

SAMCHAINU GUIDE TO THE HALACHOS OF ROSH HASHANA

A SELECTION OF LAWS & CUSTOMS WITH A FOCUS ON SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES

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The Shelah writes that learning and properly observing the laws of a Chag infuse the Yom Tov with tremendous blessing.

Please note that the laws and customs contained in this article follow the Ashkenazi custom.

ROSH HASHANAH EVENING

A woman who is making kiddush should omit the blessing of “Shehechianu”, since she already said it when she lit candles.

Before the meal on Rosh Hashanah night, there is a custom is to bless each other. "Leshana tova tikasev v'sechasem" is said to a man/ boy and "Leshana tova tikasevi v'sechasemi" is said to a woman/ girl.

Although Rosh Hashanah is a serious day and a day of judgement, it is also a Yom Tov, and the mitzvah of rejoicing on Yom Tov still applies. Therefore we eat, drink and have enjoyable meals. By doing so, we show our confidence in Hashem's kindness that we will merit a good, sweet year. However, it is best not to wear very elaborate clothing because it is indeed a day of judgment.

There is a custom to dip the challah in honey after the blessing of Hamotzi. Opinions vary regarding whether the Challah should be dipped in salt as well, as during the rest of the year.

SIMANIM: “POSITIVE SIGNS”

There is a custom to eat an apple dipped in honey for a positive sign. Although we already made Hamotzei, the apple is not considered part of the meal, and requires its own blessing of Haeitz. The same applies to the other fruits as well. (One blessing of Haeitz is sufficient for all fruits.) Foods that would be served as part of a meal (i.e. carrots, fish) do not require a blessing.

The widely followed minhag is to begin the simanim with the apple dipped in honey. It is preferable that fruits from the “Seven species” (pomegranates and dates) not be out on the table while making the blessing on the apple. (This is due to the law that grants precedence to the “Seven species” over other fruits.) Among the seven species, a date has precedence over a pomegranate. Therefore, if you have no preference regarding which food to begin with, some authorities say to begin with a date.

When a siman requires a blessing, first say the blessing and then eat from the fruit. After eating some of the fruit, then the “Yehi Ratzon” prayer is said. (See machzor for the text.) This is in order to avoid an unnecessary break between the blessing and eating the food. When eating foods that do not require a blessing, (i.e. the blessing was already said on a previous food, or a food that is part of the meal) then the “Yehi Ratzon” should be said prior to eating the food.

There is a custom brought down by the Rema to avoid eating nuts on Rosh Hashana. One reason given is that נטון (nut) is the numerical value of שׂוּן (sin).

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CANDLELIGHTING ON THE SECOND NIGHT OF YOM TOV

When lighting candles on the second night of Yom Tov, a woman should try to either wear a new garment, or to have a new fruit out on the table. While making the blessing of "Shehechyanu" during candle lighting, she should have in mind the new garment or fruit. If this is not possible, she should say the blessing of "Shehechyanu" anyways.

ASERES YEMEI TESHUVA

Beginning with Rosh Hashana and lasting through Yom Kippur are ten days otherwise known as the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, or Ten Days of Repentance. During this time there are some important changes in our Shemone Esrei.

- Instead of referring to Hashem as "HaKel HaKadosh" (at the end of the third blessing in Shemone Esrei) we say "HaMelech HaKadosh." If you forget or are in doubt if this change was made, you must restart Shemone Esrei, since the important insertion of Hashem's Kingship was omitted. However, if you remember to say "HaMelech HaKadosh" within the time it takes to say three words from making the omission, you can then say "HaMelech HaKadosh" (as long as you did not yet start the next blessing).
- In the blessing of Hashiva Shofteinu, we end the blessing with "HaMelech HaMishpat" instead of "Melech Ohev Tzedakah uMishpat". If you accidentally forget "HaMelech HaMishpat", you do not need to go back and repeat Shemone Esrei (since you already mentioned Hashem's Kingship). However, if you remember immediately after you said the word "HaMishpat", you should then say "HaMelech HaMishpat."

In addition to the above two changes, there are several additions to Shemone Esrei during this period.

- Add "Zachreinu L'Chaim" in the first blessing
- Add "U'chsov L'Chaim" after Modim
- Add "Mi Kamocho" in the second blessing
- Add "B'sefer Chaim" in the blessing of Sim Shalom

Since these additions were added to the siddur later, (during the time of the Geonim,) you do not need to repeat Shemone Esrei if forgotten. However, if you did not yet say the name of Hashem, say the addition and continue davening.

Avinu Malkeinu is said during shacharis and mincha after shemone esrei, on every day of Aseres Yemei Teshuva (except Shabbos).

During the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, we are stringent to only eat pas Yisroel (bread made by a Jew), even if during the year you are not stringent about this. There are different opinions regarding cakes, pretzels, cookies and other baked goods. Since there is a vast array of Jewish-made products available on the market today, it is praiseworthy to be on careful with these products as well.