

The Four Children of Rosh HaShanah

4

Introduction and Instructions

A core theme of Rosh HaShanah is CHANGE.

The Hebrew word "*Shanah*"—meaning year—shares its root with the word "*Shinui*"—meaning "change." We could thus creatively reread Rosh HaShanah—the "Head of the Year"—as the "Head that Changes"!

Rosh HaShanah is all about the mind that changes—the head that turns—its lessons learned. It is the yearly celebration of a mind, a life, a world, re-born. This is our time to think of how we might want to "try on" new and improved ways of being, thinking and speaking as we take off into a new year.

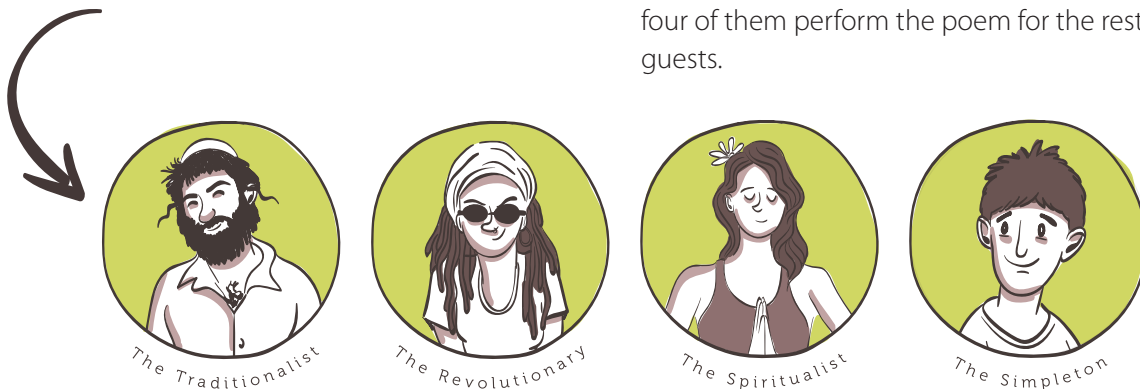
This spoken-word poem gives readers a chance to try on new characters. It is to be read in four voices—like the Four Children of the Passover *Seder*.

Invite one guest to play each character. The four characters are: The Traditionalist, The Revolutionary, The Spiritualist and The Simpleton.

Ask each reader to get into character. Embellishments and dramatizations are welcome. For instance, the Simpleton can be read innocently, like a child—perhaps curious, perhaps clueless. The Spiritualist could be read meditatively. The Traditionalist could add props of religious garb, such as a prayer shawl or a prayer book. The Revolutionary—read with fervor!

Feel free to add accents or costumes. But most importantly, add *yourself*. Notice if there are aspects of these archetypal characters that you lean toward, or others that you shy away from. For instance, perhaps you're usually a sophisticated thinker. Use this reading to try being the Simpleton. What does it feel like to look at the world through simple, childlike, eyes? Or, if you are far from rebellious, perhaps try being the Revolutionary and see what it brings up for you.

Below you will find four sets of the complete poem. Each set highlights a different character. Hand out a set to each of your four players and then have the four of them perform the poem for the rest of your guests.



After you have finished the reading, have one of your guests facilitate a discussion. Some trigger questions might include:

- Which character did you most identify with? Which one was hardest for you to empathize with?
- What changes would you like to welcome into your new year?
- What new traits would you like to embody? What new roles would you like to play?
- What would you like to hold onto and conserve?
- What would it be like to try on a different character?

Experiment. Explore. Enjoy!



The Traditionalist



The Revolutionary



The Spiritualist



The Simpleton



Rosh HaShanah Is...

By Chaya Lester



The Simpleton:

Rosh HaShanah is apples and honey.
Is new shoes and hair combed-through.
Is candle-light and distant cousins.
Is something NEW.

The Traditionalist:

Rosh HaShanah is apples dipped in *holy*,
not just honey...
Is as OLD as the universe.
Is the Book of Life.
Is a stack of prayers
read verse by sublime verse.

The Spiritualist:

Rosh HaShanah is the FIRST of all firsts.
The first inceptive in-breath of the Divine
beyond words, *beyond* appearances,
where we touch *beyond* time
just in time...to realign...

The Revolutionary:

Because God knows it's about time
that we realigned!
And realized our immense and overwhelming
need for CHANGE!
Rosh HaShanah is a nuclear reactor
of getting our proverbial act together.
Righting our wrongs.
Making the world better...and better...and better.

The Simpleton:

And so we change our clothes...our calendars...
our lines.

The Revolutionary:

Forget the facades, just so long as you change
your MIND!
Take your old bottled-up self & learn to Recycle,
Reform, Refine!

The Spiritualist:

And speaking of refined...
Let us not forget to pause, to pursue our insides
so much more than our very many *outs*...
Let us pray, chant & meditate...
That we may have no need to shout...

The Traditionalist:

For the only thing shouting
will be the ram's horn
as our prayers form
a tidal wave that hits the very shore
of what we can only call heaven...
– else what's a heaven for?!

The Revolutionary:

Though perhaps heaven also needs a few
reforms?
Especially this year...haven't we counted far
too many days of war?
Perhaps heaven has given us a bit *too much* to
mourn?

The Simpleton:

I've seen the loss of children, of soldiers,
of parents, of friends.

The Spiritualist:

The shocking slaughter of justice, of safety,
of innocence.

The Traditionalist:

We stand here humbled and gawking at the
state of the world.
We've seen her horrors and sorrows – haunting
and absurd.
When, dear God, will the Shofar of *real*
redemption be heard?

The Revolutionary:

Sometimes longing for something better is the
best that we've got...





The Spiritualist:

And sometimes, she who is rich is she who is happy with her lot.

The Simpleton:

So we know that we have lost a lot...but what have we gained?

The Spiritualist:

A deepened connection...

The Traditionalist:

A higher direction...

The Revolutionary:

A heightened push for change!

The Spiritualist:

So let us breathe and stretch,
and strain our necks
into this next horizon of a year
keeping our eyes on the prize of ideals we hold dear.

Revolutionary:

Lofty ideals of peace in the face of violence,
justice in the face of crime.

Traditionalist:

Turn our eyes from greed to giving.
Open our hands, our hearts, our minds.

Spiritualist: And this day will be our haven

Revolutionary: and our engine

Simpleton: our sense of connection

Traditionalist: to tradition

Spiritualist: and inspiration

Revolutionary: Vive la revolution!

Spiritualist: A celebration

Simpleton: of apples

Traditionalist: dipped in *holy*

Revolutionary: with grit & determination

Traditionalist: with prayers and prostrations

Simpleton: with family, with friends

Spiritualist: and spiritual elation.

ALL TOGETHER:

As we raise a L'Chaim to our differences
and the Oneness that made us!
Bless each other with a year of
sweet,
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CHANGES!





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