

Rosh Hashanah - Lessons from this Jewish High Holy Day

Written by Phillip Lester - Bloomfield, New Jersey Saturday, 11 September 2010 08:57



The Jewish High Holy Days and their relevance for all disciples of Jesus

Part 1 - Rosh Hashanah

With September's arrival comes relief from the summer's heat along with the promise of cooler evenings and the arrival of fall. Local store circulars start advertising for items of interest for Jewish people preparing to observe the High Holy Days, namely Rosh Ha Shanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot, These sacred days of the fall season are listed in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 29 As Jewish people around the world enter into this holy and sobering time of reflection let us consider just how powerful and beautiful a time of refreshing this can be for all of us.

Rosh HaShanah has traditionally been viewed as the Jewish New year and Yom Kippur which occurs exactly ten days later, focuses on atonement for sin. Other than getting these days off from work, one might wonder what relevance do these observations hold for non-Jews? This article will attempt to explain how, the High Holy Days hold tremendous value and relevance for our lives whether one is Jewish or not. This article will focus on today's observation of Rosh Hashanah.

Although traditionally viewed as the Jewish New Year, it was originally called the **Feast of Trumpets** or "**The day of the sounding of the trumpets**" (see Num 29:1-6), Over time, however, the Rabbi's traditionally came to view it as the beginning of the Jewish year and called it "Rosh Hashanah" which means "Head of the year" or the new year. This is why it's very thoughtful and appropriate to give your Jewish friends a Jewish New Years card.



You may wonder how this can be, since, Biblically it is called the first day of the seventh month! The reason is that the Jewish calendar is built on two cycles--the religious calendar beginning in the Spring (Nissan), and the civil calendar beginning in the Fall (Tishri). Due to the necessity of the Jewish people having to also observe the civil calendar, the rabbis of old used this opportunity to give spiritual applications to emphasize the importance of preparation for the holiest of days, Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement. Unlike the celebration of our civil New Year, instead of partying and revelry, the Jewish New Year is observed more with self –introspection. From a spiritual perspective, Rosh HaShanah represents a wake-up call. As the medieval Jewish Rabbi Moses Maimonides wrote, explaining that the trumpet blast signified, "Wake up from your sleep, you sleepers! Arise from your slumber, you slumberers! Examine your deeds! Return to God! Remember your Creator! Those of you who forget the truth in the futilities of the times and spend all year in vanity and emptiness, look into your soul, improve your ways and your deeds. Let each of you abandon his evil ways and his immoral thoughts." Throughout the New Testament writings, the trumpet blast is also associated with judgment and Jesus' return (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thes 4:16; Rev 11:15). Because of the themes of judgment and repentance, Rosh HaShanah is an ideal time to take stock of our life and Pray for awakening both in ourselves, and for the Jewish people.

The trumpet or Shofar was a rams horn and was sounded whenever an enemy approached or there was a need to alert the people about an event. The sound of the shofar hints at the idea of waking

up, taking a look around, listening up, heed the warnings, pay attention to God's voice. In other words, this is time to stop whatever we are doing in our busy crazy lives and take inventory of our inner being which can get so neglected. We can get so busy we forget that which is most important. We can get so caught up with our existence that we lose sight of those things that are of most value namely our relationship with God and our fellow human beings. A key word for this time of the year is Teshuva (a Hebrew word for Repentance) which implies the idea of turning from sin and returning to God. and getting back on the right track Rosh HaShana is a time to take stock of where we are at, especially in our walk with GOD. Many of us focus primarily on the external, physical, material and yet these are not the most important things in life. Teshuva is a mind set that make efforts to stop the sinful patterns that have taken root in our daily life and radically rearrange our priorities.

This is ideal time to wake up and recognize the ultimate damage that our sin does to our relationships and to have a mind change that results in a change of action. It implies a change in our innermost being – the heart- echoing the message of Psalm 51 that God desires truth in the innermost being and is looking for a broken and contrite heart. The trumpet reminds us to take an inner inventory well as heed the warning of an impending judgment. [Click to hear the Shofar](#)



This year Rosh HaShanah is observed beginning the evening of September 8 [29th] and continues throughout the [Sept 29-Oct 1, 2019]. For the next ten days (known as the “days of awe”) during which there will be a sobering time of reflection in preparation for Yom Kippur which will be observed this year on [Oct 11th]. The true fulfillment of Yom Kippur is elaborated in Isaiah 53, Daniel 9, and especially Hebrews 9-10.

In a future article we will learn the tremendous foreshadows of the Messiah contained in the sacrifices and work of the High Priest that occurred on that day (Leviticus 16). Yom Kippur hints at the deeper meaning of Redemption made

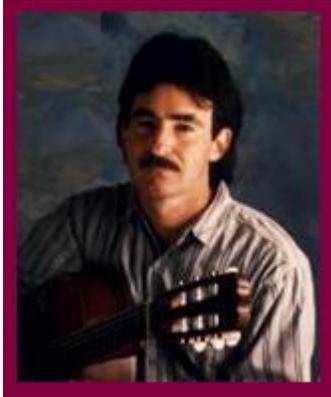
possible through the power of the blood and the mystery of substitution.

As disciples there are several benefits in understanding the significance of the Jewish calendar and the special days that are marked to be observed. According to the New Testament, the festivals are beautiful shadows of the Messiah (Colossians 2:16-17). This is especially seen in Passover and Yom Kippur. They foreshadow Gods plan of salvation in several ways. Once we understand how they correspond with the Messiah and his kingdom (I Corinthians 5:7) they build our faith and remind us how the Scriptures (both OT and NT) are so wondrously interwoven.

Secondly, another benefit of knowing about the festivals involves our ability to show consideration to Jewish neighbors and co-workers. For those reaching out to Jewish friends it is extremely helpful in our efforts to lovingly relate to them (I Corinthians 9:20-22) and let them know we appreciate the true Jewish heritage of Christianity.

During this season, we as believers would benefit from viewing these feasts as an opportunity for spiritual renewal- an opportunity to evaluate our spiritual journey – where we have been and where

we are going. Although gentile believers (non Jews) are not bound to observe these feasts, there remains, however a richness in understanding the deeper meaning of these feasts which God appointed for the Israelites so long ago and continue to be observed with reverence and awe by the Jewish community today. Although its is a time of self examination , Rosh HaShana is traditionally celebrated with the blowing of the shofar, synagogue services, a large family meal and sweets. The traditional greeting L'Shana Tova implies "May your name be inscribed in the book of life and "L' Shana Yom Tov – have good year



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