

Bite Size Bible Study

Rosh HaShanah #135

By Pastor Lee

I chose to resume the Bite Size Bible Studies by studying the Hebrew month of Tishri (which occurs sometime during our months of September and October). This month has four festival days in it and is considered to be the most serious season of the year. This first ten days is often called The Days of Awe (*Yamin Noraim*). Beginning with *Rosh HaShanah* it includes 10 days of introspection and repentance leading to the final day called *Yom Kippur*. This is a time of soul searching and of making things right with God and one's neighbors. The latter half of the month celebrates past actions by God in providing for Israel. *Sukkot* celebrates 7 days of rejoicing while living in temporary dwellings and rejoicing in God's redemption of Israel during the time of Moses. The final festival sometimes called the 8th day is *Shimini Atzeret*. It completes the entire year of festivals and is sometimes associated with what God will do in the future.

You may be asking yourself why I feel it necessary to study the Hebrew Fall Festivals. I believe that there is much in these festivals that pertains to our understanding of Jesus and His walk on this earth. Beyond that there are principles when applied to a Christian life that make that life more meaningful.

Adonai said to Moshe, "Tell the people of Isra'el, 'In the seventh month, the first of the month is to be for you a day of complete rest for remembering, a holy convocation announced with blasts on the shofar. Do not do any kind of ordinary work, and bring an offering made by fire to Adonai.'" Leviticus 23:23-25
Complete Jewish Bible

This day, called *Rosh Hashanah* (or Feast of Trumpets), occurs on the first day of the month of Tishri. For the Israelite and the Christian it reminds us to judge our words and our deeds by God's standards and not our own. It calls us to quit following our old error filled ways and failures, and to look ahead with fresh hope and determination to a brighter future. The observance of this day is to fill us with eagerness to embrace the life God has given us and to respect it. It is a time to reflect on the fact that we were created in God's own image and to do the best we can to honor that image.

On the festival day there is the blowing of the *shofar* (ram's horn trumpet) in the synagogue. It is sounded with 4 notes: **tekiah** (blast), **shevarim** (broken notes), **t'ruah** (alarm) and **tekiah gedolah** (the great blast).

The **tekiah** blast is one long note that acts as a kind of summons, or the sound of a king's coronation, when we are called to reaffirm God's sovereignty

The **shevarim** literally means "breaks" or "fractures." The shevarim blast is three medium-length notes that have been compared to the sound of weeping.

The **t'ruah** blast is a series of very short, staccato sounds that have been compared to an urgent alarm, calling us to rouse from our spiritual slumber.

These three are traditionally concluded with one long **tekiah gedolah** (or "great tekiah") which is similar to, but much longer than, the standard tekiah.

There is also a rich prophetic truth associated with *Rosh HaShanah*, as it speaks to a time of spiritual preparedness and a future fulfillment by the Messiah at His return. It is said that everyone is to appear before the King of Kings on *Rosh HaShanah* in anticipation of a personal judgment.

Paul speaks to this in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17:

Now, brothers, we want you to know the truth about those who have died; otherwise, you might become sad the way other people do who have nothing to hope for. For since we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, we also believe that in the same way God, through Yeshua, will take with him those who have died. When we say this, we base it on the Lord's own word: we who remain alive when the Lord comes will certainly not take precedence over those who have died. 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 with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord.

The sound of the shofar is a reminder of the hope in the Messiah's return at a time in the future, but the time to evaluate one's preparedness is now. For the following nine days one is to continue to evaluate their words and deeds by God's standards and to make adjustments to their lives. It is a time to make amends to family, friends and even enemies. These are called the Days of Awe and represent the time of our evaluation and preparing our lives to conform to God's standards.

We are saved by Jesus' death and resurrection but our initial usefulness in the future times of God's Kingdom will depend on what we are trained and qualified to do. This physical life we have now is our opportunity to gear up to a future we only see dimly for now. God's standards and Jesus example will ensure our success.

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