

Rosh Hashanah-The Head of the Year

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great shofar shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship YHVH in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” (Isa 27:13).

Rosh Hashanah marks the Jewish New Year and is part of the season of T'Shuvah. *Rosh* in Hebrew means “head” or “chief” and *Shanah* means “year.” In Leviticus 23:24 YHVH commanded Moshe to observe the first day of *Tishrei* as a *Yom Teruah* – a day of blowing of the *shofar*, so the Biblical name for the festival is *Yom Teruah*. This is the first day of the Hebrew civil year. This day is known in the English bible as the *Feast of Trumpets* (the Hebrew word translated “trumpets” in Lev. 23:24 is the Hebrew word *Shofar*). This day begins a final ten-day period from *Rosh Hashanah* on the 1st of *Tishrei* to the *Feast of Atonement* (*Yom Kippur*) on the 10th of *Tishrei*. These days are known as the High Holy Days and as the Awesome Days (*Yamim Nora'im*, the ten days of awe). The Shabbat that falls within this ten-day period (this Saturday, Sept. 7, 2013) is called *Shabbat T'shuvah*, the Sabbath of Return/Repentance. Five days after *Yom Kippur* starts the festival of *Sukkot*, the *Feast of Tabernacles*, on the 15th of *Tishrei*.

Rosh HaShanah/Yom Teruah is identified with many idioms and phrases that help us describe the days in the season of *T'Shuvah* and speak of their purpose. The message from *Elul 1* until *Tishrei 1* is clear: “*Repent before Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah or you will find yourself in the days of awe unprepared.*” In Jewish tradition, everyone tries to settle matters with their friends and family and fulfill their duty to their community by asking for forgiveness from one another before *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah*, and certainly before *Yom Kippur*.

1. *The Season of T'Shuvah* (Repentance, in modern Hebrew it also means to answer)
2. *Rosh HaShanah* (Head of the year, birthday of the world)
3. *Yom Teruah* (Day of the Awakening blast or the Feast of Trumpets)
4. *Yom HaDin* (the Day of Judgment)
5. *Yom HaMelech* (the Coronation of Messiah see Psalm 47)
6. *Yom HaZikaron* (the Day of Remembrance/Memorial)
7. The opening of the gates
8. *Kiddushin/Nesu'in* (betrothal in the wedding ceremony)
9. The Resurrection of the Dead (*natzal*)
10. The Last Trump (*shofar*)
11. *Yom Hakeseh* (the hidden day)

The Birthday of the World

Jewish tradition attributes Adam as being created on this day (*Mishnah, Sanhedrin 38b*). How can that be? The first word in the Hebrew Bible is **בְּרֵאשִׁית** (*Bereshit*) which when changed around to **אֶבְרֵתִישׁוּר** read *Aleph B'Tishrei*, that is, on the first of *Tishri*. Therefore by tradition *Rosh Hashanah* is known as the birthday of the world-Jewish tradition tells us the world was created then, or more exactly, Adam and Eve were created on the first day of *Tishri* and it is from *Tishri* that the annual cycle began...

Time of Observance

Rosh Hashanah is observed for two days in Israel-on the first and second days of the seventh Hebrew month (*Tishri*), which is the first month of the civil calendar. It is celebrated for two days because of uncertainty about observing the festival on the correct calendar day. *Rosh Hashanah* falls on *Rosh Chodesh*, the new moon itself. Therefore even in *Yerushalayim* it would have been difficult to let everyone know in time that the New Year had begun-to solve this problem a two-day *Rosh Hashanah* was practiced even in Israel.

Yom Teruah: The Day of the Awakening Blast

In Psalm 98:6 we read: “*With trumpets and the sound of the shofar, shout for joy before the king, YHVH!*” The blessing we receive from G-d when we understand the meaning of *Yom Teruah* and the blowing of the *shofar* is found in Psalm 89:15: “*How happy are the people who know the joyful shout (Teruah)! They walk in the light of*

your presence, YHVH.” On *Yom Teruah*, the actual day of the sounding of the *Shofar*, it is imperative for every person to hear (*Shema*) the *shofar*. The mitzvah of the *shofar* is to hear the *shofar* being blown, not actually blow it yourself, hence the blessing: *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, Asher Kidshanu Bemitzvotav Vitzivanu Kol Lishmoa HaShofar* (Blessed are You, O Adonai, King of the Universe who sanctified us by Your commandments and instructed us to listen to the sound of the *shofar*).

Teruah means an awakening blast. Thus, a theme associated with *Yom Teruah* is “wake up.” *Teruah* is also translated in the Bible as a “shout.” The Messianic reign is associated with a shout (Isaiah 12:6; 42:11, Jer. 31:7; Zephaniah 3:14). Isaiah 44:23 states: “*Sing, you heavens, for YHVH has done it! Shout, you depths of the earth! Mountains, break out into song, along with every tree in the forest! For YHVH has redeemed Ya'akov; he glorifies himself in Isra'el.*” The first coming of *Yeshua* is associated with a shout: “*Rejoice with all your heart, daughter of Tziyon! Shout out loud, daughter of Yerushalayim! Look! Your king is coming to you. He is righteous, and he is victorious. Yet he is humble - he's riding on a donkey, yes, on a lowly donkey's colt*” (Zech. 9:9). The second coming of Messiah is also associated with a shout: “*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a rousing cry, with a call from one of the ruling angels, and with God's shofar; those who died united with the Messiah will be the first to rise*” (1Thes 4:16)

Whether it is by the blast of a *shofar* or by the force of a supernatural shout, G-d's goal is the same-to awaken us! The Book of Ephesians has many references to *Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah*, e.g., “since anything revealed is a light. This is why it says, “*Get up, sleeper! Arise from the dead, and the Messiah will shine on you!*” (Eph 5:14). In Ephesians 4:30 “*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*” being *sealed* is a direct reference to *Yom Kippur*. The Lord created this festival to teach us that we will be judged on *Rosh Hashanah* and will be sealed unto the closing of the gates on *Yom Kippur*.

Isaiah 26:19 ties the resurrection with the awaking shout of the *shofar*, as it is written: “*Your dead will live, my corpses will rise; awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust; for your dew is like the morning dew, and the earth will bring the ghosts to life.*” This theme of awakening is used throughout the Bible, e.g., John 11:11, Romans 13:11 “*Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep ; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed*” It is also found in Psalm 78:65 and Daniel 12:1,2: “*Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time ; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt*” The *shofar* is the physical instrument that YHVH instructed us to use to hear (*shema*) the sound of the *shofar* teaching us to awake from spiritual slumber: “*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet ; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*” (1 Cor. 15:52). Rav Sha'ul said he was showing us a great mystery-perhaps the mystery associated with the *shofar*!

In the days of old, the *shofar* was used on very solemn occasions. We first find the *shofar* mentioned in connection with the revelation on Mount Sinai, when the voice of the *shofar* was exceedingly strong and all the people who were in the camp trembled (Exodus 19:16,19) “*...and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled... And when the sound of the shofar sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice*”

Thus, the *shofar* we hear on *Yom Teruah* ought to remind us of our acceptance of the Torah and our obligations to it. The *shofar* also used to be sounded when war was waged upon a dangerous enemy. Thus, the *shofar* we hear on *Yom Teruah* ought to also serve as a battle cry to wage war against our inner enemy-our evil inclinations and passions as well as the devil, *Ha Satan*, himself. The *shofar* was also sounded on the Jubilee Year, heralding freedom from slavery (see Leviticus 25:9-10). Spiritually, this refers to freedom from the slavery of sin, the desires of this world, and serving the devil (Romans 6:12-13; James 4:4).

Another reason for sounding the *shofar* is that *Rosh HaShanah* is the celebration of the birth of creation. God began to rule over the world on this day. When a king begins to reign, he is heralded with trumpets and *shofarim*: “*O clap your hands, all ye people; shout (Teruah) unto God with the voice of triumph... God is gone up with a shout (Teruah), YHVH with the sound of a trumpet (shofar).*” In Jewish tradition, many reasons have been offered for the sounding of the *shofar*. The ram's horn (*shofar*) is identified with the ram that became the substitute sacrifice for Isaac in Genesis 22 (this is called the *akeidah* and it is one of the prominent themes of *Yom Teruah*). Awake, awake O Jerusalem (Kol Simcha), for your king is soon coming! L'Shanah Tovah!