

Preparing for the High Holy Days

By Hannah Nesher

Yom Zikaron Tru'ah

Blessed is the nation that knows Tru'ah (Ps. 89:15)



God has established, from the beginning of time, special 'divine appointments' when He has chosen to meet with His people for specific purposes. These 'God appointed times' are called in Hebrew 'mo'adim'.

In the book of Leviticus, God specifies what each of these 'mo'adim' are for, how we are to celebrate them, and when they are to be kept. Much of the world, including the Christian community, consider these to be "Jewish holidays, feasts and festivals".

However, they were in fact created and instituted by God, first for the Jew and then also for the Gentile who would join the commonwealth of Israel through the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua. God said, **“These are MY MO’ADIM...”** (Leviticus 23:2)

God’s appointed times are basically grouped into the fall moadim and the spring ones, each of which have their own special significance and prophetic meaning.

Soon we will be entering the very special and holy time of the fall moadim: **Yom Zikaron Tru’ah** – (Feast of Shouting or Trumpets), Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) and Feast of Tabernacles/booths (Sukkot).

*“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “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 **shouting or blowing of trumpets (tru’ah)**, a holy convocation.” (LEVITICUS 23:23-24)*

The day begins on the eve before with the blowing of the shofar, special prayers and synagogue services. IT is followed by a set apart time of ten days called the **Ten Days of Awe (Yamim Noraim)** and then **Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)**.

This is an intense time of introspection and self examination, to look at the condition of our lives and get right with God. Interestingly, the very name **Yisrael יִשְׂרָאֵל** (Israel in Hebrew) can be taken to mean ‘right with God’, from two Hebrew words – **Yashar** (straight, right, or honest) and **El** – God. { **יֵשׁוּר – אֵל** }

This is also a special time of forgiveness – to both request forgiveness of those we have sinned against and to extend it towards those who have sinned against us. Of course we are to walk in continual forgiveness towards all people but knowing our human nature, God has given us this special time to focus on repentance and forgiveness.

Considering that Yeshua said unforgiveness towards others would keep us from receiving the forgiveness of our Heavenly Father this is a crucial issue.

“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.” (Matthew 6:14-15)

We are currently in the month of **Elul**, the 6th month which precedes the Fall Moadim. This time is to be spent preparing ourselves spiritually, emotionally, and physically, to meet with God. It is also a time to give extra tzedakah (charity) to the poor and needy of the Land.

At this time, we can ask the Holy Spirit to bring to our remembrance anyone with whom we need to express forgiveness or make some kind of restitution.

Peace in our human relationships is so important that in the New Testament, it says that when we stand praying, if we remember someone who has anything against us, we should leave our gift at the altar and go be reconciled with that person.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

Each morning of Elul, the shofar (or trumpet) is sounded, it's piercing, haunting sound stirring our hearts to seek God and repent of the sin in our lives. The sound of the shofar is like our souls crying out to the Righteous Judge for grace and mercy.

When we hear the shofar, we can focus on the **thirteen attributes of mercy** revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai:

“The LORD, The LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth; who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.” (Exodus 34:6-7)

A well-known and greatly respected Jewish sage of the Middle Ages, Maimonides, wrote that the sound of the shofar is like an **alarm call** as if to tell us: **“Sleepers, arise from your slumber,** and those who are dozing, awake from your lethargy. Review your actions, repent from your sins, and remember your Creator!”

In the New Testament we are also exhorted to WAKE UP out of our spiritual slumber and make the most of our time, not following vanity or frivolous pursuits but loving and following God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

"Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Messiah will shine on you. Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:14-16)

We need to truly wake up out of our spiritual slumbers and work while there is still light, for our redemption draws near.

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.
(Romans 13:11)

Slichot confessions

During this time, special psalms are read and prayers recited called Slichot (forgiveness). The Hebrew word 'slichah' means I'm sorry or forgive me. Although we strive to live a pure and holy life before God, all of us sin and fall short of the glory of God.

Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD. (Lamentations 3:40)

For the many errors we make that hurt ourselves and others, we need to repent and ask forgiveness. Part of this confession list is presented here: "Lord I repent and ask forgiveness:

For the sin that we have sinned before You through hardness of heart.

For the sin that we have sinned before You with utterance of lips.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through immorality.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through harsh speech.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through inner thoughts.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through insincere confession.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through foolish speech.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through impure lips.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through denial and false promises.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through scorning.

For the sin that we have sinned before You with food and drink.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through gossip.

For the sin that we have sinned before You in commercial dealings.

For all these, O God of forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, grant atonement through Messiah Y'shua.

During this month of Elul, may we each be challenged to take a look deep within us, asking the Holy Spirit to shine His light on any areas of sin in our lives, or hidden in our hearts that we need to deal with. As the Psalmist David composed in Psalm 139:23-24:

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Amen & Chag Sameach!

Thank you so much for all your love, prayers and sacrificial support of our family and ministry in the Land of Israel at this time. Your generosity helps us to continue sending out the Word of the Lord from Zion to the nations.

May you receive your full reward from the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge.

Love Hannah & family

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