Who send Your *Netzach*, Your Eternity, into the Worlds -
Y'hi Ratzon, may it be Your Will, that our merits *yir'bu*, shall multiply.

We eat the *ruviah* and the *meren*.

31 *Ruviah*: Apparently of Kurdish transmission. Rabbi Jonathan Omer-Man says that the Kurdish Jews are allergic to these, but they eat them annually as one of their *Rosh HaShanah Simanim*, anyway.

32 *Meren*: *Meren* means in Yiddish either 'carrots', or 'increase'; or in this case, both.

33 *Ruviah/Yir'bu, Shall Increase*: Apparently recommended because of the punning similarity between the words *ruviah* (black-eyed peas) and *yir'bu* (they shall become many). This parallels other symbolic food items that Abaye, 4th Century C.E., recommends for this occasion, because of their Aramaic names' punning similarity to attributes of a continuity of good fortune and a cessation of misfortune (*Horyot*, 12a).

The traditional rabbinic invocation in Classical Hebrew is as follows: 'May it be the will of Our Father Who Is In Heaven that our merits shall increase.'

WHITE³⁴ FIGS³⁵
(AND OTHER WHITE FRUIT, SUCH AS WHITE GRAPES)³⁶

(Hod, Splendour)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart,
that our purity shall increase

If we are using this fruit as the ritual First New Fruit Of The Season over which we *bentsch Shehekheyanu* on the second night, then, on the second night of *Rosh HaShanah*, we *bentsch Shehekheyanu*, as follows:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth.
Blessed are You Who have caused us to live and have sustained us and have caused us to arrive
to this time.

Otherwise, on the first night of *Rosh HaShanah*, we use a different white fruit here.

We distribute the fruit so that each of us has an amount at least 'k'zayith' - the size of an olive.

34 White: The colour white as suggestive of purity is traditional usage for the *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe, in garments as elsewhere.

35 Figs: Figs are one of the Five Fruits by which Hebrew Scripture praises *Eretz Yisroel*, the Land of Israel. In *D'vorim*, Deuteronomy, 8:8, the *Torah* lists among its attractions the abundance of fig-trees.

Figs are also mentioned in the rites of love in *Shir HaShirim*, Song of Solomon. Some scholars read this text as paralleling the alternative Jewish cults and rites involving nature-worship and the *hieros gamos*, the Sacred Marriage between the Eternal Feminine and the Eternal Masculine principles of agriculture and the universe. 2:13 informs us that 'The fig-tree puts forth her green figs ...'.

The inclusion of White Figs, together with another white fruit, for the *Rosh HaShanah* 'Symbolic Foods of Life', appears to derive from Franco-Jewish transmission.

36 Other White Fruit: Franco-Jewish transmission suggests white grapes. However, the Bostoner Rebbe, together with other *frum* rabbis, has ruled that until the migrant workers' unions are honoured, non-union grapes, together with non-union lettuce, are not kosher. This is because any food or article gotten by exploitation is not kosher. A number of rabbis from the liberal camp have suggested similarly. Therefore, at this drafting of this text, white grapes in general are being relegated to footnote status.

We hereby include a fervent prayer that we learn to distribute our natural resources in a way that is more in accordance with what *HaShem* intended. This cannot mean the unnecessary deaths of 40,000 innocent children of starvation, daily.

In another year, or if by some chance union grapes are available, we would recall that Sumerian texts mention grapes as one of the gifts that the Sumerian goddess Uttu demanded of her suitor, the god Enki.

In another year, or if by some chance union grapes are available, we would recall grapes as being mentioned in the rites of love of *Shir HaShirim*, Song of Songs. Some scholars read this text as deriving from the alternative Jewish cults and rites involving nature-worship and the *hieros gamos*, the Sacred Marriage between the Eternal Feminine and the Eternal Masculine principles of agriculture and of the universe. *Shir HaShirim* 2:13 informs us that '... the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance.' Later, the masculine persona compares the feminine persona's breasts to 'clusters of grapes' and 'clusters of the vine' (7:8,9). The entire text contains frequent metaphoric references to vineyards.

In another year, or if by some chance union grapes are available, we would break clusters of grapes at least *k'zayis*, the size of an olive. We would distribute them, together with the figs, so that each of us present would have at least one of each. We would make the choices around which night of *Rosh HaShanah* it was, and whether we were to use these as the ritual first new fruit of the season over which we say *Shehekheyanu*.

In the mean time, in a world in which there was food, but in which through no fault of their own all of those children are not alive to *bentsch Shehekheyanu* with us, we need to strengthen ourselves for more momentous choices. *Y'hi Ratzon* that in our days *Moshiach* should come, and which fruit to put on which night should be our greatest religious responsibility.

Hazal tell us in *Talmud Berachot* 6b that 'The merit of a fast day lies in the charity dispensed'. So be sure to donate to '*Mazon: A Jewish Response To Hunger*', or elsewhere, maybe at least the equivalent cost of this *seder*.

We bentsch Y'hi Ratzon, as follows:

Kavvanoth:

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of our teachers of generations past, from before *Torah* was given from Sinai, for Your Holy *Torah* that praises *Eretz Yisroel*, the Land of Israel, by her figs and grapes, for the poets of *Shir HaShirim*, Song of Solomon, that mentions grape-vines and fig-trees, for the Jews of France, who suggested the use of white fruits at this season, and for all those who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*, whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

We bentsch Y'hi Ratzon:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth. You Who send Your *Hod*, Your Splendour, into the Worlds - Y'hi Ratzon, may it be Your Will - that our hearts and our lives should continue to be purified.

FISHES³⁷

(Y'sod, Foundation)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart, that our personal and collective fertility, in whatever areas of our lives that we need, shall increase³⁸

37 Fishes In Sacred Gesture: Scholars suggest that fish's widely being considered a proper *Rosh HaShanah* dish is because of its fertility-symbolism - here as for *Shabbas*.

Within Jewish shamanic usage, fish have two associations:

1. Fertility
2. Protection against the '*Ayin Horo*, the 'Evil Eye'.

B'rachoth 20a explains the connection between fish and protection against the '*Ayin Horo*, the 'Evil Eye', as follows. Because fishes live beneath the surface of the water, which renders them invisible, they are invulnerable to the effects of the '*Ayin Horo*, the 'Evil Eye'.

In the medieval European shamanic usage, fertility-potions were composed of parts of animals whose fecundity was noteworthy - most commonly the fish and the hare (cf. A. Sulzabach, '*Der Fisch als Symbol*' in *Jeschurun* II, p. 506ff.; and others). Of these two creatures, only the fish can be kosher.

The image of fish also appears as protective against the '*Ayin Horo*, the 'Evil Eye', in Judeo-Arabic shamanic usage. Here, it assumes the form of larger amulets from which are suspended smaller fish-shaped mezuzah-like metallic cases that contain small written amulets.

The kabbalist Rabbi Isaiah Hurwitz mentions the symbolism of fish as an antidote to '*Ayin Horo*, the 'Evil Eye'. He does so in connection with the other *Rosh HaShanah* rite involving fish - the *Tashlich* ritual. This is to be performed at a fish-bearing stream (Hurwitz, *Sh'nei Lukhoth Ha-B'rith* - Two Tablets Of The Covenant). Hurwitz explains the necessity of the fish-bearing stream as representing humanity's being as vulnerable to ensnarement and entrapment as a fish. The hasidic Rebbe Shneur Zalman of Liadi explains the necessity of the fish-bearing stream as water's symbolizing kindness, and fish, an ever-open eye.

38 Fertility and Prolificacy: In the traditional Hebrew invocation, this is a supplication for biological fertility.

Here, the blessing is extended to mental prolificness, creative endeavours, social activism for positive change, or any of the ways that we strive to have positive impact on the world. The woman who founded the *Baith Ya'akov* schools, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe sh'lita, are two examples of individuals who helped parent future generations other than biologically.

We can propagate ourselves creatively like a wave through the ocean of humanity that is already here with us. Not only biological nurturing can be a way of loving others into being. So could all forms of nurturing. These include caring for any of the children of the Earth, or for the Earth herself; nurturing the human spirit against the forces of attrition; and being a creative artist or a teacher or a propagator of creativity.

We distribute the fishes so that each of us has a portion at least *'k'zayith* - the size of an olive.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*, as follows:

Kavvanoth:

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of our teachers of generations past, from before *Torah* was brought down from Sinai, for Your Holy *Torah* that praises fishes for their fertility through the blessing of our father Ya'akov, *'yid'gu l'rov'*, for *Hazal* who brought down to us *Berachos* and *Shabbat*, and for our teacher the kabbalist Rabbi *Isaiah Hurwitz*, who suggested the fish for *Rosh HaShanah*, and for all those who Ashkenazic and Sephardic who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*, whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth. You Who send Your *Y'sod*, Your Foundation of Being, into the Worlds - *Y'hi Ratzon*, may it be Your Will - that our lives should be as fertile and prolific as fishes.³⁹

*ROSH, HEAD*⁴⁰
(*Malchuth, Sovereignty*)

we ask *b'leiv shaleim*, with a whole heart,
that we shall be as the head
and not as the tail⁴¹

39 Fertile and Prolific As Fishes: The traditional rabbinic invocation in Classical Hebrew, thus: 'May it be Your will Our Father Who Is In Heaven that we shall be fruitful and shall become many as fishes.'

The usage here may derive from Jewish shamanic tradition. This includes among the verses from Hebrew Scripture used as protection against *'Ayin Horo*, Evil Eye, Genesis 48:1. It combines in amuletic usage this function, together with assistance in fertility: 'The *mol'och* (angel) who redeems me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Avraham and Yitzhak; and *yid'gu l'rov*, let them multiply as fishes, in the midst of the earth.'

40 Rosh: The gesture of eating the head of something in *Rosh HaShanah* 'Symbolic Foods of Life' is recorded as early as the writing of *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*, but may be assumed to be of earlier origin.

Here as elsewhere, the similarity is between the primary attribute of the symbolic food, and the desired effect itself. This parallels the use of sweet food items including honey, for a sweet year. The head as symbol of greatness and leadership is well-documented (S. Krauss, '*Aus Der Juedischen Volkskueche*' in *Mitteilungen zur Juedischen Volkskunde*, 18. Jahrgang, Heft 1-2). Part of the usage of the head may also be assumed to derive from the pun inherent in the festival's being called '*Rosh*', the 'head' of the year.

This usage is based in the universal shamanic underpinnings of all religious gesture. It informs us that every activity is assumed to call forth its counterpart. This allows us to thereby instruct the subconscious mind, and also to affect the workings of the universe.

41 Head/Tail Symbolism: The traditional rabbinic invocation in Classical Hebrew, thus: 'May it be Your will Our Father Who Is In Heaven that we shall be as the head and not as the tail.'

Alternative usage in some Eastern European communities reads, '... that our position be that of the head and not of the tail' (Sperling, Reasons For Jewish Customs and Traditions, p. 224).

This same head/tail imagery occurs in the much earlier admonition of Rabbi Matityah the Son of Heresh, that we are to 'be rather a tail to lions than a head to foxes' (*Pirkei Avoth*, 4:20). Scholars believe this admonition to have been a direct refutation of a proverb then current in Rome and Palestine, 'Better be a head of foxes, than a tail among lions'.

We distribute portions of *rosh*, at least 'k'zayith' - the size of an olive - so that each present has at least one.

Suitable kinds of *rosh* would include cauliflower, brussels sprouts, cabbage, and so on.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*, as follows:

Kavannot:

HaShem Yithbarakh, Creator, we thank You for the gifts of our teachers of generations past, from before Torah was brought down from Sinai, for the gifts from *Hazal* brought down through teachers of *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*, and for all Ashkenazic and Sephardic who suggested these gestures - *zikhronam liv'rakhah*, whose presence continues for us with an open, holy, and generous hand, full of blessings.

We *bentsch Y'hi Ratzon*:

ELOHEINU SHEBASHAMAYIM UVA'ARETZ, Our Creator Who is in the heavens and in the earth. You Who send Your *Malchuth*, Your Sovereignty, into the Worlds - *Y'hi Ratzon*, may it be Your Will, that we shall be as the head and not as the tail.⁴²

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42 Vegetable Head: This *minhag*, custom, involves the head-ness within the realm of vegetable life - situated comfortably to most Western sensibilities.

Ashkenazic tradition recommends *rosh dag*, the head of a fish. Distribution of morsels of the head of a fish is explained as the fish's symbolizing fertility, here as elsewhere.

Sephardic tradition recommends *rosh keves*, the head of a lamb or of a sheep. The head of a lamb or of a sheep is explained as being a reminder of the *Akedah*, the Binding of *Yitzhak*, Isaac. This narrative passage is traditionally read as part of the liturgy of the second day of *Rosh HaShanah*. It was a ram that Avraham ended up sacrificing in place of his only son.