

Why the Hebrew Celebration of Rosh Chodesh Is Important for Believers

Though many are familiar with the weekly Sabbath and the yearly festivals God gave to Israel, there is another appointed time which is not as well-known.

Rosh Chodesh (literally “Head of the Month”) is observed each month at the new moon, marking the beginning of a new month on the Hebrew calendar. Saturday, September 3 marks a Rosh Chodesh heralding the beginning of the month of Elul, traditionally a month of spiritual preparation leading up to the three fall feasts of Israel: the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh HaShanah), the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot).

We see in Paul’s writings that the early believers were familiar with Rosh Chodesh, just as they were with all of God’s appointed times: *“Therefore let no one judge you regarding food, or drink, or in respect of a holy day or **new moon** or sabbath days”* (Col. 2:16).

Before the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., each of these times were marked by the sacrifices which the priests brought before the Lord. Though sacrifices were made daily and weekly on the Sabbath, God commanded special sacrifices to be made monthly as well:

“At the beginnings of your months you will offer a burnt offering to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram, seven lambs in their first year, without blemish; three-tenths of an ephah of flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for one bull; and two-tenths of an ephah of flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for one ram; and one-tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with oil as a grain offering for one lamb; as a burnt

offering of a pleasing aroma, a sacrifice made by fire to the Lord. Their drink offerings will be one-half a hin of wine for a bull, and one-third of a hin for a ram and one-fourth of a hin for a lamb. This is the burnt offering of each month throughout the months of the year. Also one male goat as a sin offering to the Lord shall be offered, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering” (Num. 28:11-15).

The primary sacrifice made at Rosh Chodesh was the burnt offering of two bulls, one ram and seven male lambs, along with their grain and drink offerings. These burnt offerings (*olah* in Hebrew) symbolized the total devotion of the people to the Lord. However, these were not the only offerings to be made. There was also the sin offering: one male goat. In Scripture, the goat (*aiz* in Hebrew) symbolizes strength and willfulness.

Through the burnt offerings, the month is totally dedicated to the Lord; dedication, however, is an act of the will, and in this we all have the propensity to become willful, stubborn and resistant to God, the very one we are dedicated to (Deut. 9:6; Neh. 9:16; Zech 7:11; Rom. 2:5; Heb. 10:26; and others). Both then and now, this rebellious nature of humanity necessitates an offering for sin as well.

As we see in the chart below, Messiah’s sacrifice has fulfilled the requirements for each of these offerings before God. He has become our burnt offering who “gave Himself up for us” (Eph. 5:2), as well as our sin offering:

The Offering	The Leviticus portion	The Significance	The Fulfillment
1) Burnt (Olah)	Lev. 1; 6:8-13	Total Devotion	Eph. 5:2
2) Grain (Minchah)	Lev. 2; 6:14-24	Consistent service	John 6:33, 35

3) Peace (Shalom)	Lev. 3; 7:11-34	United fellowship	1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25; Eph. 2:13-16; Col. 1:20-22; Heb. 13:15, 20; Rev. 3:20
4) Sin (Chatat)	Lev. 4; 5:1-13	Mortifying our nature	2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:25; 8:3; Heb. 9:26; 10:5-18; 13:12
5) Guilt (Asham)	Lev. 5:14- 6: 7; 7:1-10	Compensation paid	Eph. 1:7; 1 Cor. 11:27; 2 Cor. 5:19; Is. 53:10

Messiah Our Offering: The Spiritual Significance of the 5 Major Biblical Offerings

“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin (offering) for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

In Messiah’s atonement, we no longer have the need to sacrifice animals before God. However, like the early believers, God’s appointed times can continue to mark our days, weeks, months and years as we remember the perfect sacrifice of our Messiah.

So, each month Rosh Chodesh is a time of renewal of our volitional dedication to the Lord. It also reminds us of our need of Messiah’s sin offering for us as we recognize our dependence not on our own dedication but on His sacrifice in our service to God.

Messiah fulfilled every sacrifice for us and, so on Rosh Chodesh, we appreciate again what He has done in each facet of His death for our sins.

Rosh Chodesh Sameach! (Happy New Moon)

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