

Open for us a gate  
at the closing of a gate  
פְּתַח לָנוּ שַׁעַר בְּעֵת נִגְעִילֵת שַׁעַר

Elul and the High Holidays, 2023  
חודש אלול וחגי תשרי, תשפ"ד



The Israel Reform Movement is pleased to share this resource collection specially created for the celebration of the High Holidays with our members and partners in Israel and around the world.

We assembled a variety of texts that enable you to celebrate Israel and the IMPJ with your congregations and communities. We invite you to print this collection to recite the brachot and share the inspirations during your gatherings over the course of the holidays.

We hope that you join us and bring Israel and the IMPJ into your hearts and prayers this High Holiday season.

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## Elul, the gate of *selichot*



*Slichah* (forgiveness) is both a backwards-facing movement and one towards the future. We turn our attention to what hurts us and others to our disappointments and our injuries. We turn our gaze to all that might have been different and what needs to be different and seek how to forgive.

Forgiveness is not forgetting or erasing the past, it is a movement of release and it has an element of surrender and that's why it isn't easy to forgive. Forgiveness is also a choice that arises from the ability to make peace and to mourn for what has happened in order to create a better future.

The Jewish tradition understands that we cannot begin a new year without forgiving and without asking forgiveness from others. On the one hand forgiveness allows us to improve our ability to admit our mistakes, to feel the pain of injuries caused to us and those that we caused to others. On the other hand, forgiving helps us turn our gaze to the future and choose to begin again as the choice to return to our beliefs in ourselves, in others, in God, in humanity, and in the world.



## Alternative confessional · *Al chet* / Rabbi Michal Talya

For the sin that we have sinned before you by denying our weaknesses and our mistakes, because of overweening pride

And for the sin that we have sinned before you by exploiting our power over others: neighbors, lovers, partners, animals

For the sin that we have sinned before you by blinding our hearts to poverty, oppression, corruption, war

And for the sin that we have sinned before you by repressing and ignoring our own pain

For the sin that we have sinned before our parents through unfeeling judgment

And for the sin that we have sinned before you through excessive self criticism and self reproach

For the sin that we have sinned before others by focusing on their mistakes in order to feel wiser or smarter than them

And for the sin that we have sinned before you by denying the precious light within us

For the sin that we have sinned before our loved ones by limiting our expressions of love

And for the sin that we have sinned before our bodies by neglecting them

For the sin that we have sinned before our souls by starving them of what will truly nourish them

And for the sin that we have sinned by leaving the problems of the world beyond our circle of influence

For the sin that we have sinned by thinking of ourselves as too important

And for the sin that we have sinned before you by following the false idols of military might, of money, of class

For the sin that we have sinned before you by claiming ownership of the land, of our children, of loved ones

And for the sin that we have sinned before our true power, by playing the victim card

For the sin that we have sinned before you by blaming others, instead of taking responsibility ourselves

And for the sin that we have sinned by corrupting the living conditions here on earth

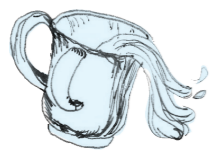
For all these, God of forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.

## Rosh HaShanah, the gate of blessings



The order of blessings for the Rosh HaShanah table, also known as "*Seder HaSimanim*", accompanies the festive meal and creates meaning out of the first items we eat for the new year. It's as if we're planting our hopes for the new year within ourselves through the food. This charming tradition gives depth to the meal and makes it celebratory and different from any other family meal.

## Seder HaSimanim, series of symbolic blessings and foods



### Merit זכות

**ברכת הזמן** Blessing the time  
(Shehechianu)

(In order to justify saying "*shehechianu*" on the second night of Rosh HaShana, some families add a new fruit they have not eaten).

Blessed are you Adonai, our God, ruler of the universe, who has enlivened us, and sustained us, and brought us to this day.

Blessing over *Netilat Yadayim*  
(ritual of handwashing).

Blessed are you Adonai, our God, ruler of the universe, who consecrates us with commandments and commands us to raise up our hands.



### Abundance שפע

Blessing the bread that we dip in honey  
The eyes of all look to You expectantly, and  
You give them their food when it is due.  
(Psalm 145:15)

Blessed are you Adonai, our God, ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Bless us, Adonai our God, this year and all its abundance, for good. And grant blessing on the face of the earth, that we may be satisfied by its goodness, and bless our year among the best of years.



### Renewal התחדשות

Blessing the apple in honey

May it be your will Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, to renew for us a good and sweet year, from the beginning of the year until the end of the year.

Blessed are you Adonai, our God, ruler of the universe, who brings forth fruit from trees.



### Sweetness מתוקות

Blessing the dates

May it be your will Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, to make our year as sweet as dates.

(The traditional blessing asks that our enemies be vanquished using a word that sounds like the Hebrew word date - Tamar.

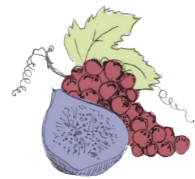


### Fulfillment הגשמה

Blessing the pomegranate

May it be your will Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, that we be as full of mitzvot as a pomegranate is full of seeds.





### Peace שלום

May it be your will Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, that we merit speedily in our days to see the fulfillment of your prophecy: "They shall sit each underneath their own vine and fig tree and they shall not be afraid, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Micah 4:4)



### Forgiveness נחילה

Blessing the carrot  
(Some use pumpkin that is called *kar'a*)

May it be your will Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, that evil decrees against us be shredded, and only our merits be read before you.

Blessed are you Adonai, our God, ruler of the universe, who brings forth fruit from the soil.



### Protection שמירה

Blessing the fennel

(In Hebrew fennel is called *Shumar*, similar to *shomer*, which means protect.)

May it be your will Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, that we be protected and guarded, along with all your creation. "May God protect your coming in and your going out, from now and forever." (Psalm 121:8)

### In the Sephardic nusach we find two more blessings:



### Awareness מודעות

Blessing the leek (called *Kartei*)

May it be your will Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, that we be aware and know that we haven't come into this world in order to disagree and fight. (The traditional blessing says "that our enemies and all who wish us ill be cut down.")



### Flourishing לבלוב

Blessing the beans

May it be your will Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, that our merits will be many and will flourish (this plays on the name for black eyed peas – *Lubya* and the word for flourishing – *livluy*).



Perhaps we can add blessings over additional foods, being as creative as possible. For example:

**Over a cup of liquor:** "May it be Your will that this be a year of blessed rainfall."

**Over quinoa:** "May it be Your will that this be a year without envy [*kinah*]."

**Over grapes and dates:** "May it be Your will that we sit, each under his own grapevine and under her own fig tree" (adapted from Micah 4:4).

**Over eggplant (*chatzil*):** "May it be Your will that this be a year without pressure [*lachat*]."

**Over tahina (tahini or sesame paste):** "May it be Your will that our pleading [*t'chinah*] be heard."

**Over an apple (*tapuach*):** May it be Your will that our hearts remain always open [*patuach*]."

**Over tofu:** "May it be Your will that the mountains drip [*yatifu*] wine" (based on Amos 9:13).

**Over ice cream (*g'lidah*):** "May it be Your will that all our wounds, physical and spiritual, heal over [*yaglidu*] and we all find relief."

And what wish shall we make at a Rosh HaShanah meal over shepherd's pie, pasta, lemon mousse, or chocolate cake? The possibilities are endless! The dinner table on Rosh HaShanah can become a creative workshop for children and adults, where smiles and heartfelt good wishes are all part of the experience.

*From Time To Time: Journeys in the Jewish Calendar by Rabbi Dalia Marx, translated by Rabbi Peretz Rodman. Forthcoming in December 2023 from CCAR. Press <https://www.ccarpress.org/> and used by permission of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.*

## Yom Kippur, the gate of confession



*"In the Heavenly court, and in the earthly court, with the acknowledgement of HaMakom and with the acknowledgement of the congregation, we grant each other permission to pray with other sinners."*

- Kol Nidre prayers.

The central prayer of Yom Kippur is the *Vidui* (confessional), the acknowledgement of one's sins – to oneself, one's community, and one's God – all those places where one has misstepped, fallen, or been mistaken. The confessional is the first

step in the process of healing and for one day the synagogue and the congregation become a support group of sinners, all of us mistaken and misguided, all of us human and exposed in our fragility.

From within that fragility, we also discover our beauty, as individuals, and as humans. Acknowledging difficulty and acknowledging beauty, and giving thanks for all of it. The Hebrew word *lehodot* means both to acknowledge or admit and to give thanks.

Below is a suggestion for an alternative *Vidui* – to give thanks for all that is good and beautiful in our lives.



## Confession and giving thanks on Yom Kippur:

### Alternative Confessional Vidui Mashlim

*Ahavnu* We have loved  
*Berakhnu* We have blessed  
*Gadalnu* We have grown  
*Diminu Yofi* We have embodied beauty  
*Hit'akashnu* We have stood firm  
*Vitarnu* We have conceded  
*Zar'anu* We have planted seeds  
*Chipasnu* We have searched  
*Tiharnu Shaker* We have cleansed our lies  
*Yatzarnu* We have created  
*Ka'avnu* We have felt pain  
*Lamadnu* We have learned  
*Machalnu* We have pardoned  
*Nisinu* We have tried  
*Salachnu* We have forgiven  
*'Azarnu* We have assisted  
*Firganu* We have complimented  
*Tzachaknu* We have laughed  
*Kibalnu* We have accepted  
*Radafnu Tzedek* We have pursued justice  
*Samachnu* We have been joyful  
*Taramnu* We have donated  
*Tamakhnu* We have supported  
*Tikkanu* We have repaired

### וידוי משלים

אהבנו, ברכנו, גדלנו, דימינו יופי.  
 התעקשנו, ויתרנו, זרענו, חיפשנו.  
 טיהרנו שקר, יצרנו, כאבנו, למדנו.  
 מחלנו, ניסינו, סלחנו, עזרנו.  
 פרגנו, צחקנו, קיבלנו, רדפנו צדק.  
 שמחנו, תרמנו, תמכנו, תיקנו.



## Sukkot, the gate of togetherness

ופרוש עלינו סוכת שלומך · *U'fros aleinu sukkat shlomekha*  
 Spread over us your Sukkah of peace

"Welcoming guests is greater than welcoming the face of the *Shekhina*  
 (the Divine presence)."  
 (Mishnah, Sukkah 2:1)



The meaning of the holiday of *Sukkot* lies in the fact that we build our *sukkah* outside our homes, under the stars. The *sukkah* creates a space that is open, yet safe, a space in which we can meet others, people who are different from us, who live nearby but are not part of our everyday routines and circles.

The *sukkah*, like the *huppah* (wedding canopy), is a *Mikdash Me'at*, a miniature sanctuary, a sanctuary that is open to the world, to the street. And this is the *Sukkat Shalom*, a place where we join together

opposites, allowing them to compliment each other: home and temporariness, inside and outside, light and shadow, siblings and strangers.

Recently, we have been spending time in the streets, the divided Israeli streets, two way streets, divided between right and left. The *Sukkot* holiday is an opportunity to go out into the streets and connect between these two sides, create opportunities for conversation, to invite the other into our *sukkah*, and to discover their inner beauty, not so different from our own.





### You and I (Equals) / Elai Botner

While I am black, and you are white,  
I am the dark, you are the light  
Enfolding like a mother,  
The one who cares for you.  
While you are small, and I am tall,  
While I just want, you reach your goal -  
Are dancing as we go,  
And feel the same other folk.

And may there be a day,  
When we'll live as one.  
And you will be my river for days and years  
to come,  
We will flow together through the time  
Until we disappear beyond horizon,  
Until we disappear beyond horizon.

At times I cry, at times you shout,  
At times I'm wrong, at times you're right.  
This is our own show without the stage and  
ones to judge.  
We may relax and ponder -  
As ourselves again with ease.  
It all will blow yonder with gentle fleeting  
evening breeze.

Refrain  
<https://lyricstranslate.com/en/showim-you-and-i-equals.html>

### שווים / מילים ולחן עיילי בוטנר

אתה לבן אני שחר,  
אני חשוך אתה באור  
שמחמם כמו אמא,  
ושדואג לך.  
אתה קטן אני גדול  
אני רוצה אתה יכול  
לרקוד, לצעד קדימה.  
להיות שלם בין אנשים.  
ואולי יבוא יום ונהפך שוים  
אתה תהיה לי נחל ואני לך ימים  
ונזרם ביחד עד אין סוף  
שניה לפני שקו החוף מגיע  
שניה לפני שקו החוף מגיע  
אני בוכה אתה צועק  
אני טועה אתה צודק  
זאת הצגה שלנו,  
ואין קהל ואין במה.  
אולי נשב בנוח,  
אתה, אתה.  
אני, אני.  
וגם תחלף הרוח,  
ויעברו כל השנים.  
ואולי יבוא יום...

[youtube.com/watch](https://www.youtube.com/watch)

## Simchat Torah, the gate of renewal



*"It is a Tree of Life to those who hold it."* - Mishlei 3:18.

The joy in the Torah meets real life.

Every year, the same book. Every year, the same stories, but each reading is different.

The Torah can be an anchor for those who wish to meet it again, to discover the connection between the past and the future, between what deserves to be and what really happens, and to examine the differences: what has changed? What is no longer applicable? Especially, to have a conversation – a living conversation.

The Torah has been the Tree of Life for so many generations of Jews and our generation is so divided, some of us are in dialogue with the Torah, others argue with it, some ignore it, and others follow it blindly.

Simchat Torah invites us to look at the Torah anew with all our pain and disappointment and anger and to enter into a dialogue with it, a dialogue with our national and cultural landscape, with all those who are different from me and all those who are like me, with everyone who makes up my people – for whom it is their book.





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