

# Rosh Hashanah / Yom Teruah – New Beginnings

## Opening Thought

Rosh Hashanah, also known as Yom Teruah – the Day of Shouting or Blasting, begins not just a new year, but a new season of spiritual awareness. It is a day that invites us to pause, listen to the shofar, and awaken to the reality of who we are before The Almighty. This moment is not only about celebration but also preparation, as it leads us into the most sacred days of the year.

### **I. Elul: The Season of Reflection and Return**

- Elul is traditionally seen as a month of teshuvah (repentance/return).
- Jewish thought often calls Elul the time when “the King is in the field”—meaning God is close and accessible.
- Psalm 27 is traditionally read daily in Elul: “Seek My face. My heart says to You: Your face, Adonai, I seek.” (Ps. 27:8).
- Elul begins the 40-day journey of repentance leading up to Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah marks day 30, and then we enter the Ten Days of Awe.

👉 Reflection question: How can I use the month of Elul going forward? Have I learned about myself and about God in this season of preparation?

## **II. Talmudic Tradition**

- In the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 10b–11a), two opinions are given:
- Rabbi Eliezer says: “The world was created in Tishrei.”
- Rabbi Yehoshua (not Moshiach) says: “The world was created in Nisan.”
- Rabbi Eliezer’s opinion became the basis for the idea that Rosh Hashanah marks the anniversary of creation.

## **III. Midrashic Expansion**

- The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 29:1) builds on this, stating:
- “On Rosh Hashanah the world was created, on Rosh Hashanah Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah were remembered, on Rosh Hashanah Yosef came out of prison, on Rosh Hashanah the slavery of our fathers in Egypt ceased. On Rosh Hashanah Adam was created.”
- In this view, Yom Teruah = Day Six of Creation, the day when Adam and Chavah were formed.

## **IV. Liturgical Evidence**

- The Rosh Hashanah liturgy reflects this belief. One of the central prayers declares:
- “Hayom harat olam” = “Today is the birthday of the world.”
- In many machzorim (High Holiday prayer books), this is explained to mean specifically: the day humanity was created.

## V. Theological Reasoning

- If Rosh Hashanah is a day of judgment, it makes sense in Jewish thought that it corresponds to the creation of man, because humanity is accountable before God.
- Animals were created earlier, but judgment and responsibility begin with Adam. Thus, the shofar and prayers of Rosh Hashanah are linked to the day Adam first stood before his Creator.

## VI. Yom Teruah: The Call to New Beginnings

- The Torah calls this day a “memorial of blowing/shouting” (Lev. 23:24; Num. 29:1).
- The sound of the shofar awakens us from spiritual slumber. Rambam (Maimonides) wrote: “Awake you sleepers from your sleep, and you slumberers from your slumber.”
- It’s both a day of remembrance (Yom Teruah) and a new year (Rosh Hashanah). We remember our covenant, our Creator, and our accountability.
- Unlike the secular New Year with resolutions, this new beginning starts with repentance, humility, and the hope of forgiveness.

👉 Key idea: True new beginnings come when we allow God to change our direction, not just our intentions.

## VII. Why Yom Teruah is Called Rosh Hashanah

- In the Torah, this moed is called Yom Teruah – the Day of Blasting. It emphasizes the shofar blast, the awakening call.
  - In later Jewish tradition (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1), it became known as Rosh Hashanah, “Head of the Year.”
  - This name reflects how Israel counted years for kingship, Sabbatical cycles, and Jubilee.
- By this time, the fall was seen as the spiritual and civil “head” of the year.

### 👉 Not a Contradiction – but a Complement

- Yom Teruah = the action of the day (shofar blast, remembrance).
- Rosh Hashanah = the meaning of the day (new year, new start).
- Both truths enrich each other: one calls us to awaken, the other calls us to renew.
- Why This is Not a Bad Thing
  - It reflects covenant identity. Naming it “Rosh Hashanah” tied the moed to Israel’s daily life.
  - It teaches renewal. Just as years begin again, so too can we begin again.
  - It aligns with Messiah’s teaching. Yeshua said, “You must be born again” (John 3:7). That’s the ultimate Rosh Hashanah — a new head/start to life.

👉 Discussion question: Do both names — Yom Teruah and Rosh Hashanah — help you see

God’s purpose for this moed more clearly? How?

## VIII. The Ten Days of Awe: The Final Stretch

- From Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur are the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah – Ten Days of Awe.
- This is the most intense time of repentance and reconciliation—between man and God, and between man and man.
- The Mishnah (Yoma 8:9): Yom Kippur atones for sins between man and God, but not for sins between a man and his fellow until he makes peace with him.
- Messiah Yeshua taught the same principle: “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift... first be reconciled to your brother” (Matt. 5:23–24).

👉 Reflection question: Who do I need to reconcile with during these days? Where do I need to seek forgiveness—or extend it?

## IX. New Beginnings Through Repentance

- Repentance (teshuvah) is not only turning from sin but turning toward Adonai.
- The Hebrew teshuvah = “to return.” It’s a homecoming.
- Paul echoes this: “If anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17).
- Yom Teruah is a beginning, not an end: the beginning of a renewed heart, reconciled relationships, and a deeper walk with God.

## X. Practical Applications

- Daily Reflection: During the Ten Days of Awe, spend 10 minutes each evening reviewing the day, asking, “Where did I honor God, and where did I fall short?”
- Acts of Kindness: Practice reconciliation by reaching out to someone with whom you’ve had tension.
- Intentional Prayer: Pray Psalm 51 (“Create in me a clean heart”) as a daily meditation.

## Closing Thought

Rosh Hashanah/Yom Teruah is a gift. It reminds us that God is not only the Creator of the world but the One who offers new beginnings every year, every season, and every day. As we hear the shofar, may it be a wake-up call to embrace repentance, reconciliation, and renewal, so that by the time we arrive at Yom Kippur, we are ready to stand before Adonai with clean hands and a pure heart.

Shanah Tovah U’Metukah — May you have a good and sweet new year!