

## Shabbaton Zichron

Yom Teruah – a Shabbat on which We Remember

---

notes by Tim Hegg

Yom Teruah, the day for sounding the shofar, is also referred to in the Torah as שַׁבָּתוֹן זְכָרוֹן, *shabbaton zichron*, a Shabbat of remembering, as noted in Lev 23:24. The NASB translates the verse:

Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. (Lev 23:24)

Like Pesach, which is also referred to as a day of remembering (הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לָכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן, Ex 12:14), Yom Teruah is one of HaShem’s festivals which calls us to remember, to be reminded of something of special importance. But while the obvious event we are to remember on Pesach is our exodus from Egypt, it is not so apparent on Yom Teruah exactly what is to be remembered when we hear the blowing of the shofar.

In rabbinic tradition, Yom Teruah or Rosh HaShanah, is also called Yom HaZicharon (יּוֹם הַזְּכָרוֹן), “the day of remembering.” The rabbis taught that when the shofar is sounded on Yom Teruah, HaShem is moved to remember His covenant with Israel and to receive their repentance. In part, this is based upon Num 10:9 and the similar language regarding the blowing of the shofar:

When you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before ADONAI your God, and be saved from your enemies. (Num 10:9)

וְכִי־תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאַרְצְכֶם עַל־הַצָּר הַצָּרֵר אֶתְכֶם וְהִרְעִתֶם  
בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וּנְזִבְרֹתֵם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְנִוְשַׁעְתֶּם מֵאִיְבֵיכֶם:

It should be noted, however, that even though Num 10:9 speaks of “sounding the alarm with the trumpets,” the Hebrew indicates that these are the silver trumpets (חֲצֹצְרוֹת, *chatzotz<sup>e</sup>rot*) which are blown, not shofars. Regardless, the sounding of a trumpet is connected with remembering.

When we first read Num 10:9, it seems to support the rabbinic tradition that the blowing of the trumpets, and by analogy, the shofar

on Yom Teruah, somehow moves God to act graciously toward His people.

But is this really what the verse is teaching? I would suggest another interpretation—that the blowing of the silver trumpets was not to move God to action but rather it was to be a reminder of the Israelite men as they went to battle that they were not to depend upon their own might or military strength but rather that as they put their faith in God and His covenant promises to them, fighting for the glory of God and not for their honor, they would be given the victory, that is, God would prove Himself faithful to the covenant He had made with Israel.

Yet Num 10:9 clearly speaks of God remembering as well: “... that you may be remembered before ADONAI your God, and be saved from your enemies.” How are we to understand the act of God “remembering?” Surely the Scriptures teach us that God knows all things at all times and that being omniscient means there is never a time when He forgets something!

ADONAI, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O ADONAI, You know it all. (Ps 139:1–4)

Therefore, when the Scriptures speak of God “remembering” or of “being remembered” before God, it cannot mean that somehow, by our deeds, we move God to do something He otherwise would not, or that we cause Him to remember something He had forgotten!

Rather, a study of the concepts of “remembering” and “forgetting” in the literature of the Ancient Near East, and particularly in the covenant or treaty language of this ancient body of literature, we discover that “remembering” means to act in loyalty and faithfulness to a covenant or treaty, while “forgetting” means just the opposite, to be disloyal to a covenant or treaty.

Thus, when Num 10:9 speaks of Israel’s fighting men being “remembered before God,” it means that as they hear the sound of the trumpets as they assemble for war, they are reminded to go in God’s strength and by His leading, knowing that God will act in fidelity to the covenant promises He has made. That is, He will bless His people when they are faithful to Him, and discipline them when they

are not—when they fight in their own strength and seek to take the honor of victory for themselves.

How might this apply to our observance of Yom Teruah? Why do the Scriptures refer to this festival as “a reminder by blowing of trumpets?” Far from the rabbinic teaching that blowing the shofar on Yom Teruah causes God to “remember” us and thus to act in kindness toward us, we know that God has poured out His mercy and love upon us through the finished work of His Son, Yeshua, on our behalf, as well as Yeshua’s present intercession for us before the Father. Yom Teruah is not a day in which we hope to get God’s attention by blowing the shofar! Rather, Yom Teruah is a day which every year calls us to remember who we are in Yeshua, calling us once again to live every day in the anticipation of His return.

So if Yom Teruah calls us to remember who we are in Yeshua, what is it that we might so easily forget or fail to affirm as we should? The Tashlich service on Yom Teruah is a perfect reminder of one of the essential aspects of our faith in Yeshua, namely, that as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us! (Ps 103:12). Some might say, “Do we really need to be reminded of this? Isn’t this obvious?” Yes, we need to be reminded of this because it is one of the enemy’s greatest weapons against us, to make us question whether or not we are fully received by God—if He really does accept us as having the very righteousness of His own Son. The enemy, and even our own fallen nature, would constantly want us to believe that in some way, in some measure, we who are in Messiah still carry some of our former guilty and weight of sin; that there is still more that we must do to be fully accepted by the Father.

So the sound of the shofar on Yom Teruah calls us back to the bedrock of the Bible upon which we stand and by which we know what is true and what is not. And what do the Scriptures tell us about those who are in Messiah Yeshua?

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

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua. (Rom 8:1)

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord. (Rom 8:37–39)

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:5, 13, 14)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Yeshua Messiah from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Pet 1:3–5)

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Yeshua Messiah our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

Therefore, on this Yom Teruah, this day in which the shofar calls us to remember, what is it that should be remembered? What should be our focus? It must be this: that as those who have been called by God's sovereign grace to become part of His family, having our sins forgiven by the infinite payment of Messiah's death for us, and now guarded and led by the Ruach Who indwells us, being the very objects of Yeshua's intercession, we may go forth to the battle with full confidence that, by God's grace and power, we will be victorious.

Yes, the shofar must remind us that the victory has already been won! Let us therefore lay aside everything that might impede our progress and live to sanctify God's Name in all of our endeavors.