

by Jews for Jesus

September 30th is Rosh Hashanah* (it begins on the 29th at sundown). Rosh Hashanah means the head of the year” and thus the holiday is referred to as the Jewish New Year. However, in the Bible it is known as “the Feast of Trumpets.” In this article, Lev Leigh (one of our new and innovative leaders) presents a unique perspective on this holiday’s meaning and fulfillment. We hope you will find his interpretation to be of interest.

The last three holy convocations or “festivals” that the Lord commanded the Jewish people to observe are the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Each occurred in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, the month called Tishrei. The Feast of Trumpets heralded the arrival of that seventh month. It also began what is known as the Ten Days of Awe between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, wherein the penitent humble themselves in preparation for the great Day of Atonement.

But besides announcing the arrival of the seventh month and introducing the final cycle of festivals, the Feast of Trumpets had a meaning in its own right. What was that meaning?

The Original Meaning of the Feast of Trumpets

Leviticus 23:23-27 maps out God’s commandments concerning this festival:

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘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 of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.’”

The only other reference to this festival in the Torah (Pentateuch) is Numbers 29:1ff. Neither passage provides much information regarding the original meaning of this feast. But, by examining the text in Leviticus 23, we note that the day was to be a memorial with blowing of trumpets. This is our only clue. The word “memorial” indicates that the event to be remembered had taken place before this ordinance.

To solve the puzzle, we must ask ourselves what extremely significant event, involving the blowing of trumpets, took place in the national life of Israel? What spiritual event was of such great importance that God commanded the people to remember it every year? I believe the Bible points to one outstanding event—connected to the blowing of trumpets—that required memorializing.

“When the ram’s horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain. So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in the fire, and its smoke

ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder” (Exodus 19:13b, 16-19).

In Exodus chapters 19 and 20 we read the account of God’s appearance on Mount Sinai and the initial giving of the Ten Commandments. Exodus 19:5 depicts God inviting the children of Israel into a covenant: the Mosaic Covenant. In a spectacular revelation, God manifested His presence in the smoke and fire on Mount Sinai—as He came to covenant with His people amidst the sound of a trumpet that caused the people to tremble. They promised to do everything that the Lord commanded.

This cataclysmic event was to be stamped indelibly upon the memory of the people of Israel. Every year, at the Feast of Trumpets, those same-sounding trumpet blasts reminded Israel that they were a people under covenant; a nation who had accepted the responsibilities of being God’s people. By doing so, the nation also prepared herself for the Day of Atonement, eight days later, when they would repent and find atonement for all they had done to break this covenant.

The Fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets

I believe that the truest fulfillment of this festival is Jesus’ offer of the New Covenant to all who would receive it.

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20b).

We who have accepted the New Covenant remember this fact every time we take communion. The bread and the cup remind us of the cataclysmic events of the Lord’s death and resurrection. They remind us of our responsibilities in being New Covenant-people. We repent and show remorse for our sin in falling short of this high and holy calling. Through faith in the shed blood of Jesus, we receive the full and final atonement provided by the New Covenant.