

A Short Introduction to Rosh HaShanah

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Rosh HaShanah, meaning "Beginning of the Year," is a biblically prescribed Shabbat but is not called by that name in the Bible. In the Bible, it is called *Yom T'ruah*, or the Day of Blowing. We take that to mean the blowing of *Shofrot*, so we may also call it *Yom HaShofar* or *Yom HaShofrot*.

The Bible does not tell us explicitly what *Rosh HaShanah* is all about, but its purpose is strongly suggested by its placement ten days before *Yom Kippur*. The Jewish community has always understood it to be the beginning of a ten-day period of personal introspection – a period of searching out and repenting of our sins in preparation for the atoning sacrifices of *Yom Kippur*. The Jewish understanding of *Rosh HaShanah* is that it is the day when God opens the "Book of Life" and judges our sins committed during the past year. According to tradition, He then gives us ten days in which to repent so that our sins can be covered over on *Yom Kippur* so that we may have eternal life with God, were we to physically die in the year to come. That is why the day is referred to as *Rosh HaShanah*; it is considered a new year of eternal life that lasts until *Rosh HaShanah* the following year.

You can see how pre-Yeshua, the day of *Rosh HaShanah*, the ten days following, and the sacrifices on *Yom Kippur* were deadly serious – and I do not use the word "deadly" lightly. For us, however, Yeshua has already performed the sacrifice that is needed for our eternal life – not only for the coming year, but for all of our years. But although Yeshua sacrificed for us, he did not repent for us. Our need to repent of our sins, to be worthy of His sacrifice, is as real for us today as repentance ever was for our ancestors in the time of Moses. So we who are believers in Yeshua and recipients of His sacrifice, approach this day and this season with solemnity of purpose on the one hand, but with joy and thanksgiving on the other. Joy because Yeshua has brought salvation to our doorstep, but solemnity because walking a repentant life is our responsibility – not His.

I am not saying that we bounce in and out of Yeshua's salvation each time that we sin; God forbid. What I am saying is that we must recognize our sins, regret them, turn from them, and want to place them under Yeshua's blood. That's what it means to be a believer in Yeshua. If we don't want to do those things, we are not true believers, and Yeshua's sacrifice sits waiting for us, but not benefiting us. And since that is the condition of most of our Jewish people who don't believe that Yeshua is *Mashiach*, as New Covenant priests, it is our additional responsibility during this season to intercede for them that they too may have eternal life since neither they nor we are able to sacrifice an unblemished lamb in God's Holy Temple as in days of old.

To the Christian community that largely ignores *Rosh HaShanah*, the days of repentance, and *Yom Kippur*, I say this. It is true that these days were not commanded to you to keep according to the Law of Moses, but beware of ignoring their important meaning in your own walk with the Lord. Much of the Christian world promotes an oversimplification of salvation, thinking that confessing Yeshua once during one's life or being immersed by a priest as an infant is all that is needed. It ignores the warning of [Philippians 2:12](#): "*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always*

obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." That Scripture is a call for us all to walk a repentant life because, as I said previously, Yeshua sacrificed Himself for us, but He did not repent for us.

You will find that this *Rosh Hashanah* service is similar to a *Shabbat* service in some ways and different in other ways. Look for the differences. Also, you will note that a new prayer has been added to the *Torah* Service in recognition of our present critical need to pray for Israel's protection from its enemies, and for our country to come alongside Israel in unqualified support for its survival.