

God's Appointed Times
Rosh HaShanah/Yom Teruah – Festival of Trumpets

Festival of Trumpets/New Year – *Leviticus 23:23-25, I Thessalonians 4:16-18, Isaiah 27:12-13, Matthew 24:31*

Purpose

Yom Teruah means “festival of trumpets” while *Rosh HaShanah* means “head of the year”. The biblical year starts with the month of Nisan (in the early spring). The Festival of Trumpets then is celebrated on the first day of the *seventh* month, Tishri. However, as time went on, the rabbis gave such significance to this Shabbat month and its feasts that they considered it a “spiritual New Year”. So important is this fall season that the entire preceding month of Elul is dedicated to a 40-day period of spiritual preparation (40 days from 1 Elul to 10 Tishri). The primary purpose of the festival is to celebrate the beginning of the new (fall) harvest season and represents *regathering* and – through *repentance* – spiritual preparation for the other two fall feasts.

Practice (Old and New Testament)

The primary and central element of this festival is the **trumpet**. As commanded in Leviticus, the day is commemorated by the sounding of the *shofar* (ram’s horn) trumpet signifying the regathering of the people and the harvest. Traditionally and historically, the shofar is sounded on numerous occasions using four different note patterns: *tekia* (blast), *shevarim* (broken notes), *teruah* (alarm), and *tekia gedolah* (the great blast) – signifying everything from hailing the arrival of a king to the calling of troops to battle.

The day is celebrated by offerings (*Numbers 29:1-6*), customary meals and a Shabbat worship service. An additional practice was added which involved the men participating in a water immersion to further symbolize the cleansing of their ways.

Prophetic Fulfillment by Christ (Holy Spirit)

The primary prophetic theme looks to the future day when the Messiah will gather his people unto Himself. However, if we calculate that Jesus began his public ministry in the fall (referencing Luke 3:23 and a late fall birth date), we find some amazing parallels surrounding his earthly ministry as well. It is interesting that Jesus preceded his ministry by a 40-day period of preparation (*Matthew 4:1-11*) and prior to that launched his ministry by the act of water immersion (*Matthew 3:13-17*) – both of which were customs related to the festival. And what better time for the Messiah to begin His [first earthly] ministry than at the beginning of the seventh/Shabbat month, and the period of spiritual renewal and repentance, and with the proclamation “repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (*Matthew 4:17*)? It is also interesting to note that the Messiah’s coming(s) were to be preceded or ushered in by Elijah (*Malachi 4:5-6, Matthew 11:12-15*).

In reference to the future gathering of believers, we turn to *I Thessalonians 4:16-18* and *Matthew 24:31*. Both are a very clear reference to the fact that the gathering of believers by Christ will be preceded by the **blowing of the trumpet** (lit. *shofar*). *Isaiah 27:12-13* tells us that the remnant of Israel will be regathered to the Lord by the **blowing of the trumpet!** See a pattern here?

Practical Applications, Observations and Challenges

“Believers in Jesus Christ should have a fond appreciation for this rich holy day - Rosh HaShanah/Yom Teruah. It has served historically as a time of spiritual preparation and repentance. Prophetically, we are reminded of God’s promise to regather and restore his chosen people in the last days. The sound of the shofar is also a reminder of the blessed hope every Messianic believer possesses – that we [are approaching the time at which we] will be in the Messiah’s presence (*Titus 2:13*). Let us give heed to the sound of the shofar and all that this holy day has to teach.” *Barry Kasdan, God’s Appointed Times, p. 68*