

Congregation Beit Mashiach
Pastor Andrew Ketel
Shabbat Message
September 16, 2017

Title: Why the New Year?

Text: Leviticus 23:24, 25

This morning we sounded the shofar to honour the upcoming Rosh Chodesh (New Moon) which will take place this Thursday. Actually, it begins at sundown on Wednesday evening. This is the seventh such blowing since the first of Nisan, thus within the Hebraic perspective it holds significance since the number seven speaks of completeness (Num. 10:10). The Scriptures calls this day “Yom Teruah” (Feast of Trumpets), yet we call this feast day “Rosh Hashanah” the ‘head of the year’ or “New Year’s” and it is on this day that the Jewish calendar changes the years designation, from 5777 to 5778. For many believers who attempt to follow Scripture as their fail authority is causes some confusion because in Exodus 12:1-2 it states that the first of Nisan is the “*beginning of months*” thus in their perspective the New Year.

The Mishnah states that there are four “New Years” within the Jewish calendar. First, is on the first of Nisan, which is the date of reckoning the reigns of Jewish kings and establishing the order of the feast days. Second, is on the first of Elul which is the date of reckoning the annual tithes of their animals. Third, is on the first of Tishrei which is the day from which we reckon the beginning of years and even more significant the designated beginning of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years. Also, what many of us overlook it is the time for planting of trees and vegetables. Fourth, is on the first or fifteenth of Shevat which is the New Year of the tree, usually when the almond trees blossom. It is interesting that the two major “New Years” fall in the times of Yeshua most important work that of Passover and High Holy Days which are times the highlight His work of redemption.

Some of you may be thinking, Pastor this is based upon a traditional Jewish perspective, was not Yeshua against honouring the traditions of the fathers. No! He was not against honouring the traditions of the fathers as long as their observance did not dishonour or override the laws of Torah. As a matter of fact, in the Torah Adonai gives the leadership of Israel the authority to flesh out the laws and practices of His people (Deut. 16:18). It was their task to declare the New Moon (Ps. 81:3-4), the Shemittah year, declare the Jubilee (Ezek. 40:1) and the basic traditions of the community. We as a Torah Observant community understand that we as believers in Messiah have been engrafted into the commonwealth of Israel. That always sounds great, but the implications of that belief are not only are we part of the commonwealth of Israel, but we also need to follow the halachah set down by that community.

Within our understanding of Scripture, we encourage that it is place back into it historical context to begin to understand it correctly. According to historical writing Tishrei 1 has been established as a “*Rosh Hashanah*” from at least the time of the return of the exiles (Fourth century B.C.E.) (Neh. 8:1-9). Even Josephus spoke of it having spiritual significance in Antiquities 1.81 where he states, Moses... appointed Nisan... as the first month for the festivals... the commencement of the year for everything relating to divine worship, but for selling and buying and other ordinary affairs he preserved the ancient order [i.e. the year beginning in Tishrei]. We need to remember that Flavius Josephus lived in the first century a

contemporary with Yeshua, so we can safely conclude that Yeshua was familiar with this practice or observance and yet did bring any measure of correction.

Scripture does not give us many directives related to the Feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah. There are three basic observances upon this day that Scripture outlines. First, this day is to be a day of *'rest.'* Secondly, we are commanded *to hear the sound of the shofar.* Thirdly, there are the *required sacrifices* but that would require the Temple to fulfill.

I was taken back when I took the time to reflect upon the traditional reasons for sounding the shofar.

1. The Creation of the World.

According to the rabbis if you would scramble the letters of the first word of Scripture Bereshit, it could spell the first of Tishrei in Hebrew. This they take as the date of creation, or at least the creation of mankind. But, the moment mankind came on the scene then Adonai became King of the Universe. The shofar is sounded at a coronation, thus every year on this feast day we are reminded of Adonai's continued kingship.

2. The Beginning of a New Year

The sound of the shofar is like a great alarm clock which calls us out of our spiritual slumber. The first day of the ten days of repentance (Awe) during which we are called to examine our deeds and correct our ways, as we return to Adonai.

3. The Reminder of Mount Sinai

The shofar was sounded just prior to the giving of the Torah (Ex. 19:19). When we hear the sound of the shofar every year we are reminded of our original commitment and sincerity to follow His ways. Even in the Book of Revelation this is what sets the believer apart (Rev. 12:17).

4. The Voice of the Prophets.

The sound of the shofar serves to remind us of the remonstrations of our Prophets which are compared to the sounding of the shofar (Ezek. 33:4-5). It is a warning of the pending judgement; the time of reckoning is at hand. The sound of the shofar is a call for us to correct our ways, follow Adonai's commandments and act properly with others.

5. The Tears.

The sounding of the shofar reminds us of the destruction of the Temple and that the shofar calls the armies of our enemies. Thus, when we hear the shofar, we should pray for the rebuilding of the holy Temple in Jerusalem and the quick return of our Messiah.

6. The Sacrifice.

The shofar, reminds us of the ram that was found tangled in the bush on Mount Moriah when Abraham was to offer Isaac to Adonai. When Abraham had proven his love for Adonai, Adonai provided an offering the ram in the place of Abraham's son Isaac. This was a foreshadowing that He provided a way of redemption for Israel and you and me through His only begotten Son Yeshua HaMashiach. The sound of the shofar reminds us of this awesome provision by Adonai.

7. The Awe.

The sounding of the Shofar instills a sense of trepidation and fear that leads us to humble ourselves before Adonai (Amos 3:6a). We contemplate the true infinitude of Adonai, how He fills all space and time.

8. The Introspection.

When we hear the sound of the shofar we are reminded of the pending great Day of Judgement (Zeph. 1:14, 16). In response, we examine our deeds and contemplate how we can improve them (I Cor. 3:13-15).

9. The Ingathering.

The shofar blast will signal the return of the Jewish people when Messiah comes (Is. 27:13). Once again, we are reminded that it is Adonai who brings about our salvation.

10. The Resurrection.

The sounding of the shofar serves to remind us of the resurrection of the dead (Is. 18:3; Dan. 12:2). We know that those included in the first resurrection have an inheritance of eternal life with Messiah. We who are dead and those who yet live and believe will be caught up to meet Him in the air to begin the wondrous journey of eternity.

As I reflected upon these ten reminders ascribed by Jewish tradition it is easy to see the finger print of Adonai within them. This coming Wednesday evening as we gather to honour and celebrate the Feast of Trumpets may we bring these reflections to mind to add to the meaning of this observance. But mostly, may we be awakened for our spiritual slumber and be repositioned on the ancient paths in a manner that will bring pleasure to our Heavenly Father. Remember that we are a part of a community that reaches back to the foot of Mount Sinai, with all its richness and the wonder of its covenantal standing with Hashem.