

Village of Hope & Justice Ministry
Yom Kippur Devotional Day 1 / Devozionale Giorno 1

Day 1: The Righteousness of Abraham

Day 1

Today is day one of what are known as the Ten Days of Awe leading up to the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur. To begin this devotional series, we will look at the meaning of the sounding of the shofar and why Rosh Hashanah is significant to the Jewish people.

You will not find the phrase Rosh Hashanah in the Bible. The festival is called Yom Teruah, the Day of the Blowing of the Trumpet. This correctly casts the festival as an attention-grabber for the Jewish people, preparing the Jewish people for the Day of Atonement, which will be observed ten days later (Leviticus 23:26–27).

Moses wrote what was given to him by Hashem (God) at Mount Sinai, "...In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord" (Leviticus 23:24–25).

The key elements found for all seven major festivals are outlined in this text; a specific day or days, a rest, a convocation (gathering), and offerings. However, as with most of the other festivals, the command to observe Rosh Hashanah comes with an additional and unique element, as well. In this instance, it is the blowing of the shofar, which we understand to be the ram's horn.

There are many reasons for the blowing of trumpets in the Bible. It serves as a warning to the Jewish people and is used to announce something to come. The shofar has taken on additional meaning throughout the years of Jewish history and understanding the role of the shofar in Jewish tradition is helpful.

The shofar (ram's horn) is blown in synagogues to remind Jewish people of the obedience of Abraham, who was willing to offer his only son as a sacrifice in obedience to Hashem (God), even though Hashem (God) prevented Abraham from going through with the act! The shofar reminds us that Hashem (God) demands full and unquestioning obedience. Additionally, according to the sages of Israel, Abraham earned an abundance of spiritual merit through his obedience.

This merit is available today for Jewish people who believe that their good works and repentance will not meet Hashem (God)'s holy standards during this season. The Jewish people would, therefore, understand the concept of "imputed righteousness," or enjoying the benefit of another's obedience and ability to please Hashem (God). Abraham did this for all Jews, according to tradition, and this idea permeates our understanding of Rosh Hashanah.

Of course, this is exactly what Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah did, as His righteousness, earned through a perfect life and atoning death, is now granted (imputed) to all those who, by faith, invite Him into their lives to be their Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. This could very well be what Paul referred to when he contrasted the disobedience of Adam with the obedience of the Messiah Jesus, "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19).

So, why is Rosh Hashanah important to me as a Jewish follower of Jesus the Messiah? Here are a few reasons why I personally observe Rosh Hashanah, as well as what it means to me.

Rosh Hashanah is an important family time, and many Jewish families around the world will have special dinners and time together, as well as attend synagogue. Observing Rosh Hashanah is a wonderful way of identifying with my Jewish people on a more spiritual level rather than focusing on Israel or social, cultural, or political concerns that might be important to communal Jewish life. It is also a fruitful season of witness, during which I am able to invite Jewish friends and neighbors to our services and Bible studies worldwide so that Jesus can be seen in a Jewish context.

Most of all, Rosh Hashanah reminds me of my own need to regularly repent of my sins and be faithful and obedient to His Word. A season of spiritual reflection can be wonderfully enriching, and I believe is vital and necessary in the midst of our busy lives—even if we are busy doing the Lord’s work. As Isaiah the prophet wrote so many years ago, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6–7).

Scripture Meditation

This encouragement to come clean before Hashem (God) is further outlined in Isaiah 58. The prophet mentioned both the New Year and the Day of Atonement.

Cry loudly, do not hold back; raise your voice like a trumpet, and declare to My people their transgression and to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways, as a nation that has done righteousness and has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They ask Me for just decisions, they delight in the nearness of God. ‘Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?’ Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, and drive hard all your workers. Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one’s head like a reed and for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord? Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke?

Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday. And the Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell. (Isaiah 58:1–12)

I hope you will read the entirety of this passage and see that Hashem (God) wants to forgive us of our sins. He is merciful and gracious by nature, as well as just and righteous. He loves us, but in order to be forgiven, we must come to Him in repentance, forsaking our sin, with a new desire to please Him through what we say, think, and do. For those of us who know Jesus as our Messiah, we are forgiven once for all. But, during these ten days of awe, we can seek renewal and ask the Lord to help us become more willing to do His will as we deepen our understanding of the everlasting love of Hashem (God) for His creation that sent Yeshua (Jesus) to the cross.

Today's Prayer

Abba (Father), thank You for the festivals You gave to Your people Israel. Please use this time of introspection to open the eyes of Israel to see their need for the imputed righteousness of Messiah, and may they find rest and forgiveness for eternity by inviting Him into their lives. Please give us opportunities during this season to connect with the Jewish people in our lives on a more spiritual level and help them see Jesus in a Jewish context. Thank You that, because of Him, we are forgiven once and for all!

Village of Hope & Justice Ministry is driven by a desire to see people coming to faith, especially the Jewish people. The Apostle Paul wrote, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Yeshua (Christ)" (Romans 10:17). Please help us continue to share the Word through these Bible studies by making a generous donation today.

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