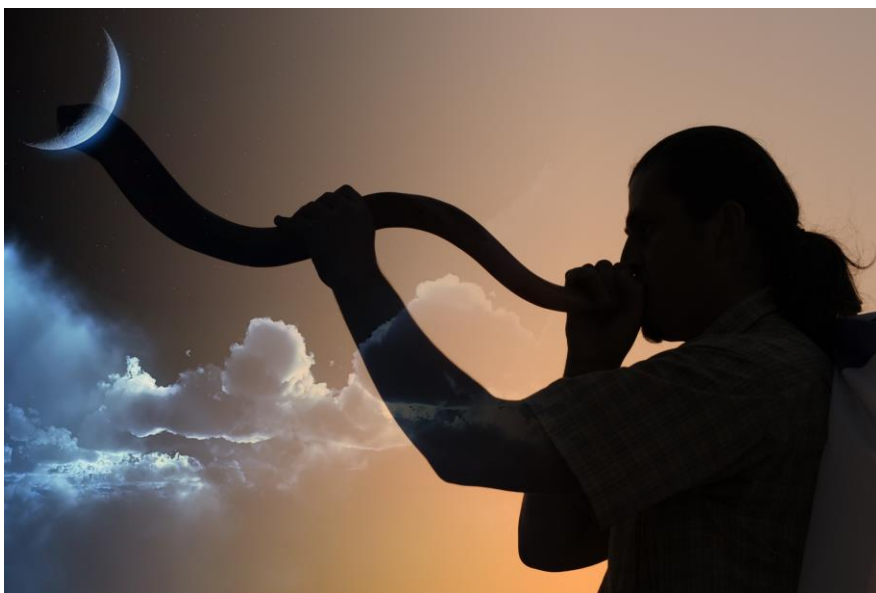




Birth-Pains of the Messiah

By Rev. Gary Cristofaro

When we are gasping with despair, when the wisdom of science and the splendor of the arts fail to save us from fear and the sense of futility, the Bible offers us the only hope: history is a circuitous way for the steps of the Messiah. (1) Today, the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord but it is not filled with the knowledge of His glory. "In the time to come, 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (Habakkuk 2:14). Now the glory is concealed; in the time to come 'The glory shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together' (Isaiah 40:5) ... We have no words to describe the glory; we have no adequate way of knowing it. Yet what is decisive is not our knowing it but our awareness of being known by it." (2)



In this age the knowledge of God's glory is limited and measured. Therefore, He instituted annual appointed times for His children to experience Him more fully if we are willing to keep our appointments with Him. In Hebrew these appointed times are called "moedim" and in English often translated "feasts". The Fall Feasts of the Lord will soon be upon us and of the seven annual Feasts, none is shrouded in more mystery and expectation than the Feasts of Trumpets or Yom Ha Teruah.

On the 1st day of the Seventh Month the Torah commands us to observe the holy day of Yom Teruah which means "Day of Shouting" (Leviticus 23:23-25). Yom Teruah is a day of rest on which work is forbidden. One of the unique things about Yom Teruah is that the Torah does not say what the purpose of this holy day is. The Torah gives at least one reason for all the other holy days and two reasons for some. The Feast of Matzot (Unleavened Bread) commemorates the Exodus from Egypt, but it is also a celebration of the beginning of the barley harvest (Exodus 23:15; Leviticus 23:4-14). The Feast of Shavuot (Weeks) is a celebration of the wheat harvest (Exodus 23:16; 34:22). Yom Ha-Kippurim is a national day of atonement as described in great detail in Leviticus 16. Finally, the Feast of Sukkot (Booths) commemorates the wandering of the Israelites in the desert and is also a celebration of the ingathering of agricultural produce (Exodus 23:16).

In contrast to all these Torah festivals, Yom Teruah has no clear purpose other than that we are commanded to rest on this day. Nevertheless, the name of Yom Teruah provides a clue as to its purpose. Teruah literally means to make a loud noise. This word can describe the noise made by a trumpet but it also describes the noise made by a large gathering of people shouting in unison (Numbers 10:5-6). (3) So our first clue begs the question; what will cause a large crowd of people to shout in unison.

The second clue derives from the timing of this Feast. Yom ha Teruah is unusual in that this feast occurs on the new moon of the seventh month as opposed to the full moon that marks other major feast days. What makes this feast day so unique is that no one could be quite sure when the moon would reappear. Thus this feast is celebrated for two full days in order that they did

not miss the appointed time. In light of this fact, I believe Yeshua (Jesus) gave us a holy riddle regarding the arrival of The Messiah when his disciples asked him privately about the signs of the end times. Regarding the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory he said “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven nor the son, but only the Father. Yet then He tells them repeatedly to WATCH.

Other Feasts of the Lord have proven to be the appointed times in which God is accomplishing major steps on the road to redemption and the restoration of all things. Likewise, I believe the Messiah’s coming will occur on a feast day. Again, the one feast that is shrouded in mystery and expectation is Yom ha Teruah. One could look to the sky the day before a full moon and know with certainty that it will indeed be full the next day. But during a new moon period one must look up and WATCH with anticipation for “no one knows the hour or the day” it ...or “HE” will appear.

Another name for this feast in Hebrew is Chevlay Shel Mashiach, which means Birth-pains of the Messiah. The rebirth of the nation of Israel and the coming of Messiah are intrinsically linked. Consider one of the sources of this term found in the words of Isaiah. “Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children. (Isaiah 66:7-8)

This day is also known as the Day of the Awakening Blast or Shout. To celebrate the future coming of Messiah ben David, Psalm 47 was read seven times in the temple on this feast day.

Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth. He will subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet. He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah God has gone up with a shout, 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. God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne. The princes of the people have gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God, He is greatly exalted.

Many believe that the last great re-gathering to the land of Israel must occur before The Messiah’s coming. The people of God shall be re-gathered in the land together and sing in a unified voice their praises to God. They will shout and celebrate their deliverance from the nations and from all of their enemies. Oh what an incredible day this will be!

Until then, The Feast of Trumpets is the beginning of a ten-day period that concludes with the Day of Atonement known in the Jewish writings as the Days of Awe. During this time may all the children of God be filled with the reverence and awe of the Holy One of Israel. May we recognize the birth-pains of Messiah, be filled with anticipation and ready for His coming! May we not only watch, but may we be found participating in His purposes by assisting the Jewish people in their quest to return home.

- (1) God in Search of Man, Abraham Joshua Heschel, page 238
- (2) God in Search of Man, Abraham Joshua Heschel, page 84
- (3) How Yom Teruah Became Rosh Hashanah, Nehemia’s Wall, posted September 26, 2014