

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"Hear the Shofar: Hear the Voice of God"

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): *Lev. 23:23–25; Num. 10:9–10; Ps. 95:7–8; Ps. 98:4–6; Gen. 22:1–18; Lev. 17:11; Is. 53:4–6, 11–12; Heb. 11:17–19; Heb. 4:7, 12–16; Is. 30:20–21*

Rosh HaShanah literally means “the head of the year.” It is the Jewish New Year, and we greet one another with *L'Shanah Tovah u'metukah*—“to a good and sweet year.” Apples and honey remind us of our hope for sweetness in the year ahead. Yet biblically, this day is called **Yom Teruah**—the Day of Shouting, or perhaps even more vividly, the **Day of Alarm**. It begins the Days of Awe, the ten-day season that leads toward Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. So beneath the sweetness of Rosh HaShanah is something deeply serious: a call to reflection, repentance, and getting right with God.

At the center of Yom Teruah stands the shofar. Throughout Israel's history, the shofar announced important moments. It sounded around Sinai, summoned the people, accompanied battle, proclaimed Jubilee, and Scripture connects the sounding of the shofar with the coming of Messiah. But the shofar is more than an ancient instrument. Its sound gives us a physical picture of the **voice of God calling His people to attention**. It asks us a simple but searching question: Are we really listening? Not merely hearing something in the background, but opening the ears of our hearts to hear what ADONAI is saying to us.

1. THE SHOFAR CALLS US TO REMEMBER WHO IS KING

The different sounds of the shofar each carried meaning. The **tekiah**, one long sustained blast, was a reassuring sound. The watchmen were on duty. All was well. The **shevarim**, three successive blasts, announced that something significant was happening—a changing of the guard, the arrival of an important person such as a king, or a summons to gather and hear good news. Then came the **teruah**, the rapid sound of alarm. Something required immediate attention. Danger was near. Wake up. Assemble. Respond. The shofar could reassure, announce, or alarm, but every sound demanded that the listener pay attention.

Rosh HaShanah reminds us first that **God is King and Ruler of all the universe**. He is not simply another voice among many competing for our attention. He is our Creator, our King, and the Judge of all the earth. We live surrounded by voices telling us what to fear, what to pursue, what to value, and even who we are supposed to be. Sometimes we become so accustomed to the noise of those voices that the voice of the Lord is drowned out, becoming background sound. Yom Teruah calls us to quiet our hearts and recognize again who is King. Before asking God to bless our plans, we surrender ourselves to His. Before asking Him to come our way, we ask Him to show us **His way**, and then we follow.

2. THE ALARM POINTS US TO THE SUBSTITUTE GOD HAS PROVIDED

Centrally connected to Rosh HaShanah is the **Akedah**, “the Binding,” in Gen. 22. Abraham was commanded to take Isaac—the son of promise, the son he loved—and offer him to God. It is difficult even to comprehend the weight of that command. Yet Abraham trusted that what God had promised remained true even when he could not understand what God was doing. Isaac also willingly went with his father, carried the wood, and allowed himself to be bound upon the

altar. Then, at the moment Abraham raised the knife, God stopped him. Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. God had provided a substitute. Abraham named the place ADONAI Yireh—ADONAI will provide. As Heb. 11 explains, Abraham trusted that God was even able to raise the dead, and figuratively he received Isaac back from death.

Here is the beauty of the Akedah: God did not ultimately require Abraham to do the very thing that the Father Himself would one day do. Abraham was allowed to stop short of sacrificing his son. **The Father did not stop short.** The ram died instead of Isaac, but Isaac could never be the atonement for our sins. Being descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cannot atone for sin. Good deeds, charity, religious activity, study, and prayer cannot erase our guilt. The Torah teaches that atonement requires life given in place of life, and Isaiah 53 points us toward the righteous Suffering Servant who bears the sins of others. Messiah Yeshua is the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice. He willingly gave His life in our place. The alarm of Yom Teruah therefore carries good news: judgment is real, sin is real, death is real—but **God Himself has provided the sacrifice.**

3. HEAR HIS VOICE—AND RESPOND TODAY

The sages taught that an incidental hearing or merely hearing an echo of the shofar was not enough. A person was to intentionally listen – to avail your ear. An open ear to the shofar represented an open heart to its message. That is a powerful picture of how we are called to receive the Word of God. Scripture repeatedly says, *“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”* (Heb. 4:7; cf. Ps. 95:7–8). God’s Word is not merely information about something He said long ago. His Word is living and active. It cuts through our religious exterior, through appearances and excuses, and exposes what is really happening within us. *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.”* (Heb. 4:12). He sees us completely. Nothing is hidden from Him.

That could sound terrifying if judgment were the end of the story, but Hebrews 4 immediately directs us toward Yeshua, our great *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest. He understands our weakness, yet He was without sin. Therefore Scripture tells us to *“draw near to the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help in time of need.”* (Heb. 4:16). God is not sounding the alarm because He wants us to run **away** from Him. He sounds the alarm because He wants us to run **to** Him. And even when we have wandered, His voice is still calling: *“Your ears will hear a word behind you saying: ‘This is the way, walk in it.’”* (Is. 30:21). He has not stopped speaking. Too often, we have simply stopped listening.

CONCLUSION: WHILE IT IS STILL CALLED TODAY

Think of the many sounds of the shofar as a picture of the many ways God speaks throughout our lives. Sometimes there is a tekiah: “All is well. Rest in Me. I am here.” Sometimes there is a shevarim: “Pay attention. Something is changing. I am leading you somewhere new.” And sometimes there is a teruah: “Alarm! Wake up! Danger! Turn around!” We do not need to live terrified that we will somehow miss the will of God while He remains silent and distant. He is speaking. The question is whether we have availed our ears to His voice or allowed His voice to fade into the background beneath every other sound demanding our attention. And one day there will be a final call—the *tekiah g’dolah*—the great sounding when this life ends or Messiah returns. That is why Scripture says **today**. *“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”* (Heb. 4:7).

So hear the shofar. Hear the voice of the King. Hear His reassurance and rest in it. Hear His announcements and walk in them. Hear His warnings and respond to them. Perhaps His voice is calling you to repentance today. Perhaps you have never surrendered your life to Messiah Yeshua and received the sacrifice God has provided for you. Or perhaps you know Him, but somewhere along the way His voice has become distant because other voices have captured your attention. Do not wait until you feel worthy or until you have repaired yourself. Run to Him. Call out with the shout of your voice or the whisper of your heart: “Lord, I need You. Lead me. Guide me. Awaken my heart to the truth.” Hear His loving intensity calling, **“Turn! Turn from death and turn to life.”** Let the alarm awaken your heart, and while it is still called today, return to Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Yom Teruah is better understood as a “Day of Alarm” than simply as the “Feast of Trumpets”? What does that communicate about the purpose of the shofar?
2. The tekiah communicated reassurance, the shevarim announced something significant or changing, and the teruah sounded an alarm. **Which of those three best describes what you sense God may be saying in your life right now, and why?**
3. What does the Akedah teach us about substitution, and how does the ram provided in Isaac’s place help us understand what God has done through Messiah Yeshua?
4. **What voices, distractions, fears, opinions, habits, or pressures in modern life have the greatest tendency to drown out God’s voice for you? What could you change so that you listen more intentionally?**
5. Is there an area in which you already know what God has been saying but have delayed responding? What would repentance, trust, or obedience look like **today**?

CLOSING PRAYER

Avinu Malkenu, Our Father, our King, give us ears to hear Your voice and hearts willing to do Your will. Silence the voices that compete for our attention, and let Your truth pierce through the noise and awaken us. When You reassure us, teach us to rest in You. When You announce a change, give us faith to follow. When You sound the alarm, give us humility to turn quickly and run to You. Thank You that You did not leave us to provide our own atonement, but You provided the sacrifice for us in Messiah Yeshua. Thank You for our great Kohen Gadol, through whom we can come boldly to Your throne and find mercy, grace, forgiveness, and help.

ADONAI, sound Your truth deeply within our hearts. Where we have wandered, call us back. Where we have become comfortable with sin, awaken us. Where fear and the voice of the enemy have become louder than Your promises, remind us that You are King. We put our trust and confidence in You. May we not merely hear Your Word incidentally, but intentionally open the ears of our hearts and respond in obedience. While it is still called today, may we hear the voice of our Father calling us from death to life, and may we run to You and return to You.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.