



BIBLICAL HERITAGE REPORT & DISCOVERING THE BIBLE

Creating a better, happier and safer world through research & the distribution of factual information about our religious & spiritual histories!

<http://www.biblicalheritage.org>

The High Holidays

By Jim Myers

As fall approaches the Jewish community turns its attention to the High Holidays, the most holy period of the Jewish calendar. The fall holidays of **Rosh HaShana** (New Year - begins at sundown on October 3rd) and **Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement - begins at sundown on October 13th) are often referred to as the **High Holidays** or **Days of Awe**. Unlike other Jewish holidays the ten day period between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur are not associated with a historical event.

Rosh HaShanah occurs on the **first and second days of Tishri** on the Hebrew calendar. In Hebrew, Rosh HaShanah means, literally, "head of the year" or "first of the year." It is commonly known as the Jewish New Year. For Americans the name may be somewhat deceptive because Rosh Hashanah has very little in common with the American celebration of New Year with its partying and football games. However, there is one very important similarity. Many Americans use the New Year as the time to plan a better life by making "resolutions." Likewise, the Jewish New Year is a time for introspection, looking back at the mistakes of the past year, and planning the changes they will make in the coming year.

This holiday is not called "Rosh Hashanah" in the Bible where it is referred to as **Yom Ha-Zikkaron** (the day of remembrance) or **Yom Teruah** (the day of the sounding of the shofar). The holiday is instituted in Leviticus 23:24-25:

"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month on the first of the month, you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing *of trumpets*, a holy convocation. 25 'You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to Yahweh.'"

No work is permitted on Rosh HaShanah. Much of the day is spent in synagogue, where the regular daily liturgy is somewhat expanded. In fact, there is a special prayerbook called the **machzor** used for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur because of the extensive liturgical changes for these holidays.

Rabbinic Judaism teaches that Rosh HaShanah is the day on which God created man, therefore each Rosh HaShanah is considered the birthday of mankind. It is the custom to proclaim God as the one and true King and to reaffirm one's desire to serve Him.

The rabbis also teach that God reviews the status of his creation and determines if each person merits another year in this world at this time. Everyone is judged by God based on his or her actions during the previous year. The resulting judgment is inscribed by God in the Books of Life and each person's future is determined for the following year. Though that judgment is inscribed, it is not yet sealed and can still be changed at least for another ten days. The rabbis teach that God waits until Yom Kippur to seal the book for the year.

How can a person change their judgment for the better? **"Repentance, Prayer, and Charity can remove the bad decree."** God looks especially at these three areas during the period between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. By doing *teshuvah* (Repentance) with true regret for the past and by making a commitment to do God's will in the future, a person can erase his misdeeds and hence improve his judgment before it is sealed on Yom Kippur. Similarly, by praying with greater *kavanah* (concentration) before God, and by giving *tzedakah* (charity) with the proper spirit, one can also upgrade one's status.

Yom Kippur is probably the most important holiday of the Jewish year. Many Jews who do not observe any other Jewish custom will refrain from work, fast and/or attend synagogue services on this day. Yom Kippur occurs on the 10th day of Tishri. The biblical source for this holiday is found at Leviticus 23:

26 And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, 27 "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to Yahweh. 28 "Neither shall you do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before Yahweh your God.

29 "If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people. 30 "As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people.

31 "You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. 32 "It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your sabbath."

The name "Yom Kippur" means "Day of Atonement." It is a day set aside for the entire community to "afflict their souls," to atone for **the sins of the past year.** As I stated before, during this period God inscribes the names of every individual in His books. On Yom Kippur, their fate for the next year is entered in these books and sealed. Yom Kippur is the last opportunity to appeal and change the judgment, to demonstrate one's repentance and to make amends.

It must be pointed out that Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and God, not for sins against another person. *In order to atone for sins against another person, one must first seek reconciliation with that person, righting the wrongs committed against them if possible.* It is only after one makes atonement with his fellow man that he or she can seek atonement with God.

In Leviticus 23 we read that Yom Kippur is a complete Sabbath in which no work can be performed. It is well-known that one is supposed to refrain from eating and drinking (even water) on Yom Kippur. However, for most Jews it is also a complete, 25-hour fast beginning before sunset on the evening before Yom Kippur and ending after sundown on the day of Yom Kippur.

The Talmud (600 CE) also includes additional restrictions that are less familiar, but are known and practiced by the more orthodox sects of Rabbinic Judaism. These include prohibitions of washing and bathing, anointing one's body (with cosmetics, deodorants, etc.), wearing leather shoes (Orthodox Jews routinely wear canvas sneakers), and engaging in sexual relations.

The coming Jewish New Year will be 5766 and during the Ten Days of Awe the shofar (ram's horn) the rams horn will be blown 100 times. It is the one musical instrument that has not changed in over 5,000 years. Yom Kippur closes with the verse, said 7 times, "*The Lord is our God.*" The Shofar will be sounded for the final time and the congregation will proclaim - "*Next year in Jerusalem.*"

BHC

Your Help is Requested

You are invited to become part of the Biblical Heritage journey. BHC works to gather quality information from many sources and distribute it to as many people as possible. *Discovering our spiritual heritage is an exciting journey.* Many people know nothing about the history of the organizations and beliefs that have played a very important role in the lives of generations of “believers.”

This spiritual journey begins with one book for many of us – our Bible. It has a history too. Who wrote its words? Who decided what our “word of God” would be? In what language was it written? How can we most accurately understand its words and messages? How accurate are our English translations? Is there a way that I can learn to work with the original languages -- without going back to college -- so I will be able to check the work of the translators?

Information that will help answer the above questions, as well as many others, has already been gathered and deposited on the BHC website and written about in our newsletters. It is available without charge to the public. Obviously, it cost money to do our work. The money comes from the tax-deductible contributions of those who understand the importance of, and urgent need for, quality information. Only by having access to factual information are we able to test the accuracy of what we believe to be either true or false.

You are encouraged to make copies of the attached article and distribute or e-mail it to as many people as possible. You are also invited to help BHC by sending a tax-deductible gift today. *You investment in BHC’s work makes you an important member of the BHC team!*

(Cut Here)

Please make check or money orders to – **Biblical Heritage Center.**

___ I will keep BHC in my daily prayers.

___ Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____.

___ I will help BHC by sending a regular monthly contribution.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

E-Mail Address _____

Print this form and mail it to: BHC – P. O. Box 79 – Cleburne, TX 76033-0079.
If you prefer to make an online donation -- go to <http://www.biblicalheritage.org> .