

שָׁנָה טוֹבָה חֲבֵרִים שְׁלִי

Shana tova, khaverim sheli.

A good year to you all, My Friends. It's a joy to be together today.

This day is known by several names, and it is observed with both joy and celebration and with repentance and awe. This plurality of meaning is one of the themes of the day.

The first name, even though it's not the original, is of course...

רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה Rosh Hashanah- Head of the year

יוֹם הַדִּין Yom Hadin- The Day of Judgement

יוֹם תְּרוּעָה Yom Teruah- Day of shouting/blasting

There are 4 different 'new years' in Judaism, and each one deals with a different aspect of life. 15 Shevat for trees (Tu B'Shevat), 1 Nisan for kings and festivals, 1 Elul for animals and tithes, and 1 Tishrei (Rosh Hashanah) for the civil year,.

The name Rosh Hashanah was given during Talmudic times, which is roughly 70 to 500 CE. So we have been calling this day Rosh Hashanah for a very long time. Rosh Hashanah literally means 'head of the year', and it is the beginning of the civil year of the Hebrew calendar. So, in that sense, it is a new year.

Happy New Year! Shana Tova!

You can also think of it as the pinnacle or peak or top of the year (all things that rosh means), because it is the first of the high holy days, and it is the day when we stand before the king. This is both a joyous celebration because, **IT'S THE KING**, and a time of judgement because, in the presence of the King of the Universe, we become fully aware of everything we have **AND** have not done.

The level of your joy in the presence of the King is directly correlated to the life you live.

There is a story from Nekhemya (Nehemiah) that exemplifies this principle. Rabbi Shmuel talked about it last night.

The people of Israel had returned from exile in Babylon to the land of Israel, and Nehemiah read the Torah aloud to them on the 1st of Tishrei. The people wept as the Word revealed their sins. The people were judged by the Word of God on this day. They stood before the King of Kings, and they were ashamed.

Therefore, what are we to say? That the Torah is sinful? Heaven forbid! Rather, the function of the Torah was that without it, I would not have known what sin is.

Romans 7:7, (CJB)

יום הדין Yom Hadin- The Day of Judgement

Another name that developed for today is Yom Hadin (the day of judgement). It seems to me to originate from the 2nd temple period.

Yeshua himself spoke much about the coming day of judgement.

But I tell you that on the Day of Judgment, men will give account for every careless word they speak. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Matityahu [Matthew] 12:36–37 (TLV)

In the Talmud tractate on Rosh Hashanah, it states that three books of account are opened on Rosh Hashanah. These books record the deeds and fates of people divided into three groups: the righteous, the intermediate, and the wicked. The names of the righteous are immediately inscribed in the Book of Life and they are sealed "to live". The intermediate class is allowed a respite of ten days (יָמִים נֹרָאִים Yamim Nora'im, The Days of Awe), until Yom Kippur, to reflect, repent, and become righteous; the wicked are "blotted out of the book of the living forever."

This should sound familiar to many of you, even if you don't study Talmud, because in Revelation we see this same concept described on the final day of judgement, the day we stand before Adonai, the righteous judge.

*And I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of the throne. **Books** were opened; and another book was opened, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, according to what they had done.*

Revelation 20:12 (CJB)

Rav Sha'ul wrote in Romans 14 that all of us will stand before God's judgment seat and then quotes this passage from Yesha'yahu (Isaiah),

that to me every knee will bow and every tongue will swear about me that only in ADONAI are justice and strength.

Yesha'yahu [Isaiah] 45:23–24 (CJB)

All of us, the whole earth, will eventually yield our rebellious selves to the will of Adonai.

Today begins the 10 Days of Awe (יָמִים נֹרָאִים Yamim Nora'im) when we seek reconciliation and offer forgiveness leading up to Yom Kippur (the day of atonement). We make teshuvah; turning from our wrong ways, vowing not to continue in them, repenting, begging forgiveness, and doing whatever we can to repair the damage we've done. This is a time of submitting our wills to the will of the King. Why wait until the end of days to submit your life to Him?

I invite you to resolve today to walk in the way, the truth, and the life of Yeshua.

תְּרוּעָה יוֹם Yom Teruah- Day of shouting/blasting

The oldest name for today is found in Torah. Leviticus 23:24 refers to the festival of the first day of the seventh month as zikhron teru'ah ("a memorial of blowing [of horns]"), and Numbers 29:1 calls the festival Yom Teru'ah ("day of blowing [the horn]"). It is interesting because it is not memorializing something that has happened in the past like many of the Biblical holidays do. Rather, it is memorializing the unfolding reality that Adonai is King over all the earth.

Wake Up

The blowing of the shofar is both a Biblical statute and a symbolic "wake-up call", stirring us to mend our ways and repent. Let us read the words of Maimonides in Mishneh Torah, in Laws of Repentance 3:4:

Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying:

Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth in the vanities of time and throughout the entire year, devote their energies to vanity and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts.

So, the shofar calls us to wake up, but we aren't waking to go about our normal day. We are waking up from our physical, emotional, psychological place of apathy and rest so that we can pull ourselves together so that we are presentable to the King of the Universe. This sounds identical to the good news of Yeshua.

He goes on to say:

Accordingly, throughout the entire year, a person should always look at himself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between

merit and sin. If he performs one sin, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of guilt and brings destruction upon himself.

[On the other hand,] if he performs one mitzvah, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and brings deliverance and salvation to himself and others. This is implied by [Proverbs 10:25] "A righteous man is the foundation of the world," i.e., he who acted righteously, tipped the balance of the entire world to merit and saved it.

This verse from Mishlei, Proverbs, is a proverb of Solomon. The verse is translated as:

When the storm has passed, the wicked are gone; but the righteous are firmly established forever.

Mishlei [Proverbs] 10:25 (CJB)

The Hebrew is this:

וְצַדִּיק יְסֹד עוֹלָם

The words are 'and... righteous... foundation... world'.

Let's ponder this for a minute. A righteous man is the foundation of the world. This is something we believe. Let's read the opening of the besorah of Yokhanan.

In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made through Him, and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overpowered it.

Yokhanan [John] 1:1–5 (TLV)

John is writing here about Yeshua. Yeshua is the foundation of the world. He is one who acted righteously, tipped the balance of the entire world to merit and saved it.

Connecting Scriptures

There is a method of exegesis, a way that we explain or interpret scripture, known by the acronym PARDES. This stands for:

Peshat (פְּשָׁט) – "surface" ("straight") or the literal (direct) meaning.[7]

Remez (רִמְזֵי) – "hints" or the deep (allegoric: hidden or symbolic) meaning beyond just the literal sense. In the version of the New Zohar, Re'iah.

Derash (דְּרָשׁ) – from Hebrew darash: "inquire" ("seek") – the comparative (midrashic) meaning, as given through similar occurrences.

Sod (סוֹד) – "secret" ("mystery") or the esoteric/mystical meaning, as given through inspiration or revelation.

I explain this because I am getting read to do a little bit of d'rash, and I want to assure you that what I am getting ready to is completely and totally kosher. I am going to weave some similar passages together to make a point.

So, let's revisit the statement from earlier from Mishneh Torah.

The shofar blasts call out:

"Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator."

There is an order of operations here.

Get up, change your behavior, and focus your attention on God. This formula is repeated many times throughout scripture. Rav Sha'ul wrote to the community in Ephesus and by extension all of us.

"Wake up, O sleeper! Rise from the dead, and Messiah will shine on you."

Ephesians 5:14 (TLV)

For me, this passage connects to something Yeshayahu, Isaiah, wrote:

Arise, shine, for your light has come, the glory of ADONAI has risen over you.

For although darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the peoples; on you ADONAI will rise; over you will be seen his glory.

Yesha'yahu [Isaiah] 60:1–2 (CJB)

Yeshua called us to wake up as well.

Turn away from your sins, for the kingdom of heaven is near.

Matityahu (Matthew) 4:17 (TLV)

We are called today to **wake up** and to repent and to live a righteous life even in the midst of a world that has gone **dark** because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. The Creator, the glory of Adonai, the light of the world, Yeshua ha Mashiakh, has risen over you. Over you will be seen His glory.

The Eschatology of Rosh Hashanah

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;

1 Thessalonians 4:16 (CJB)

This scripture refers to the return of Melekh Mashiakh, King Messiah. It is a widely held belief that Messiah will come on Rosh Hoshanah, and it is one I believe as well. It isn't just because it is Yom Teruah, the day of the blasting of the shofar. There are many times that shofars are blown, but this is a day set aside to prepare for everything else that His coming entails.

Today is a when we remember who Adonai is, and we look forward to the day when Adonai will King over all the earth.

This is precisely why the 1st of Tishrei became associated with judgement, because it is the day we will stand before the righteous judge. For now, this is the day that we rehearse and prepare ourselves for that day.

The Makhzor Rosh Hashanah, the prayerbook traditionally used for this day, contains a whole section called Malkhuyot that declares our acceptance of Adonai as our Master and our Creator, and it concludes with the proclamation that He will rule over all.

I would like to close our time this morning with the closing prayer from the Malkhuyot.

Our God and God of our fathers, reign over the entire world with Your glory, and be uplifted over all the earth with Your honor, and appear in the splendor of Your majestic might over all who dwell in the inhabited world of Your earth; so everything that has been made will know that You have made it, and it will be understood by everything that was formed that You have formed it. And they will say everyone who has breath in his nostrils, "Adonai, God of Yisrael is King and His Kingship rules over all.

We pray this in the Aleinu. Adonai will be King over the whole earth; on that day Adonai will be One and His Name One.

וְנֶאֱמַר: וְהָיָה יְיָ לְמֶלֶךְ עַל
כָּל הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
יְהִי יְהוָה אֶחָד וְשְׁמוֹ
אֶחָד

L'shanah tova tikatevu v'tekhatemu

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תְּכֻתְּבוּ וּתְחַתְּמוּ

May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.

Shana tova, shalom, shalom.

References

- Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance, 3
- Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible
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