

## ROSH HASHANAH, THE DAYS OF AWE & YOM KIPPUR

Dan Stolebarger

Unlike our US culture, our Jewish roots implore us to approach the beginning of a New Year with a time for deep reflection and repentance. Rosh Hashanah (literally means the head of the year) is just the beginning of a ten day period that ends on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). These days are referred to as the "Ten Days of Awe." This year Rosh Hashanah begins on the eve of October 2 and Yom Kippur falls on October 11.

Rosh Hashanah is also known as the Feast of Trumpets and again carries with it the concept of the return of the Messiah. In the Jewish culture this period is a time when God "opens the books" to see those whose lives merit eternal life and those who fall short. *As Christians we are well aware of the Book of Life but, unlike our Jewish brethren, our names are placed in that book on the basis of what Jesus has already done for us and not because of whatever "good works" we have accomplished.* Still, with that said, I find this feast to be very helpful. During these Ten days of Awe, I seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to ask Him to reveal to me the things that are displeasing in His sight ... those sins that so easily entangle me and then I ask for guidance, direction and insight regarding His divine plan for my life.

The Jews believe that not only on this day were Adam and Eve created but also that this was the day of the binding of Isaac - the Akedah. The Sages say that when Adam first opened his eyes and took his first breath, that he declared God to be the King of the Universe and acknowledged Him as his Creator as well. These two themes need to be woven into these Ten Days of Awe as we proclaim our Lord to be both King as well as Creator. This is a time to hear Jesus say to each of us ... "Come follow Me!" and to remember that we must heed and understand that we are

the ones who follow - not Him; in other words, He does not exist simply to "bless" our lives! We are to pick up our cross daily and follow Jesus!

The other aspect is that the Akedah speaks of God providing Himself as a sacrifice for our sin. By accepting Jesus' sacrifice we are cleansed from our sins, but that cleansing requires our confession. It is interesting that part of the tradition of the Days of Awe are for Jews to visit a moving body of water and cast bread upon the waters and watch it flow away. The bread is symbolic of their sins and the discouragement of life. I find that this is very helpful for me to do as well because it helps me to focus on both repentance and His forgiveness, for when I confess, He washes me clean and takes my sins as far as the east is from the west.

And then the culmination, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies one day out of the year to pray for the atonement of the sins of the nation. How devastating for Jews today not to have a Temple where this event could take place. This is why for the Jews that their religion is now works based. No Temple means no sacrifice and as we read in the Torah that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin... how DEVASTATING! **But for us as Believers in Jesus, we rejoice in the fact that our Lord did enter into the Holy of Holies once for all with a perfect sacrifice! As stated, our complete justification and our names being found in the Lamb's Book of Life is predicated on what HE did, not what we DO!** That's why our message to the world is called the GOSPEL (remember this word literally means GOOD NEWS!).

Finally, it is noted that the blowing of the shofar is a constant during this period of time which is why many Christians believe that the Rapture will occur during the time of the Feast of Trumpets. Who knows? That's God's business, but we are told that we must stay alert and awake and not be deceived. So many of the parables paint the picture of the workers being found busy when the Master returns! For Jews the sounding of the shofar has two primary meanings, to awaken and prepare for battle as

well as to sound the trumpets for the coronation of the King...not a bad image for us as Believers!

So, pray about celebrating this Feast this year. I find it to be a lot more productive and helpful than staying up til midnight on New Years Eve and banging pots and pans, watching some kind of ball drop and then making some kind of New Year's Eve resolutions.

With that Shalom, my friends!