



# The Feast of Yom Ha-Zikkaron/ or Yom Teruah (Rosh HaShanah)

The Feast of "Rosh HaShanah" was established as a Feast of the Lord in Leviticus 23:24, 25 as it states - *"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD..."* Rosh Hashanah is the first of the "Autumn Feasts of the Lord" which include Yom Kippur and Tabernacles. It occurs on the first day of Tishri (Sept/Oct). In Hebrew, "Rosh HaShanah" literally means, "head of the year." Rosh HaShanah has come to commonly be known as the Jewish New Year. However, It is much more than that.

We must note that there are two primary Jewish calendars found within the Bible. Jewish calendars are based upon lunar months (based on the orbit of the moon around the earth) where as our secular calendar is solar (based upon the earth's orbit around the sun). There are 29 ½ days to a lunar month. The lunar year has twelve months - 354 days. However, to make up for the 11 days that do not align with the solar calendar, they add another month (Adar 2) every 2 or three years to make sure that the feasts would fall in their proper season.

The two Jewish calendars are: the "civil calendar" and the "religious calendar."

- The "**civil calendar**" - The first month in the civil calendar is Tishrei. **Rosh HaShanah** (the Jewish New Year), the first day in Tishrei, is the beginning of the "new civil year." This is thought in Jewish tradition to be the day of the creation of man.
- The "**religious calendar**" - The religious calendar begins with the month of Nisan (formerly known in ancient Biblical times as Aviv) which is the seventh month on the "civil calendar." God established the religious calendar in Exodus 12:2, *"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."* It is important to note that Passover is in this month (the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Aviv). That is why the month of Aviv is the beginning of the Jewish "religious calendar."

Therefore, concerning Rosh HaShanah, we are not to get confused because it is celebrated on the first day of the "seventh" month. Remember, it is the beginning of the Jewish civil calendar year. We must also be reminded that the "celebrating" of this "civil new year" is much different than how we celebrate the New Year in our culture on January 1st of every year. Rosh HaShanah is considered as one of the "High Holy Days" of all Jewish holidays.

The term/name, "Rosh HaShanah" is not used and nor is it found in the Bible as the name of this feast day. The Bible refers to this feast day as Yom Ha-Zikkaron (the day of remembrance) or Yom Teruah (the day of the sounding of the shofar/trumpets). There are two types of "shofars" that are used by the Jewish people.

- a) The ram's horn
- b) The horn of an antelope called a "bushbuck."

Note - They also would use a silver trumpet which would make a very loud sounding blast used for times of alarm as well as for times of heralding great news and celebration.

Today, all of these shofars/trumpets are used at various times during Rosh HaShanah.

As we have discussed, *Rosh HaShanah* is the beginning of the year on the Jewish civil calendar. In Jewish tradition Rosh Hashanah commemorates the sixth day of creation, when Adam and Eve were created. Therefore, according to this tradition, Rosh HaShanah becomes the "birthday" of all people. However, in Jewish tradition, they also use this day to remember the "fall" of Adam and Eve. Rosh HaShanah, therefore, becomes both, a day of celebration of life being created but also it is a solemn day of reflection and repentance of sin that brings death and separation from God.

This points us to the fact that we are all physically born and have life when we are conceived within the womb. Unfortunately, that life that we have is controlled by a sinful nature that leads to spiritual death. That is our annual "civil" birthday. When we are saved from the sting of death by the blood of the Lamb, we are "born again" and our new "spiritual life" begins as represented by what God established in Exodus 14 through the Passover lamb. Passover is the beginning of the Jewish "Religious" Calendar signifying the beginning of our "new life in Christ." Jesus expressed this in John 3:6 when He told Nicodemus, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

Rosh HaShanah is referred to as *"Yom Teruah"*, the "Day of the Sounding of the *Shofar*" or the "Day of the Awakening Blast." On *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah*, the Day of the Sounding of the *Shofar*, it is imperative that every person not miss "hearing" this "blast" of the shofar. The Hebrew word *"teruah"* means "an awakening blast" which could either be a blast from a shofar or trumpet, as well as a very loud "supernatural shout." This "sounding of the shofar" or the "awakening blast," is a "call" to awaken from "spiritual sleep," repent and turn towards God and be ready to meet with Him.

In Judaism, there are three pivotal trumpet (*shofarim*) "blasts" - The "first trump" blown on the Feast of Pentecost, the second is the "last trump blown" which refers to the last trumpet sounded at the conclusion of Rosh HaShanah, and the third is the "great trump" blown on Yom Kippur. It is this "last trump" that is blown at the conclusion of Rosh Hashanah that Paul was referring to in 1Corinthians 15:52 and telling us to be alert and wake up and pay attention to what is about to take place.

- 1Corinthians 15:52 (KJV) - *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at **the last trump**: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

It is the "sounding of the shofar" or "awakening blast" that is a "warning alarm" to all who "hear it." God's heart is to awaken and warn people before He proclaims judgment. God is so faithful and loving. We see this because He is constantly trying to awaken the hearts of people unto Him. We see God's love, grace and mercy concerning this throughout the Bible.

- 1) God warned the people before the flood in Noah's day.
- 2) He sent Jonah to warn Nineveh.
- 3) God does not want anyone to receive the wrath of judgment. He desires none to perish.
  - 2Peter 3:9, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*

In Isaiah 51:9, the awakening sound of the shofar on Rosh HaShana is associated with the coming of the Messiah – pointing to Jesus. It refers to the crowning of a King. In Jewish tradition, this is the day that the true king of the Israelites was to be crowned. Throughout the history of the Jewish people we know and see that the crowning of kings did not always take place on Rosh HaShana. That is because those kings crowned at any other time were not established and anointed by God. In Jewish tradition it is believed that King David was crowned on this day.

As we have previously stated, in Jewish tradition the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is also a "sound" declaring that the "gates of Heaven" are opened. Rosh HaShanah and the next feast to be observed, Yom Kippur, are connected by a time span of 10 days. These 10 days are called the "10 Days of Awe," as well as the season of "Teshuvah." In Jewish tradition, God gave the 10 Commandments to man. Ten therefore represents man's responsibility to keep and obey the commandments. If not then they would need to repent. Note - Jewish tradition has changed this time period to begin 30 days prior to Rosh HaShanah which now makes this time period of "Teshuvah" 40 days. However, originally it was 10 days.

The Hebrew word "teshuvah" means "to return, to turn from or to repent." It is to be a period of great reflection and repentance. Every morning during this time period, the trumpet (*shofar*) or ram's horn is blown to warn and encourage the people to repent and return to God. It is a "call" to examine and prepare their lives and purge themselves of their sins (repent) so that they will not experience the "judgment and wrath" of a Holy God. The 10 days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, as we said, are called the "Days of Awe." This is to be a somber, serious time for one to examine and look inwardly within and truly repent. Why, because the individual in doing so recognizes and is in awe of a holy, just and righteous God.

On Rosh HaShana you will also see the Jewish people doing a ritual called, "Tashlich." "Tashlich" means "casting off" and involves symbolically "casting off" the sins of the previous year by tossing pieces of bread into a body of flowing water. As the water carries away the bits of bread so too are their sins symbolically carried away. In this way the person hopes to start the New Year with a "clean slate." This tradition began in the 2nd century AD and is inspired from Micah 7:19 - *"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."*

In Jewish tradition, on Rosh HaShanah, God has "books" that he writes their names in, writing down who will live and who will die, who will have a good life and who will have a bad life, for the coming year depending on their spiritual walk that previous year. However, according to Jewish tradition, a person's actions during the "Days of Awe" can alter "God's decree" or we can say their fate for the coming year. The actions that change their fate are repentance (hence doing the ritual of "Tashlich"), prayer, and doing good deeds (usually, charity) known as "mitzvahs."

These "books" are then "sealed" on Yom Kippur and the names are written in the "books." This concept of writing names in "the books" is the source of the common greeting during this time by the Jewish people, "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year." (\*\*Sound familiar?? - Revelation 20:12, 15 and 21:27- the names of His people are written in the Lamb's "Book of Life")

As mentioned, Rosh Hashanah is the first of the "Autumn Feasts of the Lord." It points to a time that is yet to come and to be fulfilled by Messiah, Jesus. The "Spring Feasts," were fulfilled through Jesus 2000 years ago – Passover, Unleavened Bread, Bikkurim or the Feast of the First Fruits and Shavout (Pentacost).

God is "sounding the alarm" to His people and the entire world to **awake from our slumber and prepare ourselves**. I believe, we are about to hear the sound of the shofar - the Gates of Heaven will be opened; the King, our Bridegroom, Jesus will come for His Bride.

I would like to conclude my basic thoughts on Rosh HaShanah by pointing us to the very familiar "Parable of the Ten Virgins" found in Matthew 25:1-13. It was this time period, the time of Rosh HaShanah through Yom Kippur that, I believe, Jesus was referring to in this parable. In this well known parable we can see the distinct references to the end times and the Feast of Rosh HaShanah. I will try to explain what I mean.

We see that there are "ten" virgins" which I believe can refer and correspond to the "Ten days of Awe." Remember, that it is during these "**Ten** Days of Awe" that the people are to prepare themselves and **be ready**. This is done through a true heart of repentance and a lifestyle that reflects the character of God.

They were to be the "light" that lights the pathway for the Bridegroom (Messiah) when He comes to take His people into the wedding feast. The shofar would be blown every day to remind the people to "awaken" from their spiritual slumber and get their hearts "right" in preparation for when God comes and "closes the gate of Heaven" on Yom Kippur.

In Matthew 25:5, we see that all of the virgins were slumbering while awaiting the Bridegroom but yet five of them were "prepared" with "oil" within their lamps and five were not. This is symbolic of the "oil of the Holy Spirit" which represents the Holy Spirit's work in the **regenerative work of salvation**. The ones with the "oil" had a true heart of repentance and their lifestyle reflected the character of Jesus who is the "Light of the world." Jesus calls His disciples to be the "light of the world" in His stead until He comes. (Matthew 5:14)

Unfortunately, all ten of the virgins were asleep which represents a "slumbering" church today. It is time for the "slumbering church" to "awaken." God is giving us a "sounding of the shofar" in many ways in these days so that we awaken from our slumber.

The five that had no oil were not prepared to meet the Bridegroom when He came. Even though they were with those that were ready, their heart was not one of repentance and their lifestyle was not reflecting the character of God. In other words, they were deceived into thinking that they were ready to meet their God simply because they were with those who were ready. They were waiting for the Bridegroom but yet they were not really ready for Him with the "oil" of the redemptive, regenerating power of the Holy Spirit which meant that they were not truly saved. How sad!!!

In Matthew 25:6, a "cry was made." This refers to the "awaken blast" (either a shofar or a loud shout) that would be blown on Rosh HaShanah (the "last trump"). It was declaring that the "Gates of Heaven" were opened and the "Bridegroom" was coming for His people to enter in to the "wedding feast."

Matthew 25:7-9 tells us, as we previously discussed that, that five were ready and five were not. The five that were not ready were frantic, realizing their state of spiritual recklessness. However, it was too late. The five virgins that had "oil" could not do anything for those that had no oil. This is a very important aspect of this parable. It is revealing to us that each person is ultimately responsible for their own heart. We cannot "piggyback" ourselves into the Kingdom on anyone else's salvation - not our spouses, not our parents, not our pastors, not our friends, etc.

Matthew 25:10 tells us that the Bridegroom came and those that were "ready and prepared" went in with Him to the "wedding feast" and the door was "shut." The others knock and knocked and begged to be let in but to no avail. The Bridegroom answered and told them the words that none of us would want to hear, *"Verily I say unto you, I know you not."* This "shutting of the door" refers to Yom Kippur when, according to Jewish tradition, the "Gates of Heaven" are closed.

This parable was the first of two last parables in Jesus' last discourse with His disciples which He gave just before His arrest and "passion on the cross." Immediately following these last two parables, He spoke of the separating between the "sheep and the goats" which ultimately speaks of the judgment to come in the end times. These final words with His disciples was Jesus' final attempt to make sure that His disciples understood what was going to take place in the "end times," just as they had asked Him. He used language and references that they could understand by using the symbolisms of the "feast days" of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur as well as the "Ten Days of Awe." Let those that have ears to hear; let them hear.