

Classic High Holiday Prayers

Rosh Hashanah



RECONSTRUCTING JUDAISM

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In order to support this year's socially distanced High Holiday season, Reconstructing Judaism is making this excerpt from the *Mahzor Leyamim Nora'im: Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* available without cost. We hope that providing this excerpt will help make your at-home High Holidays observances uniquely meaningful.

We are grateful for the efforts of Rabbi Amy Loewenthal for producing this excerpt in tandem with the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association under the leadership of Rabbi Elyse Wechterman.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR • SHANAH TOVAH • שנה טובה

HADLAKAT NEROT / CANDLELIGHTING FOR ROSH HASHANAH

Candles are traditionally lit in the home. Many communities also light candles together at the beginning of the Kabbalat Hashanah service.

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 (Shabbat and) festival light.

Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who gave us life, and kept us strong, and brought us to this time.

Many contemporary Jews are reciting *beraḥot* / blessings in ways that reflect their theological outlooks and ethical concerns. At any place where a blessing occurs in the liturgy, the following elements can be combined to create alternative formulas for *beraḥot*. This can be done by selecting one phrase from each group to form the introductory clause.

I	Baruḥ atah adonay	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are you Adonay
	Beruḥah at yah	בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ יְיָ	Blessed are you Yah
	Nevareḥ et	נְבַרְךָ אֵת	Let us bless
II	elohey ^{nu}	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	our God
	hasheḥinah	הַשְּׁכִינָה	Sheḥinah
	eyn haḥayim	עֵין הַחַיִּים	Source of Life
III	meleḥ ha'olam	מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	Sovereign of all worlds
	ḥey ha'olamim	חַי הָעוֹלָמִים	Life of all the worlds
	ru'ah ha'olam	רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם	Spirit of the world

The phrase “*Nevareḥ et eyn haḥayim*” was originally formulated by poet Marcia Falk (see SOURCES, p. 1248).

הַדְּלָקַת נְרוֹת לְרֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ
לְהַדְּלִיק נֵר שֶׁל (שַׁבָּת וְ) יוֹם טוֹב:

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam asher kideshanu
bemitzvotav vetzivanu lehadlik ner shel (shabbat ve) yom tov.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁחִיָּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ
לְזִמַּן הַזֶּה:

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam sheheḥeyanu
vekiyemanu vehigi'anu lazeman hazeh.

TIKU SHOFAR /
ANNOUNCING ROSH HASHANAH

Blast piercing notes upon the shofar for the New Moon,
for the full moon, for our festive holiday.

For it is Israel's law,
a statute of the God of Jacob.

COMMENTARY. Most of the biblical contexts make it clear that the shofar was sounded primarily to announce the beginning of the special day, especially the new moon: "Sound on the new moon the shofar, at the darkening of the moon, the day of our festival; for it is a statute for Israel, a ruling of the God of Jacob" (Psalms 81:4-5). Rosh Hashanah is the seventh, and thus a special, new moon. Two of the shofar's other associations in the Torah make it appropriate to Rosh Hashanah. The shofar heralds the nearing of God at the Sinai revelation (Exodus 19). On Rosh Hashanah we turn ourselves back toward the ways of God that the Torah teaches. In addition, the shofar is sounded on *Yom Hakippurim*, the tenth day of the seventh month, to announce the Jubilee Year, the fiftieth year, in which land, estates, and freedom that people had lost in the forty-nine (7×7) preceding years will be restored: "Declare independence in the land for all its inhabitants" (Leviticus 25:10). Rosh Hashanah promises a new lease on life, a shot at redemption, to all those who are moved by the sounding of the shofar to do *teshuvah*.

E.L.G.

DERASH. How can the law be both Israel's and God's? We Jews have discovered, shaped and created our tradition. When our tradition reveals the divinity at work within the world, it speaks both in our voice, and in God's.

R.H.



תקעו בחֹדֶשׁ שׁוֹפָר בַּכֶּסֶה לְיוֹם חַגֵּנוּ:
כִּי חֹק לְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא מִשְׁפָּט לְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:

Tiku vaḥodesh shofar bakeseh leyom ḥagenu
Ki ḥok le'yisra'el hu mishpat leylohey ya'akov.

תקעו...יעקב / Blast...Jacob (Psalms 81:4-5).

DERASH. *Keseh*, the Hebrew word for “full moon,” is similar to the Hebrew word for covering or hiding (*kisah*). The rabbis suggest that here, *keseh*, instead of meaning the full moon, reflects the fact that the moon is covered on Rosh Hashanah. Mystics have proposed that because Rosh Hashanah occurs at the beginning of the month, when the moon’s light is obscured, the darkness of judgment can block out the divine light of mercy. The shofar sound arouses the quality of mercy and subdues judgment, thereby permitting light to shine through. Similarly, self-judgment, shame, and acts of wrongdoing can cover or cloud over our own light, while *teshuvah* and forgiveness, evoked by the sound of the shofar, can reveal our light. C.B.

COMMENTARY. On Shabbat and festivals, biblical verses introducing the theme of the day serve as a bridge between the Shema with its blessings and the Amidah. *Tiku vaḥodesh shofar*/Blast piercing notes upon the shofar for the New Moon announces Rosh Hashanah through its heralding of the shofar blasts, the most distinctive feature of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy. This announcement of the first day of the year captures ancient origins, sounding a challenge to contemporary complacency. D.A.T.



KIDDUSH LEYL ROSH HASHANAH /
KIDDUSH FOR ROSH HASHANAH EVE

A full wine cup is lifted. On Shabbat, add the words in parenthesis.

With the permission of this company:

Blessed are you, THE BOUNDLESS ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are you, THE HOLY ONE our God, the sovereign of all the worlds, who has called us to your service and made us holy with your mitzvot, and given us, KIND ONE, our God, in love this day of (the Shabbat, and of) remembering, a day for (calling to mind) the sounding of the shofar (with love), a holy convocation, a remembrance of the going-out from Egypt. For you called to us and made us holy for your service, and your word is truth and stands forever.

Blessed are you, ETERNAL ONE, who raises up to holiness (Shabbat,) the people Israel and the Day of Memory. ↪



קדוש ליל ראש השנה

A full cup of wine is lifted. On Shabbat add the words in parenthesis.

סְבִרֵי חֲבֵרֵי:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קָרָאנוּ לְעִבּוּדְתוֹ
וְרוֹמַמְנוּ בְּקִדְשׁוֹ וְקִדְשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו: וְתַתֵּן-לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
בְּאַהֲבָה אֶת יוֹם (הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה וְאֶת יוֹם) הַזְכָּרוֹן הַזֶּה יוֹם (זְכוֹרוֹן)
תְּרוּעָה (בְּאַהֲבָה) מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ זָכָר לִיצִיאַת מִצְרָיִם: כִּי אֱלֵינוּ
קָרָאתָ וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְשָׁתָ לְעִבּוּדְתְךָ וּדְבַרְךָ אָמַת וְקִיָּם לְעַד: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ מִקְדֶּשׁ (הַשַּׁבָּת וְ) יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיוֹם
הַזְכָּרוֹן: ←

Savrey haveray.

Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam borey peri hagafen.
Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam asher kera'anu
la'avodato veromemanu bikdushato vekideshanu bemitzvotav.
Vatiten lanu adonay eloheynu be'ahavah et yom (hashabbat
hazeh ve'et yom) hazikaron hazeh yom (zihron) teruah
(be'ahavah) mikra kodesh zeher litzi'at mitzrayim. Ki eleynu
karata ve'otanu kidashta la'avodateha udevareha emet vekayam
la'ad. Baruh atah adonay meleh al kol ha'aretz mekadash
(hashabbat ve)yisra'el veyom hazikaron. ↪

On Saturday night while lifting one's hands toward the festival lights, add:

(Blessed are you, **THE RADIANCE**, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who creates the light of fire.

Blessed are you, **THE MANY-NAMED** our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who separates between holy and ordinary, light and dark, the seventh day and the six days of work. You separated between Shabbat holiness and festival holiness, you set apart the seventh day from the six days of work, and you sanctified Israel with your holiness. Blessed are you, **INEXPRESSIBLE**, who distinguishes among the kinds of holiness.)

Blessed are you, **ETERNAL ONE**, our God, the sovereign of all worlds, who gave us life, and kept us strong, and brought us to this time.

On Saturday night while lifting one's hands toward the festival lights, add:

(בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מְאוּרֵי הָאֵשׁ:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֵל בֵּין
אוֹר לְחֹשֶׁךְ בֵּין יוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי לְשֵׁשֶׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה: בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ שְׂבֹת
לְקֹדֶשׁת יוֹם טוֹב הַבְּדִלְתָּ וְאֵת יוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי מְשַׁשֶּׁת יָמֵי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה
קֹדֶשׁת: אֶת־עַמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל קֹדֶשׁת בְּקֹדֶשְׁתָּךְ: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
הַמְבַדֵּיל בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְקֹדֶשׁ):

(Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam borey me'orey ha'esh.

Baruḥ atah adonay eloheynu meleḥ ha'olam hamavdil beyn kodesh leḥol beyn or leḥosheḥ beyn yom hashevi'i lesheshet yemey hama'aseh. Beyn kedushat shabbat likdushat yom tov hivdalta ve'et yom hashevi'i misheshet yemey hama'aseh kidashta. Et amecha yisra'el kidashta bikdushateha. Baruh atah adonay hamavdil beyn kodesh lekodesh.)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחֲיֵינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ
לְזִמַּן הַזֶּה: