

ראש השנה Rosh Hashanah Yom T'roo-ah
(Feast of Trumpets or the Day of the Sounding of the Shofar)

Rosh HaShannah means literally "the head of the year" or New Year. The day is not designated in scripture as a New Year, but rather as a day of "memorial proclaimed with the blast of ram's horns," or "a day of blowing the shofar" (Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6). Thus the holiday could be titled *Yom T'roo-ah*, the Day of the Sounding of the Shofar. The blast of the shofar is a call to judgment and self examination, which is the main theme of the holiday. Just as a sharp blast grabs our attention, this festival is a wake-up call to us spiritually. In the military and at camp, a trumpet blast awakens us from our slumber with reveille. So it is with G-d. A trumpet blast awakens us from our slumber and calls us to Him.



The Babylonian name Tishri seems to derive from the root Ugaritic or Akkadian *seru*, which means "to begin." The ancient Semitic peoples thought of the year as beginning in the autumn, at the time of the late harvest. This was the beginning of the economic year, when crops began to be sold. The historian Josephus, and the ancient Aramaic translation of the Bible, the Targum Jonathan, identify Rosh HaShannah as the New Year observed by the people of Israel before the holiday of Passover was instituted. In addition, the traditional Jewish concept is that the world was created on Rosh HaShannah, so this day is indeed the beginning of the year chronologically. G-d made a spiritual cycle to start on Pesakh, but the chronological year didn't change. So, Jews have two new years, a chronological one, and a spiritual one. Passover is described in these terms for it is written, Ex. 12:1-2

Now Adoni said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. NASU

Therefore, it is not unscriptural to call this holiday the New Year, or Rosh HaShannah.

It was on the first day of the seventh month that Ezra the Scribe read the book of the Law before the people (Neh. 8:1-8). The people, conscious of their shortcomings, were distressed to hear the words of the Law; but Nekhemyah, Ezra's companion, said to them: "Go your way, eat rich viands, and drink the sweet beverages, and send portions to him who has none prepared; for this day is holy to our L-rd; do not be sad; for joy in the L-rd is your refuge" (Neh. 8:10). The psalmist is almost certainly referring to this festival when he proclaims: "Blow the horn at the new moon, at the full moon for our feast day. For it is a statute for

Israel, an ordinance of the G-d of Yaakov" (Ps. 81:4–5). [Encyclopedia Judaica]

Rosh Hashanah is a time to stop what we are doing, examine our lives, and return to Him--a time of re-gathering. At the time of Yeshua, on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish people would gather to celebrate this appointed time designated by G-d. While doing so they would reflect on the past year and purpose to draw near to G-d. Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of 10 days of awe--a time to repent, culminating with a day of prayer and fasting on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

Rosh Hashanah takes place at the time of a new moon, which is a new beginning of a cycle of lunar light. By placing this holiday at this time, G-d is further revealing Himself and the truth of His word. At Rosh Hashanah we are to come out of darkness and into the light, His light, as Yeshua is the "light of the world."

We see Yeshua the Messiah revealed in *Yom T'roo-ah*, the Day of the Sounding of the Shofar. For example, it is customary on this feast to read Genesis 22, because of the story of the ram caught by its horns in a bush. We blow on a ram's horn. [A ram is a male sheep. A lamb is a young sheep.] This ram was caught in a thicket, and available, with supernatural timing, to be the substitute sacrifice in place of Isaac. Isaac's father Avraham had been told by G-d to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. When Isaac asked his father "Where is the lamb?", Avraham responded, "My son, G-d will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering." Just as Avraham prepared to offer his son on the altar and G-d provided a lamb; G-d offered His son, Yeshua, on the altar, as the lamb of G-d. Isaac can be viewed as a foreshadowing of Yeshua. The prophetic words of Avraham were fulfilled to Isaac and to us, that G-d would provide for Himself the lamb. The call to repentance, which is marked by the sounding of the shofar, a ram's horn, is a reminder to turn to the lamb of G-d who died for us. It is a tremendous blessing to celebrate this festival, just as Yeshua did, as it helps us to better understand Yeshua's sacrifice which saves us from a spiritual death.

As Believers in the Messiah we are awaiting the return of the L-rd. How will we know when He is returning and re-gathering His people? Scripture tells us that this, too, will be marked with a shofar blast. Isaiah, Paul and Matthew all mention a great blast from a shofar before the returning of the Lord. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul, writes that "the L-rd Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the shofar of G-d, and the dead in Messiah will rise first."

Jewish people around the world refer to Rosh Hashanah as the Jewish New Year. This is because traditionally this was considered the day of creation, and the original New Year. G-d gave Israel a second new year cycle at the time of the Exodus from Egypt. So Jews have two cycles of the New Year. This holiday may in fact be, one of these years, the great New Year's Day of the ages. There is reason to believe the Messiah may indeed return on this very holiday, in the year of His choosing, and begin His Messianic kingdom on earth with the blast of the shofar. We are all familiar with a trumpet fanfare to announce the welcoming of a King. How appropriate then that we give a yearly welcome to the King of Kings with a

triumphant shofar blast as well. May this be the year and the Rosh HaShannah of His Return!

One of the customs of Rosh HaShannah is the use of the color white, in clothing and decorations, to denote purity before the Judge. This Jewish custom appears to be the source of the picture of the believers, the bride of Yeshua, transported to the throne of G-d, in Revelation 4.4 and 19.8, clothed in fine white linen, symbolic of righteousness. Torah curtains and covers, table cloths, can all be white to remind us of the concepts of purity in judgment, simplicity, and equality before G-d. May our spiritual robes be also bright and pure!



It is a day of eating sweet foods, in hopes for a sweet and joyful new year, as described in Nechemyah (Nehemiah). It was on the first day of the seventh month that Ezra the Scribe read the book of the Torah before the people (Neh. 8:1-8). The hearers, conscious of their shortcomings, were distressed to hear the words of the Torah but Nechemyah, Ezra's companion, said to them: "Go

your way, eat rich viands, and drink the sweet beverages, and send portions to him who has none prepared; for this day is holy to our L-rd; do not be sad; for joy in the L-rd is your refuge" (Neh. 8:10). Therefore, the motif of the foods that will be served at the kiddush lunch will be sweetness. Also, round shaped foods, that speak of the cycle of the year, such as challot baked in a round shape, are part of the day.

As Messianics, **We do not practice Tash-leekh**, (from the Hebrew word for "you will cast") which is the name of the brief ceremony that is practiced by the Orthodox on the day of Rosh HaShannah. These people gather by a body of water and throw bread crumbs, or the lint out of their pockets, into the water, in an attempt to illustrate the scripture in Micah 7.19, "You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." This practice was disclaimed by some Medieval rabbis as being based on Roman or other pagan superstition.

T'vilah: As Messianics we practice a more scriptural way to symbolize the washing away of sins, which is with a T'vilah [Immersion] service, which was also practiced during Yeshua's time by Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist).

10 Days of Awe: Between Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur, we encourage special prayer times, a meaningful time of confession, and humbling of ourselves before G-d and each other, and true reconciliation and revival.