



Noahide Laws & Lifecycle Course



Festivals III: Rosh HaShanah



**Noahide Nations Nagid Clergy
Certification Program**

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Festivals III: *Rosh HaShanah*

Introduction

Rosh HaShanah, the Day of Judgment, Birthday of the World – it is a time of tremendous celebration and tremendous solemnity. It is a day of ultimate connection with the Creator.

Judgment & Celebration.

As we mentioned earlier, Rosh HaShanah is both a day of solemnity and rejoicing. We celebrate the completion of creation and the birthday of all mankind. However, it is also a day of judgment and solemnity for it is the day upon which Adam and Eve failed in their mission.

The observances of Rosh HaShanah strive to acknowledge the day's dual nature.

Shofar on Rosh HaShanah?

The general rule with all Noahide practice is to avoid imitating those commandments ordered only to the Jewish people. Besides the fact that such imitation-of-practice limits the universal aspect of Noahism, it also creates serious problems in Torah law. Therefore, Noahides should not blow the shofar on Rosh HaShanah.

Mitzvos* vs. *Minhagim

Mitzvos are those matters that God commanded to mankind, whether Noahide or Jew. However, *mibangim* (usually translated as “customs”) are practices developed by man to enhance the spiritual experience of the holidays. While the law is that Noahides may not take on Jewish mitzvos (unless they provide some practical, real-world benefit; i.e. *tzedaka* or honoring one's parents), Noahides may certainly take on established Jewish *minhagim*. These *minhagim* are often rich with meaning and speak deeply to the human

experience of the Torah. We will mention many such *minhagim* in the course of these lessons.

Eve of Rosh HaShanah

Rosh HaShanah, as all of the Torah's festivals, begins at sunset on the previous evening. For example, Rosh HaShana 2015 is on Monday, September 14. However, it actually begins at sunset on Sunday, September 13.

By Rosh HaShanah eve, the house should be cleaned in honor of the holiday. One should also endeavor to get a haircut, cut his nails, and dress in clean, nice clothing to welcome the Great Day.

One should not rush into Rosh HaShanah. Instead, all of the preparations should be completed well before sunset so that one may enter the day in a spirit of peace, tranquility, and focus.

Evening Prayers

As with all of the liturgies brought in this course, they are based on the traditional Jewish prayers, yet adapted as needed for Noahide use. These prayer services are by no means the final or definitive forms of these prayers. Instead, these services are intended as a starting point for growth and development.

Introductory Psalm

Psalm 96

The Leader reads the bold text aloud.

Sing to The Lord a new song! Sing to The Lord, all the Earth! Praise The Lord and bless His name! Announce His salvation from day to day! Declare His honor among the nations and His wonders among all peoples. For the Lord is great and exceedingly praised; He is feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are worthless – but The Lord made the heavens! Majesty and glory are before him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Render to The Lord, you families of the nations, render to The Lord glory and honor! Give The Lord the honor due to his Name. Bring offerings into His courtyards. Bow down before the Lord in abundant holiness and tremble before Him, everyone on Earth! Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!" The world is firmly set, it shall not falter. He will judge the nations in righteousness. Heaven will

rejoice and the Earth will be glad! The oceans and their fullness will roar! The fields and all that is in them will exult! **The trees of the forest will sing with joy before the Lord – For He will have arrived, He will have come to judge the Earth. He judges the world in righteousness and the peoples in His truth!**

Introductory Nighttime Psalm & Verses of Praise¹

A Song of Ascents: Behold, bless The Lord, all you servants of the Lord who stand in the House of the Lord in the nights. Lift your hands in the Sanctuary and bless the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion, the Maker of heaven and earth.²

In perfect peace I will lie down and sleep; for You, O Lord, will set me apart and secure my dwelling.³ At dawn, the Lord will command His kindness; at night His resting place is with me – a prayer to the God of my life!⁴ The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; their might in a time of distress. The Lord helps them and enables their escape; He enables their escape from the wicked and will save them, for they have taken refuge in Him.⁵

Sanctification

Leader: May His great name be ever exalted and sanctified (**Cong.:** Amen!) in the world that He created according to His will. May His kingship reign in our lifetimes and in our days, swiftly and soon, and we say: Amen!

Cong.: Amen! May His great Name be blessed forever and ever!

¹ Inclusion of these Psalm verses is adapted from *Nusach Sfard*, the Chassidic rite version of the *siddur*.

² Psalm 134.

³ Ibid. 4:9.

⁴ Ibid. 42:9.

⁵ Ibid. 37:39 – 40.

Leader: May His great name be blessed forever and ever. Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled, mighty, upraised, and lauded is the name of the Holy One, Blessed is He (**Cong.:** Blessed is He!) exceedingly beyond any blessing and song or praise and consolation that may be uttered in the world, and we say: Amen (**Cong.:** Amen!)

Call to Prayer (omitted by one praying alone)

Leader: Blessed is The Lord, the Blessed One!

Cong.: Blessed is The Lord, the Blessed One, for all eternity!

Leader: Blessed is The Lord, the Blessed One, for all eternity!

Acceptance of Kingship

All aloud: Almighty God, we accept upon ourselves Your sovereign kingship and mastery:

All continue individually:

You alone are our God,
You alone are our King,
You alone are omnipotent, and
You alone are eternal.

You alone are our creator,
You alone are our savior.
You alone do we worship, and to
You alone do we give thanks.

As it is written in Your holy Torah: “You shall know this day and take unto your heart that God alone is God; in the heavens above and upon the earth below – there is none other!”⁶ And, “You shall love your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your means,”⁷ and to (**Leader recites aloud:**) “**Fear God, your God, and serve Him, and to vow in His name only.**”⁸

⁶ Deut. 4:39.

⁷ Deut. 6:5.

⁸ Deut. 6:13.

Leader: The Lord shall reign for all eternity!⁹

Cong: The Lord shall reign for all eternity!

Silent Prayer

During the silent Prayer, all should stand erect with the feet together. One should pray only loud enough to hear himself.

On God's Might

Your might is eternal, my Lord, the one who resuscitates the dead, who is abundant in salvations, who sustains the living with kindness, who revives the dead with abundant mercy, who supports the fallen, heals the sick, and releases the bound, Who upholds his faith to those who sleep in the dust. Who is like you, O Master of mighty deeds?

Who is comparable to You, O King, who causes death and restores life, who makes salvation bloom?

And You are faithful to revive the dead! Blessed are you, O Lord, who revives the dead!

On God's Holiness

You are holy and Your Name is Holy, and the holy ones praise you every day, eternally. Therefore, bestow your awe upon all Your works and your dread upon all you have created. Let all your works revere you and all creations prostrate themselves before you. Let them all whole-heartedly do your will. For, as we know HaShem our God, the dominion is yours. Might is in your hand and strength within your right hand; your name invokes awe upon all that you have created.

You are Holy and your name is awesome, and there is no god other than You, as it is written: The Lord, Master of Legions, will be exalted in judgment, and the Holy God will be sanctified in righteousness. Blessed are you, O Lord, the Holy king.

On the Day of Judgment

Our God, may there arise, come, reach, be noted, be favored, be heard, be considered, and be remembered a remembrance of ourselves before you for deliverance, for goodness, for grace, for kindness and compassion, for life, and for peace upon this Day of Judgment. Remember us on it, O Lord, for blessing and for life. Be gracious and compassionate with us,

⁹ Exodus 15:18.

favor us for salvation, compassion, and pity, for our eyes are turned to you, for you are God, the gracious and compassionate King!

Our God, reign over the entire universe in Your glory. Be exalted over the entire world in Your splendor. Reveal Yourself, in the majestic grandeur of Your strength, upon all that dwell within Your world. Let everything that has been made know that You are its maker and let everything that has been shaped understand that you are its sculptor. Let everything with the breath of life in its nostrils proclaim: “The Lord is King! His Kingship rules above all!” O God, purify our hearts to serve You sincerely, for You are the true God and Your word is true and eternal! Look down upon Your creation and judge it favorably! Grant us the opportunity to return to you! Grant us life, grant us salvation, and grant us favor! Blessed are you, O Lord, King over all, who sanctifies the Day of Judgment!

Giving Thanks

We thank you, for it is you who are The Lord, our God, and the Rock of our Lives. We shall thank You and relate Your praise for our lives, which are committed to Your power, and for our souls that are entrusted to You, for Your miracles that are with us every day, and for Your wonders and favors in every time – Morning, noon, and night. The Benevolent One, for Your benevolences were never exhausted, and The Compassionate One, for Your compassions are never ending – we place our hope in You.

Please, inscribe us all for a good life!

And all life will thank You and praise Your name, O God of salvation and help. Blessed are you, O Lord, Your Name is “The Benevolent one” and to You alone is it fitting to offer thanks!

For Peace

Establish peace upon the world and upon all peoples, for you are king, the master of peace!

May we be remembered and inscribed before You in the book of life, blessing, peace, and livelihood.

Blessed are you, O Lord, who creates peace.

Concluding Supplication

My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceit. To those who would curse me, let my soul be silent; let my soul be like dust to all. Open my heart to your will so that my soul will pursue it. As for all those plan evil against me, quickly nullify their counsel, frustrate their

designs. Act for Your Name's sake, act for Your right-hand's sake, act for Your sanctity's sake. Let Your right hand save and respond to me.

May the expressions of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before you, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

One takes three steps back at this point, as if taking leave of a king.

Bow to the left and say: He who makes peace in His heights,

Bow to the right and say: May He Make peace upon us,

Bow forward and say: And upon the entire world.

One straightens and concludes: And we say: Amen.

Remain in place for a moment, and then take three steps forward. The silent prayer is concluded.

Psalm 24

When the majority of those present have concluded their silent prayer, the leader begins the following responsive recitation. The Psalm is recited responsively, verse by verse, Leader followed by Congregation

Of David: a Psalm. The Lord's is the earth and its fullness, the inhabited land, and all those who dwell upon it.

For He founded it upon the seas, established it upon the rivers.

Who may ascend the Lord's mountain, and who may stand in the place of His Holiness?

One of clean hands and of pure heart, who has neither sworn in vain by My soul, nor deceitfully.

He will receive a blessing from The Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

This is the generation of those who seek Him, those who strive for Your Presence.

Raise up your heads, O Gates! Be uplifted, O eternal entrances, so that the King of glory may enter!

Who is this king of glory? The Lord – the powerful and mighty! The Lord – Who is great in battle!

Raise up your heads, O Gates! Be uplifted, O eternal entrances, so that the King of glory may enter!

Who is this king of Glory? The Lord, the Master of Legions, He is the king of glory! Selah!

We Bend Our Knees...

One should bend the knees and bow down at the words in bold text, straitening up at ...King of kings...

We **bend our knee, bow down**, and give thanks, before the King of kings, the Holy One blessed is He, Who stretches forth the heavens and founded the earth, Whose honored abode is in the heavens above, and Whose powerful presence is in the most exalted heights. He is our God; there is none else. True is our king, and there is nothing besides Him, as it is written in His Torah: “Know this day and take to your heart that the Lord is God; in the heaven above and on the earth below - there is none other.”

Therefore, we place our hope in You, Lord our God, that we may soon behold your mighty splendor; to banish idolatry from the earth. False gods will be utterly cut off; to perfect the world through the Almighty’s sovereignty. All humanity shall call in Your Name, returning the wicked of the world unto you. Then all the inhabitants of the world will recognize and know that to you every knee should bend and to Your Name every tongue should pledge. Before You, Lord our God, they will bow and prostrate themselves, and render honor unto the glory of Your Name; they will all accept upon themselves the yoke of Your kingship so that You may reign over them, soon, forever and ever. For the kingdom is Yours and You will reign in all eternity, as it is written in Your Torah: “The Lord will reign forever and ever.” And it is said: **“The Lord will be King over all the world – on that day the Lord will be One and His Name will be One.”**

Psalm 27

Each congregant recites psalm 27 to his or herself. The leader recites the opening and concluding verses (in bold text) aloud.

Of David: The Lord is my light¹⁰ and my salvation.¹¹ Of whom shall I be afraid?

The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I dread? When evil-doers – my tormentors and opponents¹² – draw near to devour my flesh, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army may besiege me, my heart will not fear. Should warfare arise against me, in this alone I shall trust.¹³

I have asked one thing of The Lord, only this have I sought: that I may dwell in the house of The Lord all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of The Lord, and to meditate within His sanctuary.¹⁴

On the day of evil He will hide me within His shelter. He will conceal me in the innermost shelter of his tent. He will lift me up upon a rock. And now he will raise my head above my foes that surround me. I will slaughter in His tent joyous offerings. I will sing and make music to The Lord. O Lord, hear my voice when I call! Favor me and answer me! For your sake has my heart spoke to me: “Seek his presence!” O God, I seek your presence! Do not conceal your countenance from me! Do not repel your servant in anger! You have been my help. Do not forsake me, do not abandon me, O God of my salvation!

¹⁰ The Midrash understands this as a reference to Rosh HaShanah.

¹¹ The salvation mentioned here is the atonement of the holiday season. For Jews it refers to the atonement of Yom Kippur, for Noahides the atonement of Sukkot.

¹² The evil-doers and opponents mentioned in this psalm are primarily internal. They are the devices of the *yetzer ha-ra*, the evil inclination. They are also the memories and emotions associated with one’s past misdeeds. These memories often torment a person and hamper their ability to return to G-d. This will be discussed more in a future lesson.

¹³ Rashi and Radak explain that this refers to the opening line “HaShem is my light and my salvation,” which is the process of Rosh HaShanah and subsequent atonement. One must trust in this process. Once a person has returned to HaShem and reestablished a positive relationship with G-d, G-d will protect and shelter him. Alternatively, Ibn Ezra explains that this phrase refers to the next sentence: *I have asked one thing of HaShem, only this have I sought: that I may dwell in the house of HaShem all the days of my life...* One should trust in G-d because he (the penitent) ultimately desires spiritual success and not the vain achievements of this world.

¹⁴ Writes the Malbim, that despite the many desires and needs a person may have, the desire to know his creator is the ultimate, all inclusive desire of the soul.

Though my father and mother have abandoned me,¹⁵ The Lord shall gather me in. Teach me your way, O Lord, and on account of my watchful foes¹⁶ set me upon a straight path. Do not give me over to their wishes for they have set against me false witnesses who breathe violence.

Had I not believed¹⁷ that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of life!¹⁸ Hope to the Lord! Be strong and He will give you courage¹⁹ – and hope to the Lord!

Greetings

The traditional greeting for Rosh HaShanah is:

May you be inscribed and sealed, immediately, for a good life and for peace.

And,

A good and sweet year!

Night Meal

*The Blessing on bread is made by the leader on 1 loaf on behalf of all present.
The custom is to use a round loaf during the holiday season.*

Leader: Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the Earth (**Guests: Amen!**)

¹⁵ Sforno explains that once a person becomes an adult he must find his own way in the world. He can no longer rely upon his parents to make choices for him. He must choose his values and make his own decisions. Although his parents are no longer his guiding voice, HaShem is always there. HaShem is eternally our father and guide.

¹⁶ The Hebrew here is a little difficult to translate. The word for “Watchful foes” is related to the word for “staring” or “gazing.” In the context of our verse, it refers to those who stare maliciously. The psalm is asking G-d to frustrate the wishes of those who maliciously watch and mock one who wishes to come back to G-d. See Radak.

¹⁷ Rashi explains: Were it not for my faith in G-d, my enemies would have destroyed me and I would have never merited to achieve closeness to G-d.

¹⁸ Meaning the World to Come. See *Brachos* 4a.

¹⁹ Strength in faith is the ultimate source of all courage.

While still holding the loaf, the leader recites:

Leader: Blessed are you, HaShem, our God, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season! **(Guests: Amen!)**

The loaf is then cut and distributed. Each person should eat his or her slice with honey. One should refrain from speaking from after answering “Amen” until having partaken of the bread.

Simanim - Signs

The custom of simanim involves eating foods whose names or qualities invoke positive thoughts and ideas of blessing. On Rosh HaShanah, God looks into the heart of all peoples and renders judgment. Therefore, one’s mind and heart should only look for the positive on Rosh HaShanah. To set the tone for the Rosh HaShanah meal, the custom of simanim is placed at its beginning.

The source of the custom is found in the Talmud:

Abaye taught: Since you have said that a siman (the name or quality of an item) holds significance, a person should habituate himself at the start of each year to eat gourds, fenugreek, leeks, beets, and dates.²⁰

The foods listed here are important because their names or other qualities invoke concepts of blessings.

Therefore, Jews have the custom to eat foods for simanim whose names invoke positive qualities, or that taste sweet, or that have traits that are considered blessed.

There is no fixed order or list of simanim foods; indeed, many families even invent their own!

Below is an example of a traditional simanim order. Only the first siman, apples, is universal.

Apples

Every guest takes a piece of apple, dips it in honey, and then each guest makes the following blessing for his or herself:

Blessed are You, The Lord, our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

A small bit of the apple is eaten following this blessing. Then the leader then recites:

²⁰ Horayos 12a; Kerisus 6a.

Leader: May it be your will, Lord our God, that you renew us for a good and sweet year! **(Guests: Amen)**

Carrot or Fenugreek²¹

Each participant then takes a small piece of carrot or fenugreek. The leader recites:

Leader: May it be your will, Lord, our God, that our merits increase! **(Guests: Amen)**

Beets²²

Each participant takes a piece of beet and the leader recites:

Leader: May it be your will, HaShem our God, that our adversaries be removed from upon us. **(Guests: Amen)**

Pomegranate

Leader: May it be your will, HaShem our God, that our merits increase like the seeds of a pomegranate. **(Guests: Amen)**

Fish

Leader: May it be your will, HaShem our God, that we be fruitful and multiply like the fish of the sea. **(Guests: Amen)**

There are many, many, more simanim that are, like these, based on Aramaic, Hebrew, or Yiddish wordplay. It is appropriate for Noahides to add more based on their own languages. Some people, in fact, eat raisins, praying for a “raise in...,” followed by celery, for “salary!”

The only general rules for simanim are: no bitter or sharp tasting foods, and that the prayer formula: May it be your will, Lord, our God... is recited before each siman is eaten.

Words of Torah

During the course of the meal, those present should be careful not to speak ill of anyone or anything, focusing only on good things and good thoughts. The discussion should include much Torah, goals for the New Year, and prayers and blessings for spiritual and material successes.

²¹ The reason for this *simon* is that the Yiddish word for carrots is *mehren*, which also means *to increase*. Fenugreek is *rubya* in Aramaic, which also implies abundance and increase.

²² Beets, in Aramaic, is *silka*. This is similar to the word *salek*, which means *to remove from upon*.

Blessing After the Meal

Psalm 67²³

For the Conductor upon the *Neginos*, a Psalm, a song: May God favor us and bless us, may He illuminate His countenance with us, *Selah*. To make known Your way upon the earth, among all the nations Your salvation. Then peoples will acknowledge You, O God, the peoples will acknowledge You – all of them. Nations will be glad and sing for Joy, because you will judge the peoples fairly and guide with fairness the nations on the earth, *Selah*! Then peoples will acknowledge you, O God, the peoples will acknowledge You – all of them! The earth will then have yielded its produce, may God, our God, bless us, May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear him!

At the conclusion of the meal, the following blessing is recited either by all together, each person to him or herself, or by the leader on behalf of all present, who respond “Amen.”

**Blessed is the God of the universe of
Whose bounty we have eaten.**

²³ The Jewish practice is to recite Psalm 126 before concluding the meal. This psalm expresses the hope for redemption of the Jewish people. Psalm 67, however, is more appropriate for Noahides because it refers to the entire world and its peoples coming to know God. It also refers to God as the source of all blessing, food, and produce.