

43 – Rosh Hashanah - Outline

2 marriage “stories”: I Think I’m Having a Wife (<https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/i-think-i-m-having-a-wife>); The Silent Treatment (<https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-silent-treatment>)

The Month of Tishrei

- Rosh Hashanah is unique in that it’s on a new moon, the Rosh Chodesh for Tishrei
- “tishrei” in the Babylonian Akkadian means “beginning”
 - the seventh month was universally accepted in the ancient world as the beginning of the year
 - God changes this at the Exodus, establishing Nissan in the spring as the 1st month of the year
 - however, Israel preserved the idea that there are TWO beginning points in the year
 - God has, indeed, designed two great “turnings” in the year in the form of the 2 equinoxes, associated with Rosh Chodesh Nissan and Rosh Chodesh Tishrei
 - when day and night are balanced at 12 hours each throughout the earth; after the fall equinox, the nights become longer than the days (in the northern hemisphere)
 - Exodus 34:22 tells us to observe Sukkot “at the turn of the year,” the “tekuphah,” which sounds like the idea of “equinox”
 - some say Rosh Hashanah is not really a beginning point in the calendar because God is clear when the months begin, yet He also designed 2 equinoxes into the year
 - these 2 beginnings are 1) birth and 2) marriage
 - the year is a mini lifetime, and in a lifetime, the two greatest beginnings are birth and marriage (marriage is “extreme,” requiring dying to the old and being re-formed as an echad with another)
 - the birth is in Nissan, and the marriage is in Tishrei
- the special energy for growth God gives in Tishrei is THE ENERGY TO BRING OPPOSITES TOGETHER
 - what marriage is all about
 - climactically: in Tishrei, the dry season ends and the wet season begins
 - agriculturally: the great fruit harvest finishes and the preparing for the grain planting begins
 - astrologically: the mazal is Moznayim, the scales, Libra
 - to be balanced on the scales, two objects need to not only be complementary, but they need to be CONNECTED; they are pulling on each other, connected together through the scale, itself
 - recall that the Rosh Chodesh of Tishrei (which sets the tone for the month) is balanced with 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of night

- God's attributes of justice and mercy are balanced in this month
 - justice is emphasized early in Tishrei (judgment, the weighing on the scales of justice); by Sukkot, we clearly see an outpouring of compassion (the great harvest, the beginning of the rains (water is associated with God's attribute of chesed, mercy))
 - in truth, all through the month we see God's attribute of mercy, including in the 10 Days
 - the call to repentance is merciful
 - the weighing on the scales includes Yeshua's sacrifice
 - chush of the month: marital intimacy, which leads to fruitfulness
 - tribe of the month: Ephraim = "double fruit"
- in the end, all the balance and bringing together of complements speaks to a renewal of relationship between God and mankind
 - not that these are equal – man is created, and God is the Creator; yet, God has chosen mankind as His bride

Rosh Hashanah within God's Yearly Pattern of Salvation

- 2 Journeys in the Year overlap in Tishrei (and Nissan)
 - 1st journey: months 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
 - journey in the light (longer days)
 - transfer into kingdom of light
 - receiving the light of truth
 - journey of youth
 - less free will
 - 2nd journey: months 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 1
 - journey in the darkness (longer nights)
 - setting out into the darkness, walking by faith
 - translating the light into our specific situation, becoming the light
 - journey of maturity
 - more free will
- the "flow" of the Tishrei mo'edim
 - Rosh Hashanah: covenant renewal, crowning God King
 - after a time of separation (3 Weeks), renewal is needed
 - the other 2 flow from Rosh Hashanah, the concrete "working out" of our choice expressed on Rosh Hashanah through the form of Yeshua
 - Yom Kippur: for reconnection, the sin issue has to be dealt with, or at least covered at this point and dealt with after the point of re-uniting
 - Yeshua's blood covers sin
 - Sukkot: the Incarnation, God descending in the form of Yeshua
 - He arrives not only as King but also in wedding clothes
- to keep in mind: the second journey is that of maturity
 - the mature bride:
 - knows how to submit to God

- is faithful to the covenant
- steps up to bring forth from her own heart a gift of herself
- is fruitful
- we should see these attributes of maturity in Rosh Hashanah because Rosh Hashanah is the seed for the second journey

Rosh Hashanah Basics

- we're not given much:
 - the day is not called "Rosh Hashanah" in Scripture (this is a traditional title); rather it's called a memorial "teru'ah"
 - "teru'ah" = "noise/alarm/clamor"
 - anciently understood to mean the blowing of the trumpet, especially the shofar (ram's horn trumpet)
 - we can derive from Scripture "Yom Teru'ah" for the name
 - it's a special Sabbath, a holy convocation, and the priesthood are given specific sacrifices to do on this day
 - Nehemiah 8 adds an angle on all the mo'edim, including Rosh Hashanah
 - Ezra reads out the Torah on Rosh Hashanah, and the people begin to cry; the leaders comfort them by telling them: "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep."
 - And Nehemiah goes on to tell them afterwards, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:9-10)
- about mo'edim generally
 - they are markers in time, like birthdays or graduations – times to celebrate
 - they are meetings with God, appointments, when He meets with us and does work in us
 - we don't show up for meetings with long faces
 - approaching mo'edim can be intimidating, anxiety-producing
 - much work to be done
 - am I walking this correctly?
 - but the mo'edim are meant for life
 - the heart is most important, the details of secondary importance
 - we try to prepare but are quick to give ourselves and others grace
 - remember what Yeshua says to Martha at her complaint that Mary is not helping her: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42).
 - one thing was necessary, the other optional, and Mary chose the necessary; Martha should trust

that in choosing the good portion, the rest will work itself out

- with the other mo'edim, we can discern various reasons for them, but Rosh Hashanah is a nearly blank slate
 - the vagueness makes us uncomfortable because the void of understanding forces us to rely on tradition
 - this is God's design for the day; it is meant to be a day that requires the development of a tradition because, as the beginning of the journey of maturity, it must contain the seed of the bride stepping up to bring forth from her own free will and from her own heart a gift to God
 - over the centuries, the Bride HAS come up with topics to focus on for the day and ways to observe it; and we can also personalize it further within our congregations and families

Rosh Hashanah Traditions and Themes

- we can glean the Jewish understanding of a special day from the additional "musaf" prayer that is added to the daily prayers on that day
- the musaf for Rosh Hashanah is said to contain three parts:
 - crowning God King
 - remembering – especially remembering the covenant
 - shofar – especially an awakening to repentance
- the 3 musaf themes are not equal; crowning God King is regarded as the main theme of Rosh Hashanah
 - the other two are supportive of this
 - covenant: is how the **relationship** is walked out
 - repentance: if something is interfering in the **relationship**, it needs to be fixed
 - aside: though repentance is not emphasized in the Rosh Hashanah prayers, what we hear in the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is the CALL to repentance, which begins in earnest on the next day and continues through Yom Kippur
 - judgment is being rendered at the beginning of Tishrei
 - at a new beginning, it's good to reflect on what went right or wrong in the previous journey
 - tradition says Adam and Eve were not only created on Rosh Hashanah but also fell and were judged on Rosh Hashanah
 - according to some, the judgment of Rosh Hashanah is delayed until Yom Kippur in order to give us time to repent; at Yom Kippur, the gates are closed and the judgments sealed, so this gives strong motivation to repent during the 10 Days
 - where does the idea of crowning God King come from?

- origin is lost in time
- we know it was part of Rosh Hashanah very anciently – recorded in the Mishnah, the first writing out of the Oral Torah (189 AD), so likely already present at Yeshua’s time
- we do read of the trumpet sounding at the coronation of a king: “There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, ‘Long live King Solomon!’” (1 Kings 1:39)
- another push in this direction comes from parsha Nitzavim (last week’s portion) where the congregation is gathered to renew the covenant with God, akin to crowning God King
- most powerful argument for crowning God King on Rosh Hashanah: comes from studying the calendar
 - this is our first real chance to exercise our free will to choose God
 - we are a newborn at Passover – Egypt pushes us out; we have little free will
 - also at Shavuot – God is tangibly present with overwhelming light and sound – who wouldn’t choose Him in that situation – again, little free will
 - Rosh Hashanah is a blank slate that we are invited to fill with our own expression of our own hearts
 - we have decided to hear in the shofar a call to repentance
 - we have decided to use our prayers together to crown God as King; He reached down to us first, and now we have the opportunity to reach back up to Him
 - the rabbis point out that a king can’t appoint himself – that’s a dictator; the people must elevate him
 - God wants a bride, not slaves
 - (see R’New, for example: https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/1629884/jewish/Crowning-G-d-as-King.htm 8m)

Connecting to the Rosh Hashanah Readings

- at first, Isaac’s story may seem like an odd choice, but we can see the themes of Rosh Hashanah here
 - Gen 21: birth of Isaac, sending away of Hagar and Ishmael, covenant with Abimelech
 - coming together of opposites
 - conception of Isaac
 - “Isaac” means “laughter”

- laughter results from the surprising bringing together of opposites
- Isaac is the bridge between Abraham and Jacob, who are complementary
 - Abraham relates to God with childlike faith
 - Jacob wrestles with God
- t'shuvah (repentance)
 - the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael are like repentance, bringing correction to a misstep of the past
- crowning God King
 - a covenant is made here with a king who is named Abimelech, meaning "my God is King"
 - God, here, is relating to Abraham as King, but through a Gentile King with whom he enters a binding blood covenant
- Gen 22: the binding of Isaac (Akeidah)
 - fruitfulness results from learning to give of ourselves as God gave His own Son from the foundation of the world
 - "...By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely MULTIPLY YOUR OFFSPRING as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:15-18)
 - haftarah is similar: Channah surrenders Samuel and, in turn, is blessed with 5 more children

Yeshua

- mentioned earlier: when we step up to elevate God as our King, He responds to that THROUGH Yeshua
 - the "spiritual" decision of Rosh Hashanah is made tangible through Yeshua at Yom Kippur and, much more so at Sukkot
 - through Yeshua, we can have a personal, tangible relationship with God
- Believers focus on the shofar as indicating Yeshua's imminent arrival, and this is true, but the 3-step traditional focus of Rosh Hashanah also points us directly to Yeshua:
 - **crowning God King:** from a place of separation from God, we reach out to Him by crowning Him King
 - **remembering the covenant:** we understand and affirm that relationship with God happens through covenant
 - **shofar awakening to repentance:** leads us to end with a statement of the problem
 - the great power for effective repentance is found only in One Source, the Messiah, and the New Covenant He mediates which penetrates to

effecting the heart, where truly effective and lasting repentance must begin

- so it is that the progression of Rosh Hashanah musaf prayers leads us to the feet of the Messiah, Yeshua

Final Thought

- you don't have to understand it to fully enter into the mo'ed
 - none of us fully understand
- suggestion: just come to Rosh Hashanah with the mindset that we gather together as one community for the purpose of crowning God King, a coronation
 - a solemn, awe-inspiring, and joyful time, and this mixture is the atmosphere we should create on this day
 - connected to the coronation, we look forward to how that decision gets played out through the imminent coming of the Messiah, Yeshua

43 – Rosh Hashanah 2023 (part 2) – Transcript (not exact)

Hello and welcome to Beth Tikkun and the Spiritual Seasons series. In this group of teachings, we are looking at the Torah portions and mo'edim in the light of God's overall pattern of salvation. This week we pause the Torah portion cycle to celebrate the important mo'ed of Rosh Hashanah. The readings for the week are Genesis 21 and 22, the stories of the birth of Isaac, the casting out of Ishmael, and the binding of Isaac.

There's a lot of detail to cover here for the month of Tishrei and Rosh Hashanah, so I thought that before we dig in I'd start out on a bit of a lighter note with a couple of light-hearted marriage-related stories. The theme of marriage is perhaps the dominant theme of the three great mo'edim of the 7th month, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. In a way, it is the grand theme of the calendar and the goal of creation. God desires a Bride. We begin being prepared for marriage from the moment we are born, and what we learn of marriage from a young age profoundly affects our lives. This first little story involves a young one beginning to learn about marriage.

"At Sunday school they were teaching how God created everything, including human beings. Little Johnny, a child in the kindergarten class, seemed especially intent when they told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and said, 'Johnny, what's the matter?'

Johnny said, 'I don't feel well, I think I'm having a wife.'"

Source: Unknown

<https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/i-think-i-m-having-a-wife>

The second story involves a married couple who had a quarrel and ended up giving each other the silent treatment. Two days into their mute argument, the man realized he needed his wife's help. In order to catch a flight to Chicago for a business meeting, he had to get up at 5 a.m.

Not wanting to be the first to break the silence, he wrote on a piece of paper, "Please wake me at 5 a.m." The next morning the man woke up only to discover his wife was already out of bed, it was 9 a.m., and his flight had long since departed. He was about to find his wife and demand an answer for her failings when he noticed a piece of paper by the bed. He read, "It's 5 a.m. Wake up."

Source: Unknown

<https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-silent-treatment>

The Month of Tishrei

Well, with those profundities out of the way, let's next turn our attention to the important month of Tishrei which begins with Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is unique in that it's on a new moon, the beginning of the month, rather than on a full moon. It is the Rosh Chodesh for the 7th month of the year.

In the ancient Babylonian Akkadian language, "tishrei" means "beginning." Apparently the seventh month was universally accepted in the ancient world as the beginning of the year. And God changes this for Israel during the Exodus, switching the beginning of Israel's months to the spring. To this day, Israel numbers Nissan in the spring as the first month and Tishrei as the 7th. However, Israel has understood that Tishrei remains A Beginning Point in the calendar, nonetheless. And so it has been preserved that there are two beginnings in the year.

And we don't have to look very far to see that God has clearly built both of these beginning points into the yearly calendar in the form of the two equinoxes. There are only two points in the year called an "equinox," one near Rosh Hashanah and one near Rosh Chodesh Nissan. It's only around these two days that are opposite to each other in the year that day and night are essentially 12 hours everywhere on the globe. At every other moment, either the day is longer than the night or vice versa. As we pass through Rosh Hashanah and the fall equinox, the night begins to dominate the day in the northern hemisphere, and that's a big change. The huge yearly fluctuations in daylight probably don't register as much with us today because we have easy artificial light, but for most of human history, that wasn't the case. The duration of daylight affected our ancestors much more. Now, let me mention that the first days of Nissan and Tishrei drift around the two equinoxes from year to year and are only occasionally actually directly on the equinox, but these two Rosh Chodeshes are basically the lunar calendar equivalents of the yearly equinoxes on the solar calendar.

It's possible that there is actually a word in the Torah for "equinox." It's the word "turn," in the phrase, "the turn of the year." We find this in Exodus 34, where it says that we are to observe Sukkot "at the turn of the year" (Exodus 34:22). Some translations say, "at the end of the year," but that seems like a poor translation for the word "tekuphah," which means "a turning." The whole year is turning. What makes Tishrei special is the equinox. Tishrei is the big turn in the year when night begins to dominate the day.

One reason I'm taking the time to talk about these equinoxes again here is that some will argue that Rosh Hashanah is not really a beginning point in the calendar because God sets Nissan as

the beginning of the year during the Exodus. I think we can say that the main beginning in the year is, indeed, Rosh Chodesh Nissan because this is what God has ordained, but there is a secondary beginning in the year at the other equinox, here at Rosh Hashanah. This is God's design, that there be these two conspicuous transition points in the calendar.

Remember that the year is like a mini lifetime. We experience rebirth and death and the whole gamut in between over the course of a single year – the entire picture is there. And if we are thinking about beginning points in our lifetimes, there are two that especially stand out above the others – our moment of birth, and our moment of marriage. Marriage is extreme, though not quite as extreme as birth. In a way, it's a death and rebirth. Marriage requires an unmaking of the life we had and a recreating together as an echad. And these two points in life are exactly what we are seeing in Nissan and in Tishrei, the birth on the one side and the marriage on the other – two beginning points.

In that vein, let's continue now with the associations we can see ourselves and those which are traditionally attached to Tishrei. What we will see is that the special energy God is putting into the universe and shedding upon the earth at this time is the energy to bring opposites together. Again, this bringing together of complements is what marriage is all about. In fact, the various pictures God puts together to speak to us about opposites coming together for fruitfulness in this month are just breathtaking. God is the Master Poet, the First Poet, and we can see that everywhere, but we especially see His poetry in how He layers various aspects of life and climate and the progression in the stars and the mo'edim – all of these working together to speak out a unified message. So, let's dig in to that a bit.

Climactically in Israel, the heat is noticeably lessening as Tishrei begins. The first rains will start late in the month, near Sukkot. Tishrei is a pivot point in Israel climactically, then; it is the meeting point of the dry season and the rainy season. It is the mixing together of fire and water.

There is an agricultural pivot happening now, too, from the big fruit harvest to preparation for the next grain planting. The great harvest is still coming in as Tishrei begins. September is maybe the only month in the year that all of the following can be harvested at the same time: the end of the grapes, the figs, the pomegranates, the dates, and the beginning of the olives. In other words, it's a very fruitful time spiritually, and this is being reflected in a great physical harvest. But as the fruits taper off as September progresses, it's time to start readying the land for the next grain crops to go in after the rains start to soften the ground.

The most obvious example of the coming together of opposites and the BALANCE of Tishrei is the mazal of the month, which is Moznayim, the scales, which we know as Libra. You really can't get a better symbol of the idea of opposites coming together than a scale – picture the kind that has the center pole with the bar across the top and two dishes hanging on either side. Balance means that two things are not only perfectly complementary but they're also CONNECTED to each other. They have to be affecting each other, pulling on each other, to be balanced – the two weights are connected through the bar across the top of the scale. Again,

recall that the very first day of the month, which sets the tone for the month, is linked to the balance of 12 hours daylight and 12 hours of night.

The moznayim, the scales, also speak to a kind of balance of God's attributes of justice and compassion. The scales are thought to represent judgment, something being weighed on the scales of justice, and this idea of justice is seen in the idea that we are judged at the beginning of the month. The idea of God's justice carries the idea of firmness, hard edges, gevurah, strictness. And this is certainly an element of Tishrei. Yet by the time we get to Sukkot, the energy is quite obviously the outpouring of God's compassion. Sukkot is a huge harvest celebration, both the harvest from the earth and the harvest from the nations of the earth. And so we have this beginning in strict justice and this ending in the great outpouring of compassion in the form of the harvest and the rains. In fact, the whole month, really, is filled with God's outpouring of gracious compassion. Yes, there are scales for judgment, but what if God takes Yeshua's goodness and adds that to our own on the scale? Even the act of calling us to repentance is compassionate. And we who are Believers see the greatest depths of God's compassion in Yom Kippur, when God's Son presents His own blood as a covering for us, effecting the forgiveness of sins. But my point here is just to say that the month of Tishrei has a special balance of God's justice and compassion, these two complements meeting each other in a special way this month.

Moving forward to the chush of the month, the bodily ability anciently associated with the month, for Tishrei the chush is...marital relations! The bodily ability associated with Tishrei is the act of marital intimacy. And marital intimacy results in fruitfulness, and fruitfulness brings us to the tribe associated with the month, Ephraim. "Ephraim" means "double fruit."

Again, ultimately what is all this balance and complement and fertility about in the month of Tishrei? We're seeing lots of pictures here that are speaking a unified message, but what's beneath it all? It is God and mankind being brought together in relationship. The two compliments at the root of it all are God and mankind. There is a renewal of this relationship happening now (a covenant renewal that is effected through the blood of the Messiah). And even within Tishrei, we see a kind of progression of that relationship, which begins as a King-and-subject relationship in Tishrei and ends as a Husband-and-wife relationship. But in both the case of King and subject and Husband and wife, we have complements coming together. Now don't get me wrong, humanity is not in some way equal to God. We are created, and He is the Creator. Yet within the mystery of God, He has chosen to take as His bride the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. And in accepting that proposal and walking it out in faith, we become eternally fruitful.

Rosh Hashanah within God's Yearly Pattern of Salvation

Let's turn now to this very special mo'ed of Rosh Hashanah by continuing to develop the larger frame we are seeing God provide for us through the idea of two journeys in the year coming together now. We can narrow down our bigger frame a bit and use this narrower idea of two journeys to understand the various traditions and details of Rosh Hashanah.

Rosh Hashanah begins the second journey in the year, which we can think of as the journey of maturity. The first journey, which is the journey of youth, is from spring to fall. We could also call that the journey in the light. The complementary journey of maturity is from fall to spring, and we can call that the journey in the darkness. Again, in the balanced days and nights of Tishrei, these two journeys don't just meet, they OVERLAP with each other in Tishrei, and the result is fertility. The seventh month is the final month of the first journey, and the seventh month does double-duty as the first month of the second journey in the year.

So let me repeat once again this fundamental structure in the year because it's vital for grasping the larger picture here. There are two seven-month periods of development within the yearly calendar. $7 + 7$ is 14. We get the two extra months we need by counting the first month and the 7th month twice, as both beginning months and ending months, the start of a new journey and the completion of the previous journey.

Let's also repeat a few more fundamentals for these two great phases of development. The first journey is birth, childhood, and adolescence. The second journey begins with adulthood and marriage and leads to fruitfulness. In the first journey, when we are not yet an adult, we have little free will, while in the second, we are an adult who has much free will; an adult steps up to make decisions on their own. The first journey happens in the light, in the spring and summer, the side of the year where the days are long and dominate the night. The second journey happens in the darkness of fall and winter, when the nights have grown to be longer than the days, so we can call the second the walk in the darkness. In the first, we are transferred another level out of the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, and in that long, sunny summer we absorb the light of truth. In the second journey, we set out into the dark world to figure out how to express that truth in our unique life situation. First we are taught the light, then we are given the opportunity to walk it out, to bring it down, to translate that truth into our own situation so that we BECOME the light in the darkness. Two journeys: childhood and adulthood, light and dark. At Rosh Hashanah, the second journey begins.

Let's quickly walk through the Tishrei mo'edim now, linking them together in a very general way. There will be a lot of detail here, but in the end, I'll give you the one idea to hold onto as we move forward. Rosh Hashanah is about covenant renewal with God: we crown Him King again. We've just come through a time of separation in the calendar, the 3 Weeks and the long dry summer without rain. At Rosh Hashanah, we stand together as a community and say to God, "We choose You again to be our King."

From this renewal flows the other two mo'edim, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. God answers the covenant renewal through His Son, Yeshua. Through Yeshua, He forgives the sin of humanity. Before this coming back together is really going to happen, there's a sin problem that needs to be in some way or the other dealt with. And so He does that through His Son. This is what is happening on high at Yom Kippur. And further, through Yeshua, God descends to earth to dwell with us, not only as a King but also as a Husband. The King arrives in wedding clothes. What follows in the winter is the process of becoming echad, one, a growing period that includes

battles to cleanse the flesh and establish the kingdom there, and eventually we come to the fruitfulness of marriage and deep echad, the deep oneness of Husband and wife.

So that's the big picture. If all of that was a little much, what I want you to remember as we keep going with Rosh Hashanah now is the idea that Rosh Hashanah begins a second journey in the year, the journey of maturity. The maturing Bride knows how to submit to God, is faithful to the covenant, steps up to bring forth from her own heart a gift of herself, and is fruitful. We will see hints of all these ideas of maturity in Rosh Hashanah. So let me say them again: the maturing Bride knows how to submit to God, is faithful to the covenant, steps up to bring forth from her own heart a gift of herself, and is fruitful.

Rosh Hashanah Basics

As we start to dig into the details now, let's start with the basics for Rosh Hashanah. We're not given much about this mo'ed, and that, in itself, tells us something about the day. The day is not called "Rosh Hashanah" in Scripture but is referred to as a day of memorial for "teru'ah," a day for making a noise or alarm or clamor. So, biblically, we derive the name "Yom Teru'ah" rather than "Rosh Hashanah." "Rosh Hashanah" is a traditional title for the day. And this noise or clamor has been anciently understood to be the blowing of the trumpet, especially the shofar, made from a ram's horn. We are also told that it is to be a day of rest and a holy convocation, and we are given specific sacrifices to do on this day.

Interestingly, in Nehemiah chapter 8, we see a fascinating Rosh Hashanah scene that I think adds a bit to our understanding. On the first day of the 7th month, Ezra reads the Torah to the people, and they begin to cry as they are listening to it, and Nehemiah and Ezra and the Levites say to the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." And Nehemiah goes on to tell them after the reading is done, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:9-10). So, here in Nehemiah, it would seem to say that not only Rosh Hashanah but any of the holy days are to be primarily times of joy, not sorrow. This is important to keep in mind because Rosh Hashanah can tend to develop a rather heavy atmosphere.

A mo'ed is a marker in time. We rejoice when we pass through a birthday or a graduation or some other marker in time. They are also days to meet with God, days on which we have appointments with Him. We generally don't show up for an appointment to God wearing long faces.

And too, let me mention here that we can be a bit overwhelmed by an approaching mo'ed season. We think of all that will need to get done. We wonder if we are walking them as we should. Let me say here that these days are meant for life, not anxiety. God is concerned with the heart first and the details second. We try to prepare, but we also are quick to give ourselves and each other a little grace. Let's remember the scene with Mary and Martha. Mary focused on what mattered in the moment, and you say, "Yeah, well that's because Martha was doing all the work!" But Yeshua says to her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many

things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42). Yeshua’s answer to Martha’s request that He tell Mary to help her implies that Martha is a bit too anxious and that she, too, could have chosen the good portion and, in the end, it would have worked out. Let’s take it one step at a time and trust Him.

So, to sum up the commandments regarding Rosh Hashanah, we aren’t told much beyond that it’s a special Sabbath and a memorial day for making a noise. With the other mo’edim, we can discern various reasons for them. Passover is obviously a memorial of the coming out of Egypt. Shavuot and Sukkot are connected to harvests and are also linked to historical events. Yom Kippur is a day for atonement. What about Rosh Hashanah? It’s not expressly linked to anything.

Let me make an important point here about this lack of information with this mo’ed. Clearly, God wanted the purpose of this day to be vague. Why would He do that? That vagueness makes us uncomfortable. We’re forced to rely on tradition, especially Jewish tradition, and many Christians, in particular, are very wary of tradition. I grew up in a Christian denomination that didn’t want to do *anything* in a worship setting that didn’t have a clear biblical precedent.

But already here we have an application to our overarching frame. Remember that we said one aspect of the journey of maturity, the second journey, is that the Bride steps up to bring a gift from her own heart? God doesn’t want a robot who will simply do whatever He says and not do anything He doesn’t expressly tell us is okay. He wants a Bride who comes alongside Him and shapes an offering of service out of love for Him. So we have the seed of this idea right here in the first day of this journey. God tells us little about this day, so we are forced to do our own digging and thinking and discussing and shaping to come up with an offering to Him for the day. We can beautify it as we want to and make applications as we want to, provided we are staying within the Torah that IS given for the day. Over the centuries, the Bride has come up with topics to focus on for the day and ways to observe it. And we can also personalize it further within our congregations and within our families. I believe this is pleasing to God. By adding touches that are meaningful to us, we beautify our Torah observance.

Rosh Hashanah Traditions and Themes

This brings us to the traditional themes and understandings of Rosh Hashanah. Each of the special days in the calendar has a special prayer called the “musaf” added that is suited to that day, and these special prayers help us to understand what the tradition is focusing us on. The musaf for Rosh Hashanah is said to have three topics. These are: 1) crowning God King, 2) remembrance, particularly remembering the covenant with God, and 3) the shofar, and this is specifically connected to the idea of awakening and repentance, t’shuvah. Again, the three are crowning God King, remembrance of the covenant, and the shofar’s call to repentance.

These three are not equal in the prayers. One of them is regarded as the main focus of Rosh Hashanah that the other two help to achieve. The emphasized theme throughout the Rosh Hashanah prayers is crowning God King. This idea is something like this: “You want to crown

God as King? – wonderful. Do that, but it's vital that you bring the covenant into this moment because it is the Word through which you HAVE that relationship. And you need to not only affirm that covenant, but you need to also check your walk and fix anything that might be coming between you and Him, and go deeper with Him! In other words, again, the primary goal is the relationship, and here that's expressed by crowning Him King. The other topics have supporting roles to play to the main emphasis.

Just as an aside here, though it's maybe not the main focus, let's not miss that the shofar is awakening us on Rosh Hashanah especially to call us to repentance, which is the focus on the 10 Days of Awe. Repenting, itself, is not the focus of Rosh Hashanah, even though it's the first of the 10 Days. The 10 Days begin with hearing the CALL to repent on the first day. And this repentance is connected to the idea of judgment being rendered at this time of a new beginning in the calendar. Rosh Hashanah is said to be the day when Adam and Eve were created, and so it was also the day they sinned and a judgment was rendered regarding that sin. So, the shofar calls us to repentance, and we feel the need for this now because we are in a season of judgment. One idea is that the gates close on Yom Kippur, which is when the judgment is sealed.

But returning now to the main focus of the day, where does this idea of crowning God King come from? The origin is lost in time. We know that it was part of Rosh Hashanah very anciently. It's found already in the Mishnah, which is Judaism's first attempt to write down the oral law, dating to around 189AD, the second century. So this idea was likely already present when Yeshua walked the earth.

The Bible does give us examples of the shofar being blown at the coronation of the king. We see that with King Solomon, for example. In 1 Kings, it says, "There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, 'Long live King Solomon!'" (1 Kings 1:39).

Another push in this direction of focusing on making God King comes from the annual Torah-reading cycle. We saw last week that parsha Nitzavim must be read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah, so the yearly readings are worked out in order to make that happen. So, clearly the sages have seen a significant connection between Nitzavim and this mo'ed. And the title of the portion comes from the moment when Israel is standing there as one in front of Moses as Moses leads them to renew the covenant with God. This idea of renewing the covenant is akin to us having a moment in the year when we say once again, "God, you are King, and we are your people." So, Nitzavim is giving us a gentle push in this direction of crowning God as King.

But I think the most powerful argument for this focus on crowning God King at this time comes from studying the calendar, where we see that this is our first real point in the year to step up to use our own free will to elevate God over us, to offer ourselves to Him. Passover and Shavuot are associated with youth, and when we are young, we don't have much free will. At Passover, God swoops in and rescues Israel from Egypt. He so actively devastates Egypt that Egypt essentially pushes Israel out at the end, which means Israel doesn't have a lot choice at that

time. Passover is God reaching down a hand to Israel first, before Israel can stretch upward. Shavuot is in the 3rd month of the year and is connected to Passover through the Counting of the Omer, and even there, the people don't have a lot of free will. They're standing there at the base of a mountain that is shaking and bellowing with smoke and glowing with flashes of lightning. Who is going to say "no" to God in a moment like that? Again, their free will is limited by their clear vision of God.

But here we come now to Rosh Hashanah, and it's a bit of a blank slate. God just basically says, "Get together on this day. It's solemn and holy. Make a noise together." And we're left to fill in the empty space. In other words, we old enough to have our own free will now. And what do we do? Well, we make it work. We're told to make a noise. So, we decide that the noise we make is going to call us to repentance. And the prayers we craft to speak out together are going to say, "God, we say today that You are our King. You chose us, before. You reached down and pulled us out of that pit. And You reached down to come down on the mountain in the desert. Now we reach back to You! Here we stand with our own free will and with a day that You chose to give very little form to, and so our choice is to reach back to You with our own free will. We stand here today together to say that You are our King. We accept." And the decision is made. What's left is to put the physical reflection on the spiritual decision, and that's coming in the other mo'edim of Tishrei.

The rabbis point out that a king can't appoint himself (see R'New, for example: https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/1629884/jewish/Crowning-G-d-as-King.htm 8m). If he does that, he is a dictator, not a king. A king must be elevated by the people. It's not enough that God swoops in to deliver the people at Passover. It must be the case that the people, of their own volition, decide to make Him King. He is ready and willing to be King, but He's not going to assume that place until we put Him there. Again, God wants a bride, not slaves.

Connecting to the Rosh Hashanah Readings

Let's turn now to making a few quick connections to the Torah readings for Rosh Hashanah. At first, they may seem a bit oddly chosen, but with a little connecting, we can start to see the wisdom here. The main readings for the two days of Rosh Hashanah are Genesis 21 for the first day and the following chapter for the second, Genesis 22. In Genesis 21, we see the birth of Isaac, the promised son. This is followed in short order by the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael. The third scene in chapter 21 is the covenant between Abraham and Avimelech. The second chapter, for the second day of Rosh Hashanah, is the binding of Isaac, the Akeidah. We can find in these two chapters all the themes we have been talking about today: the coming together of opposites, t'shuvah, covenant with God the King, and fruitfulness.

This section really would require a whole teaching on its own to do it real justice. But let me just draw some quick connections here. Regarding the coming together of opposites, first of all, we have the conceiving of a son, and this, in itself, is like the seed of this idea of the coming together of opposites. The two must come together to produce the child. But I want to focus on Isaac with this point of complements coming together. It's meaningful that the readings for Rosh Hashanah are focused on Isaac. I believe this is because Isaac is the bridge that brings

together complements. Isaac's name means "laughter," and laughter results when two opposites come together – someone's thought was clearly headed in one direction, then it suddenly careened in another direction, and that's funny, or the arrogant man slips on the banana peel. Laughter is rooted in opposites coming together like this. But more deeply, Isaac is the bridge between his father Abraham and Isaac's son Jacob. These two patriarchs are complementary, Abraham and his grandson Jacob, and they connect together through Isaac. They overlap, even, through Isaac. Abraham relates to God as a newborn, one just drawn out of the darkness of the nations. Abraham's relationship to God is energized by a childlike faith. It's different for Jacob, who is further down the line of relationship with God. Whereas Abraham listens in an uncomplicated way to God, Jacob WRESTLES with God.

Moving on from the birth of Isaac, next we have Abraham sending away Hagar and Ishmael. Can we not see this as a picture of t'shuvah, repentance? The episode with Hagar was a lapse of faith, a surrender to human reasoning to accomplish God's will. It was a stumble. And how do you repent from a stumble? You do what you can to right the wrong, for one thing. You limit the damage that has been done.

The next scene is the covenant with Abimelech, who is a local king. I would need to take some time to think about this one more, but in terms of crowning God King, we have the meaning of this king's name. "Abimelech" means "my father is king!" I mean, you can't get clearer than that. As to why God should represent Himself to Abraham at this point through a Gentile king, maybe we can simply say that God is always revealing Himself to us through everything. It's all Him. Here we have Abraham making a covenant with someone named "my father is king," and we can see this as a connection to the Rosh Hashanah theme of renewing the covenant with God by means of crowning Him King.

Lastly we come to the idea of fruitfulness and the binding of Isaac. The key to fruitfulness is, in faith, slowly learning how to surrender more and more of your life to God. And this is what Abraham has learned to do. God gave HIS Son to us from the foundation of the world. And here we read about how Abraham imitates God by offering up his own son, Isaac. And in that surrendering of self is the key to not just fruitfulness but ABUNDANT fruitfulness. Abundant fruitfulness is a many-fold blessing. And we read here after Isaac is allowed to get up off the altar that God says through an angel, "...By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely MULTIPLY YOUR OFFSPRING as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:15-18). We find this same kind of surrender in the haftarah reading when Hannah surrenders Samuel to the Lord, and He blesses her with five more children.

Yeshua

Well, as we turn now to a focus on Yeshua, I want to focus on how all of this is leading us to Yeshua, as it must. First of all, we mentioned earlier that when we step up to elevate God as our King, He responds to that THROUGH Yeshua. The next mo'ed, Yom Kippur, is focused on

what Yeshua does in the heavenlies, “on His way down,” as it were, and Sukkot is connected to the Incarnation, Yeshua tabernacling among us. So in responding to our accepting the invitation to be in relationship with God, He sends His Son, through Whom we enter in a more personal and tangible way into that relationship with God. But here’s the thing, His Son arrives not only with a crown on His head, but in wedding clothes, too. It turns out that what God has in mind here is not just the King-subject relationship, but the Husband-wife relationship.

But returning to the heart of Rosh Hashanah for a final thought, here, I want to point out that the traditional progression of prayer topics on Rosh Hashanah leads us straight to Yeshua. You know, Messianics see in the blowing of the shofar the announcing of the return of the Messiah. And surely there is truth there. But we can also see this pointing to the Messiah in the three topics emphasized in the additional musaf prayer. Remember, those are 1) crowning God King, 2) remembrance of the covenant, and 3) the shofar call to repentance. If we just think about those in that order, we come to the need for Yeshua. From a place of separation from God, which is pictured in the middle of the summer in the 3 Weeks, we reach out to God by crowning Him King. We understand that relationship with God happens through covenant, and we affirm this. But the third topic makes us aware that there’s a problem. The shofar calls us to repentance. And the great power for effective repentance is found only in One Source, the Messiah. It’s by the Messiah’s blood that the work in the heart is done that leads to real change in a person’s life. Praise God for Him. And so through this progression of prayers on Rosh Hashanah, we come to the foot of the Messiah, and we are also prepared for the next mo’ed, which is Yom Kippur.

Now, I know this is all a lot to take in. But here’s the good news, you don’t have to understand it to fully enter into it. And praise the Lord, because none of us fully understands it. As a final word here, let me just suggest that we come to Rosh Hashanah with the mindset that we gather together as one—and it is a day to be united as a body—but we come together as one on this day to re-connect to God, to renew our relationship with Him by CROWNING HIM KING ONCE AGAIN. That is what is forefront in our minds on Rosh Hashanah, that simple idea of crowning Him King. A coronation is solemn, awe-inspiring, and joyful, all at the same time, and this is the atmosphere we should cultivate. And connected to this coronation, we look forward to how that decision gets played out through the imminent coming of the Messiah, Yeshua.

Well, that’s all for today. Thank you for listening. May God bless us on this special day of Rosh Hashanah. May we be focused on crowning Him King. And may we experience a renewal and a deepening of our relationship with Him. And may we rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.

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