



Rosh Hashanah, meaning “New Year” in Hebrew, is the modern name for the first of the High Holy Days in Judaism. However, it is never identified that way in the Bible, where the name *Yom Teruah*—the Feast of Trumpets—is used instead.

It occurs on the first day of *Tishrei*, which is the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar. But there are actually two annual cycles according to the Hebraic way of reckoning time, offset by six months. The religious cycle begins during *Nisan* in the spring, and is used to mark the timing of the Feasts. The civil cycle, on the other hand, begins in *Tishrei* during the fall, and marked the timing of the sabbatical and jubilee years, and the reigns of kings.

In Leviticus 23 and Numbers 29, God simply called it *Yom Teruah*—“a day for blowing trumpets.” But, because it came ten days before *Yom Kippur*—the Day of Atonement—it conveyed the sense of being alerted to an annual day of judgment of the sins of the people of Israel. That means of atonement was accomplished by substitutionary blood sacrifice.

But after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., this holy day became known as *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year). Its purpose and observance also changed, as rabbinical Judaism formulated a series of practices that shifted the focus to personal works of atonement prior to *Yom Kippur*. This shift has also been the catalyst for a popular greeting during this season:

“*L’shanah tovah*,” an abbreviated form of “*L’shanah tovah tikatevu*,” meaning “May you be inscribed for a good year.” Those words convey a wish for people to be recorded in the Book of Life by virtue of doing good deeds during this season, which is interpreted as only guaranteeing another year of life on earth, not securing a place in the world to come. This desire for a good year is also reflected in the custom of eating sweet foods on this holy day, most notably apples and honey.

The one common element linking modern and biblical observances is still the blowing of trumpets. It is customary to blow notes with the *shofar* or a silver trumpet that are derived from specific Hebrew terms in Scripture:

- *Tekiah* – translated as “blow” is a long, sustained note.
- *Shevarim* – meaning “broken,” is a series of three medium blasts rising in tone.
- *Teruah* – literally “alarm,” is nine or more staccato notes.
- An additional final note is called *Tekiah Gedolah*, which is a very long blast.

In biblical times, these notes had specific implications regarding the very serious nature of the imminent day of *Yom Kippur*, based on the underlying meaning of the Hebrew terms:

- The first note—*tekiah*—awakened the people to the fact that the annual Judgment Day was coming.
- The second note—*shevarim*—made the people aware of their sins and the need for a broken, repentant spirit.
- The third note—*teruah*—alarmed them of the impending action ten days later on *Yom Kippur*, when the sins of the people of Israel were judged, covered and cleansed through sacrifice.

Since the seven feasts serve as a template of God’s plan of redemption for humanity, *Yom Teruah* represents the next great event on that plan, namely the return of Messiah Yeshua. It is no coincidence that 1 Thessalonians 4:16 describes it as being heralded by the heavenly trumpet of God; and it precedes the ultimate Day of Judgment, just as depicted in these holy days.