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Rosh ha'Shanah (Trumpets)

23: 23-25

Rosh ha'Shanah DIG: What call to action do you associate with the sound of shofars? Why do you think Isra'el was not allowed to work on feast days (23:3, 7, 21, 25, 28-32, 35-36)? What does this mitzvah say about the relative importance of ADONAI and His work?

REFLECT: What will the sounding of the shofar mean to the believer? What will the sounding of the shofar mean to the unbeliever? Are you looking forward to the Rapture or dreading it? Why? Do religious traditions enhance or hinder your worship of ADONAI?

Rosh ha'Shanah will be fulfilled by the Rapture.

Now we are moving from the spring feasts to **the fall feasts of Isra'el**; from prophecy of the First Coming of **Yeshua** to the events just preceding and leading up to **His** Second Coming. The next **festival** in **Isra'el's holy** calendar was the blowing of **shofars** in the fall, the seventh month (Tishri), which marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the new year in the civil calendar. In the pagan world it was often a time of corrupt practices and superstitious rituals. But to **Isra'el** it was a time when the people looked forward to a season of spiritual renewal and festive thanksgiving.



Of all the Jewish holidays, **Rosh ha'Shanah** seems like a mystery **feast**. **The Torah** does not reveal to us the exact meaning or principles of the holiday. What is clear to us, is the main commandment of blowing of **the shofar (Lev 23:24)**. **Zicharon Truah** literally means *a remembrance of blowing*. The concept of **shouting for joy** is based upon **Job 38:7**, which states that when **ADONAI** created **the heavens and the earth, all the angels shouted for joy**. **The rabbis teach that God created the heavens and the earth on Rosh ha'Shanah so it was on this day that the angels shouted for joy**. **The shofar** is not only to be remembered on this day, but it is also to be blown (see a video presentation of **Rosh ha'Shanah** by clicking [here](#)).

Rosh ha'Shana is the most common Jewish term for this feast day. Very few Jewish people today talk about **the Feast of Trumpets**, rather, they mention **Rosh ha'Shanah**, which means *the head of the year*. Although it is never referred to in this way anywhere in Scripture, this has become the most common term for this feast in Judaism. One of the fascinating facts about **Rosh ha'Shanah** is that it is considered the "New Year." The truth is, it comes in **the seventh month** of the Jewish calendar year. Did someone make a big mistake? The biblical year starts in the spring with the month Nisan (**Exodus 12:2**). This has a certain logic to it. It is the beginning of the new harvest season. However, because **the rabbis teach that God created the heavens and the earth on this day** (it was the first of the fall holidays) **they** eventually considered it as the "spiritual" New Year. Hence the name change as well. Biblically known as **Yom Teruah (the Day of Sounding/Festival of Trumpets)**, the first of Tishri became known as **Rosh ha'Shanah** (the Head of the Year). Therefore, it was not conceived of as a New

Year at this stage, but, rather, as an occasion preliminary to **Sukkot**.

Rosh ha'Shanah falls on the first day of the seventh month of Tishrei. The reason that **Isra'el** blew **the trumpets** on **the first day of the seventh month** is because we essentially adapted the old Babylonian Canaanite calendar. But according to the Babylonian calendar, the first day of the seventh month was the day of the resurrection of the pagan god Ba'al. Every year he died at the end of the rainy season, and was resurrected again at the beginning of the next rainy season.

The beginning of the rainy season is usually between **Rosh ha'Shanah** and **Sukkot**. So, his mother, the Asherah, went down to Hades, to hell, and resurrected her son from the dead, because he was the god of rain. So, we blew **the trumpet** as a call to war against idolatry, as a call to the eradication of the idols. As a call to return all men, women, and children, **Jews** and Gentiles, to the knowledge of the One **God** who created Heaven and Earth, and not an idol that died and is resurrected every year, like Baal. And we, as disciples of **Yeshua**, as believing men and women, still have to fight idolatry around the world.

So, we begin this cycle of holidays with Rosh ha'Shanah, the modern tradition of the Jewish New Year. As opposed to the modern tradition, The biblical New Year falls on the first day of Nissan, which is actually around the end of March. But tradition is tradition. As it says in Fiddler on the Roof, "We have a tradition for everything." So, we have a tradition for this too.⁴⁵¹

The Biblical Practice: When you read **Leviticus Chapter 23** there is a description of all the seven feasts. But the shortest description by far is **the Festival of Trumpets**. Just three verses . . . short and swift. **ADONAI spoke to Moses saying, "Speak to the Bnei-Yisrael (the children of Isra'el), saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you are to have a Shabbat rest** (Hebrew: *shabbathon*, not the usual word for **Shabbat**, but a *great and solemn Shabbat*), **a memorial of blowing [shofars], a holy convocation. It is traditional to sound the shofar one-hundred times. You are to do no regular work, you are to present an offering made by fire to ADONAI (23:23-25). The shofars** were sounded when **sacrifices** were **offered**, and **they** were also used by the Temple musicians.

But that's not all. We should remember that **Rosh ha'Shanah** is also a **Rosh-Chodesh (New Moon)**. **Asaf** tells us: **Sound the shofar at Rosh-Chodesh and**

at full moon for the pilgrim feast (Psalm 81:4). The first day of the biblical month is a **new moon**, and **the Feast of Trumpets** falls on **the first day of the seventh month**. Thus, it is a double holiday, and an additional **offering** needed to be brought as well.⁴⁵² **Prepare a burnt offering to make a fragrant aroma for ADONAI - one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs in their first year and without defect - with their grain offering, consisting of fine flour mixed with olive oil - six quarts for the bull, four quarts for the ram, and two quarts for each of the seven lambs - also one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you. This is to be in addition to the burnt offering for Rosh-Chodesh with its grain offering, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to the rule for them; this will be a fragrant aroma, an offering made by fire to ADONAI(Numbers 29:2-6).**

It was to be on **the seventh month**, and **seven** is the number of completion (see my commentary on **Genesis Ae - The Number Seven**). **The Israelites** got together, didn't do any **regular work**, **blew their shofars**, **presented an offering** and went home. That was it. They had no idea why. **The Passover** and **Unleavened Bread** pointed back to **the Exodus**; **First Fruits** recognized **ADONAI's** bounty in the Land; and **Weeks** remembered the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai by Moses. But **Rosh ha'Shanah** points *back* to nothing. All they knew was something important was going to happen; someone important was coming.

The Jewish Observance: Whereas in the Bible it was a one-day festival, in Judaism **Rosh ha'Shanah** has become a two-day festival. In the earlier days one could not always be sure when one day ended and another began since it was based on the visibility of three stars and eyewitnesses. For Jews living outside the Land, they would have to try to figure out when the day began in **Isra'el**, and not, for instance, in Babylonia. So in order to make sure that they didn't observe the wrong day, it has become a two-day festival to make sure that all the grounds are covered. Technically, in Judaism, it is known as Yom Arichta or "the long day" because two days are counted as one "long day" rather than two singular days.

Although other horns are permitted, **Jews** have come to prefer the ram's horn in remembrance of **Isaac's** substitute. **There are three main purposes for blowing the ram's horn. First, is a call to repentance. It was a call for all Jews to return to Judaism, for on the day all Jews will pass under judgment. The second purpose is to remind Isra'el of her covenant relationship with God. The third purpose is to confuse the Adversary on**

the day he accused **Isra'el**. He gets so confused when the ram's horn is blown that he never manages to organize his accusations.

The rabbis teach that there are three reasons why the ram's horn is blown. First, it is a symbol of the final regathering of **Isra'el** when the **Messiah** comes. Secondly, it is a symbol of the resurrection of the dead. And thirdly, they believe that on this day three books will be opened. One is called the Book of the Righteous and those who were perfectly righteous would have their names inscribed in the Book of Life and they would live another year. Another book is called the Book of the Wicked or the Book of the Dead and those whose names are inscribed into this book would die during the year. The final book is called the Book of the In-Between. Those inscribed in the third book are given ten days to repent, the ten days between the Feast of Trumpets (**Rosh ha'Shanah**) and the Day of Atonement (**Yom Kippur**).

Therefore, **Yom Kippur** is considered a logical extension of what was stated at **Rosh ha'Shanah**. In fact, the ten days between **Rosh ha'Shanah** and **Yom Kippur** take on their own holy significance. They are called *Yomin Nora'im*, **The Days of Awe**.

Traditional **Jews** spend the afternoon of **Rosh ha'Shanah** in a body of water (ocean, lake or stream) observing the ancient service, *Tashlich*. The word comes from **Micah 7:19** where the prophet promises: **You will hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea**. To illustrate this beautiful truth, people cast breadcrumbs or pebbles into the water and rejoice in **ADONAI's** promise of forgiveness while reciting **Micah 7:18-20**.

There are other practices and customs practiced by **Jews** on this **holy day**. It is customary to wear something white on this occasion because it is a symbol of purity and the forgiveness of sins. Another custom is to feast on this day. This custom is based on **Nehemiah 8:10** where after reading the Torah, the people were sent out to feast. They were to eat festive foods, but they were not to eat anything that is bitter or made with vinegar because the emphasis is praying for a sweet year, not a bitter one. The special bread eaten is Challah, which is the egg bread that Jewish people eat on Shabbat. On the Sabbath it is normally seasoned with salt, on this occasion it is dipped in honey to emphasize sweetness. While the Sabbath Challah is braided and elongated, the Challah for this occasion is round to symbolize the cycle of life and desire for a long life.

Ten days of awe fall between **Rosh ha'Shanah** and **Yom Kippur**. These are ten days in which one must repent, particularly the seven days in the middle because the first two days of these ten is **the Feast of Trumpets** and the tenth day is the Day of Atonement. It is during these seven days that one is to seek forgiveness and special forgiveness prayers are recited. If a Sabbath were to fall within the seven-day period, it is known as "the Sabbath of repentance" and especially on that Shabbat there is a great emphasis on repentance.

The purpose of this **holy day** can be summed up in one word - regathering. Since the fall holidays call us to regather a pure faith in **God, Rosh ha'Shanah** has come to represent the day of repentance. It is the day when those who love **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** take stock of their spiritual condition and make the necessary changes to insure that the upcoming new year will be pleasing to **ADONAI**.⁴⁵³

*Dear Heavenly Father, Praise **You** for **Your** wisdom in setting aside a day for **repentance**. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the joy of what **You** have done for us that we forget to look carefully at how we can draw closer to **You** in all we do, say and think. Praise **You** for **Your** wisdom in creating **the pomegranate** to be ripe at the time of this festival. How significant that its fruit is red, providing a reminding link that only thru blood can there be redemption. We offer repeated and heartfelt praise and gratitude for **Messiah's** willingness to offer **Himself** as the blood sacrifice. **By His will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Messiah Yeshua once for all. . . He entered into the Holies once for all - not by the blood of goats and calves but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. (Hebrews 10:10, 9:12)**. As we eat **the red pomegranate**, help us to remember the great pain and shame **Messiah** willingly suffered for us, and let us look carefully within ourselves to see how we can draw closer to **You** in all we say, do and think. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*



Why **pomegranates** at **Rosh ha'Shanah**? It is a strange looking **fruit** indeed with its exterior tough skin crown on the top. Unlike most other fruits, **the pomegranate** has no internal flesh to eat but only a multitude of seeds. So why does this exotic **fruit** receive special focus in the Jewish community this time of year? For starters, it is during the fall and **the High Holy Days** (starting around **Rosh ha'Shanah**) that **the pomegranate** ripens. Whereas most other **fruit** varieties are beginning to fade at this time of year, **the pomegranate** is just beginning to flourish. **This is especially noteworthy since the Talmud alludes to the rather unremarkable appearance of the tree itself that bears such a beautiful fruit (Tractate Sukkah 53d).** Of course, the **fruit** juice has been newly rediscovered for its amazing health benefits, as the POM company has marketed. **Jewish tradition equates the many seeds of this fruit with the 613 mitzvot of the Torah as this easy to miss fruit tree has long been a native of the Holy Land.** It is listed as part of the discoveries of **the twelve spies** in the **Exodus** generation (**Numbers 13:23**), **two rows of pomegranates** were molded into **the two pillars** on the porch of Solomon's Temple (**First Kings 18-20**), and the **Rimmonim** (Hebrew for **pomegranates**) were **pomegranate-shaped bells** fashioned onto **the hem of the high priest's** outer garment (**Exodus 28:33-34**). Still today we recall these details as depicted in many Ashkenazi Torah scrolls which are often crowned with silver "**Rimmonim**" bells. It is a joyful sound of our priestly service every **Shabbat** and **Holy Day** as the Torah procession makes its way through Jewish and Messianic congregations around the world.

It is not surprising that at this time of year many **Rosh ha'Shanah** cards are decorated with this very symbolic **fruit**. It is during the **High Holy Day** season that we are called to take a fresh inventory of how we are doing our spiritual journey.

Too many people get distracted by the responsibilities of daily life and yet neglect the most important part of our existence, the soul. Like **the pomegranate**, the Torah and our faith in **Messiah** can sometimes appear rather nondescript on the outside, but they bring blessing through their spiritual fruit. It would seem to be the perfect time of year to revitalize our spiritual lives and make them more relevant and dynamic. *L'Shana Tova u'metukah/ a sweet and fruitful year awaits.*⁴⁵⁴

The Messianic Significance: Seeming like a mystery to **Isra'el** today, when we put **Yeshua** in the middle of it, the mystery is solved. A mystery in the Bible is something once hidden, but now revealed. And what **Rosh ha'Shanah** reveals is **the Rapture** (see my commentary on **Revelation By - The Rapture of the Church**). There are two main passages that deal with the details of **the Rapture** and in both of those passages there is the presence of **a trumpet (First Thessalonians 4:13-18; First Corinthians 15:50-58)**.

As with all biblical **holy days**, there is prophetic as well as historical meaning in **Rosh ha'Shanah**. Many classical rabbis saw a connection between **Rosh ha'Shanah** as **the holy day** of regathering and **the Messiah** who would be the agent of that regathering. For example, in a work in the 8th century AD we find the following commentary: **Messiah ben David (son of David), Elijah and Zerubbabel, peace be upon him, will ascend the Mount of Olives. And Messiah will command Elijah to blow the shofar. The light of the six days of Creation will return and will be seen, the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and God will send full healing to all the sick of Isra'el. The second blast that Elijah will blow will make the dead rise. They will rise from the dust and each man will recognize his fellow man, and so will husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother. All will come to Messiah from the four corners of the earth, from east and from west, from north and from south. The Children of Isra'el will fly on the wings of eagles and come to Messiah . . . (Ma'ase Daniel as quoted in Patai, page 143)**. So while the historical emphasis of **the holy day** is repentance, the prophetic theme looks for the future day when the full spiritual regathering will occur.

This **holy day** is a perfect picture of the regathering of believers! In the future all true believers in **Yeshua** will be gathered to meet **Him** in **the clouds** (see the commentary on **Revelation Ai - Look, He is Coming with the Clouds**). **The dead in Messiah** will rise first, to be followed immediately by those believers alive at that time. Not surprisingly, the signal of the gathering will be the sound of **the shofar**. In fact, the reference here is to a particular note sounded at **Rosh**

ha'Shanah. For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the blast of God's shofar, and the dead in Messiah will rise first (First Thessalonians 4:16). In fact, the reference here is to a particular note sounded at **Rosh ha'Shanah**. The word normally translated shout comes from the Hebrew word *teruah*, better translated in this context as the "alarm" blast of **the shofar**. Similar references to **the shofar** as the signal of the Rapture can be found elsewhere in the New Covenant (see **First Corinthians 15:50-58** and **Revelation 4:1**).

Believers in **Yeshua Messiah** should have a fond appreciation for this rich **holy day, Rosh ha'Shanah!** It has served historically as a time of spiritual preparation and repentance, both themes we can learn from. Prophetically, we are reminded of **God's** promise to regather and restore **His** chosen people, Isra'el, on the last day. The sound of **the shofar** is also a reminder of **the blessed hope (Titus 2:13)**. Let us give heed to **the sound of the shofar** and all that **Rosh ha'Shanah** has to teach.⁴⁵⁵

The Feast of Passover was fulfilled by the death of Messiah, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the sinlessness of His sacrifice, the Feast of First Fruits was therefore fulfilled by the resurrection of Christ life, Shavu'ot was fulfilled by the birth of the Church, and the Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled by the Rapture of the Church.

A Practical Guide for Believers in Messiah: There are a number of practical ways to observe **Rosh ha'Shanah**. In synagogues, preparation starts the preceding Hebrew month, Elul, by sounding the **shofar** on Shabbat. Special prayers to cultivate repentance, called selikhot, are offered. For Messianic **Jews** and Gentiles this season could be observed in the same kind of spirit. Perhaps one might desire to purchase a **shofar** and sound it every morning during the month preceding **Rosh ha'Shanah**. This could be used to enhance the true spirit of this **holy day** - focusing on repentance and a pure walk with **God**.

Jewish tradition maintains a preference for shofars, the first being a curved rams horn, as curved horns are favored over straight horns. Second choice would be a curved sheep's horn, third is a curved horn from any other animal available, and fourth is a straight rams horn. When using one of the first four types, one would say a blessing when performing a mitzvah with a shofar. The fifth preference is the horn of a non-kosher animal which one can use for the mitzvah, but a blessing is not recited

beforehand. The last type is a horn from a cow which is not to be even considered as being a shofar. In the Torah the word used for a cow or any other animal horn is keren. These are solid horns that need to be bored out hollow in order to make a sound. When the Torah says to blow the shofar, it must be from a horn that does not need to be bored out such as a keren, but is naturally hollow.

A special evening observance can be planned upon reaching the first day of Tishri. As with most Jewish **holy** days, much of the preparation revolves around a holiday meal. The table is set with the best dinnerware, tablecloth and two candles. White is the most common color for **the holy days** based on the promise of **God** that **He** will turn our **scarlet sins as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18)**. This may include the tablecloth, and often, personal clothing. To believers it is a beautiful statement of our cleansing in **Yeshua**! It is traditional to light the holiday candles with the appropriate blessing that is slightly different from the standard **Shabbat** blessing:

*Barukh atah Adonai Elohenu melekh ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvohtav,
v'tzi-vanu l'hadleek ner shel yom tov.*

Blessed are **You, Lord** our **God, King** of the universe, who has set us apart by Your commandments, and has commanded us to strike the holiday light.

After the candles, we bless the sweet wine (or grape juice) and the special round raisin challah bread. Both remind us of an important theme of **Rosh ha'Shanah** - that we will experience a sweet and full New Year in **God's** blessing.

The foods of the dinner also make this statement. We may have the traditional *tzimmes* (carrots and honey), as well as honey cake for dessert. In one of the more graphic customs, we dip sliced apples in honey to taste the incredible sweetness that comes from our heavenly **Father**. It should be noted that the traditional greeting of the holiday season is *l'shana tova u-metukah* (may you have a sweet and good new year). Main dishes might be turkey or brisket. A symbolic dish is a cooked fish served with its head. This illustrates **God's** promise that there will be a time when **Isra'el** will no longer be **the tail**, but **the head (Deut 28:13)**!

After the dinner it is time to celebrate in worship and in meditation. Normally, this takes place in the synagogue service where believers in **Yeshua** attend a **Rosh ha'Shanah** service. What a joy to hear the sound of the **shofar**, to experience the corporate prayers, and to worship music in the fullness of **Messiah**!

Because **Rosh ha'Shanah** is to be considered as a **Sabbath day of rest**, today **Jews** celebrate it for two days. The following day can be made special by celebrating a special ceremony called *Tashlikh*. What can be a meaningful service for believers, they cast breadcrumbs, symbolizing our sins, into a body of water! The **shofar** can be sounded, and a guitar played while songs of praise are sung to celebrate the truth of the prophet: **ADONAI will again have compassion on us. He will subdue our iniquities, and He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).**⁴⁵⁶