

CHAPTER ONE

MEMORIAL OF BLOWING THE SHOFAR

(Zikaron Tru'ah)

HAPPY NEW YEAR!?

The so-called 'Jewish New Year' festival is unique. First of all, it is not really the beginning of the year. Secondly, we don't really know why we're celebrating it! Although most call this festival the 'Jewish New Year' and send New Years greetings to each other, much as Gentiles send Christmas cards, this is not actually the Biblical start of the year. In the Hebrew calendar Rosh Hashana (literally translated 'head of the year') occurs on the first day of the seventh month. Scripturally, however, the Bible designates the first month of the year as Aviv. This occurs in the spring when we celebrate Passover on the fourteenth day. Why the discrepancy? When the Jewish people were exiled to Babylon, they picked up some of the Babylonian customs, including names and dates. From Babylon, the names of several months were changed to their Babylonian counterpart. Aviv was changed to Nissan. Another change in the calendar originating out of Babylon is the change of the New Year to the seventh month instead of the Biblical first.

The Blowing of the Shofar

On the day of this festival, people in synagogues all around the world blow the shofar – the ram’s horn - usually called the ‘trumpet’ in most Bibles. Why do we blow the shofar? Well, I suppose the main reason is because God commands it.

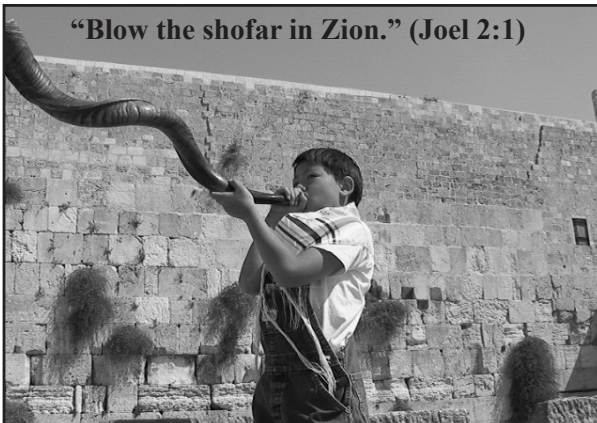
Biblical References to the Feast of the Shofar

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a ‘mini-sabbath’ שַׁבְּתוֹן (shabbaton), a memorial of blowing of trumpets זְכוֹרֹן תְּרוּעָה (ZIKARON TRU’AH)¹, a holy convocation.”

(Leviticus 23:23-25)

“On the first day of the seventh month hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to sound the trumpets.”

(Numbers 29:1)



Our son, Timothy, at the age of nine blowing the shofar (ram’s horn) in Jerusalem

1 Zikkaron Tru’ah-Remembrance of blowing ram’s horn.

The Significance of the Blowing of the Shofar

Zikaron means ‘remembrance’ in Hebrew. What we are actually to be ‘remembering’ with the blowing of the shofar (the tru’ah) is a bit obscure, since scripture does not specify. However, the blowing of the shofar has several significant applications and purposes:

1. To hail a king
2. To call a solemn assembly
3. To sound an alarm
4. To warn of anticipated judgement
5. To gather troops to battle
6. To announce a new moon (Ps. 81:3)
7. To call for God’s aid in battle against an enemy
8. To confuse the enemy camp (Judg. 7:19-21)
9. To celebrate a simchah (joyous occasion)
10. To proclaim liberty to the captives

The shofar, as fashioned out of ram’s horn, may represent not only an anticipation of God’s judgment, but also His mercy. It reminds us of how God spared Abraham’s only son, Isaac, by providing the ram. As believers in Yeshua, we may blow the ram’s horn to remind us also of God’s great mercy towards us in not sparing the life of His only Son, Yeshua, in order to grant us eternal life. God, Himself, provided the sacrifice of His only Son in order that our lives may be spared.

“He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?”

(Romans 8:32)