

# The Fall Festivals: High Holy Days

by  
Dean & Susan Wheelock

Speak to the children of Israel,  
And say to them:  
The feasts of the LORD,  
Which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations,  
These *are* My feasts.  
*Leviticus 23:2*

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- The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)*  
Jewish New Testament Publications  
Clarksville, Maryland, 1998
- The Five Books of Moses (FBM)*  
Schocken Books  
New York, 1995
- The Holy Bible - King James Version (KJV)*  
Oxford University Press  
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- The Open Bible*  
New King James Version (NKJV),  
Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1985.
- The Tanakh (TNK),*  
Jewish Publication Society,  
Philadelphia/New York, 1988

## ~ Introduction ~

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:  
The feasts of the LORD  
which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations,  
These are My feasts.  
*Leviticus 23:2*



Leviticus chapter 23 is the Festival Chapter of the Bible. Here is found, laid out in chronological order, all of the Festivals which God commanded the children of Israel to observe:

**"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "The feasts [moed] of the LORD [YHVH], which you shall proclaim [kara] to be holy [kodesh] convocations [mikra], these are My feasts [moed]."' (Lev. 23:1-2)**

The very first thing that must be noticed about this passage is that these Feasts are not the "Feasts of Israel," or the "Feasts of the Jews;" they are the Feasts of the Creator God (YHVH) who made the heavens and the earth:

**"Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You." (Jer. 32:17)**

In order to be abundantly clear, God repeated Himself in verse four when He again stated these Festivals belong to Him:

**"These are the feasts [moed] of the LORD [YHVH], holy [kodesh] convocations [mikra] which you shall proclaim [kara] at their appointed times [moed]." (Lev. 23:4)**

It is important to understand the key words found in these two verses. The first word is *moed* (mow-ehd,' Strong's #4150), and it means:

"1) appointed place, appointed time, meeting 1a) appointed time 1a1) appointed time (general) 1a2) sacred season, set feast, appointed season 1b) appointed meeting 1c) appointed place 1d) appointed sign or signal. ..."

The second word in our study is *kara* (kah-rah,' Strong's #7121) which means:

"1) to call, call out, recite, read, cry out, proclaim 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to call, cry, utter a loud sound ... 1a3) to proclaim ... 1a5) to summon, invite, call for, call and commission, appoint, call and endow ..."

Finally we have a two word phrase: *mikra* (meek-rah,' Strong's #4744) *kodesh* (koh-dehsh,' Strong's #6944). *Mikra* means:

"1) convocation, convoking, reading, a calling together 1a) convocation, sacred assembly 1b) convoking 1c) reading."

*Kodesh* means:

"1) apartness, holiness, sacredness, separateness 1a) apartness, sacredness, holiness ..."

Thus we have the sense that these days are holy (set-apart) days, which have been appointed by God, on which the children of Israel are to assemble. Not only are they to assemble, they are to proclaim them loudly and publicly.

## ~ The Fall Festivals ~

Four of the Holy Convocations (*kodesh* -- *mikra*) occur in the late summer and early fall:

- ◆ *Yom Teruah* - Day of Blowing or Feast of Trumpets (more commonly called *Rosh HaShannah*).
- ◆ *Yom Kippur* - Day of Atonement.
- ◆ First day of *Sukkot* - Feast of Tabernacles
- ◆ *Shemini Atzeret* - The Eighth Day following *Sukkot*.

This booklet deals with the first two Fall Festivals, *Yom Teruah* and *Yom Kippur*. The other two are explored in a separate booklet; *The Fall Festivals: Sukkot & Shemini Atzeret*. (You may request a copy by writing to *Hebrew Roots*.)

All of the Fall Festivals are a type of "Rehearsal" of events yet to transpire; the return of *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah Mah-shee'-ack = Jesus the Messiah), the reconciling of God and mankind, the establishment of the Kingdom of God -- the one thousand year millennial reign of *Y'shua*, as King of kings over all the earth, and the future coming of the New Heavens and Earth.

The Spring Festivals: Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) are "Memorial" Festivals, remembering those events which have already been fulfilled. These Festivals are covered in detail in two other *Hebrew Roots* booklets. *The Spring Festivals: Passover in Egypt and Jerusalem*, covers the death and resurrection of *Y'shua* during His first appearance on earth. *Shavu'ot: The Feast of Weeks* covers the giving of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Rue'-ack Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit) on the day of Pentecost.

God has set aside His *Moedim* (Appointed Times) to meet with us. They have been given for our benefit, not for His. Therefore, as the Apostle Paul said in reference to the upcoming Festival of Passover:

**"Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ [Messiah], our Passover, was sacrificed for us. <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (I Cor. 5:7-8)**

Let us resolve here and now to keep all of God's Appointed Times in their season.

Shalom!

DEW & SAW

Beit Shalom, 2009

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## ~ Teshuvah ~

All the ends of the world  
Shall remember and turn unto the LORD:  
And all the kindreds of the nations  
Shall worship before thee.  
*Psalm 22:27*



Elul (Eh-lool') is the sixth month on the traditional Hebrew calendar. To most Believers this is just another day of the year, filled with those events which mark the daily routine of normal people: work, shopping, and preparations for the opening of school. However, the eve of 1 *Elul* marks the beginning of a special season, one which we believe should be very important to those who look for the imminent return of our Husband *Y'shua HaMashiach*, for the first day of *Elul* begins a forty day period of time known in the Jewish world as *Teshuvah* (Teh-shoe-vah').

### ~ The Meaning of Teshuvah ~

The generally accepted definition for the word *Teshuvah* is 'repentance' or 'renewal.' However, the literal meaning is 'response' or 'return,' for repentance and renewal are only one part of the picture. It is a period of time when the Bride of Messiah (the people of God) are to 'respond' to God by 'returning' to Him in 'repentance' for a 'renewal' of their spirit.

*Teshuvah* is not just a 'turning' toward God, it is also a 'turning away' from the sins of the past year. It is a time of deep introspection, not just into one's improper actions of the past year, but also into the motives of the heart which were the catalyst for those improper actions. It is a time for each Believer to take stock of their spiritual status and to be moved to do something about those things which hinder their relationship with God and with other Believers.

### ~ The Origin of Teshuvah ~

While there are many Scriptures that call upon God's people to repent, they do not contain a specific command to observe the season of *Teshuvah*. However, according to tradition, the season of *Teshuvah* has been practiced among the children of Israel since the time they left the land of Egypt. According to that tradition, the very first *Teshuvah* was observed during the time that *Moshe* (Moh'-shay = Moses) was on Mount Sinai receiving the second set of tablets bearing the Ten Commandments.

### ~ Moshe's First Ascent ~

It was the Day of Pentecost (*Shavu'ot* = Shaw-voo-oat'), in the first year of the Exodus, when *Moshe* first ascended Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights to receive instruction from God. During that period of time the children of Israel committed a terrible sin; the crafting and worshipping of the golden calf.

This sin was especially grievous because *Shavu'ot* was the day of the consummation of the wedding between God and the children of Israel. This was the day they entered the *Chuppah* (wedding chamber), the betrothal having taken place in the time of *Avraham* (Ahv'-rah-hahm = Abraham) when the covenant of circumcision was given. According to tradition (and the Hebrew text), Mount Sinai itself provided the wedding canopy. We find this idea supported in the following translation from *The Five Books of Moses*, by Everett Fox:

**"Now it was on the third day, when it was daybreak:  
There were thunder-sounds, and lightning,  
a heavy cloud on the mountain  
and an exceedingly strong *shofar* sound.  
Moshe brought the people out toward God,  
from the camp,  
and they stationed themselves beneath the mountain.  
Now Mount Sinai smoked all over,  
since YHWH had come down upon it in fire;  
its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace,  
and all of the mountain trembled exceedingly.  
Now the *shofar* sound was growing exceedingly  
stronger  
--Moshe kept speaking,  
and God kept answering him in the sound (of a voice)--  
and YHWH came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top  
of the mountain."** (Ex. 19:16-20a FBM)

It is said that *Moshe* led the children of Israel to Mount Sinai just as an usher leads a bride to the *Chuppah*. Once at the mountain, Jewish tradition teaches that Mount Sinai was literally lifted off of the ground and the people stood underneath the mountain as they heard God read the *Ketuvah* (Keh-two'-vah = marriage contract or covenant) terms in the form of the Ten Commandments. It was in this manner that Mount Sinai formed the wedding canopy or *Chuppah* for *YHVH* and His Bride. No wonder the people trembled in fear. Not only did the Bride stand under the mountain *Chuppah*, she also heard the actual voice of her Husband:

**"And God spoke all these words, saying:"** (Ex. 20:1)

In fact, it was all so frightening that the Bride (the children of Israel) asked *Moshe* to act as a mediator between them and their husband, *YHVH*:

**"Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'"** (Ex. 20:19)

So, God granted their request and from that point on the Bride only heard the voice of God through *Moshe*.

### ~ A Second Warning ~

It is important to note that the very next instruction (after the giving of the Ten Commandments), which God gave to the children of Israel, concerned the making of idols as a part of worship:

**"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel; 'You have seen that I**

have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make anything to be with Me -- gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.'"" (Ex. 20:22-23)

Even though the worship of idols had been forbidden by God when He gave the Ten Commandments, He reiterated it here; possibly because of all the idol worship the children of Israel had seen in Egypt. Now the Bride had been warned twice.

*Moshe* then ascended the mountain to receive the rest of the *Torah* instruction/commands from God. But after many days had gone by without *Moshe* returning from Mount Sinai, some of the people decided to take things into their own hands, despite the direct warning that God had given to them. They not only did not wait for *Moshe* to reappear, they acted in direct opposition to the commands against idolatry that had so recently been given. This was the situation when the children of Israel demanded that Aaron make them 'gods' to worship:

**"Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' ...**

**"And he (*Aaron*) received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'**

**"So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD [YHVH].'**

**"Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." (Ex. 32:1, 4-6)**

The fallout from this act of idolatry was harsh and extensive, for God's anger was stirred up against the people on account of their illicit practice. Three thousand men died as a result of that sin, killed by the loyal Levites who stood with *Moshe* against those who had perpetrated this terrible act of disobedience:

**"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. ...**

**"And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written. Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. ...**

**"So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it. ...**

**"Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their**

**shame among their enemies), then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, 'Whoever is on the LORD's [YHVH's] side, let him come to me.' And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. ...**

**"So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day." (Ex. 32:7, 15-16, 19-20, 25-26, 28)**

Not a very auspicious beginning for a marriage.

It was in this context that the need for *Teshuvah* was first understood. The fallout from the golden calf incident was immense, and has been carried on in the form of many different kinds of idolatry throughout the generations of the children of Israel. Idolatry is a very insidious sin, one that is difficult to eradicate even after a person identifies it in themselves. However, until Messiah returns, there will always be those who look to idols, amulets, trinkets or good luck charms for help, rather than looking with complete faith and confidence to the Creator God in heaven for all of their needs.

#### ~ Moshe's Second Ascent ~

Immediately after the destruction of the golden calf, *Moshe* once again ascended the slopes of Mount Sinai:

**"And it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, 'You have sinned a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD [YHVH]; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.**

**"Then Moses returned to the LORD [YHVH] and said, 'Oh, these people have sinned a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin--but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.'**

**"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.'" (Ex. 32:30-33)**

According to tradition this second visit to the mountain began on 19 *Tammuz* (Tahm-mooz = the Fourth month) and *Moshe* stayed there for another forty days, pleading with God to forgive the children of Israel, then returning to the camp on 29 *Av* (Ahv = the fifth month). While scripture states there was definitely a second Mount Sinai visit by *Moshe*, it is not clear that it lasted for a full forty days. In fact, it appears to have been a short visit, for upon his return, *Moshe* moved his tent outside the camp, separating himself from the sinful people who were suffering under the plague which God had sent. It was here, in his tent, now called the Tabernacle of Meeting, that *Moshe* spoke with God "face to face:"

**"Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the LORD [YHVH] went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp. ... So the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. ..." (Ex. 33:7, 11)**

This was not the 'Tabernacle' which served as the dwelling house for God, that structure was to come a little bit later.

~ Moshe's Final Ascent ~

We now arrive at the last day of the month of *Av*:

**"And the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain.'" (Ex. 34:1-2)**

According to tradition, it was on 1 *Elul* (the first day of the sixth month) that *Moshe* ascended Mount Sinai a third time. This time he would not only receive instruction from God, he would also be allowed to see God's glory. (see Ex. 33:18-23):

**"So he was there with the LORD [YHVH] forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments." (Ex. 34:28)**

Forty days from 1 *Elul* is 10 *Tishri* (Teesh'-ree = the seventh month) which is *Yom Kippur* (Yohm Kee-poor' = Day of Atonement). It is said that during this time, while *Moshe* was gone, the children of Israel went through a forty day period of *Teshuvah*, of repenting and returning to the God of Israel, their Husband.

Upon his return to the camp of the Israelites on *Yom Kippur*, *Moshe* appeared with his face shining, for he had seen the backside of God in all His glory. *Moshe* spoke with Aaron and the other elders and then he spoke to all of the people:

**"Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD [YHVH] had spoken with him on Mount Sinai." (Ex. 35:32)**

God had forgiven Israel for their great sin of the golden calf. This is evident because of the fact that He did not withhold the *Torah* (God's instructions for righteous living) from the people, thus, they received with joy all of the commandments (*mitzvot*) that God had given to *Moshe*. It must have been a time of great relief, for the very first collective sin of the nation of Israel had been covered over through the mercy of God on that very first Atonement Day (*Yom Kippur*).

~ Teshuvah ~

This story is said to be the origin of the season of *Teshuvah*, a time of preparation which begins on 1 *Elul*, includes *Yom Teruah* (aka *Rosh HaShannah* = the Feast of Trumpets) and ends at the close of *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement). The fact that the season of *Teshuvah* does not end until the close of *Yom Kippur*, which is considered to be the most sacred Holyday of the year, is very important, for *Yom Kippur* is the festival which pictures God's final judgment of mankind.

According to tradition, a prior judgment takes place on *Rosh HaShannah*. At that time every individual on earth is said to be placed into one of three categories: The Book of Life, The Book of Death, or The Book of the Intermediates. Those whose names are inscribed in The Book of Life are people who

have made *Teshuvah*, returning to God in every way during the month prior to *Rosh HaShannah*. The names of the totally wicked, who care nothing about returning to God, are written in The Book of Death. The names of the remainder of the people (which constitutes the vast majority) are written in The Book of the Intermediates; their final judgment being postponed until *Yom Kippur*. If they have not returned to God (accomplished *Teshuvah*) by the close of *Yom Kippur*, their names will be inscribed in The Book of Death while those who achieve *Teshuvah* between *Rosh HaShannah* and *Yom Kippur*, will have their names inscribed in The Book of Life. It is taught that at the close of *Yom Kippur* there will be no names left in The Book of the Intermediates; all names will be written in either The Book of Life or The Book of Death.

The days between *Rosh HaShannah* and *Yom Kippur* are therefore known as *The Days of Awe*, for this is said to be man's final opportunity for redemption.

~ Messiah's Fast ~

There is another forty day period that is mentioned in Scripture which may tie very closely with the season of *Teshuvah*. That is the forty days which Messiah, *Y'shua*, spent in the wilderness immediately following His immersion by John the Baptist:

**"Then Jesus [Y'shua] was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry." (Matt. 4:1-2)**

A case can be made for this event occurring near the fall Festivals, especially if one adheres to the traditional three and one-half year ministry of *Y'shua*. If such is the case, then *Y'shua's* fasting for forty days (undoubtedly accompanied by heavy duty prayer) could very well have been during the traditional season of *Teshuvah*. This would place His encounter with *HaSatan* (Satan the devil) on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. This would also be a very meaningful day for the Messiah to overcome the wiles of the Adversary, thereby qualifying Himself to make Atonement for the sins of all people.

It is clear that *Y'shua* never departed from the instructions of God and therefore did not have need for repentance during *Teshuvah*. However, He could well have observed it as an example for us. This would be no different than His reasons for accepting baptism from John:

**"Then Jesus [Y'shua] came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?'"**

**"But Jesus [Y'shua] answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him." (Matt. 3:13-15)**

Another facet of "fulfilling all righteousness" would be his observance of the season of *Teshuvah* even though He had no need to repent. Like baptism, it was done as an example for us to follow.

~ Jewish Understanding ~

In Jewish tradition, *Teshuvah* is repeated each and every year. If one's repentance and return to God is acceptable, then that person's name is said to be inscribed in The Book of Life, but only for the coming year. They also recognize that this season, and associated Festivals, are *mo'edim* (mow-eh-deem' = appointed times or rehearsals) for the great transcendent events which will take place at the time of the coming of the Messiah. The Jews would call that future time the Messiah's first coming, while Messianic Believers know it to be His second coming. No matter how we interpret it, both groups look for the same Messiah, the King Messiah, son (descendant) of David. As Believers we should not condemn the Jewish people for their lack of understanding about the first coming of Messiah. After all, if their eyes have been closed to this fact, it was performed by God Himself:

**"Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:**

**'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart,  
Lest they should see with their eyes  
And understand with their heart,  
Lest they should turn, so that I should heal them.'**  
(Isa. 6:9-10)

**"These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him."**  
(John 12:39-41)

Why has God 'blinded' the eyes and 'hardened' the heart of the majority of the Jewish people to not accept their Messiah? *Shaul* (Paul) said it was so the Gentiles could be converted and grafted into the family of Israel. Once that is accomplished in its fullness, then God promises to turn once again to gather the Jewish people to the Messiah:

**"What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were hardened. Just as it is written:**

**'God has given them a spirit of stupor,  
Eyes that they should not see  
And ears that they should not hear,  
To this very day.'**(Isa. 29:10, 13) (Rom. 11:7-8)

When it serves God's great purpose He will open the eyes of the Jewish people to their Messiah:

**"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."**  
(Zech. 12:10)

That time may already be upon us, because many of our Jewish brethren are now coming to accept *Y'shua HaMashiach* as their Savior. For this we should all rejoice with great rejoicing, for God is completing His family according to His desires. God has not abandoned the Jewish people. He has required them to play a far different and very difficult role these last two thousand years. Let us all be praying that

Messiah's redemption will fall upon all of the Jewish people, for that is the ultimate will of God, and we should desire to be within God's will by praying for them:

**"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:**

**'The Deliverer will come out of Zion,  
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;**

(Isa. 59:20-21)

**For this is My covenant with them,  
When I take away their sins.'"** (Isa. 27:9) (Rom. 11:25-27)

~ Teshuvah Means Action ~

Let us never forget that, although God has given us an earnest portion of His Holy Spirit, we are still fleshly physical human beings. Therefore, we still find comfort in performing physical acts to aid our worship of God. It is not enough to just sit quietly and think nice thoughts. Those thoughts must be put into action if they are to have any real meaning in our lives:

**"What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**

**"But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."** James 2:14-18)

This is not to say that quiet contemplation is not both beneficial and necessary at times. However, if what we confirm during these quiet times does not produce visible good fruit, then it is 'fruitless.' *Teshuvah* is a time that begins in quiet contemplation, but ends in vigorous action. *Teshuvah* involves two distinct kinds of repentance; first towards God, and then towards other people. Both are necessary for full repentance and return to take place.

~ Repentance Toward God ~

Although *Teshuvah* is an action word, it still begins in a contemplative manner. Before any fruitful action can take place one must first become right with their Creator God in heaven. If one is not in the proper relationship with God, it is impossible to be in proper relationships with other people. Anytime a person sins (whether against God or against man) it effects their relationship with God, for ultimately, all sins are against God.

~ Understanding God's Greatness ~

Becoming right with God (it can also be called 'justified') involves a series of steps. The first (as a part of our quiet contemplation) is to recognize just who God really is, and how great are His ways:

**"And I said, 'This is my anguish;  
But I will remember the years of the right hand of the  
Most High,'  
I will remember the works of the LORD [YHVH];  
Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.  
I will also meditate on all Your work,  
And talk of Your deeds.  
Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary;  
Who is so great a God as our God?  
You are the God who does wonders;  
You have with Your arm redeemed Your people,  
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah."  
(Psalm 77:10-15)**

God is so great we cannot fully comprehend His true nature. This is one of the mysteries spoken of in the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament), into which we can only glimpse at this time. Once we are changed from mortal to immortal, from flesh into spirit, we will then be fully capable of understanding the greatness of God. In the meantime we must do our very best to understand that which is really beyond our grasp:

**"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."  
(1 John 3:2)**

Because God is 'the Greatest,' it is absolutely necessary for us to recognize that fact and admit it to ourselves and to Him. This begins to put us into a proper relationship with Him. Such admittance must be far more than just a statement such as "Oh yes God, I know that you are great and I acknowledge that greatness. Now please give me the following things: ..." Instead, it must be a total, truly heartfelt understanding that Our God is an Awesome God.

If you do not feel the overwhelming greatness of God, then you need to pray and ask that He will show His greatness to you. Some have found that studying and contemplating the intricacies of the creation, the very complexities of all physical life, leads them into a realization of just how great God really is. Such study can help one to realize the smallness of man's intellectual capacity in comparison to that of God, for what He has created man can barely understand.

### ~ Recognizing God's Standards ~

The second step, in coming to repentance before God, is to recognize that our individual lives do not measure up to the published standard which He has set forth through the books called the Holy Scriptures. God's standards are given in codified form in the first five books of the 'Old Testament,' known as the *Torah* -- with additional instructions and standards also being given in the 'Prophets' and the 'Writings.' In addition, Messianic Believers have the magnificent resource of the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament) which teaches abundantly about God's standard by giving us the example and teachings of our Savior Messiah, *Y'shua*, plus the teachings of those who were sent forth by Him (the apostles).

Each one of us needs to examine our conduct toward God and toward other people, through the eyes of those 'standards'

which He has given in the Bible. We need to note those areas where we do not measure up. It might be helpful to write down where we fall short, for then we will not be in danger of forgetting our shortcomings.

Once our list has been made, we will have a concrete basis upon which *Teshuvah* can be built. We no longer need to pray the general prayer; "Oh, God, forgive me for my sins." Now we can pray that God will forgive us for the specific sins which have been identified. This will aid in stopping the vicious cycle of committing the same sins over and over because they have not been properly identified. We absolutely must identify and acknowledge our iniquity. We need to be specific so that we may:

**"Seek the LORD [YHVH] while He may be found,  
Call upon Him while He is near.  
Let the wicked forsake his way,  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
Let him return to the LORD [YHVH],  
And He will have mercy on him;  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon."  
(Isaiah 55:6-7)**

This passage is appropriate for the season of *Teshuvah*, for this is the season when God makes Himself readily available to be found. Just as He made Himself available to *Moshe* on Mount Sinai, God makes Himself available to us. The season of *Teshuvah* emphasizes the absolute need to forsake and turn from all of our wicked ways and thoughts. Once we have fully understood our wickedness, then the promise of pardon increases our awareness of the greatness of God's mercy.

In the third chapter of Jeremiah, God's great mercy is fully revealed. The chapter begins by relating how He divorced the northern House of Israel while remaining in a marriage covenant with the southern House of Judah, even though Judah's sins later became the worse of the two. (Jer. 3:8) Despite the fact that God had separated Himself from the House of Israel and given her a bill of divorcement, He is committed, in His abundant mercy, to take her back at a future time. That reconciliation is through the Renewed Marriage Covenant (commonly called the New Covenant) and involves those of the 'lost' House of Israel who hear God's plea and repent, turning from their evil ways and returning to God and His *Torah* standard of righteousness. In other words, doing *Teshuvah*:

**""Return, backsliding Israel,' says the LORD [YHVH],  
'And I will not cause My anger to fall on you;  
For I am merciful,' says the LORD [YHVH],  
'And I will not remain angry forever.  
Only acknowledge your iniquity,  
That you have transgressed against the LORD [YHVH]  
your God.  
And have scattered your charms  
To alien deities under every green tree,  
And you have not obeyed My voice,' says  
the LORD [YHVH].**

**""Return, O backsliding children,' says the LORD [YHVH], 'for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who**



**will feed you with knowledge and understanding."**

(Jer. 3:12-15)

~ Asking Forgiveness ~

The third step, to repentance before God, is to humbly ask Him for forgiveness for those specific sins which have been identified. These sins need to be confessed specifically and fully so that release from them is total and complete. It does no good to try and hide anything from God, for He already knows more about our sins than we do ourselves. A great part of the repentance process takes place so that we fully understand our shortcomings and see the need to ask forgiveness:

**"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."**

(I John 1:8-10)

The most profound prayer of repentance in Scripture is the one that King David sang after Nathan the prophet confronted him about his sin with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. This Psalm can be used as a model for our own repentance prayers. While our sins are different from David's, they are nevertheless just as condemning as his. Remember that David was called; **"... a man after My own heart, ..."** (Acts 13:22). There were a number of reasons why this was said about David, but one of the main reasons is because he was both willing and able to repent totally and completely whenever he came to recognize that he had sinned:

**"Have mercy upon me, O God,  
According to Your loving kindness;  
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,  
Blot out my transgressions.  
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.**

...

**Hide Your face from my sins,  
And blot out all my iniquities.**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.**

...

**The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit,  
A broken and a contrite heart-  
These, O God, You will not despise."**

(Psalm 51:1-2,9-11,17)

~ Firm Resolve ~

The final step in repentance before God, is a firm resolve to live righteously before Him. This is easily said but difficult to accomplish, for many sins are habitual. In the case of habitual sins it is important to attack the problem the way we would handle any type of habit that is unprofitable to our well being. Many people in this world are addicted to tobacco or alcohol. Anyone who has experienced such addictions knows

the difficulty involved in overcoming them. The same can be true of other habitual sins. They too can become addictions and must be treated as such if we are to be completely rid of them. But be of good cheer, dearly beloved, for with the power of God's Holy Spirit it is possible to be an overcomer:

**"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus [*Y'shua*] is the Son of God?"**

(I John 5:4-5)

~ The Four Steps of Repentance ~

The four steps of repentance toward God are:

- ◆ Recognize the absolute greatness and goodness of God.
- ◆ Identify the standard by which God identifies sin, comparing your lifestyle against that standard, and listing those sins which you have committed.
- ◆ Confess your sin(s) with a truly repentant heart beseeching God to forgive you for committing them.
- ◆ Determine to live righteously from this point on.

As we confess our sins in a truly repentant attitude, we ask forgiveness through the sacrificial blood of our Savior *Y'shua HaMashiach*. He is our High Priest who sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven, serving as a mediator between each of us individually and the Father:

**"Seeing that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus [*Y'shua*] the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."**

(Heb. 4:14-16)

**"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*], who gave Himself a ransom for all, ..."**

(I Tim. 2:5-6)

This is not to say that just because the blood of Messiah *Y'shua* is available to remove our sins that we need not work at avoiding sin. John, the apostle of love, teaches just the opposite:

**"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."**

(I John 3:4-8)

May each one of us examine ourselves thoroughly during the season of *Teshuvah* and repent fully of the sins that we uncover.

### ~ Sins Toward Other People ~

The easy part of *Teshuvah* is over; now comes the difficult part. A Believer must not merely identify their sins before God and fully repent of them, asking that the Messiah's blood be used to take them away, they must also seek forgiveness from their fellow man. This does not mean that if we have committed an act that requires only repentance before God that we must confess that openly to someone. The "confessional" of the Roman Church is not a scriptural entity. However, if we have committed a sin against another person, then we must seek the forgiveness of that person, if possible.

For example, if someone has committed an act of idolatry privately within his/her own home, and no one else knows about that sin, they do not need to confess it to another person. They only need to confess it before God, since He is the one against whom the sin was committed. However, if someone has stolen something from another person he/she must not only confess it before God but must also confess to the person from whom that item has been taken. Not only must one confess their sinful deed to that person, they must also make restitution for the amount taken, plus another twenty percent for damages. In Temple times, this act was required to be performed before the sinner was allowed to bring his "Trespass Offering:"

**"If a person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD [YHVH] by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor, or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it, and swears falsely--in any one of these things that a man may do in which he sins: then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has deceitfully obtained, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of his trespass offering."**  
(Lev. 6:2-5)

Thus, according to Tabernacle ritual, the guilty party not only made restitution to the offended party, he also brought an offering to God in order to be absolved of his guilt. The same is true today. If we want to live righteously before God, then if we have obtained anything through robbery or deceit, we must make full restitution, add the additional one-fifth more, and seek not only forgiveness from the injured party but from God as well.

But there are other forms of trespass against our neighbors than robbery. What about gossip or slander? What about hateful actions or words? What about dishonoring one's parents? What about sexual sins involving another person? What about coveting someone's property? What about false witnessing in a court of law or to other authorities?

These actions do not necessarily diminish the belongings of another person the way robbery does, yet they too are sins

against other people. In *Teshuvah* tradition, the required steps are very clear. One must go to the person against whom the offense has been committed and ask forgiveness. In addition, they must go to God and ask His forgiveness as well. By this procedure the person will be released from his sin, providing that he has truly repented as well. If the offended person refuses to forgive, he is considered to be unmerciful and will, in turn, be judged by a harsher judgment and will be forgiven of his sins only in the degree that he has forgiven others. As *Y'shua* said:

**"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses."**  
(Matt. 6:14-15)

Meanwhile, the person who committed the sin, and went to his brother to ask forgiveness, will be forgiven by God whether his brother forgives him or not. This is because he has taken righteous action to resolve the issue.

The lesson of forgiveness is laid out in detail in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. This story, told by *Y'shua*, is about a man who owed the king an enormous sum of money. The king threatened to put him in prison if he did not pay up. The man pleaded for mercy and it was extended to him by the king. However, this same man then went out and found a very poor man who owed him a comparatively small amount of money. When the poor man could not pay, the man who had been forgiven the huge debt had the poor man thrown in prison. When the king heard about what had happened he called the unforgiving man before him:

**"Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'"**

**"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him."**  
(Matt. 18:32-34)

Through the sin sacrifice of *Y'shua*, we, as Believers, have been forgiven a great debt, one that would otherwise have required us to give up our very lives. At the very least it behooves us to forgive the offenses that others have committed against us so that we will not receive the harsher judgment. So if anyone comes to you and asks forgiveness, remember this story, for *Y'shua* brought it all home to us when He concluded the tale:

**"So My heavenly father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."**  
(Matt. 18:35)

### ~ The Matthew 18 Principle ~

But what if someone has offended you and does not come to you seeking forgiveness? As long as that person does not seek to obtain forgiveness, they are bound by that sin. Matthew chapter 18 also gives instructions on such matters:

**"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."**  
(Matt. 18:15)

We must be extremely careful in the execution of this principle. The very first question that must be truthfully answered is, Was what your brother did against you really a sin? Can you identify it as such in the Scriptures? It may only be a hurt feeling and not an actual sin. If it is not an actual sin, then the steps which follow should definitely not be taken lest they be used as an excuse to eliminate people one does like from the Body of Messiah:

**"But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."**  
(Matt. 18:16-17)

This is a very complex issue and this chapter about *Teshuvah* is not an adequate forum to explore it in depth. However, the warning given is extremely important. Do not mistake a personal offense for a sin, if no actual sin can be identified in the scripture. And do not tell a person that you are exercising the Matthew 18 directive if it is a personal offense and not an actual sin:

**"... be wise as serpents and harmless as doves."**  
(Matt. 10:16)

One last, but very important, principle to remember when using Matthew 18, is that the procedure only applies to those who are part of the Body of Messiah.

### ~ Human Relationships Can Be Difficult ~

As you can see, going to a friend, family member, or neighbor, and seeking forgiveness can be far more difficult than going before God, for God already knows our sins before we even acknowledge them or express our regret. In fact, He knows about sins that we have committed which we may not even be aware of at this time, because He has not yet seen fit to reveal them to us.

With our friends, relatives, and neighbors it is far more difficult. We may have to go and confess something of which the other person is not even aware. Perhaps we have gossiped about someone and they did not know that we were party to the spread of that malicious talk. Perhaps we did something that caused us to gain an advantage in some way and the other person did not realize why they did not receive the award or item they actually deserved. Such things need to be taken to that person and forgiveness must be sought. If restitution is in order, it too must be given along with the one-fifth or twenty percent increase.

What is our reward for going through this anguish? Complete forgiveness of sins. Perhaps some past sin against another person has never been resolved. It could be hindering one from a complete, full and open relationship with our Creator God in heaven. Yes, it can be very difficult, but it needs to be done. Do not delay. Do it today while there is still time.

### ~ The Customs of Teshuvah ~

There are a number of customs, which have developed over the centuries, concerning the period of *Teshuvah*. Following are a few of the more important ones.

The events described in the book of Exodus took place approximately 3500 years ago. Needless to say, a number of traditions have developed in the intervening years. It is important for us to see what these customs are, because it gives us a sense of how the children of Israel looked upon this period of time and how their current practice developed.

### ~ Penitential Prayers ~

Beginning on 1 *Elul*, the observant Jew will include a series of 'private penitential prayers' in the regular prayer service, whether it be at home or in the synagogue. Thus, each day he will ask God to help him identify his sins, and to aid him in coming to complete repentance. One might wonder how this repetitive request can be effective when it is done every day for thirty days. Does it not become rather mundane? The answer is that as we progress through the *Teshuvah* period, more and more sins are brought to our attention. It is in this manner that we can identify all of our sins, especially those which lay hidden deep within the soul. It is only when all of our sins are exposed that full and true repentance can take place, and complete release can be obtained.

In addition to the 'private penitential prayers' there are also 'public penitential prayers' that are said by all those who pray. These prayers are a part of any standard Jewish prayer book. Following are selected portions from a well know 'penitential prayer' called *Ovinu Malkenu* (Oh-vee'-new Mahl-keh'-new = 'Our Father, Our King'). It is quoted here from *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book* by Joseph H. Hertz (pp. 163-65). Please note the full recognition of the transgressions of the people, both individually and collectively, as expressed in the beautiful language of this prayer:

"Our Father, our King! we have sinned before thee.  
Our Father, our King! we have no King but thee.  
Our Father, our King! deal with us for the sake of thy  
Name.  
Our Father, our King! let a happy year begin for us.  
Our Father, our King! nullify all evil decrees against us.  
Our Father, our King! nullify the designs of those that hate  
us.  
...  
Our Father, our King! forgive and pardon all our  
iniquities.  
Our Father, our King! blot out our transgressions, and  
make them pass away from before thine eyes.  
Our Father, our King! erase in thine abundant mercies all  
the records of our guilt.  
Our Father, our King! bring us back in perfect repentance  
unto thee.  
Our Father, our King! send a perfect healing to the sick of  
thy people.

Our Father, our King! rend the evil judgment decreed against us.

Our Father, our King! let thy remembrance of us be for good.

Our Father, our King! inscribe us in the book of happy life.

Our Father, our King! inscribe us in the book of redemption and salvation.

Our Father, our King! inscribe us in the book of maintenance and sustenance.

Our Father, our King! inscribe us in the book of merit.

Our Father, our King! inscribe us in the book of forgiveness and pardon.

Our Father, our King! let salvation soon spring forth for us.

...

Our Father, our King! hear our voice, spare us, and have mercy upon us.

Our Father, our King! receive our prayer in mercy and in favour.

Our Father, our King! open the gates of heaven unto our prayer.

Our Father, our King! we pray thee, turn us not back empty from thy presence.

Our Father, our King! remember that we are but dust.

Our Father, our King! let this hour be an hour of mercy and a time of favour with thee.

...

Our Father, our King! be gracious unto us and answer us, for we have no good works of our own; deal with us in charity and kindness, and save us."

It is believed, by some, that at least portions of the *Ovinu Malkenu* were written by *Shimon Kepha* (She-moan' Key'-fah = Simon Peter). Whether this is true or not is impossible to prove, but it is an interesting speculation. Certainly, Simon Peter was an observant Jew, as can be seen from his statement to God upon seeing the vision of the unclean things in Acts chapter 10:

**"But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord! for I have never eaten anything common or unclean.'"** (Acts. 10:14)

Not only did Peter refrain from unclean food, he also did not eat 'common' food, meaning that Peter kept the strict kosher laws of his day. As an observant Jew of that time, Peter would have been very familiar with the synagogue service. Since he was a leading 'Rabbi' among the sect of the *Na'tzorim* (Nat-soh-ream' = the followers of *Y'shua* of Nazareth) it is quite possible that Peter attended traditional Jewish synagogues and therefore could very well have written prayers that would be included within the synagogue service.

### ~ Sounding the Shofar ~

It is the custom in Jewish synagogues for the shofar to be sounded on each day of *Elul* except the very last day and on *Shabbat*. There are several reasons given for this practice. One tradition states that the sounding of the *shofar* is to remind the people that they are being called to *Teshuvah*. If anyone

has forgotten that they are in the season of return, they will remember when they hear the *shofar* being sounded during the regular week days.

A *Midrash* (Meed'-rahsh = a story that teaches a lesson) concerning the sounding of the *shofar* teaches that it is blown each day of the month of *Elul* in order to confuse *HaSatan* (the Adversary) as to which day is *Yom Teruah* (*Rosh HaShannah*), the Feast of Trumpets. By not blowing the *shofar* on the last day of *Elul*, *HaSatan* is tricked into believing that the Feast of Trumpets is already past. Since *Rosh HaShannah* is the first of the judgment days, *HaSatan* (believing it is already past), eases up in his efforts to tempt the children of Israel into sin. This gives the people an opportunity to enter *Rosh HaShannah* in a spirit of confidence and peace. Then the next day, when the Feast of Trumpets has fully arrived, the *shofar* is sounded over one hundred times.

### ~ The Days of Awe ~

*Rosh HaShannah* (the Feast of Trumpets) falls on *Tishri* 1 and begins a ten day period known as the *Days of Awe*. According to tradition, those people whose names were written in The Book of the Intermediates now have only ten days left to complete *Teshuvah* and have their name transferred to The Book of Life.

Since Jewish tradition teaches that *Rosh HaShannah* is two days long (called one long day), and *Yom Kippur* is the tenth day of the month, if you subtract those three days from the ten, there remain seven days in between. Some prophetic scholars see this period of time as representing the Great Tribulation, a seven year period during which time those who are not a part of the Bride of Messiah will face extreme hardship. During this time, those on earth must make a decision as to whether they are going to return to the God of Israel, or reject him and follow the False Messiah.

### ~ Visiting the Graves of Loved Ones ~

Another custom associated with *Teshuvah* is the visitation of graves of deceased loved ones. The meaning here is twofold; to pray that God will raise up their relatives into righteous judgment, and to acknowledge the death of our old selves and the renewal of the "new man."

### ~ Psalm 27 ~

It is also customary to read Psalm 27 each day of the month of *Elul*. This Psalm is a cry by the psalmist to God, that He will hear us and bring us into that close relationship, that oneness, that we so desire. Selected verses are quoted below:

**"The LORD [YHVH] is my light and my salvation;**

**Whom shall I fear?**

**The LORD [YHVH] is the strength of my life;**

**Of whom shall I be afraid?**

...

**"One thing I have desired of the LORD [YHVH],**

**That I will seek:**

**That I may dwell in the house of the LORD [YHVH]**

**All the days of my life.**

To behold the beauty of the LORD [YHVH],  
And to inquire in His temple.

...

"Teach me Your way, O LORD [YHVH],  
And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.

...

"Wait on the LORD [YHVH];  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the LORD [YHVH]!"

(Psalm 27:1, 4, 11, 14)

May we suggest that you incorporate this Psalm into your *Teshuvah* prayers.

~ Conclusion ~

The practice of *Teshuvah* in its proper season can be a very important event in the life of a Believer. The basis for the practice is scriptural, for it was during this time, when *Moshe* was on Mount Sinai, that the children of Israel returned in repentance to their Husband, *El Shaddai* (God Almighty).

It is a time of intense introspection followed by righteous action. Introspection into the very nature of our individual sins; righteous action to clear ourselves and others of sins in which we have been involved, whether as the perpetrators or victims of sin. It is a time to clear the air so that all can be judged worthy to have their name written in The Book of Life:

"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."  
(Rev. 20:12)

If our names are written in The Book of Life the future indeed is bright:

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

(Rev. 21:3-4)

No more tears! Praise YHVH.

May your name be inscribed in The Book of Life for all eternity. *Ketivah tovah* (Keh-tee-vah' toe'-vah = a good inscription).

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Rosh HaShannah ~

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found,  
Call ye upon him while he is near:  
Let the wicked forsake his way,  
And the man of iniquity his thoughts;  
And let him return unto the LORD,  
And he will have mercy upon him;  
And to our God,  
For he will abundantly pardon.  
*Isa. 55:6-7*



The first fall Festival is commonly called *Rosh HaShannah*. It is known among Christians as the Feast of Trumpets, and falls on the first day of the seventh Hebrew month, *Tishri* (Tish'-ree). All of the other Festivals and Holidays occur no earlier than the 6th day of a month, and no later than the 22nd day of a month. Thus, all other festivals are held during the light portion of the moon. Since the months of the Hebrew calendar always begin on a new moon, *Rosh HaShannah* is the only Festival to be held during the dark portion of the moon, when it is new:

"Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon,  
At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.

<sup>4</sup> For this is a statute for Israel,

A law of the God of Jacob."  
(Psalm 81:3-4)

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. <sup>25</sup> You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD [YHVH]""  
(Lev. 23:24-25)

""And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets.""  
(Num. 29:1)

A question needs to be asked at this point. If this is a day of blowing of trumpets, why is it referred to as a "solemn feast day" in Psalm 81? Does not the blowing of trumpets seem to imply a happy, joyous, festive occasion? The answer is; "Well, yes and no!" *Rosh HaShannah* is a complex Festival. The fact of the matter is, it will be a wildly joyous day for some, and a deeply solemn day for others.

~ Rosh HaShannah ~

The term *Rosh HaShannah* is never used in scripture in direct reference to this particular day. There is only one place in the Bible in which this term is used and it is found in Chapter 40 of Ezekiel which begins the description of the Great Temple that is to be built by the Messiah after His return:

**"In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year [Rosh HaShannah] , on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the LORD [YHVH] was upon me; and He took me there." (Ezek. 40:1)**

The traditional Hebrew calendar actually observes four different new year's days, so it is impossible to say definitively which one is meant in this passage. These days are:

- ◆ 1 *Nisan* (also called 1 *Aviv*), which is the new year for kings (the date which determined a king's rule) and for Biblical Festivals. (The Biblical calendar is calculated beginning with the month of *Nisan*.) (See Ex. 12:2)
- ◆ 1 *Elul*, which is the new year for the tithing of animals. (*Elul* is the sixth month on the Biblical calendar.)
- ◆ 1 *Tishri*, which is the new year for reckoning years, for Sabbatical years, and Jubilee years. It is also considered to be the time of year when God created the world, and was the day on which the kings of ancient Israel and Judah were crowned -- as opposed to when their rule began which was on 1 *Aviv*.\* (*Tishri* is the seventh month on the Biblical calendar.)
- ◆ 15 *Shevat* (one ancient Rabbinic school says it falls on 1 *Shevat*) is the new year for planting trees and for vegetables. (*Shevat* is the eleventh month on the Biblical calendar.)

A possible reason that the Jews have considered the Ezekiel 40 passage to indicate 1 *Tishri* rather than any of the other new year's days, is because it also mentions the 10th day of the month. If the month mentioned here is *Tishri*, the 10th day would be the Day of Atonement or *Yom Kippur*. It is a general Biblical principle, that when specific dates are mentioned in the scriptures they are, more often than not, Festival days rather than common days. In addition, this passage pertains specifically to the Millennial Temple. According to tradition, the Messiah will come on a Jubilee Year. Since the Jubilee Year is always announced on 10 *Tishri* (see Lev. 25:9), and the Temple being described is the one the Messiah will administer, it would be logical to assume that Ezekiel's vision was given to him on *Yom Kippur*. If this is true, the term *Rosh HaShannah*, in Ezekiel 40:1, is then directly connected to 1 *Tishri* rather than any of the other three new year's days.

There are several names by which *Rosh HaShannah* is known. Each name signifies a special aspect of the day and adds to our understanding of it.

### ~ Yom Teruah ~

The most commonly known name is *Yom Teruah* (Yohm Teh-roo-ah') from which we get the English translation 'Feast of Trumpets:'

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\* This is a perfect picture of King Messiah *Y'shua*, whose rule began during the month of *Aviv* when He was resurrected but who will not be crowned until He returns on *Rosh HaShannah*.

**"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing [teruah] of trumpets, a holy convocation." (Lev. 23:24)**

The Jewish *Tanakh* (Old Testament) translates it this way:  
**"... a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts." (Lev. 23:24 TNK)**

Neither of the Hebrew words which are translated 'trumpets' in English (Strong's #2689 *chatzotzerah* and #7782 *shofar*) are used in this passage. The reason the word 'trumpets' is placed here, is because of the Hebrew word *Teruah*. It is Strong's #8643 and is defined as:

*"clamor, i.e. acclamation of joy or a battle-cry; espec. clangor of trumpets, as an alarum:--blow (-ing) (of, the) (trumpets), joy, jubilee, loud noise, rejoicing, shout (-ing), (high, joyful) sound (-ing)."*

Notice, the preferred definitions are the words given in italics. In other words, a more precise translation might be 'Feast of Clamor' or 'Feast of Acclamation' or, as the Jews sometimes call it, the 'Day of Blowing.'

Since there is no direct reference to either a *chatzotzerah* (hahtz-oh-teh-rah' = silver trumpet) or a *shofar* (show'-far = ram's horn) in the above passage, it is not clear, from scripture, which is to be used on this day. Both had significant use in the Tabernacle service. However, the ancient tradition was to blow a *shofar*. The reason for its use over the silver trumpet is because of Genesis 22, the offering of *Yitzchak* (Yeets'-ahk = Isaac). As you may recall, just as *Avraham* (Avh'-rah-hahm = Abraham) was about to draw the knife across *Yitzchak's* throat, an angel appeared and stayed his hand. A ram was caught in a thicket and it became the substitutionary sacrifice in *Yitzchak's* place. Thus, the *shofar* has become the traditional instrument that is sounded on *Yom Teruah*.

Why is this day commemorated with loud blasts? Two reasons. First of all, tradition holds this Festival to be the day on which the Messiah will be crowned King over all the earth. Also, the word *Teruah* is used in connection with kingship in the prophecy which God required Balaam to speak concerning Israel:

**"He has not observed iniquity in Jacob,  
Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel.  
The LORD [YHVH] his God is with him,  
And the shout [teruah] of a King is among them." (Num. 23:21)**

The second reason is because the day is also known as the 'Day of the Awakening Blast.' This reference has two meanings as well: First, it refers to the people of the earth hearing the sound of the *shofar* and repenting of their sins:

**"But everything exposed to the light is revealed clearly for what it is, since anything revealed is a light. This is why it says,**

**'Get up, sleeper! Arise from the dead,  
and the Messiah will shine on you!' (Isa. 26:19)**

**Therefore, pay careful attention to how you conduct your life -- live wisely, not unwisely. Use your time well, for these are evil days. So don't be foolish, but try to understand what the will of the Lord is."**

(Eph. 5:13-17 CJB)

The second meaning of the 'Awakening Blast' points to the resurrection of the dead:

**"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -- <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.**

(I Cor. 15:51-52)

**"Your dead shall live;**

*Together with my dead body they shall arise.*

**Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust;**

**For your dew is like the dew of herbs,**

**And the earth shall cast out the dead."** (Isa. 26:19)

The *Tanakh* (Jewish Old Testament) renders this passage in more graphic fashion:

**"Oh, let Your dead revive!**

**Let corpses arise!**

**Awake and shout for joy,**

**You who dwell in the dust!--**

**For Your dew is like the dew on fresh growth;**

**You make the land of the shades come to life."**

(Isa. 26:19 TNK)

This passage continues with an auxiliary theme that also ties in with this special day:

**"Come, my people, enter your chambers,**

**And shut your doors behind you;**

**Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment,**

**Until the indignation is past.**

<sup>21</sup> **For behold, the LORD [YHVH] comes out of His place**

**To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;**

**The earth will also disclose her blood,**

**And will no more cover her slain."** (Isa. 26:20-21)

*Yom Teruah* will be a day of clamor, acclamation of joy, and a battle cry all rolled into one.

### ~ Yom HaZikkaron ~

A second name for *Rosh HaShannah* is *Yom HaZikkaron* (Yohm Hah Zee-kah-rohn') which means Day of Remembrance or Memorial Day. This name also has its origin in scripture:

**"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial [*zikkaron*] of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.**

(Lev. 23:24)

It might be well to pause here and mention that the word 'sabbath' in this passage is not Strong's #7676 *Shabbat* (shah-baht), but is #7677 *Shabbaton* (shah-bah-tone) which

means a special Sabbath or high Sabbath. In Hebrew, when the word 'sabbath' is used in connection with one of these special Festivals it is differentiated from the weekly Sabbath by being called a *Shabbaton* rather than a *Shabbat*. This is why the New King James Version translates it "sabbath-rest," rather than simply "sabbath."

The only exception to this rule is the Day of Atonement which is called a *Shabbat Shabbaton* ("sabbath of rest") in Lev. 16:31 and Lev. 23:32. However, some of the Festivals are not referenced by either word, rather they are called "holy convocations." Wherever the term "holy convocations" is used, traditionally it has been considered to be a Festival *Shabbaton*, not a weekly *Shabbat*, for the Festivals are referenced as either *Shabbaton*, *Shabbat Shabbaton*, or *mikra kodesh* (meek'-rah koh-desh' = convocation holy). The Hebrew word *kodesh* means "a sacred place or thing," "dedicated," etc. The word *mikra* means "something called out," "a public meeting," also a "rehearsal." Thus, 'holy convocation' can also mean a 'sacred meeting' or a 'dedicated rehearsal.'

What are we to remember (*zikkaron*) on this day?

According to the *Mishnah* (Meesh'-nah = the *Oral Torah*), there are to be three different types of *shofar* blasts on *Rosh HaShannah*. Each blast represents a major theme: sovereignty (*malchuyot*), remembrance (*zikkarot*), and the sound of the *shofar*. Some things that should be remembered are:

- ◆ The creation of the world. Tradition states that the world was created on this day.
- ◆ The covenant that God made with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai.
- ◆ The New Covenant that God has made with us through the person of His son *Y'shua*.
- ◆ Our need to seek forgiveness for our sins as soon as we recognize them.
- ◆ That *Y'shua* promised to return and fully establish the Kingdom of God.

Another pause is necessary to explain that Orthodox Jews observe *Rosh HaShannah* for two days, the first and second days of the month *Tishri*. They call it 'one long day.' This practice is based on a passage found in Nehemiah chapter 8. After a remnant of the House of Judah had returned from their Babylonian captivity they were assembled to worship God in Jerusalem. Ezra the priest, began to teach them from the instruction book of God, the *Torah*:

**"So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month [*Rosh HaShannah*]. <sup>3</sup> Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. ... <sup>8</sup> So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading."** (Neh. 8:2-3, 8)

**"And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all**

the people, 'This day is holy to the LORD [YHVH] your God; do not mourn nor weep.' For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law. <sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for *this day is holy to our LORD [YHVH]*. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD [YHVH] is your strength.'" (Neh. 8:9-10)

"And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them. <sup>13</sup> Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law." (Neh. 8:12-13)

Because verse 13 mentions assembling on the second day of *Tishri*, the Jews observe this Festival for two days. This is a tradition and not commanded by scripture. (It certainly is permissible to celebrate for two days if one desires to do so.)

The interesting thing, from the standpoint of understanding the day, is to note what scripture readings have been chosen by the sages in order to 'remember' this day properly. On the first day of *Rosh HaShannah*, the *Torah* readings are:

- ◆ Genesis 21:1-34, which speaks about the birth of *Yitzchak* (Isaac);
- ◆ Numbers 29:1-6, which lists the offerings for this day.

The *Haftarah* reading (from the Prophets) is:

- ◆ I Samuel 1:1-2:10, which tells the story of Hannah and the birth of Samuel.

According to tradition, both Isaac and Samuel were born on this day. Sarah and Hannah were blessed with very special sons at a time in their lives when it seemed evident they would remain childless. Thus, we have two important births remembered on the day that also commemorates the birthday of the world, and the rebirth of those who will be resurrected from the dead.

The *Torah* readings for the second day are:

- ◆ Genesis 22:1-34, known as the 'binding of Isaac' and
- ◆ Numbers 9:1-6, a repeat of the Festival offerings.

The *Haftarah* reading is:

- ◆ Jeremiah 31:2-20, which describes the future return of the children of Israel from the north country:

**"Hear the word of the LORD [YHVH], O nations,  
And declare it in the isles afar off, and say,  
He who scattered Israel will gather him,  
And keep him as a shepherd *does his flock.*"**

(Jer. 31:10)

**"Is Ephraim My dear son?**

**Is he a pleasant child?**

**For though I spoke against him,  
I earnestly remember him still. ..."**

(Jer. 31:20)

The *Torah* reading from Genesis 22 is intimately bound up with *Rosh HaShannah* as will be seen later. It is interesting to

note that the *Haftarah* reading (Jer. 31) mentions *Rachel* (Rah-khel') weeping for her children:

**"Thus says the LORD [YHVH]:**

**'A voice was heard in Ramah,  
Lamentation and bitter weeping,  
Rachel weeping for her children,  
Refusing to be comforted for her children,  
Because they are no more.'**

<sup>16</sup> **Thus says the LORD [YHVH]:**

**'Refrain your voice from weeping,  
And your eyes from tears;**

**For your work shall be rewarded, says  
the LORD [YHVH],**

**And they shall come back from the land of the enemy.**

<sup>17</sup> **There is hope in your future, says the LORD [YHVH],**

**That *your children shall come back to their  
own border.***

(Jer. 31:15-17)

The phrase "because they are no more" could also be translated "as if they were not." In the book of Ezekiel, chapter 37, we see the great hope of this day, the resurrection of "the whole house of Israel." This means both the house of Israel and the house of Judah:

**"Then He said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!"  
<sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.'"**

(Ezek. 37:11-12)

Truly, *Rosh HaShannah* is a *Yom HaZikkaron*, a Day of Remembrance.

### ~ Yom HaKeseh ~

It was mentioned earlier that *Rosh HaShannah* is the only annual Festival that is celebrated when the moon is dark. Thus, it is also known as *Yom HaKeseh* (Yohm Hah Keh-seh' = the Day of the Concealed Moon). Since the moon does not shine on this day, the question might be asked; What shines in its place? For although this is a solemn day, it is also a day of rejoicing:

**"Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!**

**They walk, O LORD [YHVH], in the light of Your  
countenance."**

(Psalm 89:15)

As Believers in Messiah *Y'shua* we know the "joyful sound," it is the sound of the *shofar* announcing His return to earth. Then the entire world will be bathed in the light which is *Y'shua*:

**"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."**

(John 9:5)

He was the light when He was here the first time, He is the light now when He shines in our hearts to others, and He will be the light when He returns to establish His Kingdom on earth.

Another interesting question pertains to the way the Jews of *Y'shua's* day determined when each month began. Although



they were capable of doing the astronomical calculations necessary to determine each new moon, their practice was to begin each month by observation. Some of these practices are recorded in the *Mishnah*.

In essence, the procedure was for the *Sanhedrin* (the Jewish Supreme Court) to accept witnesses that the new moon had been properly sighted. The witnesses had to come in pairs and must have been together when they sighted the new moon. It is said that Rabban Gamaliel (the same Gamaliel that is mentioned in Acts 5:34, was the Rabbi [teacher] of the Apostle Paul, Acts 22:3) had a picture of the various shapes of the moon on a tablet in his room. He would show it to the potential witnesses to determine if they had seen an actual new moon or the waning of the old moon. If both witnesses did not agree in every detail, their testimony was not accepted. If the new moon was expected on a certain day but there were no reliable witnesses that had observed it correctly, the observance of the new moon was postponed to the next day. If the new moon was not visible on the second day, it was automatically proclaimed to take place on the third. Thus, the beginning of a month could never be postponed more than two days.

Those who were never allowed to testify included men who played with dice, who lent money on interest, who raced pigeons, who traded produce during the Sabbatical year, and slaves. Also, women were not allowed to give testimony concerning the new moon. A possible reason for this last prohibition is because every new moon (Heb. = *Rosh Hodesh*) is considered to be a Festival for women (because of their monthly cycle) and they are not required to work on that day. Since women may have had a vested interest in the day, they were not allowed to give testimony concerning when it occurred.

Once proper testimony had been received, the *Sanhedrin* proclaimed the beginning of the new month. A fire was started on the top of the Mount of Olives. A large torch was lit and waved back and forth, and up and down. Another group of people waited on a mountain named *Sarteba*. When they saw the torch being waved they responded in kind, and that also sent the signal to the next mountain. Thus, word went out that *Rosh Hodesh* (Head of the Month) had arrived and been confirmed.

At the beginning of six of the twelve or thirteen months of the year, (some years had thirteen months) messengers were sent out in addition to lighting the fires. This was because the enemies of Judah sometimes lit fires a night early to confuse the people. The months when messengers went forth were: *Nisan* (or *Aviv*), *Av*, *Elul*, *Tishri*, *Kislev*, and *Adar*. All of these months had important religious observances that occurred during them, and the *Sanhedrin* wanted to be sure the Festivals and other Holidays were observed on the correct day.

All of this was well and good, but *Rosh HaShannah* is a very important Festival. Yet, no one knew for sure, ahead of time, on which day it was going to fall. Thus, it became known as the Festival in which "you know not the day nor the hour:"

**"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."** (Matt. 24:36)

Now the words of *Y'shua* are true and faithful and no man really knows the day or hour in which He will return. Yet, is it

possible He might have given us a hint that His return would take place on or near the Festival which the Jewish idiom declared to be the day on which one was never quite sure when it would come? Consider the following scripture:

**"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ... <sup>4</sup> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. <sup>5</sup> You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. <sup>6</sup>Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober."** (I Thess. 5:2,4-6)

~ Yom HaDin ~

The last name, by which this day is known in Jewish tradition, is *Yom HaDin*, (Yohm Hah Deen') the Day of Judgment:

**"The great day of the LORD [YHVH] is near; It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD [YHVH] is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out."** (Zeph. 1:14)

**"For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth."** (Psalm 96:13)

It is said in the *Mishnah*:

"...at the New Year all who enter the world pass before Him like troops." (*Rosh HaShannah* 1:2)

This is considered to be the Festival that rehearses the coming of the "Day of the Lord." This is the time when God intervenes directly into the affairs of earth through the person of His Son, *Y'shua HaMashiach*:

**"That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, <sup>16</sup> A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers."** (Zeph. 1:15-16)

But all is not gloom and doom. There will be a remnant of people, devoted to God and His ways, that He will protect in this 'day of wrath:'

**"Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, <sup>2</sup> Before the decree is issued, Or the day passes like chaff, Before the LORD's [YHVH's] fierce anger comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD's [YHVH's] anger comes upon you! <sup>3</sup> Seek the LORD [YHVH], all you meek of the earth, Who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden In the day of the LORD's [YHVH's] anger."**

(Zeph. 2:1-3)

**"For in the time of trouble  
He shall hide me in His pavilion;  
In the secret place of His tabernacle  
He shall hide me;  
He shall set me high upon a rock."** (Psalm 27:5)

It is said that on *Rosh HaShannah*, every person is judged. In traditional Jewish thought it is a judgment that takes place each year, for the coming year. In the final *Yom HaDin*, the judgment will be for eternity.

As already mentioned, according to tradition this is the day God sits on His throne of judgment and three books are opened. They are the 'Book of Life,' the 'Book of Death' and the 'Book of the Intermediates.' Those whose names are written in the 'Book of Life' are the totally righteous who have fully repented of their sins, and had their repentance accepted by God. Those whose names are written in the 'Book of Death' are the totally wicked who are fit only for destruction. The vast majority of people have their names written in the 'Book of the Intermediates.' These people have until *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) to repent and have their names transferred to the 'Book of Life.' If they do not repent, their names will be written in the 'Book of Death.'

It is said that; "man is judged on New Year's Day and his doom is sealed on the Day of Atonement." A famous Jewish Rabbi, Moses Nahmanides (also known as Ramban) said; "*Rosh HaShannah* is a day of judgment with mercy, and *Yom Kippur* is a day of mercy with judgment."

In the days when the Temple stood, the gates were opened on *Rosh HaShannah* symbolizing that the way to God was still open. At the opening of the gates the *shofar* was sounded. This blowing of the *shofar* was known as the 'Last Trump,' and is tied, in the Greek Scriptures (New Testament), to the resurrection of the righteous dead:

**"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -- <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."** (I Cor. 15:51-52)

The following passage speaks of the *shofar* as sounding during a battle between the Messiah (along with the resurrected saints) against His enemies on the earth. Those whom God will save become "stones of a crown" in the land of Israel:

**"Then the LORD [YHVH] will be seen over them,  
And His arrow will go forth like lightning.  
The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet,  
And go with whirlwinds from the south. ...  
<sup>16</sup> The LORD [YHVH] their God will save them in  
that day,  
As the flock of His people.  
For they shall be like the jewels of a crown,  
Lifted like a banner over His land."** (Zech. 9:14, 16)

The Temple gates were left open until the end of the Day of Atonement at which time they were closed. Again the *shofar* was sounded and this sounding became known as the "Great Shofar." Once the gates were closed the way to God was considered to be no longer open, so it was imperative for all the

"Intermediates" to repent before this time lest their names be inscribed in the 'Book of Death.' Because of the severity of the judgment, and the importance placed upon real repentance, the days between *Rosh HaShannah* and *Yom Kippur* became known as *Yamin Nora'im* (Yah-meen' Noh-rah-eem') the "Days of Awe."

It must be remembered that in Jewish teaching this judgment took place every year, just as the Atonement goats had to be slain every year for the covering of sin, for these days are rehearsals of future fulfillments. Prophetically they are pregnant with meaning and their observance is verified by the New Testament scriptures which use the pictures and idioms of these days to teach of future events:

**"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus [Y'shua] died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus [Y'shua]. <sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ [Messiah] will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words."** (I Thess. 4:13-18)

**"And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."** (Matt. 24:31)

**"A Psalm of David.  
Do not fret because of evildoers,  
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.  
<sup>2</sup> For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,  
And wither as the green herb. ...**

**<sup>27</sup> Depart from evil, and do good;  
And dwell forevermore.**

**<sup>28</sup> For the LORD [YHVH] loves justice,  
And does not forsake His saints;  
They are preserved forever,  
But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off."** (Psalm 37:1-2, 27-29)

*Rosh HaShannah* is indeed a *Yom HaDin* (Day of Judgment). However, as Believers in the Messiahship of *Y'shua* we have the full assurance of scripture that our sins are forgiven through His blood sacrifice:

**"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission."** (Heb. 9:22)

**"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."** (Eph. 1:7)

The Day of Judgment need not be feared by those who are in Messiah (Christ). Therefore, *Rosh HaShannah* is not a day of fear, but rather a day for real celebration. For it is all of these:

- ◆ *Yom Teruah* - a Day of Blowing. Signifying the return of *Y'shua HaMashiach*, and His crowning as King of Kings.
- ◆ *Yom HaZikaron* - a Day of Remembrance. To recall the creation of the world, the birth of Isaac and Samuel, and the binding of Isaac.
- ◆ *Yom HaKeseh* - the Day of the Concealed Moon. The day that no one knows for sure when it will take place.
- ◆ *Yom HaDin* - the Day of Judgment. When God will judge righteously those who are His, and the wicked who oppose Him. Most of the people will be put into an intermediate state for future judgment.

In the past, some may not have given a whole lot of thought to the 'Feast of Trumpets.' It seems to sit out there all alone marking the beginning of the fall Festival days. By exploring the ancient understandings of these days, we are better able to understand how well God has planned all of these Festivals. With this background, one is enabled to prepare for *Rosh HaShannah* and *Yom Kippur*. The two days are completely linked and neither can be fully understood without a full knowledge of both.

#### ~ Isaac and the Shofar ~

The *shofar* is the horn of a clean animal that has been hollowed out, has a portion of the small end cut off, and is usually twisted. The result is a musical instrument that can be sounded by placing it to the lips and blowing, similar to the way one would blow a trumpet. The resulting sound has a very haunting nature, which is much different than the sound of a metal trumpet.

Tradition teaches that the *shofar* can be made from the horn of any clean animal except the cow or ox. This is because the children of Israel do not want to remind God of the sin of the golden calf. The most common horn is that of the ram. The basis for the ram's horn comes from the story of the 'Binding of Isaac.' According to tradition, *Yitzchak* (Isaac) was thirty-seven years old when God told *Avraham* (Abraham) to:

" ... **'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'**" (Gen. 22:2)

*Avraham* obeyed. He took *Yitzchak* and went to the land of Moriah. This is believed to be the exact place where the Temple was erected many centuries later. The type of sacrifice that was commanded was that of a 'burnt offering.' This offering is called an *olah* (oh-lah') in Hebrew, and required the one bringing the offering to perform it in a state of rejoicing. It is required that the animal being sacrificed not only be slain, but completely burned up so that nothing remained. Thus, *Avraham* was expected to not only slay *Yitzchak*, but burn his

body completely, and it all had to be done with a joyful attitude because it was an offering to please God.

This entire story pictures the sacrifice of *Y'shua*, God the Father's "only begotten son," for the sins of mankind. In our view, *Y'shua* preexisted with the Father prior to His physical birth. Thus, when *Y'shua* died and was buried, the Light of the world was completely obliterated. Nevertheless, God the Father took pleasure in *Y'shua's* sacrifice, since it paved the way for many other sons and daughters to be Born Again into the Family of God:

**"But we see Jesus [*Y'shua*], who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. <sup>10</sup> For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*" (Heb. 2:9-10)**

It also brings to our attention the principle of a 'substitutionary sacrifice.' We can be ever thankful for this principle, since it allowed the sacrifice of *Y'shua* to be acceptable to God in place of our own death for our sins.

When the time came to slay *Yitzchak* as the *olah*, an angel from God stayed *Avraham's* hand:

**"Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. <sup>10</sup> And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.**

**<sup>11</sup> But the Angel of the LORD [*YHVH*] called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!'**

**"So he said, 'Here I am.'**

**<sup>12</sup> And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'**

**<sup>13</sup> Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of The LORD [*YHVH*] it shall be provided.'"** (Gen. 22:9-14)

According to tradition, the *First Trump* and the *Last Trump* are related to the horns of this ram which was caught in the thicket and became the substitute for *Yitzchak*. The *First Trump* was the left horn of this ram and was the *shofar* blown at Mount Sinai when God gave the *Torah* to the children of Israel. The right horn is said to be the one to be used for the *Last Trump* which will be blown as an announcement of the coming of the Messiah.

Since the ram was an *olah* (a burnt offering) and the horns of the ram were to be burned, it has been asked how it was possible for the horns to be used for these two occasions. The traditional answer is that God created a new ram out of the ashes of the sacrificed ram. In other words, a resurrection. This again is a wonderful picture of *Y'shua* who, as a substitute sacrifice for our sins, was buried, and was resurrected from the

dead. There is yet a third 'trumpet' mentioned in Jewish tradition. It is known as the *Great Shofar* and is to be blown at the end of *Yom Kippur*.

~ Tashlich ~

A custom that has developed over the years is called *Tashlich* (Tahsh-leeck). This is a ceremony that takes place on the afternoon of *Rosh HaShannah*. A small gathering of people (family and/or friends) select several small stones. They then proceed to a body of water that is considered to be "living water." This could be a creek, river, spring fed lake, or the ocean. Each person casts their stones into the water as a reminder of God's mercy in removing their sins. It is common for the individual to recall a specific sin of the past year as he or she casts each stone into the water. Just as God removes our sins from us so that He never sees them again, so we will never again see the stones that have been cast into the water, whether they be ours or that of another person.

~ Greetings for the New Year ~

It is customary to send greeting cards prior to *Rosh HaShannah* expressing one's expectation that the recipient will be inscribed in The Book of Life for the coming year. As Believers, we could well express our expectation that the person be inscribed into that good book for all eternity, through our Savior *Y'shua, HaMashiach*.

The traditional Hebrew greetings (whether in the form of cards, or vocally in person) are: *Shanah tovah* ("A good year"), *Le-shanah tovah tikatevu* ("May you be inscribed for a good year in the Book of Life"); or *Ketivah tovah* ("A good inscription"). The correct response to all of these greetings is: *Gam le-mar* (or *Gam lekha*; fem. form), ("The same to you"). [from *The Jewish Holidays* by Michael Strassfeld, p. 98.]

~ Traditional Foods ~

Traditional foods for *Rosh HaShannah* include round *Challah* bread. (*Challah* is a braided bread served each *Erev Shabbat* or Friday evening after sunset.) The *Rosh HaShannah Challah* is dipped in honey to symbolize the desire for the coming year to be sweet. This same idea is found in a tradition of dipping apple slices in honey.

In some homes, salads and sour dishes are avoided so as not to distract from the sweetness of the day.

~ Conclusion ~

The names *Rosh HaShannah*, *Yom Teruah*, *Yom HaZikkaron*, *Yom HaKeseh*, and *Yom HaDin* all lend significance to a festival which is little mentioned in scripture. It is the first of the two High Holydays and rehearses a most joyous time for those whose names have been written in the Book of Life:

**"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."** (Rev. 3:5)

**"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ [Messiah], and shall reign with Him a thousand years."** (Rev. 20:6)

May your name be inscribed in the Book of Life for all eternity!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Sing aloud to God our strength;  
Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.  
Raise a song and strike the timbrel,  
The pleasant harp with the lute.  
Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon,  
At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.  
For this is a statute for Israel,  
A law of the God of Jacob.

*Psalms 81:14*

## ~ The Days of Awe ~

Stand in awe, and sin not:  
Commune with your own heart  
Upon your bed,  
And be still.  
Selah.  
Psalm 4:4

Let all the earth fear the LORD:  
Let all the inhabitants of the world  
Stand in awe of him.  
Psalm 33:8

... my heart stands in awe of thy word.  
Psalm 119:161



For those whose names did not attain entry into the "Book of Life" on the first day of judgment, *Rosh HaShannah*, a second period of time is given for repentance. It is known as *Yamin Nora'im*, (Yah-meen' Noh-rah-eem') the "awesome days" or the "days of trouble." In Orthodox Judaism, this is considered to be a sinful person's last opportunity for repentance.

There is some disagreement about what constitutes the length of time for the *Yamin Nora'im* (Days of Awe). Most commentators consider it to be the entire ten day period, beginning with *Rosh HaShannah* and ending with *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement). Others consider it to be only seven days long. This would be the number of days between *Rosh HaShannah* and *Yom Kippur* if the two Holydays plus the second day of *Rosh HaShannah* were subtracted. If one wishes to interpret these days in a prophetic sense, this seven day period fits very nicely into certain timetables for end time events. However, it is important that one not try to force their own prophetic opinion or desires onto the plan of God. He will work it out in His own way and time. Every modern interpreter of prophecy will probably be surprised by the actual final sequence of events that leads up to the return of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The best we can do is to:

**"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."** (Luke 21:36)

**"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. <sup>35</sup> For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth."** (Luke 21:34-35)

On the other hand, for those who are not found **"...worthy to escape..."** the gates of heaven will still be open. Remember, the gates of the Temple (which symbolized the gates of the Heavenly Tabernacle) were opened on *Rosh HaShannah* and

not closed until the very end of *Yom Kippur*, signifying the way to God's grace and favor were still open.

The book of Hebrews makes it very clear that the earthly Tabernacle (and Temple) were a shadow or copy of the Heavenly Tabernacle and that everything in the earthly Tabernacle was patterned after those things found in the Heavenly Tabernacle:

**"For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; <sup>5</sup> who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'"** (Heb. 8:4-5)

As long as the 'gates of heaven' remain open, access to God will be available to those who desire to have their names moved from the 'Book of the Intermediates' to the 'Book of Life.' One thing is sure, after the complete and final fulfillment of *Yom Kippur* takes place (and this will not be until after the one thousand year millennial reign of the Messiah), everyone will have their name written in either the 'Book of Life' or the 'Book of Death.' As Believers, we know that it is only through the atoning sacrifice of *Y'shua* that our names can be entered into the 'Book of Life,' but it is also imperative that each person come to true repentance for their sins. The Days of Awe are symbolic of the final days during which repentance is possible.

~ Seek Ye the LORD ~

**"Seek ye the LORD [YHVH] while he may be found,  
Call ye upon him while he is near:  
Let the wicked forsake his way,  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts:  
And let him return unto the LORD [YHVH],  
And he will have mercy upon him;  
And to our God,  
For he will abundantly pardon."** (Isa. 55:6-7)

On *Rosh HaShannah* the whole world stands in judgment before God and deserves to be found guilty. Only those whose sins have been forgiven, through their acceptance of the sacrificial blood of *Y'shua HaMashiach*, are worthy to be found not guilty. This acquittal is not rendered because of their own righteousness or works, but because the righteousness of *Y'shua* has been applied to them:

**"But we are all like an unclean thing,  
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; ..."** (Isa. 64:6)

**"Though your sins are like scarlet,  
They shall be as white as snow;  
Though they are red like crimson,  
They shall be as wool."** (Isa. 1:18)

While we, in our natural carnal state, are totally unrighteous, God's righteousness is eternal:

**"Listen to Me, My people;  
And give ear to Me, O My nation:**

For law will proceed from Me,  
 And I will make My justice rest  
 As a light of the peoples.  
<sup>5</sup> My righteousness is near,  
 My salvation has gone forth,  
 And My arms will judge the peoples;  
 The coastlands will wait upon Me,  
 And on My arm they will trust.  
<sup>6</sup> Lift up your eyes to the heavens,  
 And look on the earth beneath.  
 For the heavens will vanish away like smoke,  
 The earth will grow old like a garment,  
 And those who dwell in it will die in like manner;  
 But My salvation will be forever,  
 And My righteousness will not be abolished."'

(Isa. 51:4-6)

"For the goal at which the *Torah* aims is the Messiah,  
 who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts."

(Rom. 10:4 CJB)

According to S.Y. Agnon in his Nobel prize winning book,  
*Days of Awe*, p.110;

"The ten days between Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur  
 were set aside for prayer and supplication, because all  
 earthly life is judged on Rosh HaShannah, and he who  
 returns to God is forgiven on Yom Kippur..."

#### ~ A Midrash ~

There is a very interesting *Midrash*\* told in I Samuel that  
 relates to this season. It is the story of Nabal. (Heb =  
*Nah-vahl*' the "b" sounds as a "v"):

"Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered  
 together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home  
 in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the  
 Wilderness of Paran. <sup>2</sup> Now there was a man in Maon  
 whose business was in Carmel, and the man was very rich.  
 He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And  
 he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. <sup>3</sup> The name of the  
 man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And she  
 was a woman of good understanding and beautiful  
 appearance; but the man was harsh and evil in his doings.  
 And he was of the house of Caleb." (I Sam. 25:1-3)

The word *Naval* in Hebrew means: "*stupid; wicked* (espec.  
*impious*): - fool, vile person." God calls them as He sees them.

David and his men were on the run from King *Shaul*  
 (Saul). They were in need of support from the people of the  
 land who knew that he had been anointed to be king over Israel.  
 So David sent his men to *Naval* and asked for food:

"... 'Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to  
 all that you have! ... Therefore let my young men find favor  
 in your eyes, for we come on [or near] a feast day. Please  
 give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to  
 your son David.'" (I Sam. 25:6, 8)

\* A *Midrash* is a story or teaching that teaches a profound truth.  
 It may or may not be literally true. However, the moral principle that it  
 teaches is always true.

"Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said,  
 'Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are  
 many servants nowadays who break away each one from  
 his master. <sup>11</sup> Shall I then take my bread and my water and  
 my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to  
 men when I do not know where they are from?'"

(I Sam. 25:10-11)

When David heard what had happened he took four  
 hundred of his men and went to attack *Naval*:

"Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife,  
 saying, 'Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness  
 to greet our master; and he reviled them. <sup>15</sup> But the men  
 were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss  
 anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in  
 the fields. <sup>16</sup> They were a wall to us both by night and day,  
 all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. <sup>17</sup> Now  
 therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is  
 determined against our master and against all his  
 household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot  
 speak to him.'" (I Sam. 25:14-17)

*Naval* was a man who had received protection for his  
 laborers by having David's men in the vicinity of where they  
 were working. When David needed a favor in return (food for  
 the upcoming feast day) there was none forthcoming. *Naval*  
 refused to acknowledge the blessings he had received by having  
 the anointed king of Israel near to him. It must be remembered  
 that David was a type of Messiah. He was to be the conquering  
 king of Israel and, in that respect, was a shadow of the coming  
 King Messiah who will conquer all the earth.

The fool's wife, however, was full of wisdom. She took  
 steps to save her household:

"Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves  
 of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five  
 seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and  
 two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys.  
<sup>19</sup> And she said to her servants, 'Go on before me; see, I am  
 coming after you.' But she did not tell her husband Nabal.  
<sup>20</sup> So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down  
 under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men,  
 coming down toward her, and she met them."

(I Sam. 25:18-20)

Abigail pleaded with David to accept her petition and to  
 spare her household and to remember her. Abigail's  
 supplication is a beautiful example of prayer on behalf of  
 another, even one who does not deserve it. David, as a type of  
 Messiah, heard her supplication and answered her with  
 blessings:

"Then David said to Abigail: 'Blessed is the LORD  
 [YHVH] God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!  
<sup>33</sup> And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because  
 you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and  
 from avenging myself with my own hand.' ... <sup>35</sup> So David  
 received from her hand what she had brought him, and  
 said to her, 'Go up in peace to your house. See, I have  
 heeded your voice and respected your person.'" (I Sam. 25:32-33, 35)

Now we come to a most remarkable part of the story. *Naval* held a feast in his house. It is said to have been like the feast of a king. This gives us a hint as to the day on which it was being held -- none other than *Rosh HaShannah*, the day of the crowning of kings:

**"Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light.**

**"<sup>37</sup> So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone. <sup>38</sup> Then it came about, after about ten days, that the LORD [YHVH] struck Nabal, and he died."** (I Sam. 25:36-38)

Here was a man, a fool, who was given an opportunity to be a part of the coming kingdom of Israel under David -- a type of the Kingdom of God under *Y'shua*. He refused to acknowledge the mercy, kindness and protection that he had already received from that yet future kingdom. In other words, he refused to repent, to turn, to do *Teshuvah*. Then he threw himself a big *Rosh HaShannah* feast party as though he were already inscribed in the 'Book of Life.' When Abigail told him that she had made amends, rather than admitting his error and repenting (during the *Days of Awe*) *Naval* hardened his heart. Ten days later, on *Yom Kippur*, when the final judgment was made and the gates of heaven were closed, *Naval* found himself on the outside looking in, and he died.

This story is a reminder of those people in the end time who see the destruction happening during the Day of the Lord, but refuse to turn from their sin and seek God:

**"Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. <sup>11</sup> They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.** (Rev. 16:10-11)

#### ~ Free Will ~

It is a principle of scripture that every person is given a free will. Therefore, each one of us is able to choose the path we wish to take. *Naval* chose not to repent even after he realized that his wife, Abigail, had saved his life. He made a decision and it was the wrong one.

When the children of Israel were finally permitted to go into the land that God was giving them, Moses issued an admonition, which is recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. In chapter 28 God laid out the blessings the children of Israel would receive if they obeyed the marriage covenant that He had made with them, and the curses they would experience if they rebelled. This passage concludes with an appeal to "choose life:"

**"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; <sup>20</sup> that you may love the LORD [YHVH] your God, that you may obey His voice, and that**

**you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD [YHVH] swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."** (Duet. 30:19-20)

We all need to learn how to exercise right choices. The *Yamin Nora'im* (*Days of Awe*) are the perfect time to meditate on the choices we have made in the past and the choices that we are making right now, today. Free will is a wonderful thing, but with it comes great responsibility. We must learn to make daily decisions based on the Scriptures, following the instructions and guidelines they give us.

#### ~ Customs of the Days of Awe ~

*Teshuvah* occurs when a sinner forsakes his sin, asks God to remove it through the blood of *Y'shua* and decides in his heart not to do it again. However, not only must one seek forgiveness for sins that involve an act; such as theft, adultery, gossip, etc., but one must also repent and seek forgiveness for sins of the mind and heart; such as anger, lust, jealousy and covetousness. *Y'shua* was emphatic about this, in the Sermon on the Mount, when he said we must not only refrain from adultery and murder but from lust and hatred as well:

**"But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, "Raca!" [*empty headed man*] shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. <sup>23</sup> Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."** (Matt. 5:22-24)

**"You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not commit adultery." <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."** (Matt. 5:27-28)

**"Let the wicked forsake his way,  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
Let him return to the LORD [YHVH],  
And He will have mercy on him;  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon.** (Isa. 55:7)

It is an evil deed to remind a person who has done *Teshuvah* about his past sins. We must learn to forget the sins of others as well as to forgive them. The person who can do this, truly has the mind of God:

**"As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us."** (Psalm 103:12)

A common blessing people offer one another during this period is:

*"May your judgment in the Book of Life be completed and sealed for your good."*

It is also a custom to do good deeds and acts of charity during the Days of Awe. This is considered to be 'active *Teshuvah*.'

The Sabbath between *Rosh HaShannah* and *Yom Kippur* is known as the 'Sabbath of Return.' The scripture reading for this day includes:

**"Return, O Israel, to the LORD [YHVH] Your God,  
For you have fallen because of your sin.  
Take words with you  
And return to the LORD [YHVH]."** (Hos. 14:2-3 TNK)

According to the *Mishnah*, (Oral Torah):

"The sign of complete *Teshuvah* is when the same transgression comes to the hand of the transgressor in the same place where he first committed it, and he avoids it." (Yoma 86b).

### ~ Summary ~

The *Days of Awe* represent man's last opportunity to become reconciled with God and with his fellow man. During this time the Gates of the Temple were kept open symbolizing that the path to God was still open. That path, however, is the path of *Teshuvah*, of repentance and return to the ways of God. It is not a simple feeling of guilt and subsequent apology, It is a profound change in one's life direction. It means earnestly desiring to live righteously before God; to follow the standard which God established to guide the behavior of His people -- the *Written Torah* commands.

At the close of *Yom Kippur* the *Great Shofar* was sounded and the gates to the Temple were closed, symbolizing the path to God was also closed. For this reason, it is important that we repent now, while there is still time:

**"Sow for yourselves righteousness;  
Reap in mercy;  
Break up your fallow ground,  
For it is time to seek the LORD [YHVH],  
Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.  
<sup>13</sup> You have plowed wickedness;  
You have reaped iniquity.  
You have eaten the fruit of lies,  
Because you trusted in your own way,  
In the multitude of your mighty men."**  
(Hosea 10:12-13)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ~ Yom Kippur ~

Also the tenth day of this seventh month  
*Shall be* the Day of Atonement.  
It shall be a holy convocation for you;  
You shall afflict your souls,  
And offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.  
*Leviticus 23:27*



It would be a terrible thing if a person went through complete *Teshuvah* only to discover that all of their repenting and turning from sin did not take away their sins, and they were still cut off from God. It is for this reason that the forty day period of *Teshuvah*, which also encompasses *Rosh HaShannah* and *Yamin Nora'im*, are not fully complete without *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement), for it is God who grants forgiveness of sins. Our good deeds will not save us.

### ~ Reconciliation ~

Just what is atonement? It is another of the many 'religious' words that is often used but not always understood. The best definition we can find is the one used in the scriptures themselves. The English word 'atonement' is found many times in the Hebrew Scriptures (OT), but only once in the Greek Scriptures (NT). In the OT it is derived from two Hebrew words: *kaphar* and *kippur*, from which comes *Yom* (day) *Kippur* (atonement).

The root word *kaphar* (kah-far') means:

"to cover (spec. with bitumen); fig. to *expiate* or *condone*, to *placate* or *cancel*: -- appease, make (an) atonement, cleanse, disannul, forgive, be merciful, pacify, pardon, to *pitch*, purge (away), put off, (make) reconcile (-liation)." (Strong's #3722).

The second word translated atonement is *kippur* (key-poor') and it means "expiation or atonement." (Strong's #3725).

Another related word is *kapporeth* (kap-poh-reht'). This word literally means "a lid," and is always translated as "mercy seat." This was the covering of pure gold, with two cherubim on it, which formed the lid for the Ark of the Covenant. (Strong's #3727).

'Atonement' is the preferred translation of the first two Hebrew words. However, there are other translations in use in the scriptures and they include: "merciful, purge, reconcile(d), pacified, pardon, forgive(n), cleansed, and ransom."

Again we have a day with many nuances. But the main theme is always the same. *Yom Kippur* is the day on which God reconciles with His creation. It is a day for Him to be merciful, to pardon, to cleanse, and to forgive.

*Yom Kippur* was the only day of the year when anyone among the children of Israel was able to come "face to face" with God and live. This occurred when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was kept (at least until it disappeared). That meeting could only be done



with great preparation and care. The entire ceremony is laid out in Leviticus, the 16th chapter. The High Priest was required to immerse himself completely in water (baptize) five times during the Day of atonement ceremony. The term **"...wash his flesh in water..."** (Lev. 16:4,24,) is understood to mean immersion.

Once the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies, he was required to sprinkle blood before the 'mercy seat' (*kapporeth*) of God. This was considered to be where God dwelt. It was through this ceremony that atonement was granted to the entire nation for the coming year.

~ *Yom HaPeduth* ~

Because this day was also known as the Day of Redemption, it became known as *Yom HaPeduth* (Yohm Hah Peh-doot' = Day of Redemption). Even though the Leviticus Atonement service was efficacious for only the coming year, it also looked forward to a time when Messiah would return and the Day of Redemption and Reconciliation would be fully complete:

**"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."** (I Cor. 13:12)

The phrase "face to face" is a Hebrew idiom for *Yom Kippur*. According to Paul, we are not yet 'face to face' with our Father, but the time will come (as pictured by this day) when that will occur. Then we will know God fully, just as He knows us fully right now:

**"The Redeemer will come to Zion,  
And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,  
Says the LORD [YHVH]."**

<sup>21</sup> **'As for Me,' says the LORD [YHVH], 'this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants,' says the LORD [YHVH], 'from this time and forevermore.'"** (Isa. 59:20-21)

**"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus [Y'shua] and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ [Messiah] for a thousand years.**

<sup>5</sup> **But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.** <sup>6</sup> **Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ [Messiah], and shall reign with Him a thousand years.** (Rev. 20:4-6)

*Yom Kippur* is the end of the forty day period of *Teshuvah*. Since forty is considered to be the scriptural number of trial and testing, this day concludes man's period of trial and testing as well. Thus, the Day of Atonement has great prophetic

significance for the end time (much of this has been covered in the preceding chapters). The important thing to remember is that even though the resurrection of the righteous dead are pictured by *Rosh HaShannah*, there is still time in the prophetic timetable for others to come to repentance. However, those who wait until the Days of Awe to do *Teshuvah* (and this will be the vast majority of people) will have to undergo much greater trauma. Some prophetic teachers believe the *Days of Awe* correspond to the Great Tribulation:

**"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!' ..."**

<sup>13</sup> **Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' <sup>14</sup> And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"** (Rev. 7:9-10, 13-14)

~ Preparing the High Priest ~

During the time of *Y'shua*, the office of the High Priest was very corrupt. Instead of the High Priest being appointed for life, the position was sold each year, by the Romans, to the highest bidder among those Levites who qualified as sons of Aaron. Because of the enormous amount of money that was collected through the Temple tax, the High Priest was able to pay the Roman governor who appointed him and still make a tidy profit. The Romans kept the garments of the High Priest and only allowed him to wear them on *Yom Kippur*. It is for this reason that Paul did not know that a person he had insulted was the High Priest, because he was not wearing the High Priest's garments:

**"Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, 'Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.' <sup>2</sup> And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.**

<sup>3</sup> **Then Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?'**

<sup>4</sup> **And those who stood by said, 'Do you revile God's high priest?'**

<sup>5</sup> **Then Paul said, 'I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, "You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"** (Acts 23:1-5)

Even though the office of High Priest had become corrupt, Paul made amends for his offense once he became aware of the man's position. (We can learn an important lesson from this example.)

Because the office of High Priest was purchased, many of the men who held the position were really not qualified. Some were said to be illiterate. Therefore the learned priests of that time had an especially difficult task as the Day of Atonement

approached. They were required to prepare the High Priest so that he would be able to conduct the service without error, lest God be angry and atonement not be granted for that year.

First they would cloister the High Priest in the *Chamber of the Counselors* for seven days before *Yom Kippur*. During this time he would sprinkle the blood of the daily sacrifices, burn the incense, trim the lamps and sacrifice the head and hind legs of the sacrificial animals.

During the eve of *Yom Kippur* he was kept awake all night going over the service for the next day. If he began to get drowsy they would make him stand barefoot on the cold stone floor, or they would snap their fingers to awaken him.

If he was tired in the morning from lack of sleep he was soon wide awake after immersing himself in the regular priests *mikvah* (meek'-vah = immersion pool) of chilly water. It was the first of his five immersions that day.

Ten times the High Priest would speak the name of God (YHVH). The name could only be spoken on this day, and the people would prostrate themselves face down on the ground when they heard it.

When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies everyone held their breath. It was believed that if he failed to perform his duties properly he would be struck dead, as were *Nadav* and *Avihu* when they entered the *Holy of Holies* improperly:

**"Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD [YHVH], which He had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup> So fire went out from the LORD [YHVH] and devoured them, and they died before the LORD [YHVH]."** (Lev. 10:1-2)

In the event of the death of the High Priest during the service, the Deputy High Priest would assume the responsibilities in order to finish the service. Some Christians have claimed that a rope was tied around the waist of the High Priest so that if he fell dead in the *Holy of Holies* they could pull him out. This is not true. There were rules that allowed other priests to go in to retrieve his body if that happened.

#### ~ Strange Happenings ~

Central to the *Yom Kippur* service were the two atonement goats, one for YHVH and one of *Azazel* (Ah-zah-zehl' = the so-called Scapegoat). The goat for YHVH was sacrificed as part of the *Yom Kippur* service -- the goat for *Azazel* was let go in the wilderness. When the *Azazel* goat was let go in the wilderness, it was led away through a special passageway. This was so the Babylonians could not pull its hair and cry: "Take our sins and begone," which was their custom.

At some point, the *Azazel* goat was no longer released in the wilderness the way the scriptures instruct, instead it was backed off the edge of a high cliff and died in the fall. Tradition has it that a red string, tied both to the horns of the *Azazel* goat and to the door of the Temple, would miraculously turn white when the goat perished in its fall. For forty years before the destruction of the Temple this failed to happen. It was considered to be an ill omen.

Counting back forty years from 70 CE (common era or AD) yields a starting date of 30 CE, which is very close to the year that *Y'shua* was crucified (if not the very year).

Three other ill omens also occurred for forty years before the destruction of the Temple:

- ◆ The first involved the casting of lots to determine which atonement goat was for YHVH and which was the *Azazel* goat. For forty years the lot for YHVH always turned up in the left hand of the High Priest.
- ◆ The second ill omen involved the doors of the Temple. Because of their great size and weight, it took a number of men to open and close the doors each morning and evening. For forty years the doors would sometimes mysteriously open by themselves during the night. Some speculate that the earthquake which occurred when *Y'shua* died altered the level of the land and resulted in this occurrence.
- ◆ The westernmost light of the Temple *Menorah* (Mehn-noh-rah' = the seven branched candlestick) would go out of its own accord during these forty years. It was the only one to be constantly lit, and was the light from which the others were lit each day. This light represented the Messiah.

#### ~ The Temple Service ~

During the time of *Y'shua*, the entire *Yom Kippur avodah* (ah-voh-dah' = liturgical service) centered around the Temple. This service was very elaborate, even by Temple standards, and was considered to be the most important of the entire liturgical year, since it dealt with the forgiveness of sin for the entire nation of Israel. The basic outline of the *avodah* is found in Leviticus 16. However, what is given there is, according to tradition, not in strict chronological order. What follows is the *avodah* as modern Rabbinical Judaism understands it to have been performed.

The final preparations for *Yom Kippur* began seven days previous, when the *Cohen HaGadol* (Coh-hehn' Hah Gah-dohl' = the High Priest) was sequestered in the *Chamber of the Counselors*, where the final rehearsals and instructions were given for the proper administration of the service. A Deputy High Priest was prepared at the same time in case the *Cohen HaGadol* became disqualified for some reason.

During this seven day period the *Cohen HaGadol* would:

"... sprinkle the blood of the daily sacrifices, and burn the incense, and trim the lamps, and sacrifice the head and the hind leg[s] of the sacrificial animal." (*The Days of Awe* by S.Y. Agnon, p. 241)

On the morning of the eve of *Yom Kippur* (the morning of the 9th of *Tishri*) the *Cohen HaGadol* would stand at the Eastern Gate where they would parade before him the oxen, rams, and sheep that were to be used in the service the next day.

As nightfall approached, the *Cohen HaGadol's* handlers would ration his food and drink so that he would not become

sleepy from overeating. Once *Yom Kippur* arrived, he would, of course, be on a total fast, as would all Israel.

Then the court elders would turn the *Cohen HaGadol* over to the elders of the priesthood and they would take him to the *House of Avtinas*, the family which prepared the incense used in the *avodah*. They would rehearse, once again, the coming day's ceremony and read passages of Scripture to him in order to keep him awake all night. The reason they did not want the *Cohen HaGadol* to go to sleep was to avoid the possibility of a nocturnal emission which would disqualify him from performing the *Yom Kippur* service the following morning, since that would make him ritually unclean until the next evening:

**"If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening."**  
(Lev. 15:16)

On *Yom Kippur*, the regular daily sacrifices were offered plus additional offerings specific for the day:

**"On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work. <sup>8</sup> You shall present a burnt offering to the LORD [YHVH] as a sweet aroma: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without blemish. <sup>9</sup> Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram, <sup>10</sup> and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; <sup>11</sup> also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the sin offering for atonement, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings."**  
(Num. 29:7-11)

With all of these offerings, plus the special *avodah* which took place in the Holy of Holies, it was necessary to begin the day's activities much earlier than usual. For example, on most days the ashes were cleared from the altar at the time of the cockcrow (the Temple crier who announced the beginning of Temple service at dawn). However, on *Yom Kippur* the assigned priests began clearing the ashes at midnight.

Then, the *Cohen HaGadol* would be taken to the place of immersion (all priests on duty each day began by being immersed in a *mikvah* (mEEK'-vah = an immersion pool of "living water"). This was the first of five immersions the *Cohen HaGadol* would perform on *Yom Kippur*. He would then proceed to the *kiyor* (key-ohr' = the bronze or copper laver) where he would ritually wash his hands and feet for the first of ten times that day:

**"You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, <sup>19</sup> for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. <sup>20</sup> When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD [YHVH], they shall wash with water, lest they die."**  
(Ex. 30:18-20)

After the first immersion, the *Cohen HaGadol* would put on the eight Golden Garments, his regular attire when

performing duties in the Temple. Then he would make the initial incision for the daily burnt offering, while someone else would finish it so the *Cohen HaGadol* could receive the animal's blood in a vessel. This blood was sprinkled on the altar, as was done each day. Then he would proceed into the Holy Place (the first room of the Temple) to burn the morning incense and trim the lamps, after which he would offer up the head and the limbs of the daily burnt offerings, the required meal offerings, and the wine offering (see Num. 28:1-8).

At this point, the *Cohen HaGadol* was brought to the roof of the *Parvah Chamber*, in the southeast corner of the Court of the Israelites. This chamber was part of the sanctified area of the Temple complex. There a linen sheet was spread so that he was out of view of the people and he immersed for the second time. Then he would dress in the four white linen garments that were made special for *Yom Kippur* and also wash his hands and feet both before and after the immersion:

**"He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These are holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on."**  
(Lev. 16:4)

At this point the *Cohen HaGadol* would move to a place between the porch and the altar where he would begin the sacrificial slaying of the bullock which he had provided as a sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of the priests:

**"Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering."**  
(Lev. 16:3)

The practice was to perform all of the exclusive rites of *Yom Kippur* in the linen garments. Although, in the *Torah*, the command to slay the bullock is given before the command to change into the linen garments.

Just prior to the slaying of the bullock (which was to atone for the High Priest's sins and those of his family) he would place his hands on the head of the bullock and recite the following prayer using the Sacred Name of God three times. During the time of *Y'shua*, the Sacred Name was forbidden to be pronounced except by the *Cohen HaGadol* on *Yom Kippur*:

"O YHVH, I have committed iniquities, I have transgressed, I have sinned before you, I and my house. O YHVH, forgive, I pray, the iniquities, the transgressions and the sins which I have committed, transgressed, and sinned before you, I and my house, as it is written in the Torah of your servant Moses: 'For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before YHVH.'" (Lev. 16:30). (*The Days of Awe* by S.Y. Agnon, p. 244)

The *Cohen HaGadol* would then leave the bullock (not yet slain) and proceed to the east of the Temple court just to the north of the altar. There the Deputy High Priest and another priest would be stationed with the two Atonement he-Goats to perform the lottery:

**"He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD [YHVH] at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. <sup>8</sup> Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for**

**the LORD [YHVH] and the other lot for the scapegoat."**  
(Lev. 16:7-8)

The lots were made of boxwood and were set in an urn. Each lot had a cover on it so no one could see which was which. One had written inside "For YHVH" and the other "For Azazel." The High Priest would select a lot for each goat and the one that was designated for *Azazel* would have a crimson ribbon tied on its horns. The goat designated "For YHVH" would be turned to face the altar and the *Cohen HaGadol* would proclaim: "A sin-offering to YHVH." This was the fourth occurrence of the pronunciation of the Sacred Name (three times in the preceding prayer).

Then he would return to his bullock, place his two hands on its head and recite the following confession, this time including the entire priesthood as well as his own family. Again the *Cohen HaGadol* pronounced the Sacred Name three times in the prayer:

"O YHVH, I have committed iniquities, I have transgressed, I have sinned before you, I and my house and the children of Aaron, your holy people. O YHVH, forgive, I pray, the iniquities, the transgressions, and the sins which I have committed, transgressed, and sinned before you, I and my house and the children of Aaron, your holy people. As it is written in the Torah of your servant Moses: 'For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before YHVH.'" (Lev. 16:30). (*The Days of Awe* by S.Y. Agnon, p. 245-46)

At this point, the *Cohen HaGadol* would slaughter the bullock and catch the blood in a vessel and give it to an attending priest who would swirl the blood so that it would not congeal until it was time for its use in the service. Then he would proceed onto the outer altar and collect hot coals in a gold pan. After descending from the altar, a ladle was brought to him and he would take two handfuls of incense and put this on the ladle. With the firepan in his right hand and the ladle in his left, the *Cohen HaGadol* would go through the Holy place, between the two curtains and into the Holy of Holies. When he came to the Ark of the Covenant, he would place the firepan between the two carrying poles and place the incense on the hot coals so that the entire room would become filled with smoke. He then returned to the Holy Place and said a short prayer:

**"Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD [YHVH], with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. <sup>13</sup> And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD [YHVH], that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die."**  
(Lev. 16:12-13)

The *Cohen HaGadol* would then take the vessel of the blood of the bullock from the attending priest and return into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood before the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant:

**"He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side;**

**and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times."** (Lev. 16:14)

The first sprinkling was done by flicking his index finger with the palm of the hand turned upward (one time "on the mercy seat") and then seven times with the palm turned downward ("before the mercy seat").

The *Cohen HaGadol* then returned to the place where the bullock had been slaughtered (and was still laying) and they brought him the goat that had been designated "For YHVH," where he slaughtered it and received the blood in a separate vessel. He would then take the blood of the goat into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle that blood in the same manner as he had done with the bullock's blood:

**"Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat."** (Lev. 16:15)

Returning to the Holy Place the *Cohen HaGadol* would take the vessel containing the blood of the bullock (which was resting in a stand) and sprinkle the blood on the outside of the curtain in front of the Ark of the Covenant -- one time upward and seven times downward. Then he would repeat the process with the blood of the he-goat. He then took the blood of the bullock and poured it together into the vessel containing the blood of the he-goat.

From there the *Cohen HaGadol* would go to the golden altar of incense and begin to sprinkle downward from the northeast horn to the southeast:

**"And he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD [YHVH], and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. <sup>19</sup>Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel."** (Lev. 16:18-19)

The *Cohen HaGadol* then went to the outer altar and sprinkled each horn and the top seven times. The remaining blood was poured out on the western base of the outer altar. He then returned to the Eastern Gate where he would place his hands on the goat for *Azazel* and pray, using the Sacred Name three more times for a total of ten times that day. This time the prayer was for the whole house of Israel:

"Pray, O YHVH, your people, the house of Israel, have committed iniquity, transgressed and sinned before you. Pray, O YHVH, atone, I pray, the iniquities and the transgressions and the sins that your people, the house of Israel have committed and transgressed, and sinned before you, as it is written in the Torah of your servant Moses, saying: 'For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before YHVH.'" (Lev. 16:30). (*The Days of Awe* by S.Y. Agnon, p. 249)

**"And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. <sup>21</sup> Aaron shall lay both his hands**

**on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. <sup>22</sup> The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."** (Lev. 16:20-22)

During the Second Temple period, this was the only time of the year when the Sacred Name (*YHVH*) could be uttered in public. When the people attending the ceremony would hear the name pronounced they would bend their knees (some say prostrate themselves) and exclaim: "Blessed be his Name whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever," so they could not hear the exact pronunciation.

The *Azazel* goat was then led away and taken, by a series of priests, to a desolate mountain east of Jerusalem where it was forced over a cliff to tumble to its death. These specially designated priests had spent the night in shelters along the route, each a Sabbath day's journey apart. (A Sabbath day's journey was set by the Rabbis as being 2000 cubits or about .57 of a mile.) The first priest would take the *Azazel* goat to the first shelter where the second priest would accompany the goat to the next station. Each priest would stay at the shelter where he had arrived until sundown, after which they could return to Jerusalem and be immersed:

**"And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp."** (Lev. 16:26)

It is apparent that Oral Tradition has added some things to the *Written Torah* in regard to this ceremony.

The *Cohen HaGadol* would then return to the place where the bullock and the he-goat that was slain were laying, cut them open and remove the sacrificial parts. These parts were placed on a tray and taken out to the outer altar to be burned. The remains of the two animals were taken outside the camp where they were totally burned up:

**"The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal."** (Lev. 16:27)

After word had been received that the goat for *Azazel* had perished, the *Cohen HaGadol* would proceed into the Court of the Women where he would read portions of Leviticus 16 to the public assembled there. Next, he proceeded to the *Parvah Chamber* where he removed the linen garments and was immersed for the third time that day, before putting on the Golden Garments. Then he would go out and offer the up his ram and the ram for the people, along with the seven lambs.

A fourth immersion and two more washings were performed when the *Cohen HaGadol* again donned a new set of white linen garments so that he could go back into the Holy of Holies and retrieve the golden firepan and the incense ladle. This was followed by another immersion (the fifth) and washing of the hands and feet, when he dressed again in the

Golden Garments of the *Cohen HaGadol*. He then proceeded (at the proper time) to conduct the evening sacrifices.

At the conclusion of the *avodah* the *Cohen HaGadol* removed the Golden Garments and dressed in his own street clothes and returned home -- the entire *Yom Kippur avodah* and all of the special and daily offerings having been completed.

### ~ The Closing of the Gates ~

The last act of *Yom Kippur* was the closing of the gates of the Temple. Since the Temple was an earthly shadow of the Heavenly Tabernacle, this signified the closing of the gates of heaven, thereby denying access to the throne of God. This was done at sunset. The closing of the gates was accompanied by a blast on the *shofar*. This blast was called the *Great Shofar*. On the fiftieth year this blast would also announce the Jubilee Year:

**"Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. <sup>10</sup> And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family."** (Lev. 25:9-10)

Again the symbolism is great. God established the Jubilee year so that the children of Israel would never lose their inheritance. Every fifty years they returned to the land of their fathers and took possession of their families property once again. We too will return to the land of our Father and take possession of our inheritance in the Kingdom of God, the possession that our ancestor Adam lost. We will be given our inheritance, just as God promised through the Jubilee year concept.

### ~ The Goat for *Azazel* ~

There is much controversy over the true meaning of the *Azazel* goat which was sent to the wilderness with the sins of the children of Israel on its head. Even a clear definition of the term cannot be found. Here are the various definitions of the term:

- ◆ The name of the mountain where the goat was sent.
- ◆ An inaccessible rocky area of cliffs.
- ◆ Strong and hard, or hardest of the mountains.
- ◆ In Greek and Latin translations, the terms used indicate "the goat which goes," or is dismissed.
- ◆ The Scapegoat.
- ◆ The name of some undefined "power." This opinion equates *Azazel* as a supernatural parallel to *YHVH*.
- ◆ The wilderness habitation of demons.
- ◆ One of the leaders of the fallen angels who were said to have desired the "daughters of men."

As a result of these various opinions concerning the meaning of the term, various doctrines have been developed. Many Christians teach that *Azazel* represents *HaSatan* (the

adversary) who was the original instigator of sin and therefore responsible for all sin. He first sinned by rebelling against God:

**"How you are fallen from heaven,  
O Lucifer, son of the morning!  
How you are cut down to the ground,  
You who weakened the nations!  
13 For you have said in your heart:  
"I will ascend into heaven,  
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;  
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation  
On the farthest sides of the north;  
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,  
I will be like the Most High."''' (Isa. 14:12-14)**

**"You were the anointed cherub who covers;  
I established you;  
You were on the holy mountain of God;  
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.  
15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were  
created,  
Till iniquity was found in you."''' (Ezek. 28:14-15)**

In this view, the sins of mankind are placed back on the head of the one who caused all the trouble in the first place. Ultimately, the adversary (*HaSatan*) will be sent to the Lake of Fire carrying the sins of mankind so that he will be unable to deceive any longer:

**"The Adversary who had deceived them was hurled into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Rev. 20:10)**

A alternate view sees *Azazel* as representing *Y'shua*, for He is the one who took the sins of the world upon Himself so that all mankind can be forgiven:

**"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (II Cor 5:21)**

**"The next day John saw Jesus [*Y'shua*] coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)**

The *Encyclopedia Judaica* makes some interesting comments concerning the *Azazel* goat:

"The goat which was dispatched to *Azazel* was not a sacrifice since it was not slaughtered. From the actual verses themselves it is not even certain whether the goat was killed; thus it seems that the two goats can be compared to the two birds used in the purification ritual of the leper. Just as there, one of the birds is set free to fly over the field (Lev. 14:4-7), so here too the goat of *Azazel* was sent onto the wilderness. The goat was dispatched in order to carry the sins of Israel into the wilderness, i.e., to cleanse the people of their sins. This is also the reason why the ritual took place on the Day of Atonement." (CD-Rom Version: *Azazel*)

A number of years ago we were blessed to be able to journey to the *Azazel* mountain east of Jerusalem with a tour group. It is a most desolate area. After walking around the top of this rocky mountain, it was not clear to us that even if the *Azazel* goat were pushed off the mountain that it would die in the fall, as there were no sheer cliffs, only more gradual slopes. Certainly, if the goat were literally thrown off the top it would probably die in the fall, but if, as tradition teaches, the goat was merely forced to back off the mountain top, it could well have survived with a few scrapes and bruises.

### ~ *Yom Kippur* Customs ~

There are a number of traditional customs associated with *Yom Kippur* which Messianic Believers would do well to understand, in order to more properly observe the day. Some are commanded in Scripture. Others have descended from tradition, or are related to historical events tied to the day.

### ~ Afflicting One's Soul ~

According to tradition, on *Yom Kippur* it is forbidden to eat, to drink, to wash, to anoint oneself, to put on leather shoes and to have sexual intercourse. These are all considered to be ways in which one is to "afflict your souls" (Lev. 23:27). However, the scriptures indicate that only abstaining from food and drink is required, the other rules being derived from tradition:

**"... I humbled myself with fasting;  
And my prayer would return to my own heart." (Psalm 35:13)**

### ~ The Return of Moses ~

Tradition teaches that this is the day on which Moses descended Mount Sinai with the second set of tablets, and the children of Israel were forgiven for worshipping the golden calf:

**"So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. 9 Then he said, 'If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.'**

**"10 And He said: 'Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD [*YHVH*]. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.'" (Ex. 34:8-10)**

Thus the children of Israel were restored to favor in the eyes of God even though a veil covered *Moshe's* face:

**"Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. 30 So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. 31 Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation**

returned to him; and Moses talked with them. <sup>32</sup> Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. <sup>33</sup> And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. <sup>34</sup> But whenever Moses went in before the LORD [YHVH] to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. <sup>35</sup> And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him." (Ex. 34:29-35)

According to the Apostle Paul, the fact that *Moshe* had to place a veil over his face, when speaking to the people, indicated that the children of Israel were not ready to understand the fullness of God's plan which would culminate in *Y'shua*, the *Suffering Servant* Messiah -- the sinless One who had to come and die so that we could be forgiven of our sins. Thus, Paul indicated that a veil still exists over the minds of those of the house of Judah to whom God has not yet revealed Messiah *Y'shua*, for they are not able to see the first coming of Messiah as prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures (OT).

One of the purposes of the *Torah* was to show the people where they fell short of God's standard. In other words, to show the people their sins. Now, however, in Messiah *Y'shua* those past sins have been removed through the blood of Messiah and that, along with the indwelling of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit) arms Messianic Believers with the power to resist sin. Thus, the veil has been removed from those who believe:

**"Therefore, with a hope like this, we are very open --  
<sup>13</sup>unlike Moshe, who put a veil over his face, so that the  
 people of Isra'el would not see the fading brightness come**

to an end. <sup>14</sup> What is more, their minds were made stonelike; for to this day the same veil remains over them when they read the Old Covenant; it has not been unveiled, because only by the Messiah is the veil taken away. <sup>15</sup> Yes, till today, whenever *Moshe* is read, a veil lies over their heart. <sup>16</sup> 'But,' says the *Torah*, 'whenever someone turns to ADONAI, the veil is taken away.' <sup>17</sup> Now, 'ADONAI' in this text means the Spirit. And where the Spirit of *ADONAI* is, there is freedom.'" (II Cor. 3:12-18 CJB)

~ Caring for the Sick ~

It is tradition that if a person is sick they are not to fast on the Day of Atonement. If the sick person wants to fast and the doctor says they must eat, then the person must eat. If the sick person says they need to eat, then they must eat. Traditionally one is not required to endanger their health by fasting.

~ The Reading of Scripture ~

It is the custom of many to read all of the Psalms on the night of *Yom Kippur*.

The traditional *Torah* readings include the following:

- ◆ Leviticus 16:1-34
- ◆ Numbers 29:7-11
- ◆ Isaiah 57:14 - 58:14
- ◆ Leviticus 18:1-30
- ◆ Jonah 1:1 - 4:11
- ◆ Micah 7:18-20

The book of Hebrews is also excellent reading for this day.

On the tenth *day* of this seventh month  
 You shall have a holy convocation  
 You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work.  
 You shall present a burnt offering<sup>r</sup> to the LORD *as* a sweet aroma:  
 One young bull, one ram, *and* seven lambs in their first year.  
 Be sure they are without blemish.  
 Their grain offering<sup>r</sup> *shall be of* fine flour mixed with oil:  
 Three-tenths *of an ephah* for the bull,  
 Two-tenths for the one ram,  
 And one-tenth for each of the seven lambs;  
 Also one kid of the goats *as* a sin offering<sup>r</sup>,  
 Besides the sin offering<sup>r</sup> for atonement,  
 The regular burnt offering<sup>r</sup> with its grain offering<sup>r</sup>,  
 And their drink offerings<sup>r</sup>.

*Numbers 29:7-11*

~ Some Final Thoughts ~

While the Temple stood, the Jews were able to celebrate the Day of Atonement each year by the sacrifice of the two goats. Atonement was made and their sins were covered for the past year. Once the Temple was destroyed, this method of atonement, or reconciliation, was closed to them. In its place they developed a system of repentance. However, it is our understanding that atonement and reconciliation can only be achieved through the person of *Y'shua HaMashiach*:

**"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ [Messiah] died for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. <sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. <sup>11</sup> And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], through whom we have now received the reconciliation [KJV = *atonement*]."** (Rom. 5:8-11)

The Day of Atonement is a very special day. But it is not just fasting and afflicting our souls that God wants, rather He wants us to do real *Teshuvah* and completely change the direction of our lives. We must learn to live our lives as though *Y'shua* were in our shoes, actually living His life in us. That truly is Messiah living in us:

**"Cry aloud, spare not;  
Lift up your voice like a trumpet;  
Tell My people their transgression,  
And the house of Jacob their sins.**

...

**<sup>3</sup> "Why have we fasted," they say, "and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?"**

**"In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure,  
And exploit all your laborers.**

**<sup>4</sup> Indeed you fast for strife and debate,  
And to strike with the fist of wickedness.  
You will not fast as you do this day,  
To make your voice heard on high.**

**<sup>5</sup> Is it a fast that I have chosen,  
A day for a man to afflict his soul?  
Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush,  
And to spread out sackcloth and ashes?**

**Would you call this a fast,  
And an acceptable day to the LORD [YHVH]?**

**<sup>6</sup> Is this not the fast that I have chosen:**

**To loose the bonds of wickedness,  
To undo the heavy burdens,  
To let the oppressed go free,  
And that you break every yoke?**

**<sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
And that you bring to your house the poor who are  
cast out;**

**When you see the naked, that you cover him,  
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?**

**<sup>8</sup> Then your light shall break forth like the morning,**

**Your healing shall spring forth speedily,  
And your righteousness shall go before you;  
The glory of the LORD [YHVH] shall be your  
rear guard.**

**<sup>9</sup> Then you shall call, and the LORD [YHVH] will  
answer;**

**You shall cry, and He will say, "Here I am."**

**If you take away the yoke from your midst,  
The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,**

**<sup>10</sup> If you extend your soul to the hungry**

**And satisfy the afflicted soul,**

**Then your light shall dawn in the darkness,**

**And your darkness shall be as the noonday."**

(Isa. 58:1,3-10)

This passage does not say that the physical fast of *Yom Kippur* is abolished. Rather, it expressly states that afflicting ones soul without adequate *Teshuvah* is not what God wants. He is looking for people to turn away from their inwardness and to become concerned about the people around them. This is not a time to be a religious hobbyist, it is a time to live one's religion openly. *Y'shua* made this very same point:

**"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.**

**<sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."**

**<sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"**

**<sup>40</sup> 'And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."**

**<sup>41</sup> Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: <sup>42</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me."**

**<sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?"**

**<sup>45</sup> Then He will answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."**

(Matt. 25:31-46)



This passage should give all of us cause to stop and take stock of the way we are conducting our lives. Are we really putting our faith into practice? Are we really clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and visiting the sick as we should be? When we do these things, it is as though we are doing them to *Y'shua* Himself. We must get our priorities straight.

~ In Conclusion ~

*Repentance, Judgment, Awe, and Reconciliation* are the four aspects of this most incredible season that is known as the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. The Festivals of the *YHVH* are so full of meaning that one could study them from now until *Y'shua* returns and still only have a small amount of the true understanding pictured by them. Let us give thanks to our Father in heaven that He has seen fit to reveal His wonderful plan for mankind through the Festivals. Let us all resolve to learn more about them. But most important of all, let us learn to live them the way God wants us to live them.

As Messianic Believers in *Y'shua*, we understand that the physical ceremony performed at the Temple is no longer needed to obtain atonement, for our *Cohen HaGadol, Y'shua*, has performed the ultimate ceremony with His own blood as payment for our sins. We have received atonement, not because we are worthy but because the Father loves us and He has called us through His Son, *Y'shua*:

**"Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. <sup>7</sup> But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in**

**ignorance; <sup>8</sup> the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. <sup>9</sup> It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience -- <sup>10</sup> concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.**

**"<sup>11</sup> But Christ [*Messiah*] came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. <sup>12</sup> Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more shall the blood of Christ [*Messiah*], who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? <sup>15</sup> And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."**

(Heb. 9:6-15)

May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for all eternity.

DEW & SAW

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