



Erev Rosh Hashana

September 6, 2021

Shana Tovah Mishpacha! Sundown today (7:53 PM) marks the beginning of Hebrew year 5782. It is hard to realize that *Beit Shalom* began as a congregation in the year 5762 and that we will observe our twentieth anniversary in August, 2022. We had two and one-half wonderful years in the Mini-Synie and we've been here in our very comfortable home on Jackson Street since 2005, over 16 years. But, you should have seen her when we met her. What a transformation. And, tonight is actually our 20th *Rosh Hashanah* together as a congregation.

Leviticus 23 tells us how this festival was to be celebrated. I say was, because we can no longer fulfill ADONAI's requirements and there are two reasons. First, we are not in Israel. ADONAI preceded the festivals by saying: 10 "Speak to *Bnei-Yisrael* and tell them: When you have come into the land...." (Leviticus 23:10 TLV). Second, there is no Temple and no Levitical priesthood. 23 *Adonai spoke to Moses saying: 24 "Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you are to have a Shabbat rest, a memorial of blowing (shofarot), a holy convocation. 25 You are to do no regular work, and you are to present an offering made by fire to Adonai."* (Leviticus 23:23-25 TLV). Today, without Temple and priests, we commemorate the first day of the seventh month by having a *Shabbat* rest, blowing the *shofar* as a memorial at a holy convocation and doing no regular work. We can't present a burnt offering.

Leviticus 23 doesn't tell us what to call this day, but the *rabbis* have named it *Yom Teruah*, the "day of shouting." It's assumed that shouting means blowing a ram's horn, but *Teruah*, shout, is the word and the word *shofar* is not there. The assumption is that shouting means blowing or sounding. In English, it's usually called "the Festival of Trumpets," A generation or so before Yeshua, another name was added, *Rosh Hashanah*, which in Hebrew means "the head of the year." In Yeshua's day, this name had already been well established as the beginning of the fiscal year, the business year. But, ADONAI declared the first day of *Nisan*, six months earlier, to be first among his appointed times. This month contained Passover, the Festival of Unleavened Bread and the wave offering of the firstfruits of barley and is considered the beginning of the spiritual year. It was also the new year for kings, and the initial year of a king's reign concluded on the first of *Nisan*. There is also a new year for animals on the first of *Elul*, the month preceding *Tishrei*, and cattle were tithed from that date. The 15th of *Shevat*, the eleventh month, is known as the new year for the trees, or *Tu B'Shevat*, and fruit was tithed from that date. The first day of *Tishrei* as *Rosh HaShanah*, the head of the year, is also the beginning of the agricultural year. *Sh'mitah* and *yovel* years, sabbatical and Jubilee years, are also counted from this point. In this sense, *Tishrei* 1 is also known as the new year of the years. Of these four new years, only one was proclaimed by ADONAI, but He allowed Israel to add these others for their administrative purposes.

The one event most associated with *Rosh Hashanah* is what is called the *Akedah*, the "binding," and refers to the binding of Abraham's son Isaac when he was tied up as a sacrifice. It is connected spiritually to this day, *Yom Teruah*, the Day of the *Shofar* Blast because of the

horn of the ram which became ADONAI's substitute sacrifice for Isaac. Throughout Scripture, there were many events which were accompanied by *shofar* blasts. At Sinai, the *Torah* was given to Israel with the sound of the *shofar*. With the sound of the *shofar*, Israel conquered Jericho, and it was also sounded to signal the assembly during war. The watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem blew the *shofar*, and it was also blown to announce the Jubilee year. The *shofar* was blown to announce the festivals and the new moon. Isaiah 27:13 tells us that the *shofar* will be blown at the time of the ingathering of the exiles of Israel. And, according to Joel, it will usher in the Day of the Lord: 1 *“Blow the shofar in Zion! Sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all living in the land tremble—for the day of Adonai is coming—surely it is near!”* (Joel 2:1 TLV). The ram's horn is also what seems to tie *Yom Teruah* to the resurrection of the dead in Jewish tradition and the resurrection and also the catching away of the living in the clouds in Messianic Jewish and Christian belief. It is described by *Sha'ul* in 1Thessalonians 4 and 1Corinthians 15. Thessalonians says: 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.”* (1Thessalonians 4:16-17 TLV). Whether this will occur on some future *Tishrei* 1, we don't know. Scripture doesn't actually tell us that this festival is connected to Messiah Yeshua's return. But, for whatever ADONAI's reasons to command it, we will keep on blowing the *shofar* on this day as long as we are in these mortal bodies.

We are also beginning a new *sh'mitah* year tonight. *Sh'mitah* refers to the seventh year, the Sabbatical year, the year in which the land was to be given rest from planting and debts were to be forgiven. Since the *Torah* was given, each year has been important in its own way and each year brings us closer and closer to the event for which we're all waiting, the return of our Messiah, Yeshua. This year, the worldwide events of 2021 continue to cause concern for almost everyone. The destruction of the twin towers on September 11th, 20 years ago this coming *Shabbat*, was a huge wake-up call for us living in the United States. Since that time, we've had more and more wars and rumors of wars and the entire world is unsettled. The pale horse of Revelation has also visited us once again: 8 *“Behold, I saw a horse, pale greenish gray. The name of the one riding on it was Death, and Sheol was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill by sword and by famine and by plague and by the wild beasts of the earth”* (Revelation 6:8 TLV). I am not suggesting that this horse has just appeared. It has appeared many times during human history and possibly the one-fourth of the earth means that at Yeshua's coming, one-fourth of the total world population will have died because of either sword, famine, plague or wild beasts. The United States has had the sword beginning with rebellion against England, through two world wars and most recently with Afghanistan, the total loss of 1,304, 560 lives. We have not had famine here, but there have been many famines in the world and some are ongoing now with the loss of millions of lives. The world has had the plague in many forms, from the “black death” in the middle ages, to the worldwide flu epidemic of 1918 which killed 25-50,000,000. Now we have the worldwide Covid epidemic. So far, it has caused 4,500,000 deaths. The rider of the pale horse continues to spread death.

Seven years ago in my *erev Rosh Hashanah* message, 2014, a *sh'mitah* year, I told you about a surprising event which happened seven years earlier in Jerusalem. It was connected to the January 11, 2014 death of former prime minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, who had been in a coma for eight years since suffering a stroke on January 4, 2006. His death was featured

in a prophecy by Jerusalem Rabbi Itzhak Kaduri who died in 2006, several months after Sharon suffered his stroke. In his later years, Rabbi Kaduri became very interested in the identity of the Messiah. In 2005, he had a vision in which the Messiah told him His name and when He was coming. This much was already known in Israel following his vision in 2005, but the rabbi would not tell the name of Messiah or when he was coming. He did say that it would be “soon after the death of Ariel Sharon.” Rabbi Kaduri wrote a note about his vision which he said should not be read until one year after his death. He died in 2006 at more than 100 years old. His exact age is not known. The message he hand wrote was read in 2007. It stated that he had met the Messiah and that He would come shortly after the death of Ariel Sharon. Rabbi Kaduri knew that Sharon was in a coma before he died. He also revealed the name of the Messiah. He did it by writing a message in Hebrew: *Yarim Ha’Am V’yokhiakh Shedvaro V’torato Omdim*, meaning “He will raise the people.” The first letters of each word, **y**ud, **h**eh, **v**av, **s**hin, **v**av and **a**yin spell out the name Yehoshua. Its shortened form is Yeshua. Ariel Sharon has been dead for almost eight years now. Rabbi Kaduri didn’t explain what a short time is.

When will Yeshua return? It could be years or it could be soon. Yeshua said: 32 *“Now learn the parable from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the door. 34 Amen, I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things happen.”* (Matthew 24:32-34 TLV). If the fig tree represents Israel, as many today think, its branches began to bud in 1948 when it became a nation again. I’m speculating just like everyone else, but I don’t believe that we have to determine the length of a generation, forty, fifty, sixty or more years, to know what Yeshua meant. The words “this generation” seem to refer to people. The people of that generation which began in 1948 will not die before all the things Yeshua spoke of happen. A newborn when Israel became a nation in 1948 would be 73 years old today. That means that Yeshua’s return would be no further away than 2058 when that person would be 110 years old if he or she lived that long. Do we have to wait 37 years for Yeshua to return? Not necessarily. If this generation will not pass away before He returns, Yeshua could return within the generation just as soon as the troubles of these times take place- some time within the generation, not after it. We may even be in the troubles of those times today.

As we were beginning the last *sh’midah* year in 2014, Rabbi Jonathan Cahn’s book, *The Mystery of the Shemidah*, had just been released. In it, he proposed that financial rise and fall in the United States and the world were tied to the ancient seven year *sh’midah* cycle. The next year after that, 2015, was not a good year. Regarding it, *Forbes Magazine* said: “In 2015 the U.S. economy was so slow that several historically-reliable indicators of an imminent recession were waiving red flags. Industrial Production was negative over 12 months, and retail sales growth was falling. The global economy was even weaker. By early 2016, global stock markets were falling hard. Negative economic reports from China caused panic selling. Interest rates fell sharply, and there were widespread warnings of deflation and depression.” Does this mean that 2022 will bring a recession? We don’t know.

According to *Torah*, the biblical principle of *sh’midah* only applies in Israel. When ADONAI set out these parameters, everyone was in agriculture because everyone owned land or were in the process of regaining it through *sh’midah*. According to the World Bank of development indicators, now only about 29% of Israel’s land is involved in agriculture. The *sh’midah* year has become unobservable. When Jews returned to Israel over the last few centuries, each family was not issued land as they were when they conquered the Land of

Canaan. Modern times also brought other areas of commerce, fishery, manufacturing, transportation, etc. I do not believe that ADONAI would have all the farm land in Israel, a little over 1,000,000 acres, lie fallow for a year. It would be impossible to feed the 9 million people of Israel for one year out of what grew naturally on those acres. Also, 9 million people would have to walk through that land and pick it themselves. According to *Torah*, it cannot be harvested. What this says to me is that the *sh'mitah* disappeared with the destruction of the Temple, the last time that most Israelis owned and farmed the land.

According to 2nd Chronicles 36, the destruction of the 1st Temple was due to not allowing the land its Sabbath rest. The seventy years of captivity in Babylon were to repay one year for each *Shabbat* year which was not observed. Do the math. The seventy years in Babylon were payment for 490 years that *sh'mitah* was not observed. If the 1st Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE, Judah's problem would have begun 490 years earlier, around 1076 BCE, a period which seems to coincide with the capture of Canaanite lands. This would mean that Israel never observed the *sh'mitah* after entering the land. A shocking possibility, isn't it?

The truth is that you can't observe a command that you can't observe and *sh'mitah* can no more be observed today than bringing a sacrifice by fire. The physical observance of *sh'mitah* is not possible. There may be a spiritual component to the *sh'mitah*, but only ADONAI knows what it is. The same applies to the *Yovel*, the Jubilee. If the *sh'mittah* wasn't observed for 490 years, how could the Jubilee be observed? For the same reasons that *sh'mitah* can't be observed in the physical sense, *yovel* can't be observed physically. As a spiritual picture, the Jubilee may be the return of the Messiah. Supposedly, it has not been observed in Israel since before the destruction of the 1st Temple in 586 BCE. In that period, it may have been announced, but it apparently was not applied. If it had been properly observed, ADONAI would not have required the 70 years of captivity. No one knows when either the *sh'mitah* or the *yovel* really occurs. Israel has had a recognition of certain years as Jubilee, but not carried out according to Leviticus 25. Modern Jubilee years are said to be 1967-68 and 2017-2018. Obviously, these are at odds with a *sh'mitah* of 2021-2022. If the Jubilee was to occur the year after the *sh'mitah*, it would be next year, 2022-2023. That is five years off from the 2017-2018 Jubilee observed in Israel. Obviously, no one knows when it is, but, ADONAI does and He will apply it as He wishes when the time comes. In the meantime, we can continue to have our ears tickled by this prophecy and that dream and that calculation. We don't know what the *sh'mitah* means today or the *yovel* which follows the seventh cycle. Whether Yeshua will return on *Rosh Hashanah* during a Jubilee year, we also don't know. It doesn't matter when. We are told to be ready at all times. If Yeshua were to come back tonight, He would require our souls!

Shana tovah! Happy New Year!