

## Yom Zikaron Tru'ah– A Call to Repentance Genesis 21:1-34, 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10, 1 Thess. 4:13-18



**“Blessed is the nation that knows Tru’ah.”** (Psalms 89:15)

During the entire sixth Hebrew month of Elul, Jewish people are engaged in a time of introspection and self-examination in preparation for the Biblical Fall Feasts and Festivals of the seventh month of Tishrei.

Each morning of Elul, the shofar (ram’s horn 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 soul crying out to the Righteous Judge for grace and mercy.

Although every day is a good day to repent - to get our hearts right with God and all others - a traditional Jewish custom is to take this special time to honestly assess our spiritual condition.

Yeshua, our Messiah, also exhorted us to examine ourselves instead of judging others:

**“How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?”** (Matthew 7:4)

When we hear the shofar, we may 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) The Shofar (Ram’s Horn)



## Wake Up!

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, <sup>16</sup> 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)

A Jewish custom that takes place the day before ‘Rosh Hashana’ is for Orthodox Jewish men to be immersed in the mikvah – a water purification ritual similar to baptism. It is within this Hebraic context that we may better understand the mission of John the Baptist (called Yochanan the Immerser) who called for repentance at the time of the Fall Feasts at the river Jordan.

**“Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ”** (Matthew 3:1-2)

## Slichot סליחות confessions

During this time, special psalms are read and prayers recited called Slichot סליחות (forgiveness). It comes from the Hebrew word ‘slichah’ סליחה which 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, therefore we need to repent.



“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 Yeshua.**

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 with which we need to deal.

As the Psalmist David composed:

**“Search me, O 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.”**

(Psalms 139:23-24)

I’m sorry....

A traditional Jewish custom is to go to each person with whom there may be some kind of breach in relationship, and to say, “*I’m sorry*”. Bringing reconciliation to broken relationships is so crucial to our spiritual life that the Word of God instructs us to leave everything at the altar and first go make it right with the person who may be holding something against us.



**“Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother 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 5:24)

Coming from an Orthodox Jewish home before coming to faith in Yeshua the Messiah, I remember how my blessed imah (mother) used to come to each of us children every year before the ‘High Holy Days’ (as these fall festivals are commonly called), asking forgiveness for any way she may have sinned against us. It is truly a beautiful custom from which we could all learn to freely give and receive forgiveness, not only from God but from one another.

## Rosh Hashanah

The first of these Biblical Fall Feasts is traditionally called ‘Rosh Hashana’, a Hebrew word meaning, ‘head of the year’. A Jewish custom is to eat the head of a fish (rosh dag) at the festive meal, bringing to mind the promise that God will make us the “head and not the tail; above and not beneath.”<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 28:13



Harvesting Pomegranates

Other foods eaten on the holiday are pomegranates, which symbolize fruitfulness and fertility due to the many seeds inside the fruit. In Israel, the trees are loaded down with ripe pomegranates at this fall season in time for the holiday.

Instead of the usual braided challah loaf of bread, a round challah is eaten with the meal to symbolize the cycle of life. Apples are dipped in honey and eaten in the hope for a sweet year.



Since this festival occurs in the seventh month in the Hebrew calendar, why is it considered the Jewish New Year? This seems especially puzzling since the Bible tells us that the actual New Year begins in the spring (Aviv), in the month of Nissan. "This month is to be for you the first month, the *first month of your year*." (Exodus 12:2) This first month is when the festival of Passover occurs: "And in the fourteenth day *of the first month* is the Passover of Adonai." (Numbers 28:16)

Traditional Judaism, however, celebrates Rosh Hashana as a commemoration of the Creation of the Universe and the birth of Adam and Eve, although there are some who claim that this tradition comes out of the Jewish Babylonian exile and reflects the many changes that were incorporated into Judaism from non-Biblical and even pagan sources. Just as mainstream Christianity has adopted several customs with 'questionable origins'<sup>2</sup>, so has modern day Judaism. Most Jewish people celebrate Rosh Hashana as a "Jewish New Year" and observe customs such as dipping apples in honey and wishing everyone a good, healthy, prosperous New Year. Messianic Judaism, however, seeks to return to the ancient ways and to follow a more Biblical path according to the truth of God's written Word.



<sup>2</sup> See book, [Come Out of Her My People, Flee Babylon](http://www.voiceforisrael.net), by the author: [www.voiceforisrael.net](http://www.voiceforisrael.net)

This biblical festival is so awesome and rich in meaning; and yet it has been somewhat 'watered down' in traditional Judaism from its true meaning to a mostly secular 'new year' celebration.



It is observed by greeting one another with blessings for a happy, healthy & sweet new year.



For this reason one custom is to eat apples dipped in honey.

*Apples & honey eaten on Rosh Hashana*

## Yom Zikaron Tru'ah



In the Bible, this festival is not called Rosh Hashana, but rather Yom Zikaron Tru'ah (Feast of Trumpets). It is a difficult phrase to translate literally, but Yom Zikaron means 'remembrance day' and 'truah' is a Hebrew word for 'shout, blast, battle cry or alarm'.

Usually, these days of the festival are marked by hearing repeated blasts of the shofar. The sound of the shofar is not meant to comfort but to disturb us out of our complacency - to 'sound the alarm', to call to arms, to warn us of imminent danger!

### Sound the Alarm

**“Blow the shofar in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand.”** (Joel 2:1)

Actually, the word 'shofar' שופר comes from a Hebrew root word 'shaper' שפר which means 'to improve'. The shofar calls us to improve our inner character – to be more and more conformed into the image of our Creator, Elohim.

The sound of the shofar was so powerful that it shook Mt. Sinai and its sound even brought down the walls of Jericho. Obviously, the shofar is an instrument of great spiritual significance.





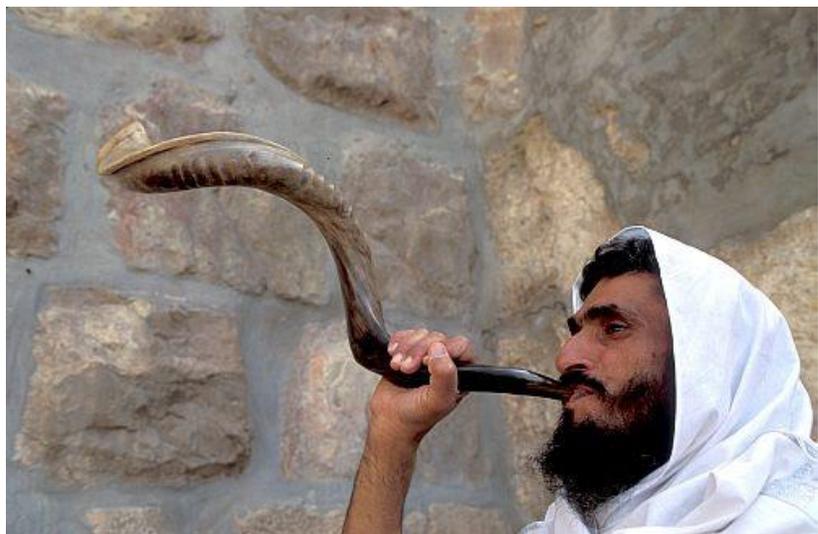
Israel standing before God at Mt. Sinai

The blast (or in Hebrew ‘tru’ah’) of the shofar (ram’s horn) represents the voice of God to His people. On Mt. Sinai, on the third day, amidst the booming thunder, flashes of lightning and a dense cloud, **“the sound of the shofar was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.”** (Exodus 19:16)

We can only imagine the intensity of such a scene. Who blew the shofar from that thick cloud on Mt Sinai with all the people of Israel gathered below? Was it a man or could it have been Elohim - God Himself blowing on the shofar?

Exactly why do we blow the shofar on Yom Zikaron Tru’ah? We know it is a commandment but the reasons are not specifically stated.

**“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 blowing the shofar, (Shabbaton Zikron Tru’ah) a holy convocation (mikreh kodesh). (Leviticus 23:24)**



For what other reasons do we blow the shofar?

- \* to mark the arrival of a new moon
- \* to celebrate a simcha (joyous occasion)
- \* to proclaim liberty to the captives
- \* to hail a king at his coronation
- \* to warn of impending judgment
- \* to gather troops to battle,
- \* to sound an alarm,
- \* to call a sacred assembly and time of fasting,
- \* to confuse the enemy camp
- \* to draw God's attention



#### THE SHOFAR IN CALLING AN ASSEMBLY

**“Blow the shofar in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly...”** (Joel 2:15-16)

Believers in the nations, in Jerusalem, and all across the Land of Israel are blowing the shofar to rally its people to fasting, prayer and repentance - knowing that the day of the Lord is at hand.

#### THE SHOFAR IN MERCY

The shofar as a ram's horn may also represent God's mercy by sparing the life of Isaac. Abraham, in obedience to God's command, prepared to offer up his son on the altar as a sacrifice; but instead of taking Isaac's life, God Himself provided the sacrifice with a ram caught in the thicket.

**“And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.”** (Genesis 22:8)

We blow the ram's horn to remind us of this example of God's mercy, but God has further revealed His greater mercy through Yeshua (Jesus). He did not spare the life of His only son, Yeshua, but gave it up for us in order that we may have eternal life. How can we even doubt in God's goodness?

**“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)

## THE SHOFAR IN WARFARE

Today, the shofar is being re-discovered as a powerful instrument of spiritual warfare and is being blown, not only in Jewish synagogues, but also in Christian Churches and Messianic Congregations all over the world.

The Bible contains many references to the shofar being used in battle. Joshua and his Israelite army took the enemy city of Jericho with the great tru'ah (shout) and the sounding of the shofarot (plural of shofar).

Jericho was a walled city – a stronghold of the enemy standing between Israel and their possession in the Promised Land. It took the shofar and the tru'ah to break down the walls. It can do the same in our own lives when faced with a 'walled city' or stronghold of the enemy that stands in the way of us and our inheritance in the Lord.



The Fall of Jericho

**“When the shofarot sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the shofar, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city.”** (Joshua 6:20)

In another example, Gideon and his small band of men blew their shofarot, held in their right hands and broke the pitchers holding the torches in their left hands.

**“ When the three hundred blew the shofarot, the Lord set every man’s sword against his companion through the whole camp...All the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.”** (Judges 7:22)

How does this relate to us as people of the God of Abraham today?

When we experience an attack of the enemy, basing our hope for divine help on the promise in the book of Numbers:

**“When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the shofarot and you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and you will be saved from your enemies.”** (Numbers 10:9)

## THE SHOFAR IN PROPHECY

Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah will return with a tru'ah (shout!) and the shofar call of God; and then the rapture will occur:

“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with **the shofar call of God**, and the dead in Messiah will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

In the New Testament, the Book of Revelation speaks of the resurrection and the rapture in connection with **the last shofar**.

**“Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last shofar. For the shofar will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”** (1Corinthians 15:51-52)

## THE SHOFAR IN JUDGMENT

The sounding of the shofarot begins in Revelation 8:7 with the outpouring of God's judgments upon the earth. Seven angels standing before God in heaven are given seven shofarot to sound.

**“So the seven angels who had the seven shofarot prepared themselves to sound.”**  
(Revelation 8:6)

The earth is struck with plagues similar to the plagues God used to destroy Egypt, including hail, water turned to blood, locust, frogs, and darkness.

The seventh and final shofar: (Revelation 11:15-18) The seventh shofar signals the rule and reign of the Messiah on earth, **“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and ever!”** (Revelation 11:15)

What is the voice of God saying to us as the body of Messiah through the call of the shofar?

**“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, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.”** (Ephesians 5:13-17)

We have only so much time left of daylight while we may still work; for soon the night and the darkness will be upon us. Let's determine to make the most of the time we have left to serve the Lord with all our hearts and walk in obedience and courage for His coming Kingdom.

## Shofar and Tru'ah

The 'Day of the Lord', according to the ancient Hebrew prophets, will be a day of darkness, distress and wrath – a day of the **shofar and tru'ah!**

**“The great day of the LORD is near— near and coming quickly. The cry on the day of the LORD is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.**

**That day will be a day of wrath— a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness— a day of shofar (ram's horn) and tru'ah (battle cry) against the fortified cities and against the corner towers.” (Zephaniah 1:14-16)**



**“God has gone up with a shout (tru'ah), the LORD with the sound of a trumpet (shofar). Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with understanding.” (Psalms 47:5-7)**

## Sound of the Shofar

May the sound of the shofar shatter our complacency

And make us conscious of the corruptions in our lives.

May the sound of the shofar penetrate our souls

And cause us to turn back to our Father in Heaven.

May the sound of the shofar break the bonds of the evil impulse within us

And enable us to serve the Lord with a whole heart.

May the sound of the shofar renew our loyalty to the one true King

And strengthen our determination to defy the false gods.

May the sound of the shofar awaken us to the enormity of our sins

And the vastness of God's mercy for those who truly repent.

May the sound of the shofar summon us to service

And stir us to respond, as did Abraham, “Here am I.”



May the sound of the shofar recall the moment

When we stood at Mount Sinai and uttered the promise:

“All that the Lord has spoken, we will keep and obey.”

May the sound of the shofar recall the promise of the ingathering of the exiles

And stir within us renewed devotion to the Land of Israel.

May the sound of the shofar recall the vision of the prophets,

Of the day when Egypt, Syria, and Israel will live in peace.

May the sound of the shofar awaken us to the flight of time

And summon us to spend our days with purpose.

May the sound of the shofar become our jubilant shout of joy

On the day of the promised, long-awaited redemption.

May the sound of the shofar remind us that it is time

to “proclaim liberty throughout the land

to all the inhabitants thereof.”

May the sound of the shofar enter our hearts;

For blessed is the people that hearkens to its call. (Author anonymous)

**“Blessed is the nation that knows Tru’ah.”** (Psalms 89:15)

## Harvest of Souls

It may very well be that we are rapidly heading towards a coming judgment upon the world; but for those of us who know the Lord, it is not a time for dread or fear. It is a time for repentance; a time to cry out for the mercy of Adonai to bring in a great harvest of souls in the midst of the coming crisis and chaos. For those who do not yet know the Lord, the coming days will be a terrible time of God’s judgment.

The Word warns of a coming financial collapse: **“Wail, you who live in the market district; all your merchants will be wiped out, all who trade with silver will be destroyed.”** (Zephaniah 1:11).

May we be about our Father’s business in this hour, storing up treasures in Heaven where it cannot be destroyed.

## Days of Awe (Yamim Nora'im)

The ten day period between Yom Tru'ah and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) are called '**Yamim Nora'im**' (*Days of Awe* or literally *Terrible Days*). These are to be days of serious repentance (t'shuvah) and prayer before the fast of Yom Kippur.

These ten Days of Awe are a time to seriously seek the face of God, to examine our lives and to repent before God for our sins. We call upon His mercy - for ourselves, our families, and our nations. It is a time to get our lives right – before our God and with one another; a time to let go of petty grievances and forgive and seek forgiveness. If we don’t forgive from our hearts, God will not forgive us.



Ultimately, each one will stand before God the judge, and give an account of his or her life. God is coming to judge the earth.

**“For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.**

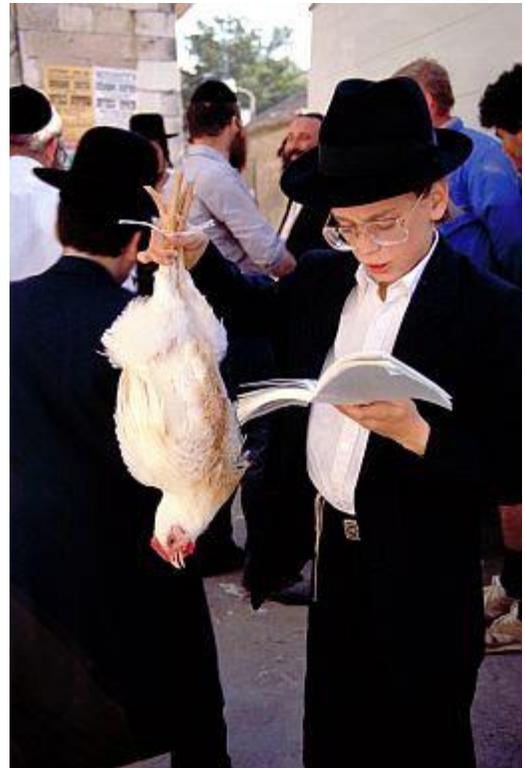
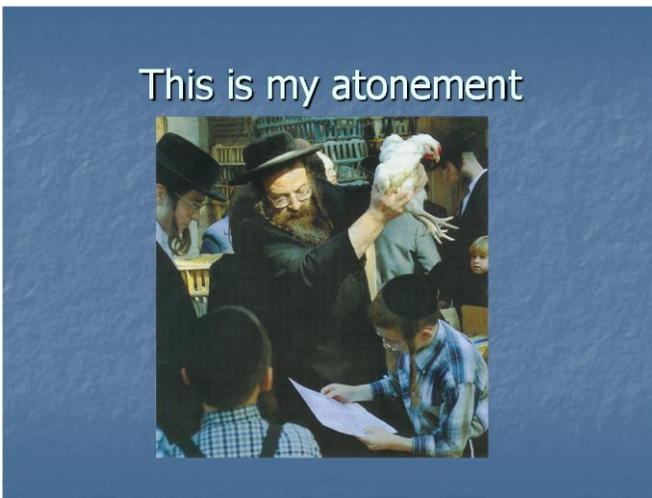
**He shall judge the world with righteousness and the nations with His truth.”** (Psalms 96:13)

## This is my Atonement – Kapparrah

A Jewish custom still practiced by Orthodox Jews during the Ten Days of Awe is called **Kapparot** from the Hebrew word, **Kapparrah**, meaning **atonement**.

A live fowl is swung over the head while reciting a prayer:

*“This is my substitute, my vicarious offering, my atonement (kapparrah). This chicken /rooster will die so that I may obtain a long and pleasant life of peace.”*



kapparrah ceremony



Young Jewish boy with charity (Pushke) box

In modern times, many Jewish people substitute tzedakah. They wave coins, which are then put in a ‘*pushke*’ (charity box). Some Jewish people practice this custom simply out of religious ritual without even any real understanding of the concept of atonement.

Hoping to obtain Divine pardon through the sacrifice of a chicken or the giving of tzedakah is a vain hope. No amount of silver or gold can deliver us from the wrath of God.

**“Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD’s wrath.”** (Zephaniah 1:18)

We have been redeemed without money through the precious and costly gift of the blood of Yeshua. **“You have sold yourselves for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.”** (Isaiah 52:3)

## Inscribed and Sealed in the Book of Life

Traditionally, Yom Tru'ah is the day when God as judge opens His Book and examines our deeds. God is a righteous judge; all His ways are just and true. He will reward the righteous and not allow the wicked to go unpunished.

**“Surely there is a reward for the righteous. Surely He is a God who judges in the earth.”**  
(Psalms 58:11)

The Traditional blessing on 'Rosh Hashanah' is:

**L'Shanah tovah tikateivu v'teichateimu! May you be inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet new year!**

The words 'inscribed and sealed' refer to the belief that at this particular time our names are written in the Book of Life and God determines what will happen in our lives in the coming year.

Whether or not our names are written in the Book of Life is more than just a 'hope' for a good year to come - of health, happiness and prosperity; it determines our eternal future!

"Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."  
(Revelation 20:15)



*Sefer Ha-chayim (Book of Life)*

We can be ever thankful and rejoice that our names are written in Heaven; and pray for those who do not have this assurance.

Yeshua said, **“However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”** (Luke 10:20)

The scriptures contain many other references to this Book of Life. The Hebrew Prophet, Daniel, wrote that **“Everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered”** (Daniel 12:1)

May it truly be so for all our family and loved ones – and for all Jewish people who do not yet know their Messiah Yeshua; may He reveal Himself so that their names will be inscribed in the Lamb’s Book of life for eternity.

“He that overcomes...I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life...” (Revelation 3:5)

“Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)

## A Great Shaking Coming

Yeshua warned us that there will come a time when everything will be shaken that can be shaken; but thanks be to God we stand on the solid rock of a Kingdom which cannot be shaken.

“And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but the heaven.’ This expression, ‘Yet once more,’ denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken...” (Hebrews 12:26-28)



Hasidic Jew, blowing the kudu shofar in Uman, Ukraine, 2010.

## Remembering the Coming of the Lord

As we hear the sound of the ‘tru’ah’ blast of the shofar on this ‘Yom Zikaron Tru’ah, may we remember with great anticipation that our Messiah, Adonai Yeshua, is coming soon and encourage one another with these words:

**“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a tru’ah, with the voice of the archangel and with the shofar call of God, and the dead in Messiah will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

None of us knows the exact day or hour of His coming, but we can encourage one another with the revelation knowledge that we who are children of the Light and not darkness, are not appointed to wrath but to salvation in Yeshua Hamashiach.

**“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer**

**wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.”** (1 Thessalonians 5:8-9)

Let us continue to trust in God’s mercy, goodness, wisdom and love. He is perfectly righteous but also wholly merciful. It is not His will that even one should perish.

As we hear the sound of the shofar on this Yom Zikaron Tru’ah, let us awaken from our spiritual slumber and turn back to Adonai before that great Day of the Lord is upon us:

*"Awake from your slumber, you who have fallen asleep in life, and reflect on your deeds. Remember your creator. Be not of those who miss reality in the pursuit of shadows, and waste their lives in seeking after vain things which neither profit nor save. Look well to your souls and improve your character. Forsake each of you his evil ways and return unto the Lord." (Maimonides)*

About the Author:

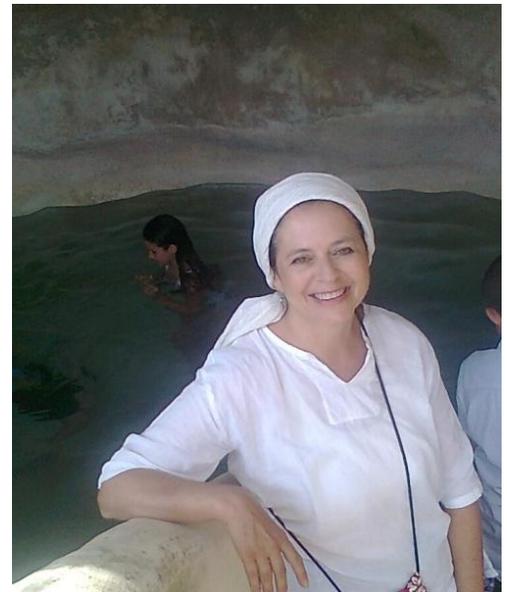
Hannah Neshar grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She made aliyah (immigrated to Israel) and is now teaching about the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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