



Rosh Hashanah

September 19, 2020

Chag Rosh Hashanah Sameach! Happy New Year to you, my *mishpocha* of *Beit Shalom*! This is a *Rosh Hashanah* unlike any that I have experienced since ADONAI called me into Messianic Judaism. Other than 9-11, we have not experienced a *Rosh Hashanah* with so much uncertainty. In looking back, I found that I gave my first official *Rosh HaShanah* message one year before 9-11 on September 29, 2000. It was the year 5761 and now we are at 5781. What a difference twenty years has made. And, a lot has happened in my life as well as I approach 83. But, ADONAI has been good to me and continues to be good every day. In looking at that message, I found that it was about all the traditional things, *Rosh Hashanah* as the birthday of creation, the binding of Isaac and of course, the blowing of the *shofar* in anticipation of the last *shofar* being blown from heaven. Then, we were looking forward to Yeshua's return, but not nearly as much as we are today. What a difference twenty years makes in the signs of the times?

Also, as a congregation, we have changed. And, much for the better. We have spiritually matured not only individually, but also as Yeshua's called out body. During these twenty years literally hundreds have come through and been a part of *Beit Shalom*. And, each has brought their own spiritual and material gifts. Most are no longer here, having gone on to other locations and careers or other pursuits. But, without them, and without you, *Beit Shalom* would not be what it is today. I would like to pay tribute to one special person who heard that *Rosh Hashanah* message twenty years ago, Mrs. Virginia Meeks Giles. She was a true servant of ADONAI, faithfully serving, praying and attending for these twenty years. We would not be the same today without you Mrs. Giles. And, I am sure that Yeshua has said, "well done, good and faithful servant; enter into your rest." I also could have not have succeeded with my faithful Mary Louise. She has loved me, encouraged me, prayed for me and forgiven me for my trespasses and is a co-partner in the leadership of *Beit Shalom*. Without her, there would be no *Beit Shalom*. She has been my inspiration. I also want to thank my fellow rabbi and co-elder, Herb Brooks for his dedication to ADONAI and for his faithful service to *Beit Shalom*. I can definitely say that without him, we would not be able to function as a congregation. He is always here and ready to do whatever is needed. And, I would be remiss in my thanks if I did not include our faithful *shamashim*, Lou McPherson, Danny Roman and Roxanne Roman. Their contributions to our congregation are immeasurable. They are examples of dedication to ADONAI for all of us. And, of course I want to thank everyone else. You have all had a part through the years and now in making *Beit Shalom* the special congregation that it is. I love, appreciate and respect all of you and thank you for your love and support for me, for your service through the years, for your prayers, for your devotion to ADONAI through your tithes and offerings and for your physical labors which have enabled us to be a small group accomplishing much. *Beit Shalom Messianic Synagogue*, Thomasville, Georgia, is indeed a special place and I love and appreciate each and every one of you!

Together we have grown spiritually and are at a high point of committed service to Yeshua today. But, because of what we see in our world today, it is absolutely necessary

that we continue to grow. *HaSatan's* hordes have been let loose on the world and we have been in training being prepared to stand in the gap spiritually for our nation. Not nearly everyone who calls upon the name of Jesus even knows that there is a need to stand in the gap. But, there is a remnant preparing for battle, how many I don't know, but may it be millions. It is a battle against the evil one and all those that he has mobilized in his fight against ADONAI's Son Yeshua. Everything which we see going on today here in the United States and around the world is *HaSatan's* futile battle against ADONAI and His anointed and the place where He has placed His name, Jerusalem. He will lose, but we must fight against him faithfully until Yeshua completely and finally defeats him.

In 1Chronicles 16, we see the beginning of ADONAI's plans for Jerusalem: 1 *"They brought the Ark of God and set it in the middle of the tent that David had pitched for it"* (1Chronicles 16:1 TLV). Psalm 132 says: 13 *"For Adonai has chosen Zion, He has desired it for His dwelling: 14 "This is My resting place forever. Here I dwell, for I have desired it"* (Psalm 132:13-14 TLV). Today the city where ADONAI has placed His name is the focus of the most intense hatred from all around the world. They think that they are fighting against flesh and blood, but they are fighting against G-d! 2 *"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling to all the surrounding peoples when they besiege Jerusalem as well as Judah. 3 Moreover, in that day I will make Jerusalem a massive stone for all the people. All who try to lift it will be cut to pieces"* (Zechariah 12:2 TLV). That day is coming. Yeshua will defeat His enemies. But, my prayer is that the people of these Arab nations which have made peace with Israel and those 5 or 6 which are soon to do so won't be among those destroyed. Even today, as we look forward to *Yom Kippur* ten days from now, we pray that our brother and sister Jews would all know Yeshua, the *Mashiach* whom they have been waiting for almost five thousand years. Not only do we pray for the salvation of all Israel, but also for the salvation of their cousins, the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, who are making peace today. May those in all of Islam see the falseness of their god and the truth of the G-d of Israel, the only true G-d.

But, the battle is also for our nation, the United States of America. What has happened here in the last thirty to forty years is like the frog in hot water. We are told that if you put a frog in hot water, he will jump right out. But, if you put him in cold water and slowly turn up the heat, he will be cooked to death. That is what has happened to us. Just little by little, violence and sex have been added to our television and our books and magazines, to the point that everything is now socially acceptable. Sex before marriage, living together without marriage and child bearing without marriage are the norm. The murder of children created in ADONAI's image is allowed at the whim of the one carrying the baby. Rioting, violence and murder are allowed as socially acceptable events as a right of protest. Why are these things here today? Because the Body of Messiah has failed to uphold the standards which G-d has given us. We are at fault. We have allowed it.

And, we are called to be different. As Yeshua's disciples, we stand firm in the truth of His Word because of our faith. We have faith that ADONAI's Word is true and that we have been justified by Yeshua's sacrificial death. And, we have faith that all of ADONAI's Word is truth. It is our guide to life. Habakkuk 2 says: 4 ...*"But the righteous will live by his trust"* (Habakkuk 2:4b TLV). The TLV renders it "trust" and other versions say "faith," but the Hebrew word is *emunah*. It means faithfulness. Faith is the beginning, but we must also be faithful. *Ya'acov* said: 18 *"But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works"* (James 2:18 TLV). 22 *"But the fruit of the Ruach is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control—against such things there is no law"* (Galatians 5:22-23 TLV).

Sha'ul said that faithfulness is a fruit. It must be cultivated and allowed to grow. We begin with faith and grow it into faithfulness. Faithfulness to us means what *Ya'acov* said: 22 *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding yourselves"* (James 1:22 TLV). We cannot just pay lip service to *Torah* saying that we believe it is for today. Especially, in these days, we must be faithful. Today, as we begin the Ten Days of Awe, we are being called upon as followers of *Yeshua* to examine our lives. Are we being faithful to what we proclaim? Or, are we just paying lip service to being faithful. This is not a time that we can fall short. Things are critical.

There is a story about a Jewish man marooned on a desert island. With no seeming possibility of being rescued, he began to build his village. When rescuers finally came years later, he proudly showed them his town and especially his synagogue. They asked, "but what's that building across the street?" He answered, "that's the synagogue that I don't go to." We are all a little like that man. We want to be where we are and believe that it is the best. But, hopefully he was praying for that other synagogue as we must be praying for the rest of *Yeshua's* body and *Abraham's* body.

The man on the island was a religious community of one. But, being marooned on a desert island is about the only excuse for being a religious community of one. The faithfulness to which we are called is not a religion of individuals, but of a body, *Yeshua's* body. We can only function fully as a called out local body which itself is a part of *Yeshua's* greater body. And, we must not neglect to assemble ourselves together as the writer of *Hebrews* tells us (*Hebrews* 10:25). That is a part of our faithfulness, being faithful to what we believe. The writer of *Hebrews* quoting *Habakkuk* confirms our need to be faithful and expands upon it: 37 *"For yet 'in a very little while, the Coming One will come, and He will not delay. 38 But My righteous one shall live by emunah; and if he shrinks back, My soul takes no pleasure in him"* (*Hebrews* 10:37-38 TLV). That's where we are right now. We are living for *Yeshua* by our faithfulness and He will not be pleased with us if we shrink back from the faithfulness to which He has called us.

Next *Shabbat*, we will assemble in this building to repent with all those who have answered the call of "The Return." Our nation is at a cross-roads. Will our combined cry to *ADONAI* turn the tide for our nation? Pray that millions will turn out to cry out to *ADONAI* for our sins on that day, standing in the gap for everyone else. Over the centuries, our nation has done many evil things, including slavery, the evil treatment of the indigenous people of our land and abortion. But, we have also allowed hate, racism, antisemitism and perversity to be a part of our communities. We must repent for what our fathers and our government representatives have done, but each of us must also repent for our own sins of hatred and distrust. We have all sinned. Not one of us is righteous! The Return is also an opportunity for *teshuvah*, repentance and turning back to *ADONAI* for those who have strayed from their commitment to *Yeshua*. Pray that on that day that millions who have left their relationship with G-d will turn from their sins and renew their commitment to *Yeshua*. Together, we are especially praying the prayer which *Solomon* prayed at the dedication of the Temple: 14 *.."when My people, Over whom My Name is called, humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land"* (*2Chronicles* 7:14 TLV). Pray against complacency and apathy in *Yeshua's* body, and that on September 26th we might be a mighty army of prayer warriors and that *ADONAI* will hear our cry and heal our land.

Through Daniel's prophecy in chapter 8 of his book, we have established that "the last days" began June 9th, 1967, 53 years ago, the day when Israel recaptured the city of Jerusalem. See the message *Ki Tavo* of September 5th for more information. What we see all around us today is Scripture coming true. Israel has fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (66:7-13) by becoming a nation in 1948, Jerusalem is no longer trodden underfoot of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24b) thus fulfilling Yeshua's prophecy and this means that we, His followers, are living in the last days.

We are tremendously privileged to live at this time in history. Some of us will even see the physical return of our Messiah. But, because of what has been given to us, Yeshua has said: 48... "*From everyone given much, much will be required;*" (Luke 12:48b TLV). We are fortunate to be so near to His coming, but, the Jews have been looking forward to the Messiah's coming for centuries. One was the sage, *Saadia Gaon* in the 10th century. He compiled a list of ten reasons why we should listen to the sound of the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*. Traditionally, it is one hundred blasts, most of which we have already heard during the service and will hear the remainder after this message. Here are his reasons for hearing the *shofar*.

1. The *shofar* recalls the trumpets that were used to coronate a king. *Rosh Hashana* is a reminder of God's Kingship over the world. Our Messianic expectation is that the *shofar* causes us to look forward to Yeshua's coming coronation as King.

2. The haunting sound of the *shofar* arouses us to examine our deeds and renew our relationship with G-d.

3. To remember that the *shofar* was blown when the *Torah* was given at Mount Sinai and to use the opportunity to recommit ourselves to *Torah* study and observance.

4. The *shofar* reminds us of the words of the prophets and encourages us to follow their teachings.

5. There are three different sounds that are blown with the *shofar*. Each one resembles a different type of cry. In this context, the crying sounds represent our desire for G-d to redeem us and usher in the Messianic era.

6. The *shofar*, being a ram's horn, reminds us of the binding of Isaac. Instead of sacrificing his son Isaac, Abraham sacrificed a ram instead. As followers of Yeshua, the *Akedah* reminds us of the death and resurrection of our Messiah.

7. The powerful sound of the *shofar* reminds us of the power of G-d who is everywhere at all times.

8. To recall that on the Day of Judgment, a *shofar* will be blown to announce its arrival. As followers of Yeshua, we understand that *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, will be announced by the "great *shofar*" before Yeshua takes His place in His judgment seat.

9. To recall that in the Jerusalem of the future, the *shofar* will be blown to announce freedom and peace for all its inhabitants.

10. To recall that the *shofar* will be blown in Messianic times to announce the redemption of the entire world. At that time, the entire world will come to accept G-d upon themselves and all forms of idolatry will be eradicated. As followers of Yeshua,

we will also hear those *shofar* blasts as our Messiah sits on His throne (Luke 1:30-33) and proclaims *Torah* from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2).

These are worthy reasons to hear the *shofar* and we are indeed privileged to live in and hear it in the time of the end.

But, it may not be as easy for us as it has been before. We don't know what will happen with the militant protests in our nation's future, but pray that they will subside. But, as Yeshua said: 16 ... "*I didn't promise you a rose garden*" (John 16:33)! No, that's not what He said, but that's what He meant in the terms of our modern country song. 33 "*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have shalom. In the world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33 TLV)! He told us that we will have trouble. The Greek word behind trouble is *thlipsis* and it means "tribulation." There has been tribulation for Yeshua's followers from the day He spoke these words forward. And, His followers have tribulation today.

As Yeshua sat on the Mount of Olives, He spoke prophetically to His disciples about a number of things. Some of them were about the end times. He said: 29 "*But immediately after the trouble of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*" 30 "*Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*" (Matthew 24:29-30 TLV). The time which Yeshua spoke of is the coming time of the "last *shofar*," the one which *Sha'ul* spoke of in 1Thessalonians 4: 16 "*For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the blast of God's shofar, and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left behind, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air—and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words*" (1Thessalonians 4:16-18 TLV). We are almost there. We are now experiencing "the trouble of those days which Yeshua prophesied. But, He has also told us: 28 "*Now when these things begin to happen, stand straight and lift up your heads, because your salvation is near*" (Luke 21:28 TLV)! And also: 20 ... "*And remember! I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20b TLV).

L'Shana Tovah! Praying that each of us will have a good and peaceful 5781!