
THE TANACH STUDY CENTER mail.tanach.org
In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag
Questions for Self Study - by Menachem Leibtag

for ROSH HASHANA

ROSH HA'SHANA - ACCORDING TO THE TORAH

1. In Chumash, there are only a very few psukim that describe the holiday that we refer to as Rosh Hashana:

- a) In Parshat Emor / Vayikra 23:23-25
- b) In Parshat Pinchas / Bamidbar 29:1-6

After reviewing those psukim, and based on them alone, answer the following questions:

- What is the biblical name of (what we call) Rosh Hashana?
- On what day is this holiday to be celebrated?
- What are the special 'mitzvot' of this holiday?

Which of these mitzvot are common to all of the other holidays in Emor and Pinchas, and which of these mitzvot are unique for Rosh Hashana?

Based on these sources alone, is there any reason why this holiday should be called 'rosh hashana' [the New Year]?

2. Based on these psukim alone, does the Torah provide any reason for celebrating this holiday? Is there any apparent or implied reason for this holiday, or for any of its mitzvot?

Does Parshat Emor (or Parshat Pinchas) provide a reason for the celebration of any of the other holidays? If not, are there any apparent or implied reasons for their celebration?

[If so, explain what they are.]

In Parshat Emor, we told that this holiday should be a 'zichron tru'a', while Parshat Pinchas tells us that it should be a 'yom tru'a'. Can you explain what these terms imply? In your answer, relate to Bamidbar 10:1-10, noting especially 10:9.

In your opinion, does "zichron tru'a" imply the same concept as "yom tru'a"? Is there any obvious reason why this day should be a "yom tru'a"? Assuming that these psukim (in Pinchas & Emor) were the only sources - how would you expect for this holiday to be celebrated?

3. Next, review the next set of psukim in Emor & Pinchas that describe Yom Kippur. i.e.

- a) Vayikra 23:26-32 and b) Bamidbar 29:7-11.

Based on these sources alone, does there appear to be any obvious or implied connection between the holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?

In your answer, relate to the words 'ach' and 'zeh' in Vayikra 23:27, and Bamidbar 29:7. [Note as well the Torah's use of the word "zeh" in 23:34, and the word "ach" in 23:39. If there is a relationship, what would that be?]

Is there any explicit or assumed reason for why Yom Kippur is celebrated specifically on the tenth of Tishrei?

4. Next, review the Torah's presentation of both Sukkot and Shmini Atzeret in Parshat Pinchas (Bamidbar 29:12-19), paying attention to the different korban **mussaf** on each holiday.

Then, compare those korbanot to the korban mussaf of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (see 29:1-11). Do any of these holidays share the same or similar korban mussaf? If so, can you explain why?

If certain holidays share a similar korban mussaf, would this suggest a thematic relationship between them? If so, what would that relationship be? Is the any obvious reason for why there is a need for so many holidays in the 'seventh month'?

5. In any of the above sources, is 'Rosh Hashana' ever referred to as the **new** year? If not, what is it called, and why?

Review Shmot 12:1-3. How do these psukim explain the 'calendar' used to define the holidays in Emor and Pinchas?

6. The 'shalosh regalim' are first presented as a unit in Shmot

23:14-17. Review those psukim, noting the names of those holidays, and the reason for their celebration.

Note how (what we call) Sukkot is referred to as 'chag ha-asif' [a fruit gathering festival] which is to be celebrated 'be-tzet ha-shana' [when the year goes out] / see 23:16.

Can you explain what 'year' is ending with the fruit harvest?

What can we infer from this pasuk in regard to **when** the agricultural year begins? What is the logic behind considering this the beginning (or end) of a year?

"MATAR", Eretz Canaan, & the AGRICULTURAL YEAR

7. See Devarim 11:10-12. Read these psukim carefully, noting how it relates to importance of rain for the agriculture in the Land of Israel (in contrast to the Nile River supplying water for the fields in Egypt). With that in mind, explain what the Torah refers to by the phrase 'mi-reishit ha-shana' [from the beginning in the year] in the last pasuk that describes how God 'oversees' the rain in this Land (see 11:12). Based on those psukim, what year does 'reishit ha-shana' refer to? Relate this to the topic that follows 11:13-17!

Based on these psukim, explain the connection between the 'rainy season', the 'beginning of the agricultural year', and the first day of the seventh month.

In your opinion, could the fact that the rainy season in the Land of Israel begins in the autumn relate to any other holidays that the Torah tells us to celebrate in the seventh month?

If so, explain why.

In what manner does the 'rainy season' determine the fate of the forthcoming agricultural year? Why would (or should) this carry religious significance?

8. Review once again Bamidbar 10:1-11. First of all, explain why this short 'parshia' about the 'chatzotrot' is located at this point in Sefer Bamidbar? [i.e. How does it relate to the fact the Bnei Yisrael now prepare to leave Har Sinai and begin their journey to conquer the land of Israel?]

According to this parshia, what is the difference between a 'teki'a' and tru'a. [Note the verb used for each, and which action each 'note' relates to.] In your opinion, why is specifically a tru'a sounded when going to war (see 10:9), and a teki'a sounded on the holidays (see 10:10)? See the commentators on these psukim (10:8-10), especially the Ibn Ezra & Ramban!

9. Review the following sources, noting how they describe some sort of a "yom truah":

Tzfatia 1:12-16, Amos 3:6, and Yoel 2:1-3, 11-14 & 2:15-17. Based on their context, what do they think that the phrase "yom truah" meant to people during the time of the Tanach?

Based on these psukim, can you suggest an explanation for what the Torah means when it instructs us to make a 'zichron **tru'a**' (see Vayikra 23:24) or a yom tru'a (see Bamidbar 29:1) on the first day of the seventh month? Can you explain why?

10. Review Vayikra 25:1-11, noting how these laws discuss the laws of 'shmitta' and 'yovel'. Then pay special attention to 25:9, noting the connection between shofar, tru'a and the 'seventh month!'. In your opinion, why does the seven year shemitta cycle increment specifically in the seventh month (i.e. on Yom Kippur)? Is there an agricultural reason for this?

Relate this pasuk to the above questions?

Then, see the Mishna - Masechet Rosh Hashana 33b, and the gemara a few lines from the bottom (tanu rabbanan...) until the bottom of 34a. Based on that gemara, explain how Chazal learn the laws of shofar from the psukim quoted above.

11. Based on the above, can you suggest a thematic connection between Rosh Hashana & Yom Kippur?

Is the date of Yom Kippur significant? What important event in the history of Am Yisrael took place on that day?

How would this relate to the forthcoming rainy season?

Note as well the time of year for the mitzva of Hakhel in Devarim 31:11-12. What does 'mo'ed shnat ha-shmitta' refer to, and why is it during 'chag ha-Sukkot'?

Which 'calendar' (i.e. solar or lunar) does this relate to?