

בְּשׂוֹרָה *Besorah!*

Newsletter of
MESSIANIC TESTIMONY
Autumn 2019

Rosh HaShanah - just a memorial or a wake-up call?

Once again, we find ourselves at that time of year when 3 significant Biblical Feasts are about to occur: Rosh HaShanah (New Year), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and Succot (Tabernacles); and once again, space limits us as to how much we can discuss! I'm drawn, this time, to Rosh HaShanah: New Year or, the Feast of Trumpets. According to Lev 23:23-25, it is a 'high sabbath' (שַׁבְּתוֹן), memorial (זִכְרוֹן), a 'blowing/ alarm' (תְּרוּעָה), a 'holy calling' (מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ) and the cessation of ALL forms of 'servile work'. Another Hebrew name for this day is Yom Teruah – the Day of 'Blowing'.

Verse 24 of Lev 23 instructs us that this observance is to take place in the seventh *month* (חֹדֶשׁ). In Hebrew, the word for month comes from the word 'new' (חֹדֶשׁ), because of the 'new' moon. However, the Targum (Aramaic translation) renders the word for month as 'ירחא', or 'moon'. Even our English word for 'month' comes from the word 'moon'.

In the Bible, every New Moon was to be signalled by the blowing of a shofar; the ram's horn. The main spiritual purpose of this monthly observance is to proclaim God as King! The Feast of Trumpets (Literally, 'Yom Teruah', or 'Day of Blowing/Shouting') is the seventh of these months, hence it is a 'new moon sabbath'; a significant time of exalting the Lord!

Psalms 47 is the 'Psalm of the Day' when it comes to celebrating Rosh HaShanah and it has been traditionally read just before the blowing of the shofar. So apposite are the words of this psalm in describing the significance of the observance that, in recent centuries, this has increased to seven recitations before the blowing of the shofar! Please read the entire psalm and consider some of the language it contains: '**Shout** (from teruah) unto God with the voice of triumph (v.1).' 'For the LORD **most high** is terrible; *He is a great King* over all the earth (v.2).' 'God is gone up with a **shout** (teruah), the LORD with the sound

Sharing Yeshua with Jewish People worldwide

www.messianictestimony.com



of a **trumpet** (shofar) (v.5).’ ‘Sing praises unto **our King**, (v.6).’ ‘**For God is the King of all the earth** (v.7).’ ‘**God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness** (v.8).’ ‘**He is greatly exalted** (v.9).’

In picking up some of these themes, I’m reminded of the account of the battle at Jericho (Joshua 6: 1-17). The name ‘Jericho’ (יֵרִיחוֹ) means ‘moon’ and it was by means of blowing the shofar that the walls came down! Another passage that alludes to this feast, in my estimation, is Rev 11:15 where we read, ‘And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the **kingdoms of this world** are become **the kingdoms of our Lord**, and of His [Messiah]; and He shall reign forever and ever.’ The passage goes on to talk about God reigning in power, of judging the nations and the temple of God being opened (vv. 16-19).

With all of that as a backdrop and keeping all of these elements in mind, let’s turn our thoughts to another important declaration, called the ‘Kedusha’, which is made throughout the observance of Rosh HaShana. This is the declaration, taken from Isaiah 6:3: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.’

In verse 1 of Isaiah 6 we read, ‘In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.’ I have often thought it somewhat odd that Isaiah begins an account of such an amazing vision with the somewhat vague phrase ‘in the year’. While Isaiah uses the phrase ‘in the year’ in other places, the contexts are different and the passages do not contain a vision of the Lord! Other Biblical visions

begin with things like, ‘in the 13th year, the 4th month, on the 5th day, I was among the captives’ (Ezek 1:1). Perhaps not all Biblical visions are linked to specific dates in scripture, but if a date *was* going to be recorded for this amazing vision, I would expect it to be more than just the *year* in which it took place, wouldn’t you?

But let’s look at some of the context and details of Isaiah’s vision to see what we might glean:

Uzziah was a mighty king. In 2 Chron 26, we read that he fortified Jerusalem and assembled a massive host of fighting men (307,500, with 2,600 chiefs) and impressive artillery! However, his heart became lifted up and he attempted to enter the Temple to burn incense, which was illegal. The result was that God smote him with leprosy (2 Chron 26:16-21) and he lived in quarantine until the **day** of his death (v.21).

The description of Isaiah’s vision (Is 6) contains much linguistic allusion to Uzziah’s reign *and* to the Feast of Trumpets. God, Himself, is referred to as ‘King Jehovah of Hosts’. He is seated on a throne. The word for ‘temple’ here is (הֵיכָל), which means ‘palace’. The seraphim *call* ‘Holy, holy, holy (same as ‘holy calling’) is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of His Glory.’ The scene also takes on priestly elements when we consider that His ‘train’ is the Hebrew word ‘hems’, which is the same as that of the hem of Aaron’s robe (Ex 28:33,34) and we find smoke ascending and an altar with burning coals (similar to Rev 8:3,4); perhaps a direct reference to what Uzziah attempted to do!

Indeed, in the order of service for Rosh HaShanah, the ‘Kedusha’ (the ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ declaration), is recited or alluded to at least 4 times, along with other prayers

that emphasise God's position as King, as Most High, as Lord of Hosts, His Glory and His Throne (Is 6:8). With the combination of the linguistic links to the Feast of Trumpets/New Year in this vision, and Isaiah's cry that he is a 'man of unclean lips, dwelling in the midst of a people of unclean lips', for his eyes have seen 'the King, the Lord of Hosts', I wonder whether Isaiah might have actually had this vision at the Feast of Trumpets/New Year – hence the phrase, 'in the year that King Uzziah died...'

If Isaiah did have this vision on Yom Teruah, then perhaps my own long-standing question as to why he cried out regarding his *unclean lips* - instead of, say, an unclean heart - might also be answered. Central to the celebration of Rosh HaShana is the blowing of the shofar! I was classically trained on the French Horn and came very close to realising a professional career of it. Lips are very important for blowing any horn (some great players have their lips insured), let alone blowing such a holy horn as the shofar! I've spent time in orchestras with gifted musicians - many who could play better than I could – but I assure you: most had unclean lips! So when 'blowing the shofar', it's not just the skill (and it takes a lot of skill!) that counts! God looks at the life.

Beyond that, Isaiah's personal conviction,

confession and cleansing still weren't enough. Just seeing the 'need' to bring God's Word to the nation of Israel ('whom shall I send, who will go for us?') isn't enough! As great preachers have said, 'the need is not the call!' No. Isaiah needed to be *sent by God*. Sadly, I fear that there are many who are active in 'good' endeavours – even things related to Israel and the Jewish people – but who lack the essential calling and preparation described in Isaiah's vision and experience of this Yom Teruah. Let's remember that bringing the Gospel to the Jewish people is a high, holy calling; one in which 'servile (self-serving) work' is prohibited and one which requires one to be purified, called and sent by God. Read the battle of Jericho again (Josh 6). The people were to be literally 'stripped', not armed (v. 9 - *החלוץ* means stripped) for that war and they were forbidden to speak (v. 10) until instructed to do so.

In my own case, it was during an orchestral rehearsal break when the Lord called me to bring the Gospel to the Jewish people. That was about 45 years ago but I remember it as if it were yesterday. Jericho was formidable and stood as either the obstacle or the gateway to the Jewish people entering the Promised Land and could not be brought down by sheer human goodwill. How is your 'embouchure'?

Shanah Tova, Chrissy Rodgers

