

NEW EDITION

GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES

A Practical Guide For Understanding
and Celebrating The Biblical Holy Days

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Rosh HaShanah

The New Year

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Lord said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the Lord by fire’” (Leviticus 23:23–25).

One of the fascinating facts about the holy day, *Rosh HaShanah* is that it is considered the “New Year.” The truth is, it comes in the seventh month of the calendar year. Did someone make a blatant miscalculation?

The biblical year starts in the spring with the month Nisan (Exodus 12:2). This has a certain logic to it. It is the beginning of the new harvest season.

However, the rabbis gave such significance to this special Shabbat (it was the first of the fall holidays) that they eventually considered it as the “spiritual” New Year. Hence the name change as well. Biblically known as *Yom Teruah* (the Day of Sounding/Festival of Trumpets), this first day of Tishri became called “Rosh HaShanah,” the Head of the Year.

The purpose of this holy day is summed up in one word—regathering. Since the fall holidays call us to regather to a pure faith in God, Rosh HaShanah has come to represent the day of repentance. It is the day when the people of Israel take stock of their spiritual condition and make the necessary changes to insure that the upcoming new year will be pleasing to God.

So important is this day of Rosh HaShanah that, in fact, the entire preceding Hebrew month of Elul takes on a holy significance of its own. The rabbis stressed that the forty day period from the first day of Elul through the tenth day of Tishri (Yom Kippur) was to be a time of special spiritual preparation. This was based on the belief that it was on the first of Elul that Moses ascended Mount Sinai in order to receive the second set of Tablets of the Law and that he descended on Yom Kippur (*Pirke DeRabbi Eliezer* 46).

TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE

In synagogues the *shofar*, or ram’s horn, is sounded daily to alert the faithful that the time of repentance is near. Many Orthodox men take a special water immersion (Hebrew, *tevilah mikveh*) to symbolize cleansing their ways.

Since the theme of Rosh HaShanah is repentance, the observance takes on a somber character, yet always with a hint of hope because of God’s forgiveness. In the traditional Jewish home, the evening starts with the festival dinner with many of the customary dishes. Then it is off to synagogue for the evening service. A good part of the next day is also spent in worship.

The liturgy, music and prayers emphasize the recurring theme of repentance, turning to God. Since the day is a shabbat, most Jewish people take off from work or school in order to observe the day correctly.

In traditional groups, the afternoon of Rosh HaShanah is spent at a body of water (ocean, lake or stream) observing the ancient service, *Tashlich*. The word derives from Micah 7:19 where the prophet promises, “You will hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.” To illustrate this beautiful truth, people cast bread crumbs or pebbles into the water and rejoice in God’s promise of forgiveness.

With these themes in mind, it is customary in the Jewish community to send holiday cards greeting family and friends with wishes for a blessed New Year.

The most noticeable custom is the *shofar*, the trumpet mentioned in the biblical text. The shofar is sounded in the synagogue with four different notes: *tekia* (blast), *shevarim* (broken notes), *teruah* (alarm) and *tekia gedolah* (the great blast). These notes provide some spiritual lessons. Rabbis observed that the shofar was used in the ancient world to hail a king. So, too, at Rosh HaShanah, all Israel is said to appear before the King of Kings in anticipation of personal judgement. Also, often in the Bible the shofar was sounded to gather the troops together for battle (see Joshua 6). In this case, the shofar is our “wake-up call”; an alarm to call us to our appointed time.

THE PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT

As with all biblical holy days, there is prophetic as well as historical meaning in Rosh HaShanah. Many classical rabbis saw a connection between Rosh HaShanah as the holy day of regathering and the Messiah who would be the agent of regathering. For example, in a work in the 8th century C.E. we find the following commentary:

Messiah ben David (son of David), Elijah and Zerubbabel, peace be upon him, will ascend the Mount of Olives. And Messiah will command Elijah to blow the shofar. The light of the six days of

Creation will return and will be seen, the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and God will send full healing to all the sick of Israel. The second blast which Elijah will blow will make the dead rise. They will rise from the dust and each man will recognize his fellow man, and so will husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother. All will come to the Messiah from the four corners of the earth, from east and from west, from north and from south. The Children of Israel will fly on the wings of eagles and come to the Messiah... (Ma'ase Daniel as quoted in Patai, p.143).

While the historical emphasis of the holy day is repentance, the prophetic theme looks for the future day when the full spiritual regathering will occur under the Messiah.

All the details of Rosh HaShanah become more interesting as we consider the New Testament and the life of Yeshua. The bulk of biblical evidence has led me to agree with those who say the Messiah's birth took place in the late fall, not the winter (see chapter on "Sukkot"). If this is true, we can approximate the time when Yeshua started his public ministry. As Luke notes in his Gospel (3:23), Yeshua was "about thirty years old" thus placing his baptism and first preaching in the fall of that year.

Consider the parallel themes to Rosh HaShanah. Would it be surprising that Yeshua took a special immersion/mikveh in the fall of the year (Matthew 3:13–17)? Is there a relationship to the forty day period of testing by the adversary (Matthew 4:1–11)? And what was the message Yeshua immediately started proclaiming after the forty days? "Turn from your sins to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!"

What better time could there have been for the Messiah to start his earthly ministry than the time of the spiritual new year? The historical evidence seems to indicate the month of Elul served as the perfect time of preparation for the greatest spiritual message ever to come to Israel: return to God, Messiah has come!

There is rich prophetic truth associated with this Feast of Trumpets. As it characterizes a time of ingathering and spiri-

tual preparation, a future fulfillment of Rosh HaShanah is also alluded to. In speaking of the future regathering of the believers in Messiah, commonly called the “Rapture,” Rabbi Saul (the apostle Paul) reveals an interesting connection to the holy day:

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; then we who are left still alive will be caught up (Latin = rapture) with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord. So encourage each other with these words” (I Thessalonians 4:16–18).

This holy day is a perfect picture of the regathering of believers! In the future all true believers in Yeshua will be gathered to meet him in the clouds. The dead in Messiah will rise first, to be followed immediately by those believers alive at that time. Not surprisingly, the signal of the gathering will be the sound of the shofar. In fact, the reference here is to a particular note sounded at Rosh HaShanah. The word normally translated “shout” in verse sixteen comes from the Hebrew, *teruah*, better translated in this context as the “alarm” blast of the shofar. Similar references to the shofar as the signal of the Rapture can be found elsewhere in the New Testament (see I Corinthians 15:50–58 and Revelation 4:1).

Another important fulfillment of Rosh HaShanah is the regathering of the Jewish believing remnant at the second coming of Messiah. As far back as the seventh century B.C.E., the prophet Isaiah wrote:

In that day the Lord will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 27:12–13).

That this passage is referring to a latter day regathering of the believing remnant is clear, and we are still waiting for this

shofar to fulfill it. Likewise, Messiah Yeshua, when asked about the future of Israel, confirmed this as a latter day promise in his own teaching:

He (the Son of Man) will send out his angels with a great shofar; and they will gather together his chosen people from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31).

Believers in Yeshua HaMashiach should have a fond appreciation for this rich holy day, Rosh HaShanah! It has served historically as a time of spiritual preparation and repentance, both themes we can learn from. Prophetically, we are reminded of God's promise to regather and restore his chosen people, Israel, in the last day. The sound of the shofar is also a reminder of the blessed hope every messianic believer possesses: we could enter Messiah's presence at any time (Titus 2:13). Let us give heed to the sound of the shofar and all that Rosh HaShanah has to teach.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BELIEVERS IN MESSIAH

There are a number of practical ways to observe Rosh HaShanah. In synagogues, preparation starts the preceding Hebrew month, Elul, by sounding the shofar on Shabbat. Special prayers to cultivate repentance, called *selikhot*, are offered. For Messianic Jews and Gentiles this season could be observed in the same kind of spirit. Perhaps one might desire to purchase a shofar and sound it every morning during the month preceding Rosh HaShanah. This could be used to enhance the true spirit of this holy day—focusing on repentance and a pure walk with God.

A special evening observance can be planned upon reaching the first day of Tishri. As with most Jewish holy days, much of the preparation revolves around a holiday meal. The table is set with the best dinnerware, tablecloth and two candlesticks. White is a common color for the holy days based on the promise that God will turn our scarlet sins as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). This may include the tablecloth, and often, personal clothing. To believers it is a beautiful statement of our cleansing in Yeshua! It is traditional to light the holiday

candles with the appropriate blessing which is slightly different from the standard Shabbat blessing.

Barukh atah Adonai Elohenu melekh ha-olam, asher kidshanu b' mitzvohtav, v'tzi-vanu l'hadleek ner shel yom tov.

Blessed art thou, O Lord Our God, King of the universe, who has set us apart by your commandments and has commanded us to kindle the holiday light.

After the candles, we bless the sweet wine and the special round raisin challah bread. Both remind us of an important theme of Rosh HaShanah—that we will experience a sweet and full New Year in God's blessing.

The foods of the dinner also make this statement. We may have the traditional *tzimmes* (carrots with honey), as well as honey cake for dessert. In one of the more graphic customs, we dip sliced apples in honey to taste the incredible sweetness that comes from our heavenly father. It should be noted that the traditional greeting of the holiday season is *l'shana tova u-metukah* (may you have a sweet and good new year). Main dishes might be turkey or brisket. A symbolic dish is a cooked fish served with its head. This illustrates God's promise that there will be a time when Israel will no longer be the tail, but the head (Deuteronomy 28:13)!

After the dinner it is time to celebrate in worship and in meditation. Normally, this takes place in the synagogue service. The purchase of tickets ahead of time is usually necessary since Jews do not ordinarily pass a plate at services. Membership fees and individual tickets for the high holy days are charged.

Believers in Yeshua might attend Rosh HaShanah services at a local messianic congregation. Here you will celebrate the various customs of the holy day among fellow believers. What a joy to hear the sound of the shofar, to experience the corporate prayers, and to worship in music in the fulness of Messiah! If there is no messianic group nearby, perhaps a home service is in order. This could

include many of the same elements to draw attention to this special day.

Since this is a shabbat, the following day can be made special by taking off from normal work and school. Usually, there is a special service on the morning of Rosh HaShanah to continue in corporate worship of the King. After the morning services, customarily in late afternoon, the special ceremony called Tashlikh is held. What a meaningful service this can be for believers—to cast bread crumbs, symbolizing sins, into a body of water! The shofar can be sounded, and a guitar played while songs of praise are sung to celebrate the truth of Micah 7:19!

Being in a warmer climate, our San Diego group has even had a group immersion service at this time, culminated in a fellowship picnic. Whether at home or in a congregational setting, Rosh HaShanah can be a wonderful time of spiritual revival, preparing to be gathered to the King of Kings, Yeshua!

Rosh HaShanah Recipes

HONEYCAKE

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup oil
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 cup applesauce
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 1/4 cups teaspoons baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg, optional
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves, optional

Directions:

Mix oil, honey, sugar and applesauce. Add dry ingredients, mixing thoroughly. Pour into greased 8 or 9 inch square pan. Recipe can be doubled and place in a 9x13 inch pan. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes.

SOLE ROLL-UPS

Ingredients:

- 1 medium size onion
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 4 small sole fillets (about 6 oz. each)
- 1 medium size zucchini (about 10 oz.)
- 1 14-1/2–16 ounce can stewed tomatoes
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil leaves
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

Directions:

Chop onion, cook in oil in a 10 inch skillet until tender (about 5 minutes). Sprinkle one side of fillets with salt. Roll each fillet, salt-side in, starting with a short end. Cut zucchini into 1/2 inch chunks. Add stewed tomatoes, basil, pepper and 1 teaspoon salt, stirring to break up tomatoes. Add zucchini. Place sole roll-ups in tomato mixture, seamside down. Turn up heat until mixture boils, then reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until sole flakes easily.

TZIMMES**Ingredients:**

- 2 lbs. carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1/4 cup orange juice concentrate
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 lbs canned yams, drained
- 1 lb. pineapple chunks
- 3/4 lb. dried fruit mix, chopped
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice.

Directions:

Steam carrots until soft. Mix with remaining ingredients in a large saucepan. Cook over low heat until fruit is soft and everything is heated through.

Rosh HaShanah Crafts

SHOFAR

Materials:

Heavy grade paper (tag board)
tape
pens

Directions:

Color and decorate paper; roll the paper into a cone; tape. Wet your lips and blow in same manner as a kazoo.

BIRTHDAY CAKE FOR CREATION

Materials:

Cake mix
cake ingredients
bowl
pan
oven
decorator frosting.

Directions:

Mix and bake a cake according to package directions. After frosting, write “Happy Birthday World” with decorator frosting.

JERUSALEM PICTURE

Materials:

Large construction paper for background
glue
pens
cut outs of Jerusalem-style buildings
greenery.
Rosh Hashana cards with Jerusalem pictures—optional

Directions:

Student may either cut their own designs or use pre-cut designs. Glue onto background. The picture reminds us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. It also reminds us that the coming judgement will start from Jerusalem.

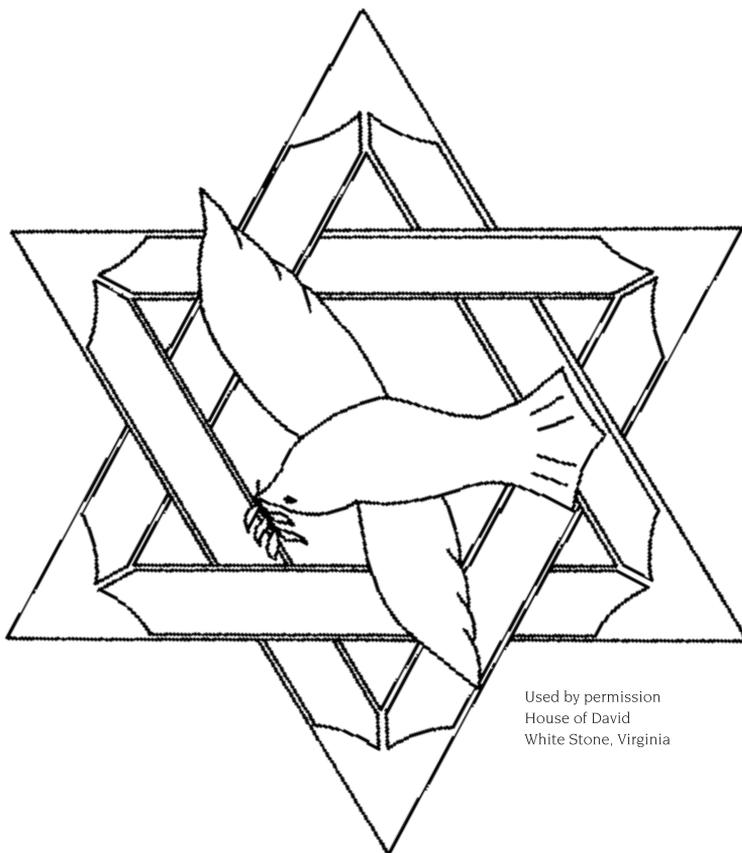
HOLY SPIRIT PICTURE

Materials:

picture below copied onto paper
pens
mat board—optional

Directions:

Color and glue onto a board.



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Rosh HaShanah Music

Melech Ozair

*Adapted by Stuart Dauermann
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Liturgy

Am Em Am Em Am C G
Mel-ech O-za-ir u Mo-shi-a u Ma-gen Mel-ech O-za-ir u Mo-

C G C A7 Dm E Am
shi-ah u Ma-gen Ba-ruch a-tah A-don-nai, Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai

1. C G C A7 2. C G Am
Ma-gen A vra-ham Ma-gen A vra-ham

2. King, Redeemer, Savior and Shield; King, Redeemer, Savior and Shield.
Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Shield of Abraham.
Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Blessed art Thou, O Lord, Shield of Abraham.
3. Atah Gibbor Le'Olam va-ed; Atah Gibbor Le'Olam va-ed.
Mechayeh Meytim Atah, Mechayeh Meytim Atah, Rav LeHosiah.
Mechayeh Meytim Atah, Mechayeh Meytim Atah, Rav LeHosiah.
4. You are the Mighty One, forever O Lord; You are the Mighty One,
forever O Lord.
You raise the dead, sleeping in their graves, You are mighty to save.
You raise the dead, sleeping in their graves, You are mighty to save.

