



Rosh Hashanah 5776 Table Blessing Ritual

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Jewish Voice
for Peace

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AS WE WELCOME THE NEW YEAR 5776 on the Jewish Calendar, we pause to take a step out of our busy years, that seem to blend together one after the other. We reflect on the grief of the year past, the victories, the mis-steps and the close calls. On Rosh HaShanah, tradition tells us our fate for the coming year is written in the Book of Life, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed—what will we commit to building in the coming year that might change the course of our own lives, and our role in the movement for justice in Palestine, for the year to come?

The Jewish calendar celebrates a total of four New Years- Rosh Hashanah marks the time the world was created, and serves as a new year for humans (whereas Tu B'Shvat is the new year for trees!)

We celebrate a moment in time—stepping aside from the rush of the world to honor the possibilities and realities of change. We mark how self reflection, self care, and renewal is a vital part of our lives as activists, strategists, and individuals.

ON THIS EREV ROSH HASHANAH, YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF AROUND A TABLE WITH FELLOW JVP MEMBERS, FELLOW MOVEMENT ORGANIZERS, YOUR CHOSEN FAMILY, YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN. THESE BLESSINGS AND MEDITATIONS ARE DESIGNED TO BE USED IN PART OR WHOLE FOR YOUR TABLE RITUAL.

Light Candles

THIS ROSH HASHANAH, as at all of our holidays, we begin by lighting candles and blessing the act of lighting. Why? Because it is quintessentially human to make change, and to make the tools for change. In our religious culture we envision a God who created the world, and humans who have been changing that world ever since. We kindle fire to make light in the dark, warmth in the cold, and to cook foods that are pleasing to our senses.

As Jews, we are obligated, no matter how difficult the times, to recognize and bless beauty and creativity. Joy is as real as struggle, a truth we assert as we begin this holiday, this Head of a New Year.

ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר קדישנו במצותיו
וצונו להדליק נר של יום טוב

*Ba'rukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam ah-sheer k'dishanu
b'mitz-vo-tav v'tziva-nu l'hadlik ner shel yom tov*

BLESSED ARE YOU, SOURCE OF LIGHT, OUR GOD, THE SOVEREIGN OF
ALL WORLDS, WHO HAS MADE US HOLY WITH YOUR MITZVOT AND
COMMANDED US TO KINDLE THE FESTIVAL LIGHT.

ברוכה את ה' השכינה רוח העולם אשר קדישנו במצותיה
וצונו להדליק נר של יום טוב

*Brucha at Yah HaShechinah Ruach ha-olam ah-sheer k'dishanu b'mitz-
vo-tayha v'tziva-nu l'hadlik ner shel yom tov*

BLESSED ARE YOU, YAH, SHECHINAH, THE SPIRIT OF ALL WORLDS, WHO
HAS MADE US HOLY WITH YOUR MITZVOT AND COMMANDED US TO
KINDLE THE FESTIVAL LIGHT.

Kiddush

AS WE BLESS WINE we are blessing the fertility of the earth, the products of vines and trees and plants that have fed us for thousands upon thousands upon thousands of years. In our inherited culture we learn that the land of Israel was richly fertile. Historically, we know the fertility endured as people farmed the land to raise crops and groves, and we know this abundance is being destroyed by military Occupation, land theft, abuse of water and salination of aquifers, and decades of intentional policies to make the land unable to support the Palestinian people.

As we bless this wine, this harvest of the land, we celebrate that we are *ha-adamah*, creatures of the earth and we insist that all creatures of the earth have inherent rights to the fertility and abundance of our world:

ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam borei pri hagafen

BLESSED ARE YOU, ETERNAL WELLSPRING, OUR GOD, SOVEREIGN OF ALL WORLDS, WHO CREATED THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

ברוכה את ה' השכינה רוח העולם בוראת פרי הגפן

Brucha at Yah HaShechinah Ruach ha-olam bora'at pri hafen

BLESSED ARE YOU, ETERNAL WELLSPRING, SHECHINAH, SPIRIT OF ALL WORLDS, WHO CREATED THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

Shehecheyanu

WHENEVER WE CELEBRATE A MOMENT IN TIME we say the shehecheyanu, a blessing of thanks to God for having sustained us and brought us to this time.

To begin this blessing we acknowledge the generations of activists who have come before, people whose lives and organizing and theories and songs and stories and passions created the social justice movements we work within today. If you would like to invite any of these teachers or ancestors into the New Year with you, please share their names:

As Jewish activists for peace and justice we also want to mark the many victories our movement has celebrated this year. As our sage Marge Piercy writes:

*This is the blessing for a political victory:
Although I shall not forget that things
work in increments and epicycles and sometime
leaps that half the time fall back down,
let's not relinquish dancing while the music
fits into our hips and bounces our heels.
We must never forget, pleasure is real as pain.*

And we may celebrate victories, of bodies of fatih and corporations choosing to divest from the Occupation:

- United Church of Christ
- Presbyterian Church USA
- Mennonite Central Committee

- *18 Quaker Meetings across 15 states from 2012-2015*
- *Soros Fund Management dropped SodaStream*
- *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation divests from G4S*
- *Baltimore rejects Veolia contract*
- *Durham cuts ties with G4S*
- *Dream Defenders endorse BDS*
- *60 US elected officials endorse #SkiptheSpeech by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu*
- *Columbia, Princeton, Erlham, Wesleyan, Loyola Chicago, Northwestern, Oglethorpe, Stanford, DePaul, and so many more vote in support of divestment*

And so with each other, with our community of activists extending around the globe and back through the generations, we bless our arrival at the beginning of a new year:

**ברוך אתה ה' אלוֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהֵחִינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִיגְעָנוּ
לְזִמָּן הַזֶּה.**

*Ba-ruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam she-he-che-ya-nu
vi-kee-yi-ma-nu vi-hi-gee-an-u liz-man ha-zeh.*

BLESSED ARE YOU, WATCHMAKER, OUR GOD, SOVEREIGN OF ALL
WORLDS, WHO HAS KEPT US ALIVE AND SUSTAINED US AND LET US REACH
THIS TIME.

**ברוכה את ה' השְׁכִינָה רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהֵחִינּוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִיגְעָנוּ
לְזִמָּן הַזֶּה.**

*Brucha at Yah HaShechinah Ruach ha-olam she-he-che-ya-nu vi-kee-yi-
ma-nu vi-hi-gee-an-u liz-man ha-zeh.*

BLESSED ARE YOU, WATCHMAKER, SHECHINAH, SPIRIT OF ALL WORLDS,
WHO HAS KEPT US ALIVE AND SUSTAINED US AND LET US REACH THIS
TIME.

Hand Washing Before Bread

WHILE MOST AMERICAN JEWS encounter handwashing only in the Passover seder, the tradition is to wash hands before making the blessings of the bread. Tonight, in honor of the start of 5776, we will say together the blessing for handwashing, and then pour water over each other's hands.

As the water flows each person is invited to name one thing they feel they should have finished this year and didn't and then proclaim, "this is the season to be able to start again." Each time the group as a will respond: Kayn Yihee Ratzon – So be it.

ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו
וציונו על נטילת ידים

*Ba-ruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam asher k'dishanu
b'mitzvotav v'tzi-va-nu al ne-tilat yadayim.*

BLESSED ARE YOU, WATCHMAKER, OUR GOD, SOVEREIGN OF ALL
WORLDS, WHO HAS MADE US HOLY WITH YOUR MITZVOT AND
COMMANDED US TO WASH HANDS.

ברוכה את ה' השכינה רוח העולם שהחינו וקימנו והיגענו
לזמן הזה.

*Brucha at Yah HaShechinah Ruach ha-olam asher k'dishanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzi-va-nu al ne-tilat yadayim.*

BLESSED ARE YOU, WATCHMAKER, SHECHINAH, SPIRIT OF ALL WORLDS,
WHO HAS MADE US HOLY WITH YOUR MITZVOT AND COMMANDED US TO
WASH HANDS.

Bless Bread



WHEN WE BLESS WINE, we are blessing the grapes themselves, the fruit of the vine. But when we bless bread we bless not the wheat but the bread – lechem – the product made by humans from the created world. This reveals one strain of Jewish thought, the idea that the God who created the world is in partnership with humans, and that peace and justice, a time of redemption, will come not by divine miracle but by generations of hard work repairing what is broken. As Rabbi Tarfon wrote in Perkei Avot, “You are not free to desist from the work [of tikkun olam].” And as they also said, in the grand Rabbinical tradition of making sweeping declarations of Divine intent fit into actual human lives, “but neither are you obligated to finish it.”

As people who intentionally open our hearts and minds to hurt and violence and tragedy in the world, the first part of that statement can easily overwhelm the second! Tonight, after we bless the challah, we'll help each other remember by repeating both phrases to all here.

The first person will say, “I am not free to desist from this work,” and the second person, to their right, will respond, “but neither are you personally obligated to finish it.” Then that second person will speak the first phrase, and the person on their right will answer with the second phrase.

ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם המוציא לחם מין הארץ

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam hamotzi lechem min
ha'aretz*

**BLESSED ARE YOU, GROWER, OUR GOD, SOVEREIGN OF ALL WORLDS,
WHO BRINGS FORTH BREAD FROM THE EARTH**

ברוכה את ה' השכינה רוח העולם המוציאת לחם מין הארץ

*Brucha at Yah HaShechinah Ruach ha-olam ha'motziat lechem min
ha'aretz*

**BLESSED ARE YOU, GROWER, SHECHINAH, SPIRIT OF ALL WORLDS, WHO
BRINGS FORTH BREAD FROM THE EARTH.**



Challah and Apples in Honey

DIPPING CHALLAH OR APPLES INTO HONEY is a trademark custom of new year celebrations. The sweet taste reminds us of the sweetness of the world, and the ritual can be a plea for God to be compassionate and sweet when we account for our year.

As we taste the sweet honey (or syrup, or agave) we focus the taste, and remember that no matter how hard the struggle we must feed ourselves and each other sweet and beautiful things.

“THE WORKER MUST HAVE BREAD, BUT SHE MUST HAVE ROSES, TOO.”

ROSE SCHNEIDERMAN, 1911.



MICAH BAZANT

New Fruit

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IT IS TRADITIONAL TO EAT A NEW KIND FOOD, or a eat a favorite food for the first time this year, at the Rosh Hashanah table. New year, new chances, new risks, new joys!

Entering into a new year is a chance to look at our work with fresh eyes, and take the inspiration of newness from this moment. Pass a plate with new and special fruits, and as you pick a piece of new or favorite fruit to eat, share a new strategy, idea, theory for change that you will try this year.

ברוך אתה ה' אלוקינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam b'orei pri ha'etz

BLESSED ARE YOU, BLOSSOMER, OUR GOD, SOVEREIGN OF ALL WORLDS,
WHO CREATES THE FRUIT OF THE TREE.

ברוכה את ה' השכינה רוח העולם בוראת פרי העץ

Brucha at Yah HaShechinah Ruach ha-olam b'orei pri ha'etz

BLESSED ARE YOU, BLOSSOMER, SHECHINAH, SPIRIT OF ALL WORLDS,
WHO CREATES THE FRUIT OF THE TREE.

