

Although Rosh Hashanah is referred to as “the day of judgment,” the primary focus of the davening is the proclamation of Hashem’s Kingship and not advocating for ourselves. Our reliance on governments and their leaders for peace, protection and prosperity is constantly exposed as folly. This only makes it easier to recognize Hashem’s ultimate reign, and reinforce our belief and faith that He, and only He, is the source of everything. This enables us to sincerely plead to Him for a good year, as we pray for all our needs, big and small, material and spiritual, while remembering to include our family, friends, and Torah leaders in our prayers.

Erev Rosh Hashana

Selichos is significantly longer; *Tachanun* is said at the end of *Selichos* while it is omitted later during *Shacharis*. The Shofar is not sounded after *Shacharis*. *Hataras Nedarim* is conducted following davening. One must understand what he is saying in order for the nullification to be effective. If one is aware of a specific *kabbalah/neder* he made, he should not rely on the general text of *Hataras Nedarim*, rather he should mention it separately to the ‘beis din’ participants. Some have the custom to fast on Erev Rosh Hashanah until *chatzos*. There is an accepted minhag for men to immerse in the mikvah on Erev Rosh Hashanah, preferably not before an hour prior to *Chatzos*. One should get a haircut and wear nice clothing in honor of the impending Yom Tov and to display our confidence in Hashem’s mercy. However, it is improper to wear exceedingly ornate and expensive clothes. A two-day candle is commonly lit for Yom Tov use.

Shemittah - Pruzbal

Rosh Hashanah 5783 marks the end of the *Shemittah* year of 5782. Special halachos apply to *Shemittah* produce, fruits which grew in Eretz Yisrael during the *Shemittah* year, which affect how it may be sold and disposed of. There is also a mitzvah of *Shemittas Kesafim*, which requires one to forgo all loan debts owed to him. According to many Poskim, this mitzvah applies outside Eretz Yisrael as well. A Pruzbul document avoids this loan cancellation and keeps all debts active by transferring the loans to a Beis Din (according to *Ashkenazim* this Beis Din is similar to that of *Hataras Nedarim*, and need not be an official Beis Din). According to most Poskim, *Shemittas Kesafim* goes into effect at the end of the *Shemittah* year, thus the prevalent custom is to execute a Pruzbul on or shortly before Sunday, Erev Rosh Hashanah, which is the final day to do so. A husband’s Pruzbul suffices for the loans of his wife as well.

Rosh Hashanah

On the first night of Rosh Hashanah we greet a man/woman by saying, “*Leshana Tovah Tikaseiv/ee Veseichaseim/ee*”. After this point we no longer use this greeting. The Poskim discourage marital relations on

Rosh Hashanah eve, unless it is a *Leil Tevillah*. One who removes his Tallis while taking a break during davening need not make a new berachah when he puts his Tallis back on. Many are lenient regarding eating before hearing *Tekias Shofar*. However, one should preferably not eat more than a *k’beitza* of *pas habah b’kisnin* (e.g. cake, cookies etc). One must be exceedingly careful about his behavior on this day. A person should strive to utilize the entire day in a meaningful way, with many Poskim writing that one should preferably avoid sleeping on Rosh Hashanah day (some write only until *chatzos*). *Tashlich* is said ideally on the first day of Rosh Hashanah following *Mincha*. It may also be said anytime until *Hoshanah Rabbah*. One may not prepare on the first day of Yom Tov for the second night of Rosh Hashanah. As such, preparations for the meal, candle lighting, etc., may not begin until after nightfall. *Shehecheyanu* is recited on both nights of Rosh Hashanah at candle lighting and during *Kiddush*. Due to a halachic uncertainty regarding reciting *shehecheyanu* on the second night, there is a widespread minhag to partake in a new fruit by the meal and have it present when reciting the *shehecheyanu* by *Kiddush*. It is advisable for the new fruit to be present at candle lighting on the second night when the *shehecheyanu* is recited (the fruit is not eaten until the meal).

The Rosh Hashanah Meal: A new fruit is present on the second night during *Kiddush* when the *shehecheyanu* is recited (see above). There is a minhag to use round challo for all the Yom Tov Seudos (up to and including *Shemini Atzeres*). The challah is dipped in honey in addition to salt; some do not dip in salt at all. After making *Kiddush*, washing, and eating challah, various foods are eaten as a *siman tov* (a good omen) for the new year. Many customarily begin by reciting a *berachah* of *ha’eitz* and tasting a bit of an apple. The apple is then dipped into honey, the *yehi ratzon* is recited (...*Shanah Tova uMesukah*) and the apple is eaten. One should have in mind that the *berachah* of *ha’eitz* will apply to the dates and pomegranate from the *simanim* as well. Some maintain that it is better not to have the dates and pomegranate fruits present at the table when making the *bircas ha’eitz* on the apple (as halachically the *ha’eitz* blessing should be made on them if they are present). Alternatively, some partake in the dates first. Many include Hashem’s Name when saying the *yehi ratzons*; others omit His Name. The *yehi ratzon* may be recited on any food item present even if one isn’t actually eating the food. Some partake in the *simanim* on both nights of Rosh Hashanah; others do so only on the first night. One should

be cognizant of any Kashrus Organization advisories regarding bugs in certain fruits. Many Poskim rule that a man who forgets to add *Yaaleh V’Yavo* in *Bircas Hamazon* on Rosh Hashanah needs to repeat *Bircas Hamazon* only during the evening meals. A woman does not need to repeat.

Rosh Hashanah Davening

Through familiarizing oneself with the *davening* and understanding its meaning, one can elevate his or her prayers and entire *davening* experience.

MUSSAF: The themes of the *Mussaf* prayer are: *Malchuyos*, *Zichronos* and *Shofaros*. The *pesukim* of *Malchuyos* - Kingship - highlight Hashem’s existence and His complete and absolute control over all. The *pesukim* of *Zichronos* - Remembrance - highlight Hashem’s attribute of justice, as He remembers every deed performed by all of mankind. The *pesukim* of *Shofaros* highlight Hashem’s revelation at Har Sinai and in the upcoming days of *Mashiach*. During the *Kedushah* of *Mussaf*, when the Chazan chants “*Ayei*”, it is an auspicious time for special prayers. When bowing down for *Kor’im*, a separation is placed between one’s head and the floor. No separation is needed for one’s knees. Especially on this exalted day, one should concentrate during *Bircas Kohanim*.

SHOFAR: There is a *Mitzvas Asei Midoraysa* to hear the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. Although women are not obligated to hear the Shofar, the prevalent minhag is for women to fulfill this mitzvah by hearing at least 30 Shofar blasts. There is a mitzvah of *Chinuch* for a minor son who understands the significance of hearing the Shofar to do so. However, a child who will disturb others should not be brought to Shul. One should not talk from the first Shofar blast until the final blasts at the end of *Mussaf*. *Tehillim* may be recited, as prayers are not considered an interruption. One should preferably wait to recite *Asher Yatzar* until after the shofar blasts following *Shofaros* (just before *Modim*). However, if one gauges that it’s possible that he will need to use the restroom again before those later blasts, he should make the *berachah* immediately, so as not to lose the earlier *berachah* obligation.

10 Aseres Yemei Teshuvah

Beginning on Rosh Hashanah and throughout the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, the beracha "*HaKeil HaKadosh*" (in all *Shemoneh Esreis*) changes to "*HaMelech HaKadosh*", and the beracha "*Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat*" (in weekday *Shemoneh Esreis*) changes to "*HaMelech HaMishpat*." If one forgets "*Hamelech Hakadosh*," he may correct his error if he remembers immediately. Once a few seconds have passed, or if he began the next beracha ("*Atah Chonen*"), he must restart *Shemoneh Esrei*. (According to Sefardim this applies to "*HaMelech HaMishpat*" as well, and one must return to the beracha of *Hashivah Shofeteinu*). If one is unsure what he said, we assume he said *HaKeil Hakadosh/Melech Ohev*, as is his habit all year. However, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur itself, when the beracha of *Atah Kadosh* includes the lengthy addition of *U'vechein Tein*, if one knows he said *U'vechein* we may then assume that he ended the berachah correctly.

Zachreinu L'chaim, Mi Chamocha, Uch'sov Lechaim, and *B'sefer Chaim* are added into *Shemoneh Esrei* in their places. Additionally, many say *Oseh HaShalom* in place of *Hamevarech es amo Yisrael Bashalom*. If one forgot these additions but immediately remembered before saying Hashem's name at the end of the beracha, he may go back and fix his error. Otherwise, one does not need to repeat *Shemoneh Esrei*.

In Kaddish, *Le'eila (u')Le'eila Mikol* is said, and *Oseh Shalom* is read *Oseh HaShalom*.

Many Shuls, particularly Nusach Sefard, have the custom to recite *Shir Hamaalos* (Tehillim 130) during Shacharis, after *Yishtabach*. *Avinu Malkeinu* is said both during Shacharis and Minchah throughout the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

During the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, one should increase his involvement in charity, mitzvos and Torah learning. There is a minhag to refrain from eating *pas akum* (bread type items baked by a non-Jew) as an added stringency. Many are stringent regarding cookies, pretzels and perhaps even cheerios.

Many avoid eating *egozim* (nuts) as their gematria is the same as *chet* (sin). Many avoid eating sour or bitter foods. Some say that spicy foods aren't included in this stringency.

Tzom Gedaliah

The fast day of Tzom Gedaliah commemorates the tragic passing of Gedaliah ben Achikam, who's passing marked the destruction of the fledgling community of Jerusalem which remained following the Churban. During *Shemoneh Esrei* of Shacharis, the *Sheliach Tzibbur* adds *Aneinu* as a separate beracha. *Chazaras Hashatz* is followed by *Avinu Malkeinu*, *Tachanun*, and *Kerias Hatorah* (*Vayechal Moshe*).

Minchah includes *Kerias Hatorah* followed by the *Haftarah* (*Dirshu Hashem*). One who is fasting adds *Aneinu* in his quiet *Shemoneh Esrei* (as part of *Shema Koleinu*). *Nusach Ashkenaz* says *Sim Shalom* in place of *Shalom Rav*. In *Chazaras Hashatz*, the *Sheliach Tzibbur* adds *Aneinu* (as a separate berachah) and *Bircas Kohanim*; *Avinu Malkeinu* follows.

Kerias Hatorah

First Day of Rosh Hashanah: The *keriah* and *haftarah* contain similar narratives of barren women whose prayers were answered and were blessed with children. The *leining* (Bereishis 21:1-34) tells of Sarah Imeinu who was remembered (on Rosh Hashanah!) and conceived and bore her only son, Yitzchok. The *haftarah* (I Shmuel 1:1-2:10) relates the story of Chana, who prayed fervently and was blessed with a son, Shmuel (Hanavi). Some say this too occurred on Rosh Hashanah. These episodes teach us the power of sincere prayer.

The *Maftir* (Bamidbar 29:1-6) is the same for both days of Rosh Hashanah, and reviews the *korbanos Mussaf* to be sacrificed on Rosh Hashanah.

Second Day of Rosh Hashanah: *Zichronos*, remembrance, is one of the themes of the day. We lein the episode of *Akeidas Yitzchak* (Bereishis 22:1-24) to invoke remembrance of our ancestors merits into today's judgment. The *haftarah* (Yirmiyah 31:1-19) speaks of Hashem's promise to Yirmiyah to attend to Klal Yisrael in better times and redeem them. The *pasuk* of "*Haben yakir li*" is also one of the ten *pesukim* of *Zichronos* recited in the *Mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah. The emotional pleas of Rachel Imeinu are recounted as well, in

which she begs for mercy for her children, in merit of her mercy and selflessness towards her sister Leah.

For the Rosh Hashana Table

Leshanah tovah u'mesukah

What is the explanation of a "good and sweet" year?

Rabbi Zlotowitz zt"l explains that while we may be intellectually aware that all Hashem does for us is for the good, practically speaking, the sweetness of any given situation may not be obvious. Thus, we wish each other a year of goodness that we can easily understand and experience as sweet.

Wishing you and your family a *Shanah Tovah Umesukah!*

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