

# ABOUT SIMANIM

One of the customs most widely associated with Rosh Hashanah is the widespread practice of taking *simanim* – various foodstuffs – and through them asking God to bless us in ways that are connected with the name or taste of the food item. This practice is mentioned in the Talmud but is not, surprisingly, codified in Jewish law.

Why is it so closely associated with Rosh Hashanah? And, more troublingly, why is it not considered to be an act of superstition? (see *Ravya* 2:547)

From our prayers we understand that Rosh Hashanah is the day that commemorates the 'conception of the world'. It is a day in which the latent potential for the year ahead is being laid down. Just as the conception of a child lays out a genetic sequence whose every molecular detail has the power to make a dramatic difference to the child's entire life, so too on Rosh Hashanah each moment helps to deliver blessing and accomplishment throughout the year to come.

One aspect of the *simanim* foods is a lesson in the art of appreciation. Every act of ingestion, every ingredient and every flavour can be connected back to Hashem. If we can notice and appreciate each detail, then we have the ability to build another piece of 'DNA' for the year ahead.

The *Shelah Hakadosh* suggests that a second, related element, is that of prayer. The foods and their associated names trigger connected thoughts. On Rosh Hashanah we view ourselves as beings whose future has not yet been decided and, to this end, we ask for blessings for the year ahead recognising that – like the representations we quite loosely attach to the *simanim* – those blessings must be earned in order for the attachment to grow from tenuous to tangible.

Rosh Hashanah broadens our awareness to the fact that our life should not be taken for granted. Rather, it is being built and rebuilt through the prayers and acts that characterise the New Year. For two days we lead lives where every second counts. The lessons of living with such sensitivity and focus help to set us up for a truly blessed year ahead.

**May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a good year in which you enjoy the sweetness of the blessings of true and deeply fulfilled living.**

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## A USER-FRIENDLY GUIDE TO SIMANIM

TO ENHANCE YOUR ROSH HASHANAH MEAL

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OLAM MEMBER

This list follows no particular order  
It is an almost universal custom to begin with apple dipped in honey



### Apples and honey

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֶּךְ  
הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ:

Baruch atah Ado-nai Elo-heinu melech ha'olam borei pri haetz.

Blessed are you, Hashem, our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the tree.

Take a bite of the apple

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה'  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
שֶׁתַּחַדֵּשׁ עֲלֵינוּ שָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּמְתוּקָה:

Yehi ratzon milfanecha Ado-nai Elo-heinu v'elo-hei avoteinu, she't'chadesh aleinu shanah tovah u'metukah ka'devash.

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that You renew for us a year which is good and sweet like honey.

Before partaking of any of the following foods, we add the blessings below which can be said in Hebrew or English

### Pomegranate

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁנִּרְבֶּה זְכוּתֵנוּ כְּרַמּוֹן:

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that our merits increase as [the seeds of] a pomegranate.



### Leek (or Cabbage)

Aramaic: "Karti", a play on the Hebrew word "karat" (to cut).

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁיִּכְרְתוּ שׂוֹנְאֵינוּ:

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that our enemies and haters shall be cut down.



### Beetroot or Swiss Chard

Aramaic: "Silka" or "selek" in Hebrew, related to the Hebrew word "silek" (to depart).

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁיִּסְתַּלְקוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ:

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that our adversaries shall be removed.



### Gourd (e.g. Squash)

Aramaic: "Karaa", related to the Hebrew words "karaa" (to rip apart), and also "kara" (to announce).

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,  
שֶׁתִּקְרַע רוּעַ גְּזֵר דִּינֵנוּ, וְיִקְרָאוּ לְפָנֶיךָ זְכוּתֵנוּ:

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that the evil of our verdicts be torn apart, and that our merits be announced before you.



### Fenugreek (or Carrots)

From the Aramaic: "Rubia", meaning increase or abundance.

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
וְאַלְקֵינוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁיִּרְבּוּ זְכוּתֵנוּ:

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that our merits shall increase.



### Dates

Hebrew: "Tamar", related to the word "tam" (to end).

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁיִּתְמוּ שׂוֹנְאֵינוּ:

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that there come an end to our enemies.



### Fish

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁנִּפְרֶה וְנִרְבֶּה כְּדָגִים:

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that we should be fruitful and multiply like fish.



### Head of a Fish

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְקֵינוּ  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, שֶׁנִּהְיֶה לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב:

May it be Your will, Hashem, our God and the God of our forefathers, that we be as the head and not as the tail.

