

Today's the Day of the Shofar Blast

September this year is an intense and holy month for the Jewish people. Today, Sept. 10 is Rosh Hashanah—the Jewish New Year. Yom Kippur—the Day of Repentance follows 10 days after. The weeklong culmination is Sukkot—the Feast of Tabernacles, which begins the evening of Sept. 23.

For centuries, the high holy days have been looked at as a time of reflection and renewal for the Jewish people. Today, I am glad that many Christians are also finding spiritual meaning in experiencing these feasts and holidays, the source of which can be found in the Bible.

The Jewish New Year is a universal holiday. It is the birthday of the world, when according to Jewish tradition, God created mankind. On Rosh Hashanah, all of creation is judged as to whether they are accepting of God's dominion over all the earth. Rosh Hashanah cannot be exclusive to one religion, for by making it so, we are closing the door on universal repentance, acceptance of revelation and ultimately, redemption.

The Torah (Lev. 23:24) refers to Rosh Hashanah as the "day of the [shofar] blast," and the shofar that we blow on Rosh Hashanah contains a universal call to action. When we hear the shofar, we are supposed to remember that God remembers us that He is watching us, and He is with us. And that just like God remembers the universal "us," – all the way back to the beginning of the world when Adam and Eve were created in God's image—so, too all of their descendants must unite at the call of the shofar.

The blasts are intended to wake us up to the truth that we are loved and that we must extend that love to all beings.

The shofar is likewise universal imagery for revelation and redemption.

We read in the Rosh Hashanah liturgy about the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai long ago accompanied by the sound of the shofar:

“And the sound of the shofar became increasingly stronger... And the entire people saw the sounds and the flames and the sound of the shofar and the smoking mountain, and the people saw and trembled.”

And then another usage of the shofar sometime in the future:

“Sound the great shofar for our freedom, raise the banner to gather our exiles. Draw our scattered ones near from among the nations and bring in our dispersions from the ends of the earth. Bring us to Zion, Your to Jerusalem, home of your sanctuary.”

At Sinai, amid the sound of the shofar—we woke up to what God expects from us. And in the future, God will appear again, accompanied by the same sound—to herald the messianic age, a time of eternal peace.

In Exodus 12:2, God tells Moses, “This month shall be the beginning of months to you. It shall be the first month of the year to you” requiring the Jewish people to follow a biblical calendar that begins with Rosh Hashanah. Then, in Leviticus 23:2, God says, “Concerning the feasts of the Lord that you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My appointed feasts.”

Holiness in time is therefore manifested through God’s festivals and according to His calendar, which begins on Rosh Hashanah. And it is on this holiday, therefore that we Jews must ask ourselves if we are relating to our historical mission in this world. Have we uplifted the world? Have we been a light unto the nations?

The previous year of 5777 was marked by the jubilee anniversary of Jerusalem's reunification. In 5778, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of Israel's independence.

If all of God's children come together this year, imagine what 5779 could bring.

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