

ROSH HASHANAH: IN THE BEGINNING GOD

By Richard Samuel

Unto the children of Israel, saying; In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall you have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. Leviticus 23:24

God doesn't do anything without a purpose and plan. When He created the heavens and the earth He did it on an appointed set time.

I would like to go to the Hebrew word for Genesis:

Genesis is the Greek word meaning "origin" or "beginning".
The Hebrew word is "Bereshith" meaning "in the beginning".

To understand the meaning of Hebrew words, they are derived from a three letter consonant which is called "the root" which contains the essence of the word's meaning. For example, the first word of the Torah is "bereshith", as we have seen means "in the beginning". The root is Resh-Alef-Shin, which means "head" or "first". It is the same root as the "Rosh" in "Rosh Hashanah" the first of the year, The Jewish New Year.

"Today the World was born" is a Jewish prayer on Rosh Hashanah recalling the creation of the world. According to the Jewish Sages, the day that the world was created also marks the sixth day of creation, the day in which God also created man.

Not only is Rosh Hashanah the first day of creation and the creation of Adam and Eve, Sarah was born and died on this day, This was the day that Isaac was born, also it was the day that Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob. The *shofar* blown on Rosh Hashanah is known as the last trump, which *Rav Sha'ul* (the apostle Paul) mentioned in First Thessalonians 4:16-17. At this time, the believers in the Messiah who are righteous (*tzaddikim*) according to *Yom HaDin* (the Day of Judgment) will be taken to Heaven in the rapture (*natzal*) along with the righteous who had died before this time. On *Rosh Hashanah*, the coronation of the Messiah *Yeshua* as King will happen in Heaven (Revelation 5). Jesus (*Yeshua*), who had come to earth during His first coming to play the role of the suffering Messiah –Messiah Ben Joseph, He will be crowned as King over all the earth in preparation for His coming back to earth to reign as King Messiah – Messiah Ben David during the Messianic age, the Millennium, or in Hebrew eschatology, the *Athid Lavo* (Revelation 19:16; 20:4).

In rabbinical Judaism, *Rosh Hashanah* (literally "the head of the year") is celebrated as Jewish New Years Day. The holiday is observed on the first two days of the Hebrew month of Tishri, which usually falls in September or October, and marks the beginning of a ten-day period of prayer, self-examination and repentance (*aseret yemei teshuvah*), which culminates on the fast day of Yom Kippur. These ten days are referred to as *Yamim Norai'm*, the Days of Awe or the High Holy Days. Rosh Hashanah also remembers the creation of the universe by the Lord (Adonai).

Rosh Hashanah is also known as *Yom Teru'ah*, the "Feast of Trumpets". Tradition stated that the universe was created by the LORD on Rosh Hashanah, so that Rosh Hashanah marks the sixth day of creation, when the LORD created Adam and Eve.

Rosh Hashanah is also called "Yom ha-Zikaron," the "Day of Remembrance" (Lev. 23:24) in reference to the commandment to remember to blow the shofar (*teruah*) to coronate God as King of the Universe. The blast of the shofar is meant to jolt us from our sleep. We are to *remember* who we really are by remembering that the LORD is our King.

According to Jewish tradition, on Rosh Hashanah the destiny of the righteous, the *tzaddikim*, are written in the Book of Life, and the destiny of the wicked, the *resha'im*, are written in the Book of Death. However, many people (perhaps most people) will not be inscribed in *either* book, but have ten days -- *until Yom Kippur* -- to repent before sealing their fate. Hence the term: "Aseret Yemei Teshuvah" - the Ten Days of Repentance. On Yom Kippur, then, everyone's name will be sealed in one of the two books.

Consequently, many synagogue prayers are invocations to be made worthy to be written in the Book of Life. Sermons about the need for repentance and the themes of God's judgment are often delivered during this time. The Kingship of God is stressed throughout the services as well.

Yom Tov	Torah Reading	Haftarah	Brit Chadashah
Rosh Hashanah Day 1	Genesis 21:1-34; Numbers 29:1-6	1 Samuel 1:1-2:10	1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:51-54
Rosh Hashanah Day 2	Genesis 22:1-22:24; Numbers 29:1-6	Jeremiah 31:1-19	1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:51-54

The Torah portion for the first day of Rosh Hashanah is about the birth of Isaac, and the portion for the second day is on the Akedah, or the binding of Isaac. An additional service includes extra benedictions added to the normal service, emphasizing God's Kingship, the remembrance of our days, and the call of the shofar to usher in the Messianic Kingdom at the end of days.

Sounding the Shofar

The *shofar* (ram's horn) is the most-mentioned musical instrument in the Scriptures. It is blasted at least 100 times during a typical Rosh Hashanah service, thus satisfying the commandment to make *Teru'ah* ("noise") on this day. The sound of the shofar, then, is meant to stir the heart to fear and to inspire *teshuvah* (repentance): "**When the shofar is blown in the city, don't the people tremble?**" (*Amos 3:6*)

There are four primary types of shofar blasts:

1. *Tekiah* (תְּקִיעָה) - A long single blast (the sound of the King's coronation)
2. *Shevarim* (שְׁבָרִים) - Three short wail-like blasts (signifying repentance)
3. *Teru'ah* (תְּרוּעָה) - Nine staccato blasts of alarm (to awaken the soul)

4. *Tekiah ha-Gadol* (תְּקִיעַת הַגָּדוֹל) - A great long blast (for as long as you can blow!) The *Last Trumpet* spoken of by Paul in Corinthians 15:51

The general custom is to first blow *tekiah*, followed by *shevarim*, followed by *teruah*, and to close with *tekiah hagadol*:

The order of the blasts may vary according to various Jewish custom, and they may be heard at different points in the Rosh Hashanah service (for example, at the start of the service, after the Torah reading, after reading parts of the Amidah- blessings). If Rosh Hashanah happens to fall on a Shabbat (Sabbath), no shofar blasts will be heard (since carrying a shofar is considered work) but the shofar will be sounded on the Second Day of Rosh Hashanah (this holiday, like most Jewish holidays, lasts for two days because of the difficulty of determining the exact time of the new moon). An expert in blowing the shofar is called *baal tekiah*, by the way.

The Christian and Rosh Hashanah

First, the LORD God is indeed the King of all the earth, our Creator and Redeemer. He is *Melech Gadol al-kol-ha'arets*, (מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ), a "great King over all the earth" (Psalm 47:2). Though Christians should acknowledge His righteous rule and Kingship at all times, Rosh Hashanah is a "sanctified reminder" of God's creative authority in our lives. Yeshua (Jesus) is called the *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) (Anointed One), a term that denotes His Kingly dignity and royalty. He is also the Creator and Sustainer of all creation (Colossians 1:16). He is coming to rule and reign from Jerusalem (Zion), in the Millennium. Christians will be judged according to their deeds of service (2 Corinthians. 5:10). The world system (and Satan) will be judged on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) at the end of the Great Tribulation at His Second Coming. Just as the heavenly shofar was sounded from Sinai, so it will be one day sounded from Zion (Isaiah 27:13).

As the only true King and Judge, God indeed has a *Sefer HaChayim* (Book of Life) as well as a *Sefer Ha-Metim* (Book of Death). The Scriptures clearly warn that on the Day of Judgment to come, anyone's name not found written in the Book of Life will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelations 20:15).

Second, the month of Elul and the preparation for Rosh Hashanah reminds us to be ready for the appearance of King Yeshua our LORD. We are commanded to watch and be ready for His appearance. We ought, therefore, be in a constant state of repentance (*teshuvah*) as we seek to humble ourselves and walk with our God.

The New Testament links *teshuvah* with salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) itself. Jesus (Yeshua) first message was "Repent and believe the gospel (בְּשׂוּרָה)" (Mark 1:15), and Paul linked *teshuvah* with confession and trust in the saving work of the Messiah on our behalf (Romans 10:8-13). *Teshuvah* implies a *response* to the Person of Yeshua that is demonstrated through confession that He is none other than YHVH, the LORD of Compassion and grace. The sound of the shofar is meant to awaken our hearts and to prepare for coming judgment.

Third, Rosh Hashanah itself, or rather *Yom Teru'ah*, has prophetic significance in the life of the Christian. The blowing of the shofar is prophetic of the rapture of the church, where those who are part of the Bride of (Jesus) Mashiach, the church, will experience everlasting transformation:

"Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (shofar): for the trumpet (shofar) shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:52)

The Talmud states that on Rosh Hashanah the dead will be raised. This corresponds to the "last trump" mentioned by the Apostle Paul in the verse above.

Fourth, the *Tashlikh* (casting off of sins) ceremony reminds us that our LORD is a God of new beginnings, and even if we have sinned and fallen away from Him and repent, He is faithful to restore us and cast our sins away from us. After all, God sent His only Son Yeshua to be our Sin-Bearer and Atonement, so we can take comfort in His forgiveness when we earnestly seek to repent from the harm we have done and begin anew with God.

Fifth, we should be grateful to the LORD for writing our names in the Lamb's Book of Life, or *Sefer HaChayim*. Of course we do not believe that we are made acceptable in the LORD's eyes by means of our own works of righteousness (Titus 3:5-6), but that does not excuse us from being without such works (as fruit of the Spirit in our daily life).

So now we see the significance of the day that God spoke and created Heaven and Earth. It was an appointed set time and established types in the Bible that link His (Jesus) relationship between Himself and His creation.