



ראש השנה Special Foods for

תו"ל tell us that eating symbolic food on ראש השנה has great significance and affects the upcoming year. Therefore, it is customary to eat many symbolic foods on ראש השנה. For example, at the beginning of the סעודה, we dip our challah and apple into honey and ask for a sweet year.

Challah Dipped into Honey



When we eat the challah to begin the meal, we dip it into honey to symbolize our request for a sweet year. We should first dip our challah into salt as is done throughout the year¹.

Dipping the Apple into Honey



We dip the apple into honey and say the blessing בורא פרי העץ, having in mind to include all subsequent fruits². We eat a small piece of apple and say יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה, asking Hashem for a good, sweet year. It is important to have כונה and arouse ourselves to תשובה when saying יהי רצון³.

Please note: Since we recite a brocha for the apple, we eat the apple first and then say יהי רצון. When eating all subsequent fruits, the יהי רצון is said first⁴.

תמרים - Dates



The word תמרים contains in its roots the word תם, which means to cease or to finish. Therefore, we eat תמרים and say שיתמו שונאינו, asking Hashem to destroy our enemies. When saying this יהי רצון, let us pray with כונה that Hashem help us overcome our enemies.

[3] שר"ע סימן תקפג מ"ב ס"ק ב

[4] שר"ע סימן תקפג מ"ב ס"ק ד

[1] כף החיים סימן תקפג ס"ק ד

[2] שם ס"ק יג



מעריץ - Carrots (Carrot Tzimmes)

The Yiddish word for carrots is מעריץ, which means to increase. Therefore, we eat carrots and say שְׂיָרְבוּ זְכוּתֵינוּ... אֱלֹהֵינוּ, asking Hashem that our זְכוּת should increase. In this זְכוּת, we pray that Hashem help us follow the תּוֹרָה properly, so we should merit these זְכוּת.

Please note: We do not recite the brocha בּוֹרָא פְּרִי הָאָדָמָה on carrots or the other symbolic vegetables, for vegetables are eaten as part of the meal and do not require their own brocha⁵.

רימונים - Pomegranates



We eat a רימון (pomegranate) and pray that our mitzvohs and merits should increase as the רימון, which has many seeds. Before partaking of the רימון, we say שְׂיָרְבוּ זְכוּתֵינוּ פְּרִימוֹן... זְכוּתֵינוּ.

קרא - Gourd (Squash)



The word קרא reminds us of 2 words: 1) יקרע - to tear
2) ויקרא - to announce.

We say the prayer שְׂתִקְרַע רוּע גָזַר דִּינֵנוּ, וְיִקְרָאוּ לְפָנֶיךָ זְכוּתֵינוּ. We ask that Hashem rip up (שְׂתִקְרַע) our גָזַר דִּין and that our merits be proclaimed (וְיִקְרָאוּ) before You.

סלקא - Beets or Spinach



The word סלקא hints to the word סלק, which means to remove. Therefore, we eat סלקא and say שְׂיִסְתַּלְקוּ אוֹיְבֵינוּ וּמְשָׂטֵינוּ... זְכוּתֵינוּ, asking Hashem that our enemies be removed.

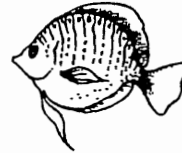
[5] מקראי קודש - הימים נוראים סימן ז



Leeks - פרתני

The word פרתני hints to the word כֹּרֵת, which means to **cut off**. When eating פרתני, we say יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ... שְׂיִכְרְתוּ שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ, asking Hashem that our enemies be cut off (destroyed).

Fish - דגים



We eat fish and say יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ... שְׁנַפְרָה וְנִרְבָּה בְּדָגִים, asking that our children should multiply as the fish of the sea.

Head of a Fish or Ram - ראש דג או כּבֶּשׂ



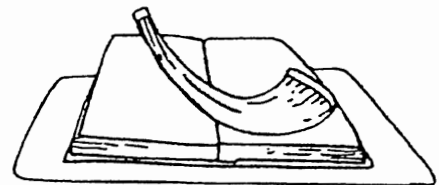
We eat the head of a fish and say שְׁנֵהֵיָה לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב, asking that we be **likened** to the **head** (leader) and not to the **tail** (followers)⁶. This phrase was taken from the פְּסוּק in the Torah:

“Hashem will place you as the head and not as the tail”⁷. Hashem promises בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל that if they follow the תּוֹרָה, they will be mighty among the nations.

Some eat the **head of a ram**. We choose the head of a ram to recall the עֲקִידַת יִצְחָק of זְכוּת and ask for a good year in his merit.

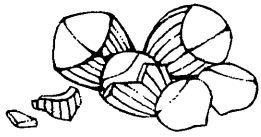
Of course, besides eating the special foods, we must also do our part to ensure that Hashem will accept our תְּפִילוֹת. We must do תִּשְׁבָּה and avoid anger, לְשׁוֹן הָרַע and מַחְלוּקָת.

By showing Hashem that we are making the effort to improve and begin the New Year properly, we trust that Hashem will grant our request for a happy and healthy New Year.



[6] שר"ע סימן תקפג סעיף ד

[7] פרשת דברים כח פסוק יג



Foods to be Avoided

We should avoid any **Sour or Bitter Foods**, since we eat only foods symbolic of sweetness, not bitterness⁸.

Nuts are customarily not eaten for two main reasons. The Hebrew word for nut is אגוז, which has the same גמטרקא as חטא (without the א). Nuts also cause excessive saliva, which can be a problem during davening⁹.

Other Customs of ראש השנה

There is a custom to **bake challah** in the form of a **circle**¹⁰, for a circle symbolizes a crown, the sign of Hashem's kingship over the universe.

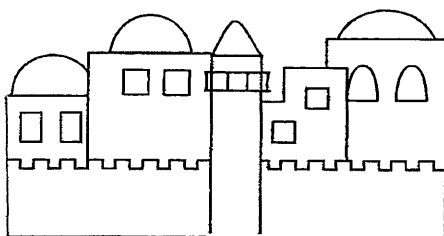
It is customary to eat **honey cake**, as this symbolizes our request for a sweet year. Also, the term לקח (in Yiddish) used for cake means portion. We pray to have a "goodly portion" in the coming year.

Many have the custom to eat the symbolic foods the second night also and to recite the יהי רצון as well¹¹.

Some have the custom to dip challah into honey through הושענה רבה, when the final דך is sealed.

In the זכות of our sincere תשובה and our efforts to perform all the מצוות properly, may we be זוכה to a שנת גאולה וישועה for all of כלל ישראל.

תנינה וחתומה טובה!!



[8] שו"ע סימן תקפג מ"ב ס"ק ה
 [9] שם רמ"א סעיף ב'
 [10] ברכת חיים (pg. 30, 45)
 [11] מטה אפרים סימן תר ס"ק ע"ד

Name _____

Review Questions

- 1) We dip our _____ into honey and ask Hashem for a _____ year.
- 2) We eat _____ and pray that our זְכוּת should increase.
- 3) The word פְּרָתִי hints to the word _____ which means _____
- 4) The word סֶלֶקָא reminds us of the word _____ which means _____
- 5) We eat תְּמָרִים and say יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ... שְׂמֵחֵנוּ שׁוֹמְרֵינוּ, asking Hashem to _____
- 6) We eat a רִמּוֹן (pomegranate) and ask that _____
- 7) We eat the head of a fish and pray that _____
- 8) Give the 2 reasons why we avoid eating nuts on ראש השנה
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
- 9) Some have the custom to dip challah into honey through _____
- 10) List 3 ways how we can improve ourselves:
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____