

## Rosh Hashanah 08/30/07

### Introduction

Read Lev 23:23-25; Num 29:1-6.

Rosh Hashanah is something of a paradox in the OT.

- On the one hand, it is unquestionably instituted in the law: Lev 23:24-25; Num 29:1-6.
- On the other hand, it is never mentioned unambiguously in the Bible.

So in studying this feast, we need to focus on the terms in the description itself. The descriptions in Lev and Num include several terms. Three of these are common to all or most of the festivals:

- “holy convocation,” indicating the need for the people to gather together, is common to all the holy days.
- So is “no servile work,” indicating that they are to lay aside their usual activities,
- and so is the mention of “an offering made by fire.”

But two are more specific:

- A sabbath rest *Sabbaton* ; used in Lev of this feast and also Atonement and Tabernacles, not in Numbers.
- The most distinctive term is the one translated in our version by “trumpets.” It is used in both Lev and Num, and does not appear in any other feast.

Last year we studied the term *Sabbaton*. We saw that the term reflects the position of these holy days in the seventh month, making them a kind of annual “sabbath” that anticipates the coming millennial rest.

This year, let's consider the word translated “Trumpets.”

### Two Kinds of Trumpets

The trumpet sets apart Rosh Hashanah from all other feasts. But Num 10:10 says that trumpets were to be blown over all feasts. How can we reconcile these?

There were two kinds of trumpets.

Ref	Kind of Trumpet	User
Num 10:2, 8	<i>xacocerah</i> , Metal (silver). Expensive.	Priests
Judg 7:16-22, Gideon and his men vs. Midian	<i>shophar</i> , Ram's horn. Widely available.	Anybody

Both are translated “trumpet” in the AV, except when the two words occur in the same verse (2 Chr 15:14; Psa 98:6; Hos 5:8). Then “trumpet” refers to the metal trumpet, and the ram's horn is called a “cornet,” literally “little horn.”

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What kind is mentioned in Lev 23:24? Actually, neither! The word translated “blowing of trumpets” is *teru(ah*, which refers either to the blast of a trumpet or to a loud shout. In Num 10, it is the word translated “alarm,” and is commonly used in accounts of war. But the universal Jewish tradition is that the trumpets used on Rosh Hashanah were the *shophar*, the ram's horn. Of course, as on any feast day, the *xacocerah* would have been heard as well. But it is the *shophar* that makes this distinctively the feast of trumpets.

(Display Brother Saxe's *shophar*.)

So our approach here will be to understand the use of the *shophar* in Jewish life, and from that to seek to understand the significance of this feast.

### References to the Shophar

In these references, I have bolded instances of *shophar* and *teru(a* or the Hiphil of *rw(*.

#### Secular uses

There are two main secular uses: in battle, and in coronations.

#### *A Battle Signal*

##### To muster the troops

\*Jud 6:34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a **trumpet**; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

Neh 4:18-20 18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the **trumpet** was by me. 19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. 20 In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the **trumpet**, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

Jer 4:5 Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the **trumpet** in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities.

##### During an attack

This is a more specialized form of the previous use, summoning the assembled troops to a coordinated attack.

Josh 6:2-5 And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. 3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. 4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven **trumpets** of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the **trumpets**. 5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the **trumpet**, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

The Jericho episode is unusual in that the *shopheroth* are used by the priests rather than by the people.

\*Judg 7:15-22 And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. 16 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a **trumpet** in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. 17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. 18 When I blow with a **trumpet**, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the **trumpets** also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. 19 So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the **trumpets**, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. 20 And the three companies blew the **trumpets**, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the **trumpets** in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. 21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. 22 And the three hundred blew the **trumpets**, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host.

### To warn against an attacker

This blends into the previous one, since the warning leads the people to assemble, either to defend themselves or to evacuate.

\*Eze 33:2-6 2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: 3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the **trumpet**, and warn the people; 4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the **trumpet**, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5 He heard the sound of the **trumpet**, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. 6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the **trumpet**, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

Hos 5:8 Blow ye the **cornet** in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: **cry aloud** [Hiphil *rw*(“sound the alarm] at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin.

Jer 6:1 O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the **trumpet** in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.

### To call off an attack

This is also a mustering activity, in that you are recalling the troops and gathering them together.

2 Sam 2:24-28 24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah by the way of the

wilderness of Gibeon. 25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill. 26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren? 27 And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother. 28 So Joab blew a **trumpet**, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

2 Sam 18:16 16 And Joab blew the **trumpet**, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. [after death of Absalom]

Here is an episode that combines mustering and withdrawing.

\*2 Sam 20:1-2, 22 And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a **trumpet**, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel. 2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem. ... 22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a **trumpet**, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

### *At Coronations*

This may be an extension of the military role, since the responsibility of the king was largely military. Recall Israel's motivation for asking for a king:

1 Sam 8:19-20 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; 20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

Here are three examples from the OT.

2 Sam 15:10 10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the **trumpet**, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

2 Kings 9:13 13 Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with **trumpets**, saying, Jehu is king.

\*1 Kings 1:33-39 33 The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: 34 And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the **trumpet**, and say, God save king Solomon. 35 Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah. ... 38 So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 39 And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the **trumpet**; and all the people said, God save king Solomon.

Also at Joash, 2 Kings 11:14, but that is the metal trumpet.

## Religious Applications

Let's try to correlate these with the two secular meanings.

### *At Sinai*

Exod 19:16, 19; 20:18. The Israelites didn't blow the *shophar*; but they heard it when the Lord descended on the mount.

Exo 19:10-19 10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, 11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. 12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: 13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the **trumpet** soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. 14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. 15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives. 16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the **trumpet** exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. 18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. 19 And when the voice of the **trumpet** sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

Here God is summoning his people to him, gathering them together. Note vv. 13 “when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up,” and 16-17 “the voice of the trumpet ... and Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God.” So it reminds us of the secular use of mustering the people for battle.

But it is also connected with coronation. The Lord's covenant with Israel, instituted on Mt Sinai, has the characteristic pattern of the suzerainty treaties of the ANE, by which a king bound his vassals to himself. This relationship has been expounded by a number of writers, notably Meredith Kline, *The Treaty of the Great King*. So sounding the *shophar* in connection with the giving of the covenant may be connected with the recognition of God as the king who has the right to give the covenant. It's interesting to speculate who is blowing the horn here. It's not the people. I suspect it's an angel.

### *Installation of the Ark*

At the coming of the Ark into Jerusalem, 2 Sam 6:15

So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with **shouting**, and with the sound of the **trumpet**.

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It is tempting to see this as a coronation ceremony, celebrating the Lord's rule from Zion. Recall our study of Ps 68, written for this occasion, which explicitly refers to God as “king” (v. 24) and anticipates the subjection of all nations to him (28-35).

### *Covenant Renewal*

At Asa's renewal of the covenant. 2 Chr 15:14

And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with **shouting**, and with trumpets, and with **cornets**.

This event recalls the original giving of the covenant on Mt Sinai.

### *Start of Jubilee*

At the Day of Atonement marking the beginning of the year of Jubilee, Lev 25:9 (the name “jubilee” comes from the word for “ram,” so the year takes its name from this signal.)

Then shalt thou cause the **trumpet** of the **jubile** to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the **trumpet** sound throughout all your land.

As marking the end of seven sevens of years, the Jubilee can be viewed as a “super sabbath,” an amplified version of the feast of trumpets, celebrating the Lord's rule over all the earth. All debts are forgiven to remind men that ultimately everything belongs to God.

### *Eschatological Uses*

The *shophar* is prominent in descriptions of the day of the Lord. Because of the judgments associated with that day, these seem most closely allied with the use of the trumpet in warfare:

Joel 2:1 Blow ye the **trumpet** in Zion, and **sound an alarm** in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;

Zeph 1:14-16 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of the **trumpet** and **alarm** against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

Zech 9:14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the **trumpet**, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. [in the day when the Lord delivers his people from their enemies]

But the Lord's coming is also the occasion of setting up his role as king over all the earth:

Ps 98:5-9 With trumpets and sound of **cornet** [both kinds of trumpet, which would have been the case at this feast] **make a joyful noise** before the LORD, the King. ... 9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Thus we are not surprised to hear references to the trumpet in prophecies of the Lord Jesus' return:

Matt 24:29-31 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a **trumpet**, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

1 Cor 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last **trump**: for the **trumpet** shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Thess 4:16-17 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the **trump** of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The day of the Lord is the coronation of Jesus as the earthly king (Ps 2), and his day is a day of great warfare for his adversaries, when the trumpet summons his people to join him in the great conflict (cf. Rev 19).

Consider the effect of the seventh trumpet in Revelation:

Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

## **The Feast of Trumpets**

What does this survey suggest about the feast of trumpets? Three themes seem to be associated with it.

### ***The Celebration of the Lord as King***

The Lord is Israel's king. When the nation asked for a human king, they were rejecting his rule:

1 Sam 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

Long before this happened, God commanded them to celebrate the Feast of Trumpets at the beginning of the seventh month. Interestingly, it can be shown from the history of the building of the temple (Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, pp. 28-30) that the years of a king's reign were dated from the first day of the seventh month. This was the "official" time for coronations. We have already seen that the bringing of the Ark into Jerusalem, marked with the *shophar*, had royal significance. It is likely that one important point of this feast was to remind the nation that the Lord was their true king.

We need reminding of this today. The political activism of many evangelicals in recent years shows how careless believers have become in this regard. We need to remember that we, like the patriarchs of old, are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb 11:13). The Lord is our true king, and our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20).

### ***Reaffirmation of the Covenant***

Once we recognize our king, we are reminded of his covenant with us. Israel needed to remember their obligation to keep their king's law.

Today, we are not under the covenant of Sinai, but we are still under covenant—the New Covenant. The difference is not that God's law is irrelevant to us, but that he has written it in our hearts and enables us by his Spirit to keep it. The feast of trumpets reminds us of this responsibility.

### ***Anticipation of the Day of the Lord***

The Lord has taught us to pray that God's kingdom would come on earth, as it is in heaven. The OT prophets anticipated that the *shophar* would mark the Day of the Lord. As we saw last year, this era is the earth's sabbath, the culmination of God's program for the earth. It is likely that the trumpets of the sabbatical feast of the seventh month are meant to remind us of that great coming sabbath, and to keep us watching and waiting for our Lord's return, loving his appearing.

### **Notes**

Ps 81 (cf. v.3) may refer to this feast, together with Tabernacles, so Perowne after Delitzsch, though Hengstenberg and Keil favor Passover.

Ps 47 mentions the *shophar* (v.5) and is a psalm of the coronation of God as king over all the earth. Maybe do this next year.