

As Prophetic Words Rise About 2017's Rosh HaShanah, Here's What You Need to Know About This Holy Day

Last week, Israelis began excitedly preparing for Rosh HaShanah, the secular Jewish New Year. As you may know, Israel observes two main New Year's. According to Exodus 12:2, the new year which God gave us starts in the spring. The secular or civil New Year's celebrated the first day of the seventh month ("Tishrei").

Rosh HaShana literally means "Head of the Year." The holiday falls this year on Sept. 20-22. It is traditionally celebrated with liturgical worship, merry greetings and gatherings, gift-giving and sounding the shofar. A hearty consumption of apples and honey symbolizes hopes for a sweet new year. Prophetic words about the upcoming year (which will be 5778) now add to the mix, as more and more Christians celebrate this special day.

It is good that Gentile followers of Messiah are engaging in the biblically Hebraic roots of our faith. We Messianic Jews encourage your authentic celebration of the feasts. What you may not know, however, is that some of the most critical, biblical aspects of Rosh HaShana are overlooked by many Jews and Christians due to a focus on extra-biblical traditions. Restoring the purity of God's appointed day in your celebration could bring even greater blessing to you, others—and Him.

What are some ways we can restore the foundations of this week's feast known as Rosh Hashanah? First, Rosh HaShanah as the Jewish new year is not a biblical feast. It is not

mentioned or even directly referenced in the Scriptures. The feast that is commanded on what has been popularized as Rosh HaShanah is actually the day of blasting trumpets (Num. 29:1) or according to Leviticus 23:24, memorial of trumpet blasting. The Hebrew name for the day is Yom Teruah.

There is reason to believe Rosh HaShanah was likely observed by the ancient Israelites. It developed as a major holiday during the Jewish exile in Babylon in order to accommodate the pagan culture in which Israel had become immersed. Eventually it overshadowed any national emphasis on the new year God actually designated for His people, which is the first day of the first month, called "Nissan." Unfortunately, Rosh HaShanah also eroded much of the significance of Yom Teruah. This is reflected in the fact Yom Teruah is the only feast rarely called by its biblical name. So to start, to help restore the pure essence and meaning of the day, Rosh HaShanah ought rightly be called, and observed as, Yom Teruah.

One rationale for the replacement of Yom Teruah with Rosh HaShanah, and resulting new year focus, is the rabbinic belief that Yom Teruah marks either the creation of the world, or of Adam and Eve, or both. (Believing in both could impact the meaning of seven "days" of creation.) This is based partly on a complex, mystical word play on the first word of Scripture, *bereishit*. In any case, I believe we would do best to call the day as God calls it, namely, a day to sound trumpets:

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you will have a holy assembly. You will do no ordinary work. It is a day of blowing the trumpets for you. You will offer a burnt offering as a pleasing aroma to the Lord ... [a] grain offering] ... [and other offerings] made by fire to the Lord" (Num. 29:1-6).

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath, a memorial with the blowing of

trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no regular work, and you shall offer a food offering made by fire to the Lord (Lev. 23:23-25).

According to the Scriptures, God wants us to honor what we call Rosh HaShanah as a Sabbath. Instead of our usual daily work, we are to gather in holy assembly with His people. He instructs us to make temple offerings and sacrifice, but thankfully, the atonement of Yeshua fulfills this command. In Yeshua, we are to approach Yom Teruah (and everyday) with a spirit of sacrificial surrender: "I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1). Perhaps most importantly, the Scriptures say God wants us blasting trumpets loudly and repeatedly throughout the day. According to tradition, the shofar was (and is) sounded in Israel 100 times.

Understanding certain Hebrew nuances of the name Yom Teruah can help us grasp deeper realities of the day. The Hebrew word which is translated "sound trumpets" or "blow trumpets" in Numbers 29 and Leviticus 23 is *teruah*. According to Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew root for *teruah* means (1) to disfigure or shatter by breaking; (2) to split ears by loud noise, such as by shouting for joy, sounding an alarm or intense crying and (3) loud destruction or triumph. Based on the root meanings of *teruah*, Yom Teruah can be translated as a day of loud clamor or noise, loud acclamations of joy, piercingly loud alarms, shattering battle cries and jubilee. This is significant!

Collectively, the Hebrew meanings of *teruah* describe kingdom breakthrough. Not just humankind, but the earth and spirit realms may be affected by the ear-piercing cries, wails and triumphant declarations and decrees released this day through the shofar. One (admittedly extra-biblical) possibility is that heaven's shofars are sounded over the earth realm on Yom

Teruah. As we come into agreement with the declarations and decrees of YHVH by likewise blowing trumpets, His kingdom on earth is released in greater measure.

When Yom Teruah was divinely instituted, the Israelites would have associated shofar blasting with their first and only direct, national encounter with YHVH. The literal heaven- and earth-shaking encounter took place at Mount Sinai. After a great and mighty shofar blast, God gave His people the gift of His holy Law (Ex. 19:13, 16-19; 20:18). Therefore, to the ancient Israelites, Yom Teruah would have served as a memorial—but also reaffirmation or renewal—of divine covenant: “If you will faithfully obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My special possession out of all the nations ...Then all the people answered together and said, ‘ All that the Lord has spoken we will do: (Ex. 19:5, 8a). If you, too, are in covenant relationship with God, Yom Teruah can be a special day to remember and reaffirm or renew covenant as the shofar blasts.

Before long, trumpets were associated in Israel with other key events. They were used to call sacred assemblies. They sounded military battle cries to which God promised to respond: “When you go into battle ... sound a blast ... then you will be remembered by the Lord your God and rescued from your enemies” (Num. 10:1-10). If you assemble (with or without others) before God this Yom Teruah, or are engaged in battle (and who isn’t?) why not ask Him to apply trumpet blast victory to your situation?

A final primary purpose of trumpets was to declare the coronation of a king or anointing of a high priest (1 Kings 1:34, 39; 2 Kings 9:13; 11:12-14, 2 Sam. 15:10) Therefore, on Yom Teruah, observant Jews still declare the kingship of YHVH over creation. Yom Teruah is also an ideal time to declare Yeshua as King and High Priest over your life, your nation, Israel and all the earth.

With Yeshua as its focus, Yom Teruah is not just a memorial or new year celebration. It can serve as a prophetic act of intercession, worship, repentance and re-alignment with YHVH. It is also a form of spiritual warfare. "Dream" with me, for a moment. What might possibly happen if on Yom Teruah, Holy Spirit-filled shofar blasting resounded across Israel and the nations? What kingdom breakthroughs could transpire if His people around the world gathered in their respective nations, in unity by the Spirit, and sounded trumpets for a day to affirm covenant with YHVH, declare Yeshua's kingship and posture themselves for Kingdom advance?

In addition to all the above, Yom Teruah is a prophetic foreshadow of Messiah's return and resurrection of the dead. When Yeshua comes to earth, heaven's trumpets will sound loudly (1 Thess. 4:16-17, 1 Cor. 15:52, Matt. 24:30-31). Some believe that on a future Yom Teruah, followers of Yeshua will be caught up in the air to meet Him. Others say Yom Teruah is the day on which He will physically return to judge humankind. Still others say both could take place simultaneously.

Observant Jews who do not believe in Yeshua (and some who do) have traditionally regarded Yom Teruah as a day of judgment. It is said that heaven contains books in which every person's words and deeds are recorded. There are also books of life and death, and all are opened on Yom Teruah. On Yom Teruah, God carefully reviews the books. Some rabbis believe Satan is given access to heaven's court on Yom Teruah. There he stands and accuses humankind, proverbially throwing the book at us. God hears Satan's case, then gives us 10 days to repent of our sin. Ten days later He closes the books and seals our destiny for the upcoming year. The day of sealed or final judgment is known as Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26)

Such a scenario could well foreshadow the end of this age. After followers of Yeshua are caught up to join Him in the marriage supper of the Lamb, those remaining will have 10 days, so to speak, to turn to God before they are judged. If

this is so, the trumpet call this Yom Teruah offers an ideal time to praise God for the gift of forgiveness of sin and to pray for the salvation of others. He desires that none perish, but that all gain everlasting life. Pray especially for Israel's salvation as our people gather in synagogues this Yom Teruah, read His Word and leave hoping to be inscribed in God's book of life.

Yom Teruah is a day to hear, and then do, what the Spirit is saying through the shofar. It is a day to engage with fresh revelation of and from God. It is a day to celebrate a fresh start—and new year, if you will. I encourage you to eat the scroll that is trumpeted on Yom Teruah, and then, feel free to enjoy your apples and honey, too! {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .