

1. W. H. Davenport Adams, *Curiosities of Superstition* (1902), pg. 127

It was on Halloween, or All Hallows' Eve – the evening of the 31st of October – that Superstition ran riot [in Celtic society], because on that particular evening the supernatural influences of the other world were supposed to be specially prevalent, and the power of divination was likewise believed to be at its height... Apples are a relic of the old Celtic fairy lore. They are thrown into a tub of water, and you endeavour to catch one in your mouth as they bob round and round in provoking fashion. When you have caught one, you peel it carefully, and pass the long strip of peel thrice, sunwise, round your head; after which you throw it over your shoulder, and it falls to the ground in the shape of the initial letter of your true love's name.

The Origins of Apples and Honey

2. Talmud, Keritot 6a

Abbaye said: Since we say that signs are substantive, one should accustom himself to eat gourds and fenugreek, leek, beets and dates at the start of the year.

3. Rabbi Yaakov Baal haTurim (13th-14th century Germany, Spain), Tur Orach Chaim 583

In Germany it is customary to start the Rosh Hashanah meal by dipping a sweet apple into honey, asking Gd to bless us with a sweet new year.

4. Apples Taste; Medicine; Relationship with Gd; History; Mysticism

5. Rabbi Jacob Moellin (14th-15th century Germany), Maharil, Laws of Rosh HaShanah 7

Why eat an apple? Are there no sweeter fruits than the apple? One may explain that it hints at the apple orchard which is known to Kabbalists. "And he said: See, the scent of my son is as the scent of the field."

6. Rabbi Jacob Moellin (14th-15th century Germany), Maharil, Laws of Rosh HaShanah 7

The reason we eat sweet foods is to declare that Gd will decree a good and sweet year for us.

7. Rabbi Natronai Gaon (9th century Babylon), Responsa, Orach Chaim 179

This is a good reading of omens, and sages and most of Babylon are accustomed to do this. On Erev Rosh haShanah they take meat or heads and cook them in *tisni* or something sweet. They do not cook with vinegar. They say, "We will eat sweet things and meat and rich cooked foods, so that the whole year will be sweet, and there will be no bad thing and no trouble.

8. Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel HaLevi (12th-13th century Germany), Raavyah 2: Rosh haShanah 547

We eat *tisni* with meat and drink honey and sweet things so that the coming year will be rich and sweet. And so it is said in Ezra (8:10), "Go and eat rich foods..."

Superstition? [Nichush]

9. Leviticus 19:26

Do not eat upon the blood, do not read omens and do not calculate times.

10. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Idolatry 11:16

All of these are words of falsehood and deception, which the early idolaters used to trick the nations to follow them...

11. Rabbi Moses Nachmanides (13th century Spain), Commentary of Ramban to Deuteronomy 18:13

The meaning of "You shall be complete with HaShem your Gd" is that we are to dedicate our hearts to Gd alone, and trust that Gd alone engineers all and knows the truth of all future events, and from Gd alone we should seek the future, from His prophets or His pious ones, meaning the *urim v'tumim*.

12. Rabbi Ovadia Seforno (15th-16th century Italy), Commentary to Deuteronomy 18:14
That you should not trust the words of the time-analyzers and sorcerers, as the sages said, "There is no *maza* for Israel."
13. Genesis 24:12-14
And [Eliezer] said: Gd, Master of my master Abraham, prepare before me today, and perform kindness with my master, Abraham. Behold, I will stand at the well of water, and the daughters of the citizens will come to draw water. The girl to whom I will say, "Please incline your pitcher and I will drink," and she will say, "Drink, and I will also give to your camels to drink," she is the one You have shown for Your servant Isaac, and thus I will know that You have performed kindness with my master.
14. Talmud, Chullin 95b
Any omen-reading which is not like that of Eliezer the servant of Abraham and Jonathan the son of Saul is not [forbidden as] omen-reading.
15. Genesis 24:21
And [Eliezer] waited mutely for her, silent, to know whether Gd had made him successful, or not.
16. Tosafot (12th-14th century Western Europe) to Chullin 95b כאליעזר
Perhaps this sage thought Eliezer did not give her the bracelets until she told him whose daughter she was.
17. Talmud, Horiyot 12a
Abbaye said: Since we say that signs are substantive, one should accustom himself to see gourds and fenugreek, leek, beets and dates at the start of the year.
18. Rabbi Moses Nachmanides (13th century Spain), Commentary of Ramban to Genesis 12:6
Know that all of the decrees of Heaven become irreversibly enduring once they cease being decrees and become active and visible... And therefore Gd had Abraham begin to take control of Israel, and He made Abraham model all that would happen with his descendants.
19. Talmud, Shabbat 55a
Gd never decreed a good measure and then recanted and caused harm, except one instance...
20. Rabbi Judah Loeb [Maharal] (16th century Prague), Beer haGolah, Be'er 2
Now, know and understand this, for it is an amazing insight, to create for a heavenly decree an emulation and sign below, so that the good will come to pass and the decree will be fulfilled for the good. Therefore, it is fitting to create a sign and emulation, as we find the prophets did. This is the matter of emulating in eating (seeing) at the start of the year items which have a good sign, so that the decree will emerge into reality, and the good decree will thereby be fulfilled. This is not *nichush*; it is only preparation for the fulfillment of the decree for the good. This is what they meant with "Since we say that signs are substantive," for it is substantive in this regard, that via the sign the decree will emerge into positive reality.
21. Nechemiah 8:10
And he said to them: Go and eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and send portions to those who have none prepared, for today is sacred for our Gd. Do not be sad, for the joy of Gd is your strength.