**Rosh Ha-shana: Yom Truah - Zichron Truah**

**by Menachem Leibtag**

To our surprise, Chumash appears to have left out the two primary aspects of the holiday which we call Rosh Hashana: \* that it marks the beginning of the NEW YEAR, and \* that it is a Day of Judgement. This week's shiur attempts to uncover them.

INTRODUCTION Chumash contains only two brief and ambiguous references to Rosh Hashana: 1) In Parshat Emor: "On the SEVENTH month, on the first day of that month, you shall have a day of rest - ZICHRON TRU'AH..." (Vayikra 23:23-25) 2) In Parshat Pinchas: "On the SEVENTH month ... You shall have a YOM TRU'AH...". (Bamidbar 29:1-6)

In both of these Parshiot, the Torah commands us to observe a holiday on the first day of the SEVENTH month without even hinting as to why this day or month is special. Furthermore, the Torah tells us to observe this day as a ZICHRON TRU'AH, or YOM TRU'AH, without explaining precisely what these phrases mean! How does the SEVENTH month ('MID-year') become the NEW year? How does YOM TRU'AH become a day of judgement?

To answer these questions, we must first explain the biblical concept of a 'year'.

THE BIBLICAL YEAR Although it is commonly assumed that Rosh Hashana marks the anniversary of God's creation of the world, this specific issue is a controversy in the Talmud between R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua (see Mesechet Rosh Hashana 10b-11a). According to R' Yehoshua, who claims that the world was created in Nissan (the first month), is there nothing special about the first of Tishrei (the seventh month)? And even according to R' Eliezer, who claims that the world was created in Tishrei, why should the anniversary of the Creation provoke a yearly 'Day of Judgement'?

In Chumash itself, we find TWO yearly cycles. The cycle which begins in Nissan is best known, for the Torah explicitly commands us to count all of the months from Nissan ("parshat ha'chodesh"/ see Shmot 12:1-2). However, the cycle which begins in Tishrei is less well known, for it is only implicit. Nonetheless, a quick analysis of several mitzvot and psukim can show how obvious it really is. The most obvious proof is from the mitzvah of "shmita": "Six YEARS you shall plant your fields... and gather your produce, but on the seventh YEAR the land shall have complete rest... (Vayikra 25:3-5)

Although the Torah does not specify the precise time of year when this cycle begins, it can be inferred from the law of the "yovel" (jubilee) year which follows: "You shall count seven cycles of seven years... then you shall blow the shofar on the SEVENTH MONTH, on the tenth day of the month... (Vayikra 25:8-9)

If the Yovel year begins on the SEVENTH MONTH, then obviously the entire shmita cycle must begin in the SEVENTH month. In addition to this textual proof, there is a very logical reason why the shmita cycle should begin in the SEVENTH month. As we know, the mitzvah of shmita relates to planting and harvesting one's field. Since the fall season (i.e. Tishrei) marks the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the next year's planting season, it makes sense that the shmita cycle begin in Tishrei. In other words, in addition to the yearly cycle which begins in Nissan, and relates to the Exodus and our national redemption, another yearly cycle exists which begins in Tishrei and relates to the natural cycle of the agricultural year. Proof of this 'agricultural cycle' is found in the Torah's presentation of the "shalosh regalim": "Three times a year you shall hold a festival for Me: Observe chag ha'matzot... in the spring... chag ha'katzir, when you first reap your grain harvest, and chag ha'asif - AT THE END OF THE YEAR - when you GATHER YOUR PRODUCE (fruit harvest) from the fields..." (Shmot 23:14-16)

Here, the Torah specifically states that the harvest holiday, better known as Succot, is the END OF THE YEAR. [Parshat Emor states specifically that this holiday is to be celebrated in the SEVENTH month. (See Vayikra 23:39!)] If the previous year ends in Tishrei, the new year must also begin in Tishrei.

Our final proof is found in the Torah's presentation of the mitzvah of HAKHEL, which connects both the shmita cycle and Succot to the END OF THE YEAR: "At the END of every seven years, at the turn of the SHMITA cycle, on CHAG HA'SUCCOT... you shall read this Torah..." (Dvarim 31:10-11)

Once again we find that the Torah considers the time of year of Succot as the end of the agricultural year. Thus far, we have proven that the SEVENTH month is indeed the beginning of the NEW YEAR, i.e. the agricultural new year. Based on this understanding, we can now explain why it becomes a day of judgement.

RAIN - AND THE NEW YEAR Before we continue, we must review the different stages of the agricultural year in the Land of Israel: \* The planting season begins during the autumn months of Cheshvan & Kislev, continuing into the winter. [Recall, that in the Land of Israel, it only rains between Succot and Pesach.] \* The grain harvest begins in the spring with the barley harvest in Nissan and the wheat harvest in Iyar and Sivan. \* The fruit harvest begins in the summer months of Tamuz and Av, and continues until Tishrei.

With this in mind, we can proceed. Due to the nature of this cycle, the ultimate success of the agricultural year hinges on the amount of RAIN that falls in the months of Cheshvan and Kislev (late autumn and early winter). This early rainy season is so critical that the first three chapters of Mesechet Taanit describe in detail the public fasts which are declared should the first rain be only a few weeks late! Should more than a month go by without rain, more severe public fasts are declared, SIX brachot are added to "shmoneh esray" - including ZICHRONOT AND SHOFROT, similar to the brachot added on Rosh Hashana! [I recommend that you scan through the mishnayot of Mesechet Taanit in order to appreciate this point.]

It is not coincidental that on these fast days we daven as on Rosh Hashana. As mentioned above, the month of Tishrei marks the beginning of the new agricultural year, and thus the forthcoming rainy season. It is precisely this rainy season which DETERMINES THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE YEAR. Insufficient rain in the autumn leads to thirst, drought, famine, and disease in the spring and summer. Thus, from nature's perspective, it is the early rainy season which determines 'who will live and who will die, who by thirst and who by famine, who by war and who by disease...'. Due to the importance of this early rain, man will do everything in his power to make sure that indeed it will fall. In ancient Canaan, people believed that worshiping a pantheon of rain and fertility gods such as Baal and Asheyra would secure adequate rain. Modern man, on the other hand, believes that rainfall is simply determined by chance, according to the whims of nature. Chumash tells us exactly the opposite - the rain that falls in the land of Israel is a DIRECT function of God's "hashgacha" (providence). "For the land which you are about to enter is NOT like the land of Egypt [which receives a constant water supply from the Nile] ... the land which you are about to possess [Eretz Yisrael] contains hills and valleys, [there] you will drink water from the RAIN FROM HEAVEN (matar ha'shamayim)..." (Dvarim 11:10-11)

After stating the land's DEPENDENCE on RAIN FROM HEAVEN for its water supply, the Torah informs us that God Himself oversees this rainfall: "It is a land which the Lord your God LOOKS AFTER [doresh otah], always He keeps EYE on it, from - REISHIT Hashana - the year's beginning to the year's end." (Dvarim 11:12) [See previous shiur on Parshat Ekev.]

Interestingly enough, this is the only time in Chumash where we find the name ROSH HASHANA (=REISHIT HASHANA); precisely in the context of the rainy season, at the start of the agricultural year!

This theme develops in the next parsha - "v'haya im shmoa" (the second parsha of daily kriyat shma!): "Should you listen to my mitzvot... then I will grant the RAIN for you IN SEASON (lit. at the proper time) -'YOREH u'MALKOSH' - the early rain and the late rain... BEWARE, should you go astray... then God will shut the heavens so that there WILL BE NO RAIN..." (Dvarim 11:13-16)

Yet again, we find that the amount of rain which falls, especially during the critical season, is a DIRECT function of God's "hashgacha", and thus, a direct result of our religious behavior.

Based on this interpretation, the biblical importance of celebrating a holiday on the first day of Tishrei now becomes clear. As we anticipate the forthcoming agricultural year and its critical rainy season, we dedicate a special day in which we abstain from work ("shabbaton"/ Vayikra 23:23) in order to gather together ("mikra kodesh") and proclaim God's DOMINION over the entire Creation. Based on our deeds, and our willingness to serve Him, He will determine the fate of the forthcoming year. Our fate lies in HIS hands, NOT in the hands of nature or any other god. [We therefore dedicate the month of Elul to repentance, in preparation for this day, in order to prove to God that we are indeed worthy of a good judgement (according to the guidelines of parshat "v'haya im shmoa").]

Up until this point, we have uncovered the biblical reason why the SEVENTH month is considered the beginning of a NEW year and a time of judgement. In anticipation of the rainy season and its influence on the fate of the agricultural year, the Torah commands Bnei Yisrael to set aside a special day in which we must recognize that the fate of the forthcoming year will be determined by God. With this background, we can better appreciate the significance of the special mitzvah which the Torah commands us to keep on this day: 1) ZICHRON TRU'AH (in Parshat Emor) 2) YOM TRU'AH (in Parshat Pinchas) Why does the Torah command us to sound a TRU'AH specifically on this day?

"YOM TRU'AH" IN THE BIBLE Today, a shofar is considered a 'religious artifact', usually purchased at the local "sforim" store or Judaica shop. Back in the time of the Bible, things were a little different. Then, a shofar would have been sold by the local 'arms dealer', for it was used as the primary communications tool in war. Military commanders and officers used the shofar to communicate important signals to their troops (e.g. Gidon and his 300 men / Shoftim 7:16-20). Similarly, civil defense personnel used the shofar to warn civilians of possible attack and to mobilize reserves (see Amos 3:6). Therefore, in a manner similar to one's gut reaction to the sound of a siren today, the sound of a tru'ah in biblical times meant immediate danger. Hearing that sound was associated with going to battle or being under attack, i.e. a situation where one's life is on the line. For example, the prophet Tzfania uses the phrase YOM SHOFAR U'TRU'AH to describe a situation of war and terrible destruction. "At that time [on the YOM HASHEM], I will search Yerushalayim with candles and I will punish the men... who say to themselves 'GOD DOES NOT REWARD NOR DOES HE PUNISH' [i.e. no hashgacha!]... The great day of the Lord is approaching... it is bitter, there a warrior shrieks. That day shall be a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress ("tzarah u'mtzuka"), a day of calamity and desolation...., YOM SHOFAR U'TRU'AH ..." (Tzfania 1:12-16)

According to this pasuk, "yom tru'ah" and "yom shofar" clearly imply a day of imminent danger and war.

The prophet Amos also refers to the shofar in a similar context: "Should a shofar be sounded in the town, would its people not be frightened (ye'cheradu)? Could misfortune come to a town if God had not caused it?" (see Amos 3:6 and its context) [See also Yoel 2:1-3,11-14 & 2:15-17, & Yirmiyahu 4:3-8.]

Therefore, the Torah instructs us to make a "yom tru'ah" on the first day of the seventh month in order to create an atmosphere which simulates the tension and fear of war. We are supposed to feel on this day, just as we would on a day of war - that our lives are truly in danger. This explains "yom tru'ah". What is the meaning of "zichron tru'ah"?

ZICHRON TRU'AH Luckily, there is a pasuk in Parshat Bha'alotcha which ties together these two words: "Should war take place in your land...- v'HA'RAY'O'TEM - you must sound a TRU'AH with the trumpet (b'chatzotzrot), v'NIZ'KAR'TEM - and you will be REMEMBERED by the Lord your God, and He will save you from your enemies." (Bamidbar 10:9)

Should war break out, God commands us to sound a TRU'AH in prayer to God - in anticipation of that war. In doing so, we are recognizing God's hashgacha over the outcome of the forthcoming battle, and thus show Him that we deserve His special providence. This parallels the situation on the first of Tishrei. In anticipation of the forthcoming rainy reason, we must sound a TRU'AH in order to remind ourselves that God will determine the fate of the year and ask for His special providence. Therefore, this day is not only a YOM TRU'AH - a day of AWE on which our lives are judged, but also a ZICHRON TRU'AH - a day on which we must sound the shofar in order that God will REMEMBER us.

SHOFAR SHEL AYIL Even though Rosh Hashana is commonly referred to as the JEWISH New Year, it is actually the NEW YEAR for ALL mankind. Nonetheless, Am Yisrael is first to declare God's kingdom on this day, for it is our national duty to proclaim His Name. As we begin the year by sounding the TRU'AH, we specifically use a shofar from an "ayil" (a ram) - the symbol of "akeidat Yitzchak", a testimony of our total devotion to God. In doing so, we remind the Almighty of His choice of Avraham Avinu and His special relationship with his children, in order that He NOT judge us like any other nation; but rather as His own special Nation.

shabbat shalom & shana tova, menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. In Chodesh Tishrei, the 'seventh' month, we find many "chagim" which relate to nature, especially the 'seven' days of Succot marking the culmination of harvest season of the previous year. We also find three days of 'Judgement', Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kipur, and Shmini Atzeret. 1. Compare the korban musaf of each of these three chagim. (one par, one ayil, seven kvasim and one seir l'chatat). 2. In what way are these chagim connected? Note the use of the word "zeh" and "ach" in Vayikra 23:23-40. 3. According to Chazal, when are we judged for water? How does this relate to the above shiur? 4. Relate this to the tfila of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kipur! (It's in your machzor at the end of the seder avodah.)

B. Why does God need Am Yisrael to proclaim him king? The one thing Hashem, k'vyachol, can NOT do is make himself king. A kingdom is meaningless if there are no subjects. A king becomes king when and because he is accepted by his subjects. Similarly, only when God is accepted and recognized by man does He become Melech. 1. Relate this to our davening on Rosh Hashana. 2 Explain changing "E-l HaKadosh" - to "Melech Hakadosh" according to this concept.

C. The Jewish New Year, the New Year special and unique to Am Yisrael is actually Nissan - "HaChodesh Hazeh lechem Rosh Chodashim Rishon hu lachem lchodshei Hashana" (Shmot 12:1-2). Yitziat Mitzraim (which took place in Nissan) marks the birth of the Jewish Nation. 1. What aspects of Pesach and HaMatzot emphasize that we are a special nation, different than other nations. 2. What aspect of the chagim in Tishrei, relate to all mankind. (Note 70 parim on Succot etc. - see also Zecharya chap 14)

D. TKI'AH / TRU'AH - AC/DC A short explanation concerning the biblical difference between TKI'AH and TRU'AH. TKI'AH implies a straight note (like DC current), while TRU'AH implies an oscillating - up & down - note (like AC current). A TKI'AH usually indicates a public rejoicing or an 'all clear signal', while a TRU'AH usually indicates a warning of some sort. [Those of you who were in Israel during the Gulf War know what I am referring to.] This distinction is found in Parshat Bha'alotcha in connection to the mitzvah of "chatzotzrot" (trumpets). 1. Read Bamidbar 10:1-10. Note that according to that parsha, the "tkiah" was used as a signal for gathering the camp and happy occasions (10:3-4,7,10), while the "tru'ah" was used as a signal to prepare for travel in military formation and war (10:5-6,9). Relate this to the above shiur, see Ramban & Ibn Ezra.

E. It seems strange that the Yovel year should begin on Yom Kippur (see Vayikra 25:8-10). It should begin on the first of Tishrei - Rosh Ha'shana. 1. Relate the laws of Yovel to the laws of Yom Kippur to find a thematic connection between them. Could this be the reason why Yom Kippur was chosen to proclaim the Yovel? 2. Why do you think that Chazal learn many halachot of shofar and Rosh Hashana from the laws of Yovel? 3. See Mesechet Rosh Hashana 33b-34a. Relate this Gemara to the above shiur.

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