A Rosh Hashanah Seder

A Simplified Guide for Christians

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Home Ceremony for Celebrating the New Year

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets a holy convocation. – Lev. 23:24

Preparations...

The home ceremony for Rosh Hashanah takes place at sundown, just before the start of Tishri 1. The main event of this holiday consists of a special festive meal, similar to a Friday evening Shabbat meal. The Rosh Hashanah celebration begins with the lighting of candles (hadlakat nerot), symbolizing the transition from profane to sacred time, and the recitation of the blessing thanking God for enabling us to reach this season (the Shehecheyanu blessing). Other customs such as eating apples dipped in honey are enjoyed.

Here’s what you’ll need for a Rosh Hashanah simchah (celebration):

1. A festive kosher dinner
2. A least two candles
3. Wine (or grape juice) in a Kiddush cup
4. A round challah loaf (“Crown Challah”)
5. Fresh apples and honey
6. A plate with carrots, leeks, beets, dates, pomegranate, and fish
7. A shofar (“ram’s horn”)
8. A sweet pomegranate

Remembering the Akedah...

In the Torah, Rosh Hashanah (“the head of the year”) is referred to as Yom HaZikkaron, “the Day of Remembrance” as well as Yom Teruah, a “Day of Shouting”...

As Yom HaZikkaron, we recall the story of Isaac’s near-sacrifice (said by tradition to have occurred on Tishri 1) when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his “only begotten” son (בְּנֵי יָרוּד) as an offering (this is known as the Akedah). Abraham obeyed God’s command, built an altar, and prepared to sacrifice Isaac, but at the very last minute was stopped by the Angel of the LORD. The Angel pointed out a ram caught by its horns in a nearby bush and told Abraham to sacrifice it in place of Isaac. Here again is a picture of the sacrifice of the Son of God by the Father offered on behalf of those who trust in Him...
Since Rosh Hashanah is about \textit{teshuvah} (תשובה) or returning to God through repentance, the Akedah of Isaac is retold to remind us that submission to God is the way to demonstrate a repentant attitude before the LORD.

\textbf{Torah Reading: The Binding of Isaac...}

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Please take your son, your only son (בן יושע, בן יחיד), even Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a whole burnt offering (קרמר) on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the whole burnt offering and arose and went to the place (מקום) of which God had told him.

On the third day (יומם) Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the lad will go over there and bow down to worship and return (ובית מרום) to you.” And Abraham took the wood for the whole burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.

And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” (אבינו) And he said, “Here I am, my son” (אני בנו). He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering (קרמר)?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering: my son” ( الأنא והאレイי חמשה עלולה בן, תימים). So they went both of them together. When they came to the place (מקום) of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son (בןּים) and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son (הקשיש). But the Angel of the LORD (מלאך הearer) called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son (בן יושע, בן יחיד), from me.”

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram (אריה) caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a whole burnt offering instead of his son (בן). So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide” (אもらう יוהי). As it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.” – Gen. 22:1-14

The first occurrence of the word “love” in the Scriptures refers to a father’s love for his “only” son who was offered as a sacrifice on Moriah, the place of the crucifixion of Yeshua.

Jewish tradition says that Isaac was 37 years old at the time of the binding...
We are now ready to start our Rosh Hashanah seder...

1. Candle-Lighting Blessing

On Erev Rosh Hashanah, about 18 minutes before sundown, a woman of the house will recite or sing the following blessing while kindling the holiday candles:

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us with His commandments and commanded us to kindle the lights of (*Sabbath and of) Yom Zikkaron.

Note: If Rosh Hashanah occurs on a Shabbat read: “…shel shabbat ve-yom ha-zikkaron.”

It is customary for the woman of the house to recite the Shehechayanu blessing (see #3, below) immediately after reciting the candle lighting blessing as well. If this is performed, we still recite the Shehechayanu blessing together during Kiddush.
2. Reciting Kiddush...

The Rosh Hashanah holiday is then sanctified by reciting Kiddush (the blessing over wine) and then reciting two additional blessings thanking God for allowing us to reach this season in our lives:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' צְבָאֹותּ אֶלוֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָאָלָלָמִים
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' צְבָאֹותּ אֶלוֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָאָלָלָמִים

barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei pri ha-gafen ha’amiteet – Yeshua Ha-Mashiach.

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe, Creator of the true fruit of the vine – Yeshua the Messiah.”

3. Reciting Shehecheyanu...

The Shehecheyanu blessing is said to thank God for enabling us to reach this season:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' צְבָאֹותּ אֶלוֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָאָלָלָמִים
ברוך אתה צבאות אלהינו מלך העולם

Shehecheyanu ve-ki-ye-manu ve-higanu lazman ha-zeh. (Amen)

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season. Amen.

barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-hecheyanu ve-ki-yemanu ve-higianu lazaman ha-zeh. (Amen)
4. Thanking God for the Appointed Times...

Just as the spring festivals (Passover, Firstfruits, and Shavuot) have been perfectly fulfilled in the first coming of Yeshua as Mashiach ben Yosef, so the fall festivals (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot) will be fulfilled in His second coming as Mashiach ben David. Since the first advent of Yeshua fulfilled all of the spring mo’edim to the smallest of details, we believe that His second advent portends similar fulfillment as revealed in the fall mo’edim. The LORD God of Israel did not give us the holidays in vain. Therefore, let us thank God for His great plan of salvation revealed in the festivals:

ברוך אַתָּהּ הַיָּהָהּ אַלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הַעֲולָם
עַשֵּׂר בְּעַתֵּקֵם חָכְמוֹת, וּמַעֲשֶׂרִים לְשִׁמְךָ.
לָכוּ בְעַמֶּרֶךְ חֲפֶשֶׂים אֲרוֹרֵנִים, אוֹרֶ הַעֲולָם.

Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
ascher natan lanu chaggim, chukkot, u’mo’adim le-simchah
likhvod Yeshua ha-Mashiach Adoneinu, ohr ha-olam.

“Blessed art You, LORD our God, King of the universe,
who has given to us holidays, customs, and seasons of happiness,
for the glory of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, the light of the world.”

5. Reciting HaMotzi...

Since Rosh Hashanah celebrates the cyclical passage of time and the recurring progression of holidays of the New Year, it is customary to recite the HaMotzi blessing over round loaves of challah (symbolizing the revolving seasons or the Crown of God). Often these are sweetened with raisons for the holiday.

ברוך אַתָּהּ הַיָּהָהּ אַלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הַעֲולָם
הַמּוֹצֵא אַתָּהּ לְחֵמֶךָ חֳלָלוֹ לִי

Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
ha-motzi et lechem ha-chayim min ha-shamayim.

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe,
who brings forth the living bread from heaven.”
6. Reciting the Shema...

It is our custom to spread out a tallit like a canopy and have everyone present gather underneath as we sing the Shema, recite the Ve’ahavta, and then hear the “priestly blessing.”

שְׁמֹעָלֶים יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is One Lord

בָּרוּךְ שֶם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתּוֹ לְעֹלָם וַאֲדָם

Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

You shall impress them upon your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

7. Recite the Priestly Blessing...

יִבְרָכֶנָּנוּ יְהוָה וְשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל

May the LORD bless you and keep you; May the LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; May the LORD lift up his face to you and give you peace...

After the blessing we sing “Shabbat Shalom” and wish everyone a sweet new year...
8. The Simanim Service

Some people actually have two seders during the year: one in the spring (i.e., the Passover seder), and another in the fall for Rosh Hashanah. A Rosh Hashanah seder will include simanim (~ynIm'ysi), “symbolic foods” served at the beginning of a Rosh Hashanah meal that are used as an occasion to symbolically bless the New Year.

After lighting the yom tov candles and performing kiddush, it is customary to recite a short blessing and prayer about the symbolism of different foods before eating them for the first time in the New Year. The order is not particularly important, though the following traditional blessings are often included in the service.

A. Netilat Yadaym – Washing the hands...

ברוך אתה יוה되면לךמלכתבעולם.
אשר קראת במשמסותינו_pdataוונשםברור

barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kiddeshanu bemitzvotav, vetzivanu netilat yadayim

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe, who sanctifies us with his commandments and commanded us about washing of hands.”

B. Eating Carots (rubya)

We eat carrots as a play on the word rubya, a word that resembles the Hebrew word for increase or enlarge (i.e., ribbuy: ירבע). We begin, however, by first reciting the traditional blessing for the fruit of the earth (ha-adamah):

ברוך אתה יוה דולוקמלכתבעולם.

barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei pri ha-adamah.

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the earth.”
We then eat some carrots. After finishing we then say:

יְהֵי רַצְוִּי מִלְפָּנְךָ יְהוָה עֲלָהִים אֶלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ
שְּרֵכָרָה שֵׁלֵגְנָה

yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve’lohei avoteinu,
she-yirbu zekhuyoteinu.

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that our merits increase.”

C. Eating Leeks (karsi)
We eat leeks, called karsi in Aramaic, as a play on the Hebrew word karat - to cut down - i.e., “May our enemies be cut down.” Note that we do not repeat the ha-adamah blessing (see above) before eating since we’ve already recited this. After eating, however, we add:

יְהֵי רַצְוִּי מִלְפָּנְךָ יְהוָה עֲלָהִים אֶלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ
שְׁרֵכָרָה שֵׁלֵגְנָה

yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve’lohei avoteinu,
she-yikartu soneinu.

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that those who hate us be cut away” (yikartu – play on karsi –”leeks” in Aramaic).
D. Eating Beets (selek)

We eat beets as a play on the Hebrew word *selek* (سجل: beet), which reminds us of the Hebrew word *lesalek* (לשלך) – to remove (i.e., our enemies). Note that once again we do not repeat the ha-adamah blessing before eating since we’ve already done so previously. After eating some beets, however, we will add:

יְהֵי רַצון מִלְּפַנְּךָ יְהוָה, יְאַלְּהוֹנִי יְאַלְּהיִי אָבָהָנוּ

שְׁחֵם לַפְּנֵינוּ

*yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve’lohei avoteinu, she-yistalku oyveinu.*

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that our enemies be taken away” (*yistalku* – from *selek*, “beets” in Hebrew).

E. Eating Dates (tamar)

Dates are another sweet food often associated with Rosh Hashanah. We have fun making the connection between the Hebrew word for “date” (i.e., tamar: תמר) that reminds us of the Hebrew verb for “an end” (תמר). After eating the dates, we recite:

יְהֵי רַצון מִלְּפַנְּךָ יְהוָה, יְאַלְּהוֹנִי יְאַלְּהיִי אָבָהָנוּ

שְׁחֵם לַפְּנֵינוּ

*yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve’lohei avoteinu, she-yitamu shoneinu.*

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that those who hate us be ended” (*yitamu* – from *tamar*, dates in Aramaic)
F. Eating Fish (dag)

The fish symbolizes that we teem and multiply. First we recite the appropriate blessing for eating fish (the she-hakol blessing):

ברוך אתה יהוה אַל‑כָּלָה פִּילָךְ הוָלָה.
שָׁלוֹם נַחֲנֵה בְּךָ.

`barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-hakol nihyah bidvaro."

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe,
Who by His Word brings about all things.”

After tasting the fish we say:

אין רצון מלפくださ יהוה אלוהינו יַנֵּלָה יָבָטָה
שְׁנֵפָה וּנְרָבָה כְּרָבָם

`yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve’lohei avoteinu,
she-nifreh v’nirbeh ke’dagim."

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers,
that we be fruitful and multiply like fish.”

We then look at the head of the fish and say:

אין רצון מלפ salida יהוה אלוהינו יַנֵּלָה יָבָטָה
שְׁנֵפָה לַראֵשׁ לֵאָשׁ לֹזָב

`yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve’lohei avoteinu,
she-niyeh lerosh ve’lo le’zanav."

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers,
that we be the head and not the tail” (Deut 28:13)
Apples Dipped in Honey...

It is also customary to eat apples dipped in honey during this meal. Why? It is a tradition to eat a newly ripened fruit for the first time during that fruit’s harvest season, and since Rosh Hashanah falls around the beginning of apple season, the apple has become the “first fruit.” This provides the opportunity to recite the blessings both over the fruit of the tree (bore pri ha’etz) as well as another Shehecheyanu. After eating the apple dipped in honey, we ask God “to renew this year for us with sweetness and happiness.”

G. Blessing over the Fruit

We dip our apples in honey and recite the following blessing before eating:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי היען.

barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei pri ha-etz.

“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the trees.”

H. The New Year Blessing

We then recite together:

יהי רצון милאנויה יהוה אלוהינו ואלוהי אבותינו
שיהיה שנה טובה ו IDbואתא אבדא אדונא יוטשה

yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu velohei avoteinu, she-techadesh aleinu shanah tovah u’metukah ba’Adoneinu Yeshua Ha-mashiach.

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that you renew for us a good and sweet year in our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.”
I. Eating Pomegranate (rimon)

Eating a pomegranate reminds us of the sweetness of the Torah. May the new year be good and sweet for us all, and may our righteous deeds increase, like the many seeds of the pomegranate (1 John 2:29). Again, since we’ve already recited ha-etz blessing, we do not need to repeat it. After eating the pomegranate, however, we add:

יְהִי רָצָנִי מְלָפְּנְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וֶאֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹאֵינוּ
שֵׁם רְפָאָה בְּעֵיְתָךְ מֶרְפָּא

yehi ratzon milfanekha, Adonai Eloheinu ve’lohei avoteinu,
she-narbeh ze’khuyot ke’rimon.

“May it be your will, LORD our God and God of our fathers, that our merits be numerous as the seeds of a pomegranate.”

We now go on to enjoy our festive Rosh Hashanah meal...
9. Grace After the Meal

After the meal, it is customary to recite the *birkat hamazon*, the “grace after meals,” including special additions marking the festival of Rosh Hashanah. A shortened version of the blessing is provided here:

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ברוך אתה יהוה אלוהינו מלך העולם
הנה אים כל העולמים בני חסדים ביישוב ובברכה.
ברוך אתה יהוה בני כל עולם. אמן.
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*barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
hazzan et ha-olam kullo b’tuvo, b’chen, b’chesed, uv’rachamim.*

*Barukh attah Adonai, hazzan et ha-kol. Amen.*

“Blessed are you, LORD our God, master of the universe,
Who nourishes the whole world in goodness, with grace, kindness, and compassion.
Blessed are You, LORD, who nourishes all. Amen.”

**Hodu La-Adonai ki Tov**

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והודי ליהוה כי שופע כל עולם חסד
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*hodu la’Adonai ki tov! ki le’olam chasdo!*

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!”
10. Listening to the Shofar

If you have a shofar (ram’s horn), you may want to fulfill the mitzvah of listening to its sound by blowing it at this time. The one who blows the shofar recites the blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּהּ אֲדֹנָיֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָאֱלֹהִים מְצַוְּנוּ לְשַׁמְנוּ אֶזֶר קָדְשָׁנּוּ

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us with His commandments and commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar.

Barukh attah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kideshanu be’mitzvotav ve’tzivanu lishmo’a kol shofar.


Our Closing Blessing: “Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling, and to cause you to stand, rejoicing, without blemish before His glorious presence, to the only God our Savior through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord and great Lamb of God, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time, and now, and for all eternity. Amen.”

Tetelestai! It is finished!

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands.

Let’s Sing! “La-shanah haba’ah bi-yerushalayim ha’chadasah!”

“Next year in the new Jerusalem!”

Peace in Yeshua