

# Shavuot Seder Seder of the Seven Prophetesses



## Introduction to the Seder

While I was putting together the Rosh Chodesh Guide for Sivan a few years ago, I had an idea for a Shavuot seder. According to the Kohenet Wheel of the Year, Sivan is the month of the Prophetess. It makes sense, as this is the month of prophecy and the revelation at Mt. Sinai. According to the Babylonian Talmud there are seven prophetesses in Jewish tradition

“The rabbis taught: Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses preached to Israel...Who were the seven prophetesses? Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, Esther.” ([Tractate Megillah](#))

This combined with two Shavuot traditions and became the basis for the idea of this seder. The two traditions are: 1) Tradition of studying Torah all night of Shavuot eve and 2) Tradition of eating dairy on Shavuot. Neither of these is Halachah, or Jewish law, but instead both are Minchagim – traditions or customs. The tradition of staying up all night to study Torah is to prepare us for the personal revelation received at Sinai on Shavuot day. It is said that at Sinai we each, individually, heard the voice of G!d/ dess speak to us in our own way.

The full texts for each prophetess are NOT included in the seder. The texts can be found in any Tanach, Chumash or for free at [Mechon-Mamre.org](#). The suggested texts are just a few texts that you could include. I highly encourage you to explore a variety of modern and ancient commentary and midrash on each of the prophetesses. See the end of the seder for additional resources.

There are a lot of different reasons given for the tradition of eating dairy on Shavuot; everything from agrarian to kabbalistic. I invite you to choose whichever one (or ones) are relevant and resonant for you. For the purposes of this seder, choose a different cheese, dairy product, or dairy dish for each of the seven prophetesses. This, I think could be a great deal of fun and intellectual work. I'd love to hear what dairy product you think should be assigned to each prophetess. And, of course, try to use local, ethically farmed dairy products.

Decide for yourself if you want to nibble as you study; eat the representative food at the end of studying about each prophetess; or begin each section with a bite of food and wine. Remember that this is also the end of the counting of the Omer and the wheat harvest, so adding good bread/or wheat crackers would be an appropriate addition.

As an additional element you could also make Ushpizot cards for Sukkot featuring the seven prophetesses. It would be a great way to tie the cycle of the seasons together. An easy way to do this might be to make print out a page for each with key texts about and using the words of the prophetesses and make little scrolls out of them. You could write the name of the prophetess on the back of the scroll so it is visible when you roll it up.

You could also add first fruits of the season to your seder, as Shavuot is also the Feast of First Fruits. Needless to say, without wine there is no blessing – so go find a few good bottles of wine to compliment your cheese.

I hope you will share your experience with this seder at [www.peelapom.com](#), [facebook.com/peelapom](#) or at [PunkTorah.org!](#)

***Chag Sameach!***

Carly  
»»'37



# Shavuot Seder Seder of the Seven Prophetesses



## Order of Service

1. Light Candles
2. Blessing over Torah Study
3. Blessing over Wine and Foods
4. The Prophetesses
  - 1) Sarah
  - 2) Miriam
  - 3) Deborah
  - 4) Hannah
  - 5) Abigail
  - 6) Huldah
  - 7) Esther
5. Blessing of Ushpizot Scrolls
6. Closing Prayers

## Lighting of Candles

נברך שכינה אלותינו רוח העולם אשר קדשתנו במצותיה וצונו להדליק נר של יום טוב

*N'varech Shekhina Eloteinu Ruach HaOlam asher kid'shatnu b'mitzvotaha o'tzivatnu l'hadlik neir shel Yom Tov.*

Let us bless the Divine Presence, Spirit of the World, who makes us holy through miztvot and commands us to light the festival lights.

### The Women's Prayer (Traditional Sephardic Blessing<sup>1</sup>)

With these candles  
We pray to God  
The God of our fathers  
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob  
To grant us good life and health  
To all my dear ones  
And the whole world

With these candles  
We pray to God  
The God of our mothers  
Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel  
To grant us good life and health  
To all my dear ones and the whole world

*Light seven candles, one for each prophetess.*

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<sup>1</sup> Originally found at [RitualWell.org](http://RitualWell.org), but can no longer access my source link.



## *Blessing before Torah Study*

### **A Prayer Before Prayer** *(Recite Together)*

I now prepare  
to unify my whole self –  
heart,  
mind,  
consciousness,  
body,  
passions,  
with this holy community,  
with the Jewish people everywhere  
with all people everywhere  
will all life and being.

To commune with the Source of All Being  
May I find the words,  
the music, the movements,  
that will put me in touch  
with the great light of God.

May the beauty of God rest upon us  
May God establish the works of our hands,  
and may the works of our hands establish God.

*~ From the Elat Chayyim High-Holiday Machzor, as found at RitualWell.org*

### **Optional Songs:**

*See Appendix 2 for where to find audio tracks of these songs.*

#### **Sweet Surrender**

We are opening up in sweet surrender to the luminous love light of the One  
We are opening up in sweet surrender to the luminous love light of the One  
We are opening  
We are opening  
*~ Rainbow Community*

#### **Return Again**

Return again  
Return again  
Return to the land of your soul

Return to who you are  
Return to what you are  
Return to where you are born and reborn again

Return again  
Return again  
Return to the land of your soul  
*~ Shlomo Carlebach*



## Blessing over Food

Depending on what food you use will depend on what blessings you include. I've listed several food blessing below that you can use for this section. All of the blessings below are in the feminine and use the active blessing format of "Let us bless." Please use the food and wine blessings(if included) that are appropriate for what you are eating and your Jewish practice.

### Blessing over Dairy<sup>2</sup>

נברך שכינה אלותינו רוח העולם, הנותנת מזון מן בעלי-חיים של הארץ  
N'varech Shekhinah Eloteinu Ruach HaOlam HaNotenet Mazon Min Baalei Chayyim Shel HaAretz

Let us bless the Divine Presence, Spirit of the World, Who Provides us with Nourishment through the Creatures of the Earth

### General Blessing over Food<sup>3</sup>

This is the "when in doubt" or if food doesn't fit into any category traditional food blessing.

נברך שכינה אלותינו רוח העולם שהכול נהיה בדברה  
N'varech Shekhinah Eloteinu Ruach HaOlam Shehakol Nihyeh Bi-D'varah

Let us bless the Divine Presence, Spirit of the World, at Whose Word all Things Come into Being.

See the Appendix for additional food and wine blessings.

## Sarah

"Sarah, as it is written [Gen. xi. 29]: "The father of Milcah and the father of Yiscah." And R. Itz'hak said: By Yiscah is meant Sarah. Why was she called Yiscah? Because that signifies *seeing*, and she was a *seer* through the Holy Spirit." ([Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Megillah](#))

Texts to explore and study for Sarah:

- [Genesis 17:15-17:27](#)
- [Genesis 18:1-18:15](#)
- [Genesis 21:1-21:22](#)
- [Genesis 23:1-23:20](#)

Closing Blessing for Sarah:

"We call upon Sarah the priestess, co-founder of Judaism, who gave us the candle-lighting ceremony. Beautiful and holy princess, she celebrated in sacred groves and a simple tent, bringing the light of the Shekhinah wherever she traveled. Laughing mother of ageless beauty, bless our way."  
~ [Leah Novick, excerpted from Appeal to the Matriarchs](#)

<sup>2</sup> This is a blessing I wrote for a Tu B'Shevat seder that I created as part of a project for Kohenet. It is intended as a specific blessing for meat or dairy. Much thanks to R'Jill Hammer and Shoshana Jedwab for their incredible guidance and thoughtful help with Hebrew wording of this blessing.

<sup>3</sup> Depending on what food you use will depend on what blessings you include. As the seder primarily focuses on dairy, for most the dairy blessing should suffice. I have included "shehakol" in case you are having other foods too. If you are more traditional in your practice, please include whatever blessings required for you.



## Miriam

“Miriam, as it is written [Ex. xv. 26]: “Then took Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron.” Aaron’s, and not Moses’ sister? Said R. Na’hman in the name of Rabh: She had prophesied even when she had been yet but Aaron’s sister, before Moses’ birth, and she said: In the future my mother will give birth to a child that will deliver the Israelites. Finally, when Moses was born, the whole house was filled with light. And her father rose, and kissed her on her head, and said: Daughter, thy prophecy is fulfilled. Afterward, when he was cast into the river, the father asked: Daughter, what has become of thy prophecy? And this is what is written [ibid. ii. 4]: “And his sister placed herself afar off, to ascertain what would be done to him,” *i.e.*, to know what would be the end of her prophecy.” ([Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Megillah](#))

Texts to explore and study for Miriam:

- [Exodus 2:1-2:10](#)
- [Exodus 15:20-15:27](#)
- [Numbers 12:1-12:16](#)
- [Numbers 20:1-20:6](#)

*Closing Blessing for Miriam:*

“Miriam, charismatic spiritual and political leader, you challenged male authority from childhood and taught through ecstatic music and dance. You nourished us in the desert, watering our bodies and souls. Dancing mother, guide us now, through another wilderness of confusion, showing us the way to restore feminine energy to a wounded planet.” ~ [Leah Novick, excerpted from Appeal to the Matriarchs](#)

## Deborah

“Deborah, as it is written [Judges, ix. 4]: “And Deborah, a prophetess.” ... “Said R. Na’hman: Pride does not become women. Two women were proud, and they both had unlovely names: one was called Bee (Deborah) and one Cat (Huldah). Of Deborah it is written [Judges, iv. 6]: “And she sent and called Barak and went not herself”; and of Huldah it is said [II Kings, xxii. 15]: “Say unto the man that hath sent you to me”; and she did not say, “unto the king.”” ([Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Megillah](#))

Texts to explore and study for Deborah:

- [Judges 4:4-4:14](#)
- [Judges 5:1-5:31](#)

*Closing Blessing for Deborah:*

“Deborah, great warrior, judge and mother in Israel, your fiery example inspires us to take action. We long to know more of your words and yearn to take your poetry into our hearts and minds. Warrior mother, we need your energy now to sacralize the political and create leaders that embody your prophetic leadership.” ~ [Leah Novick, excerpted from Appeal to the Matriarchs](#)



## Hannah

“Hannah, as it is written [I Sam. ii. I]: “And Hannah prayed and said, My heart is glad in the Lord, my horn is exalted through the Lord.” My *horn* is exalted, and not my *flask*. David and Solomon, who were anointed with the horn, their dynasty endured; but Saul and Jehu, who were anointed with a flask, their dynasties did not last.” ([Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Megillah](#))

Texts to explore and study for Hannah:

- [1 Samuel 1:1-1:28](#)

*Closing Blessing for Hannah:*

“Hannah, woman of personal prayer, your petition is our model for individual appeals to the divine. You called out directly to God for help, transcending the conventional service. Prayerful mother, we need your davenning now, so that we might be empowered to attract divine healing into the barren places in our lives.” ~ [Leah Novick, excerpted from Appeal to the Matriarchs](#)

## Abigail

Generally, I've only been including key texts for each women, but with Abigail and interesting pattern appeared that was worth further exploration. She is repeatedly referred to as Abigail, wife of Nabal the Carmelite – even after she is David's wife. Because of this interesting element, I have included each time her name is mentioned in this way, as well as her key text 1 Samuel 25:2-25:44.

“Abigail, as it is written [I Sam. xxv. 31]: “And when the Lord will do good unto my lord.” She prophesied that he would be king.” ([Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Megillah](#))

Texts to explore and study for Abigail:

- [1 Samuel 25:2-25:44](#)
- [1 Samuel 27:1-27:3](#)
- [1 Samuel 30:4](#)
- [2 Samuel 2:2](#)
- [2 Samuel 3:2](#)

*Closing Blessing for Abigail:*

“Avigayil, forceful woman of Carmel, you foresaw David's future; feeding and welcoming the outlaw chief when his life was in jeopardy. Becoming his wife in hard times, before he was king and psalmist, you supported the emergence of genius. Clairvoyant mother, send us your insight so we might have the strength to trust and follow our intuitions.” ~ [Leah Novick, excerpted from Appeal to the Matriarchs](#)



## Huldah

“Huldah, as it is said [II Kings, xxii. 14]: “Huldah the prophetess.” ... Said R. Na’hman: Pride does not become women. Two women were proud, and they both had unlovely names: one was called Bee (Deborah) and one Cat (Huldah). Of Deborah it is written [Judges, iv. 6]: “And she sent and called Barak and went not herself”; and of Huldah it is said [II Kings, xxii. 15]: “Say unto the man that hath sent you to me”; and she did not say, “unto the king.”” ([Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Megillah](#))

Texts to explore and study for Huldah:

- [2 Kings 22:1-20](#)

*Closing Blessing for Huldah:*

“Huldah, preacher at the Southern gates of the Temple, you were consulted on important religious matters, like your cousin Jeremiah. You, whose teaching comes to us in your advice to King Josiah, are needed now. Prophetic mother, help us find the deep learning of enlightenment and peace.”

~ [Leah Novick, excerpted from Appeal to the Matriarchs](#)

## Esther

“And Esther, because it is written [Esther, v. 7]: “Esther put on royalty.” It should be written, “royal apparel”? That means, she clothed herself in the Holy Spirit, and this is inferred from an analogy of expression; here it is written, “she put on,” and in I Chron. xii. 18, “a spirit invested Amassoi.” As there the Holy Spirit is meant, so here.” ([Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Megillah](#))

Texts to explore and study for Esther:

- [Esther 2:7-2:23](#)
- [Esther 4:1-4:16](#)
- [Esther 5:1-5:8](#)
- [Esther 7:1-7:10](#)
- [Esther 8:3-8:8](#)
- [Esther 9:12-9:14](#)
- [Esther 9:26-9:32](#)

*Closing Blessing for Esther:*

“Esther, gentle queen with premonitory knowledge that propelled you to save your people, whether you are historical or mythological, we are touched by your story. How you must have feared your awesome destiny, overcoming fear with transcendent faith. Royal mother, bless us with inner strength to overcome the obstacles that block us from fulfilling our sacred assignments.”

~ [Leah Novick, excerpted from Appeal to the Matriarchs](#)



## Closing Prayers

*These prayers should be the final thing you do, including eat. If you want to have a formal meal then you should do these prayers after that to close out the seder. Take a moment here to create/finish your scrolls. Tie ribbon or string around them to hold them closed, as you will not be seeing them again until Sukkot. Hold them in your hands and just take a moment to reflect, before moving on to the closing prayers.*

### **Abbreviated Birkat HaMazon** (Blessing after the Meal)

*Again, please follow your own practice here. This is a simple abbreviated Birkat for those that are not Orthodox.*

Blessed is the master of Bread.

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָה מַלְכָּה דְעָלְמָע מְרֵי דְהַי פְּתָא

*Brich rachamana malka d'alma ma'rei d'hai pita.*

### **Final Blessing:**

We honor you, prophetesses who have lead the way. May we carry you in our hearts through the summer that we may reap the harvests that you have sown. We carry you with us until you may take your place as honored guests in our Sukkah.

Blessed be the prophetesses who speak truth through all generations.



## Appendix 1: Food Blessings

### Blessing over Wine

נברך שכינה אלוֹתֵינו רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵאת פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן  
*N'varech Shekhina Eloteinu Ruach HaOlam Boreit Pri HaGafen*

Let us bless the Divine Presence, Spirit of the World, Creator of the Fruit of the Vine

### Blessing over Bread

נברך שכינה אלוֹתֵינו רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיָאָה לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ  
*N'varech Shekhina Eloteinu Ruach HaOlam HaMotzei Lechem Min HaAretz*

Let us bless the Divine Presence, Spirit of the World, Who Brings Forth Bread from the Earth

### Blessing over Fruit from Trees

נברך שכינה אלוֹתֵינו רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיָאָה לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ  
*N'varech Shekhinah Eloteinu Ruach HaOlam Boreit Pri HaEtz*

Let us bless the Divine Presence, Spirit of the World, Creator of the Fruit of the Tree

### Blessing over Fruit of the Earth

נברך שכינה אלוֹתֵינו רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵאת פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה  
*N'varech Shekhinah Eloteinu Ruach HaOlam Boreit Pri HaAdamah*

Let us bless the Divine Presence, Spirit of the World, Creator of the Fruit of the Earth



## Appendix 2: Resources

### Dairy for Shavout

- [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish\\_Holidays/Shavuot/At\\_Home/Foods.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Shavuot/At_Home/Foods.shtml)
- <http://www.aish.com/h/sh/r/48969771.html>
- [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/2160/jewish/Eating-Dairy-Foods.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2160/jewish/Eating-Dairy-Foods.htm)

### Readings for Prophetesses:

- **Free Tanach:** <http://www.mechon-mamre.org>
- **Peeling a Pomegranate Book Store:**  
[http://astore.amazon.com/peelingapomeg-20?\\_encoding=UTF8&node=25](http://astore.amazon.com/peelingapomeg-20?_encoding=UTF8&node=25)
- **Appeal to the Matriarchs:**  
[http://telshemesh.org/air/appeal\\_to\\_the\\_matriarchs\\_leah\\_novick.html](http://telshemesh.org/air/appeal_to_the_matriarchs_leah_novick.html)
- **Tractate Megillah:** <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/t04/meg02.htm>

### Songs:

- **Return Again:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYvpbcImTnc>
- **Sweet Surrender:** <http://vimeo.com/37837400>
- **Birkat HaMazon:**  
[http://www.ritualwell.org/sites/default/files/imce\\_uploads/image.2006-03-10.6628833074.wmv](http://www.ritualwell.org/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/image.2006-03-10.6628833074.wmv)

### Ushpizot – Sukkot Ancestor Flags

- <http://jhom.com/calendar/tishrei/ushpizin.htm>
- <http://www.ushpizot.org/>
- <http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/ushpizot-guide>
- <http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/ushpizata-egalitarian-seder-ushpizin>

