



September 23, 2022

Is "Rosh Hashanah" the New Year?

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

My wife and I have returned from North Carolina visiting scattered brethren, and to officiate a wedding for a young couple that I was blessed to do premarital counseling with. It was a fast 4 days, but we were blessed!

We will soon come to the beginning of the seventh month of the Hebrew or Jewish calendar on Monday, September 26 or more precisely at sunset September 25. The astronomical new moon conjunction takes place at 5:54 pm EDT on Sunday, September 25.

The Jewish community labels the first day of the seventh month as "Rosh Hashanah" which literally means "head of the year" and hence also "New Year's".

Have you ever asked, where did this tradition come from?

What is the biblical name for the first day of the seventh month?

I thought it might be interesting to relate some information from an article "*How Yom Teruah Became Rosh Hashanah*" by Nehemiah Gordon, along with some thoughts on this question as well.

The first stage in the transformation was the adoption of the Babylonian month names. In the Torah, the months are numbered as First Month, Second Month, Third Month, etc. (Genesis 7; Leviticus 23; Numbers 28). During their sojourn in Babylonia our ancestors began to use the pagan Babylonian month names, (a fact readily admitted in the Talmud). The pagan nature of the Babylonian month names is epitomized by the fourth month known as Tammuz. In the Babylonian religion, Tammuz was the god of grain. Adam Clarke's Commentary states: "He is

fabled to have been a beautiful youth beloved by Venus, and killed by a wild boar in Mount Lebanon, whence springs the river Adonis, which was fabled to run blood at his festival in August.

The women of Phoenicia, Assyria, and Judea worshipped him as dead, with deep lamentation, wearing priapi and other obscene images all the while, and they prostituted themselves in honor of this idol. Having for some time mourned him as dead, they then supposed him revived and broke out into the most extravagant rejoicings."

In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet described a journey to Jerusalem in which he saw the Jewish women sitting in the Temple "weeping over Tammuz". *"So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz."* (Ezekiel 8:14).

Some of the Babylonian month names found their way into the later books of the Tanakh, but they usually appear alongside the Torah month names. For example, Esther 3:7 says: *"In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus . . ."* This verse starts off by giving the Torah name for the month ("First Month") and then translates this month into its pagan equivalent ("which is the month of Nisan").

By the time of Esther, all the Jews lived within the boundaries of the Persian Empire and the Persians had adopted the Babylonian calendar for the civil administration of their realm. At first, the Jews used these Babylonian month names alongside the Torah month names, but over time the Torah month names fell into disuse.

Although many Jews returned to Judea when the Exile officially ended in 516 BCE, the forebears of the Rabbis remained behind in Babylonia where rabbinical Judaism gradually took shape.

Many of the earliest known Rabbis such as Hillel I were born and educated in Babylonia. Indeed, Babylonia remained the heartland of Rabbinical Judaism until the fall of the Gaonate in the 11th Century CE. The Babylonian Talmud abounds with the influences of Babylonian paganism.

One field of *Babylonian religious influence* was in the observance of Yom Teruah on Tishri 1 as a New Year's celebration.

From very early times the Babylonians had a lunar-solar calendar very similar to the biblical calendar. The result was that Yom Teruah often fell out on the same day as the Babylonian New Year's festival of "Akitu". The Babylonian Akitu fell out on the 1st day of Tishrei which coincided with Yom Teruah on the 1st day of the Seventh Month. When Jews started calling the "Seventh Month" by the Babylonian name "Tishrei", it paved the way for turning Yom Teruah into a Jewish Akitu.

The Babylonians actually celebrated Akitu, New Year's, twice every year, once on the first of Tishrei and again six months later on the first of Nissan. The first Babylonian Akitu celebration coincided with Yom Teruah and the second Akitu coincided with the actual New Years in the Torah on the first day of the First Month.

While the Rabbis proclaimed Yom Teruah to be New Year's, they still recognized that the 1st day of the "First Month" in the Torah was, as its name implied, also a New Year. "*This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.*" (Exodus 12:2) In Ezekiel 40:1 the Hebrew phrase *roshe shaneh* "Rosh Hashanah" is found and refers to the beginning of the year in the first month. Adam Clarke calculates the date as Tuesday, April 20, A.M. 3430.

God clearly and strongly warned against adopting pagan practices from the surrounding nations. (Deut. 12:28-32).

It seemed that the Lord winked at the exiles adopted names of the month from the Babylonian calendar because they appeared later in some books of the Bible. But that does not mean God approved or promoted such.

There is an allusion to the removal of the pagan names from the land during the time when the kingdom is set up after Christ's return. "*It shall be in that day,*" *says the Lord of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered . . ."* (Zechariah 13:2)

One would consider and ponder that this would include changing the names of the days of the week (and names of the months) to ones that God initially gave - and would approve of.

Some people have argued that Yom Teruah should be considered as New Year's day because they claim it is the beginning of the Sabbatical year. However, the Torah does not say that Yom Teruah is the beginning of the Sabbatical year and all indications are that the Sabbatical year begins on the First day of the First Month.

The Torah does say the following: "*Then you shall cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth of the seventh month; in the day of atonement, the trumpet sound throughout all your land...*" (Leviticus 25:9)

This verse is saying that a shofar should be used to announce the coming arrival of the Jubilee year, the 50th year in the Sabbatical system. It does not say that the Jubilee begins on the Day of Atonement, only that the impending arrival of the Jubilee year is announced on the Day of Atonement.

The shofar is to be sounded throughout the land on Yom Kippur of the 49th year, six months before the beginning of the coming Jubilee year. This interpretation is supported by the immediate context in Leviticus 25. Verse 8 says to count forty nine years, and then verse 9 says to sound the shofar throughout the land, and verse 10 says to proclaim the 50th year as the Jubilee.

This shows that the shofar announcing the coming Jubilee in verse 9 is sounded throughout the land before the Jubilee is actually proclaimed in verse 10. It only makes sense that the Jubilee year was to begin on the first day of the first month, not the first day of the seventh month...

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.



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