
a *Grace Notes* course

History II

The Temple

Its Ministry and Services as they were at the time of Christ
by Alfred Edersheim

Lesson 15 – Chapter 15, The New Moon; The Feast of Trumpets; New Year's Day

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Contents

Chapter 15, The New Moons; The Feast of Trumpets; New Year's Day	1
The New Moons	1
The Determination of the New Moon	1
The Blowing of Trumpets	1
The Sacrifices of the New Moon.....	2
Necessity for Distinguishing the Temple and Synagogue Use	2
A Prayer of the Third Century, AD.....	3
The Moon of the Seventh Month	3
The Mishnah on New Year's Day.....	3
The Talmud on the New Year	4
New Year's Day in Jerusalem.....	4
The New Year's Blessings.....	5
The First Day of the Seventh Month.....	5
Quiz - Instructions.....	5
Questions on The Temple, Lesson 15	6

Instructions for Completing the Lesson

Begin each study session with prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who makes spiritual things discernable to Christians, so it is essential to be in fellowship with the Lord during Bible study.

Instructions

1. Read the lesson notes carefully.
 2. Look up and study each passage of the Bible that is mentioned.
 3. Complete the answers to the QUIZ and send your response to Grace Notes. The instructions for returning the Quiz are at the end of the lesson.
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Chapter 15, The New Moons; The Feast of Trumpets; New Year's Day

The New Moons

Scarcely any other festive season could have left so continuous an impress on the religious life of Israel as the 'New Moons.' Recurring at the beginning of every month, and marking it, the solemn proclamation of the day, by--'It is sanctified,' was intended to give a hallowed character to each month, while the blowing of the priests' trumpets and the special sacrifices brought, would summon, as it were, the Lord's host to offer their tribute unto their exalted King, and thus bring themselves into 'remembrance' before Him.

Besides, it was also a popular feast, when families, like that of David, might celebrate their special annual sacrifice (1 Sam 20:6,29); when the king gave a state-banquet (1 Sam 20:5,24); and those who sought for instruction and edification resorted to religious meetings, such as Elisha seems to have held (2 Kings 4:23).

And so we trace its observance onwards through the history of Israel; marking in Scripture a special Psalm for the New Moon (in Tishri) (Psa 81:3); noting how from month to month the day was kept as an outward ordinance, even in the decay of religious life (Isa 1:13; Hosea 2:11), apparently all the more rigidly, with abstinence from work, not enjoined in the law, that its spirit was no longer understood (Amos 8:5); and finally learning from the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel that it also had a higher meaning, and was destined to find a better fulfilment in another dispensation, when the New Moon trumpet should summon 'all flesh to worship before Jehovah' (Isa 66:23), and the closed eastern gate to the inner court of the new Temple be opened once more to believing Israel (Eze 46:1). And in New Testament times we still find the 'New Moon' kept as an outward observance by Jews and Judaizing Christians, yet expressly characterised as 'a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ' (Col 2:16,17).

The Determination of the New Moon

We have already shown of what importance the right determination of the new moon was in fixing the various festivals of the year, and with what

care and anxiety its appearance was ascertained from witnesses who had actually seen it; also how the tidings were afterwards communicated to those at a distance. For the new moon was reckoned by actual personal observation, not by astronomical calculation, with which, however, as we know, many of the Rabbis must have been familiar, since we read of astronomical pictures, by which they were wont to test the veracity of witnesses. So important was it deemed to have faithful witnesses, that they were even allowed, in order to reach Jerusalem in time, to travel on the Sabbath, and, if necessary, to make use of horse or mule (Mish. Rosh ha Sh. i. 9; iii. 2). While strict rules determined who were not to be admitted as witnesses, every encouragement was given to trustworthy persons, and the Sanhedrim provided for them a banquet in a large building specially destined for that purpose, and known as the Beth Yaazek.

The Blowing of Trumpets

In the law of God only these two things are enjoined in the observance of the 'New Moon'--the 'blowing of trumpets' (Num 10:10) and special festive sacrifices (Num 28:11-15). Of old the 'blowing of trumpets' had been the signal for Israel's host on their march through the wilderness, as it afterwards summoned them to warfare, and proclaimed or marked days of public rejoicing, and feasts, as well as the 'beginning of their months' (Num 10:1-10). The object of it is expressly stated to have been 'for a memorial,' that they might 'be remembered before Jehovah,' it being specially added: 'I am Jehovah your God.' It was, so to speak, the host of God assembled, waiting for their Leader; the people of God united to proclaim their King.

At the blast of the priests' trumpets they ranged themselves, as it were, under His banner and before His throne, and this symbolical confession and proclamation of Him as 'Jehovah their God,' brought them before Him to be 'remembered' and 'saved.' And so every season of 'blowing the trumpets,' whether at New Moons, at the Feast of Trumpets or New Year's Day, at other festivals, in the Sabbatical and Year of Jubilee, or in the time of war, was a public acknowledgment of Jehovah as King. Accordingly we find the same symbols

adopted in the figurative language of the New Testament. As of old the sound of the trumpet summoned the congregation before the Lord at the door of the Tabernacle, so 'His elect' shall be summoned by the sound of the trumpet in the day of Christ's coming (Matt 24:31), and not only the living, but those also who had 'slept' (1 Cor 15:52)--'the dead in Christ' (1 Thess 4:16). Similarly, the heavenly hosts are marshalled to the war of successive judgments (Rev 8:2; 10:7), till, as 'the seventh angel sounded,' Christ is proclaimed King Universal: 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever' (Rev 11:15).

The Sacrifices of the New Moon

Besides the 'blowing of trumpets,' certain festive sacrifices were ordered to be offered on the New Moon (Num 28:11-15). These most appropriately mark 'the beginnings of months' (Num 28:11). For it is a universal principle in the Old Testament, that 'the first' always stands for the whole--the firstfruits for the whole harvest, the firstborn and the firstlings for all the rest; and that 'if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy.' And so the burnt-offerings and the sin-offerings at 'the beginning' of each month consecrated the whole. These festive sacrifices consisted of two young bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year for a burnt-offering, with their appropriate meat- and drink-offerings, and also of 'one kid of the goats for a sin-offering unto Jehovah.'

There is a curious and somewhat blasphemous Haggadah, or story, in the Talmud on this subject. It appears that at first the sun and moon had been created of equal size, but that when the moon wished to be sole 'ruler' to the exclusion of the sun, her jealousy was punished by diminution. In reply to her arguments and importunity, God had then tried to comfort the moon, that the three righteous men, Jacob, Samuel, and David, were likewise to be small--and when even thus the moon had the better of the reasoning, God had directed that a 'sin-offering' should be brought on the new moon, because He had made the moon smaller and less important than the sun!

When we pass from these simple Scriptural directions to what tradition records of the actual

observance of 'New Moons' in the Temple, our difficulties increase. For this and New Year's Day are just such feasts, in connection with which superstition would most readily grow up, from the notions which the Rabbis had, that at changes of seasons Divine judgments were initiated, modified, or finally fixed.

Necessity for Distinguishing the Temple and Synagogue Use

Modern critics have not been sufficiently careful in distinguishing what had been done in the Temple from what was introduced into the synagogue, gradually and at much later periods. Thus, prayers which date long after the destruction of Jerusalem have been represented as offered in the Temple, and the custom of chanting the 'Hallel' (Psa 113-118) on New Moons in the synagogue has been erroneously traced to Biblical times.

So far as we can gather, the following was the order of service on New Moon's Day. The Council sat from early morning to just before the evening sacrifice, to determine the appearance of the new moon. The proclamation of the Council--'It is sanctified!'--and not the actual appearance of the new moon, determined the commencement of the feast. Immediately afterwards, the priests blew the trumpets which marked the feast. After the ordinary morning sacrifice, the prescribed festive offerings were brought, the blood of the burnt-offerings being thrown round the base of the altar below the red line, and the rest poured out into the channel at the south side of the altar; while the blood of the sin-offering was sprinkled or dropped from the finger on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, beginning from the east, the rest being poured out, as that of the burnt-offerings.

The two bullocks of the burnt-offerings were hung up and flayed on the uppermost of the three rows of hooks in the court, the rams on the middle, and the lambs on the lowest hooks. In all no less than 107 priests officiated at this burnt-offering--20 with every bullock, 11 with every ram, and 8 with every lamb, including, of course, those who carried the appropriate meat- and drink-offerings. At the offering of these sacrifices the trumpets were again blown. All of them were slain at the north side of the altar, while the peace- and freewill-offerings, which private Israelites were

went at such seasons to bring, were sacrificed at the south side. The flesh of the sin-offering and what of the meat-offering came to them, was eaten by the priests in the Temple itself; their portion of the private thank-offerings might be taken by them to their homes in Jerusalem, and there eaten with their households.

A Prayer of the Third Century, AD

If any special prayers were said in the Temple on New Moons' Days, tradition has not preserved them, the only formula dating from that period being that used on first seeing the moon--'Blessed be He who reneweth the months.' To this the synagogue, towards the close of the third century, added the following: 'Blessed be He by whose word the heavens were created, and by the breath of whose mouth all the hosts thereof were formed! He appointed them a law and time, that they should not overstep their course. They rejoice and are glad to perform the will of their Creator, Author of truth; their operations are truth! He spoke to the moon, Be thou renewed, and be the beautiful diadem (i.e. the hope) of man (i.e. Israel), who shall one day be quickened again like the moon (i.e. at the coming of Messiah), and praise their Creator for His glorious kingdom. Blessed be He who reneweth the moons.' At a yet much later period, a very superstitious prayer was next inserted, its repetition being accompanied by leaping towards the moon! New Moon's Day, though apparently observed in the time of Amos as a day of rest (Amos 8:5), is not so kept by the Jews in our days, nor, indeed, was abstinence from work enjoined in the Divine Law.

The Moon of the Seventh Month

Quite distinct from the other new moons, and more sacred than they, was that of the seventh month, or Tishri, partly on account of the symbolical meaning of the seventh or sabbatical month, in which the great feasts of the Day of Atonement and of Tabernacles occurred, and partly, perhaps, because it also marked the commencement of the civil year, always supposing that, as Josephus and most Jewish writers maintain, the distinction between the sacred and civil year dates from the time of Moses.

In another place we have adopted the common, modern view, that this distinction only dates from the return from Babylon. But it must be admitted that the weight of authority is all on the other side. The Jews hold that the world was created in the month Tishri.

In Scripture this feast is designated as the 'memorial blowing' (Lev 23:24), or 'the day of blowing' (Num 29:1), because on that day the trumpets, or rather, as we shall see, the horns were blown all day long in Jerusalem. It was to be observed as 'a Sabbath,' and 'a holy convocation,' in which 'no servile work' might be done. The prescribed offerings for the day consisted, besides the ordinary morning and evening sacrifices, first, of the burnt-offerings, but not the sin-offering, of ordinary new moons, with their meat- and drink-offerings, and after that, of another festive burnt-offering of one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs, with their appropriate meat- and drink-offerings, together with 'one kid of the goats for a sin-offering, to make an atonement for you.'

While the drink-offering of the festive sacrifice was poured out, the priests and Levites chanted Psalm 81, and if the feast fell on a Thursday, for which that Psalm was, at any rate, prescribed, it was sung twice, beginning the second time at verse 7 in the Hebrew text, or verse 6 of our Authorised Version. At the evening sacrifice Psalm 29 was sung. For reasons previously explained (chiefly to prevent possible mistakes), it became early common to observe the New Year's Feast on two successive days, and the practice may have been introduced in Temple times.

The Mishnah on New Year's Day

The Mishnah, which devotes a special tractate to this feast, remarks that a year may be arranged according to four different periods; the first, beginning with the 1st of Nisan, being for 'kings' (to compute taxation) and for computing the feasts; the second, on the 1st of Elul (the sixth month), for tithing flocks and herds, any animal born after that not being reckoned within the previous year; the third, on the 1st of Tishri (the seventh month), for the Civil, the Sabbatical, and the Jubilee year, also for trees and herbs; and lastly, that on the 1st of Shebat (the eleventh month), for all fruits of trees. Similarly, continues

the Mishnah, there are four seasons when judgment is pronounced upon the world: at the Passover, in regard to the harvest; at Pentecost, in regard to the fruits of trees; on the Feast of Tabernacles, in regard to the dispensation of rain; while on 'New Year's Day all the children of men pass before Him like lambs (when they are counted for the tithing), as it is written (Psa 33:15), "He fashioneth their hearts alike; He considereth all their works."

The Talmud on the New Year

To this we may add, as a comment of the Talmud, that on New Year's Day three books were opened--that of life, for those whose works had been good; another of death, for those who had been thoroughly evil; and a third, intermediate, for those whose case was to be decided on the Day of Atonement (ten days after New Year), the delay being granted for repentance, or otherwise, after which their names would be finally entered, either in the book of life, or in that of death. By these terms, however, eternal life or death are not necessarily meant; rather earthly well-being, and, perhaps, temporal life, or the opposite. It is not necessary to explain at length on what Scriptural passages this curious view about the three books is supposed to rest.

But so deep and earnest are the feelings of the Rabbis on this matter, that by universal consent the ten days intervening between New Year and the Day of Atonement are regarded as 'days of repentance.' Indeed, from a misunderstanding of a passage in the Mishnah (Sheb. i. 4, 5), a similar superstition attaches to every new moon, the day preceding it being kept by rigid Jews as one of fasting and repentance, and called the 'Lesser Day of Atonement.' In accordance with this, the Rabbis hold that the blowing of the trumpets is intended, first, to bring Israel, or rather the merits of the patriarchs and God's covenant with them, in remembrance before the Lord; secondly, to be a means of confounding Satan, who appears on that day specially to accuse Israel; and, lastly, as a call to repentance--as it were, a blast to wake men from their sleep of sin (Maimonides, Moreh Nev. iii. 43).

In opposition to this, Luther annotates as follows: 'They were to blow with the horn in order to call

God and His wondrous works to remembrance; how He had redeemed them--as it were to preach about it, and to thank Him for it, just as among us Christ and His redemption is remembered and preached by the Gospel'; to which the Weimar Glossary adds: 'Instead of the horn and trumpets we have bells.' See Lundius, *Jud. Heiligth.* p. 1024, col. ii. Buxtorf applies Amos 3:16 to the blowing of the horn.

New Year's Day in Jerusalem

During the whole of New Year's Day, trumpets and horns were blown in Jerusalem from morning to evening. In the Temple it was done, even on a Sabbath, but not outside its walls. Since the destruction of Jerusalem this restriction has been removed, and the horn is blown in every synagogue, even though the feast fall upon a Sabbath. It has already been hinted that the instruments used were not the ordinary priests' trumpets, but horns.

The Mishnah holds that any kind of horns may be blown except those of oxen or calves, in order not to remind God of the sin of the golden calf! The Mishnah, however, specially mentions the straight horn of the antelope and the bent horn of the ram; the latter with special allusion to the sacrifice in substitution of Isaac, it being a tradition that New Year's Day was that in which Abraham, despite Satan's wiles to prevent or retard him, had offered up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. The mouthpiece of the horns for New Year's Day were fitted with gold--those used on fast days with silver.

Another distinction was this--on New Year's Day those who blew the horn were placed between others who blew the trumpets, and the sound of the horn was prolonged beyond that of the trumpets; but on fast days those who sounded the trumpets stood in the middle, and their blast was prolonged beyond that of the horn. For the proper observance of these solemn seasons, it was deemed necessary not only to hear but to listen to the sound of the horns, since, as the Mishnah adds, everything depends on the intent of the heart, not on the mere outward deed, just as it was not Moses lifting up his hands that gave Israel the victory, nor yet the lifting up of the brazen serpent which healed, but the upturning of the heart of Israel to 'their Father

who is in heaven'--or faith (Rosh ha Sh. iii. 8). We quote the remark, not only as one of the comparatively few passages in the Mishnah which turn on the essence of religion, but as giving an insight into the most ancient views of the Rabbis on these types, and as reminding us of the memorable teaching of our Lord to one of those very Rabbis (John 3:14,15).

The New Year's Blessings

The Mishnah (Rosh ha Sh. iv. 5, etc.) mentions various 'Berachoth' or 'benedictions' as having been repeated on New Year's Day. These, with many others of later date, still form part of the liturgy in the synagogue for that day. But there is internal evidence that the prayers, at any rate in their present form, could not have been used, at least, in the Temple.

From the text of Rosh ha Sh. iv. 7, it distinctly appears that they were intended to be used in the synagogues. Of course, this leaves the question open, whether or not something like them was also said in the Temple. The Mishnah mentions altogether nine of these 'benedictions.'

Besides, the Rabbis themselves differ as to their exact amount and contents, and finally satisfy themselves by indicating that the titles of these benedictions are rather intended as headings, to show their contents, and what special direction their prayers had taken. One set of them bore on 'the kingdom' of God, and is accordingly called Malchiyoth; another, the Sichronoth, referred to the various kinds of 'remembrance' on the part of God; while a third, called Shopharoth, consisted of benedictions, connected with the 'blowing of the horn.' It is said that any one who simply repeated ten passages from Scripture--according to another authority, three--bearing on 'the kingdom of God,' 'the remembrance of God,' and 'the blowing of horns,' had fulfilled his duty in regard to these 'benedictions.'

Quiz - Instructions

The following questions relate to your study of this lesson.

Respond to the questions as required.

You have choices about sending the quiz back to Grace Notes.

The First Day of the Seventh Month

From Scripture we know with what solemnity the first day of the seventh month as observed at the time of Ezra, and how deeply moved the people were by the public reading and explanation of the law, which to so many of them came like a strange sound, all the more solemn, that after so long a period they heard it again on that soil which, as it were, bore witness to its truth (Neh 8:1-12). In the New Testament there is no reference to our Lord having ever attended this feast in Jerusalem. Nor was this necessary, as it was equally celebrated in all the synagogues of Israel.

Yet there seems some allusion to the blowing of the horn in the writings of St. Paul. We have already stated that, according to Maimonides (Moreh Nev. iii. c. 43), one of its main purposes was to rouse men to repentance. In fact, the commentator of Maimonides makes use of the following words to denote the meaning of the blowing of trumpets: 'Rouse ye, rouse ye from your slumber; awake, awake from your sleep, you who mind vanity, for slumber most heavy has fallen upon you. Take it to heart, before Whom you are to give an account in the judgment.' May not some such formula also have been anciently used in the synagogue; and may not the remembrance of it have been present to the mind of the apostle, when he wrote (Eph 5:14): 'Wherefore it is said, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!' If so, we may possibly find an allusion to the appearance of the new moon, specially to that of the seventh month, in these words of one of the preceding verses (Eph 5:8): 'For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light!'

- If you received an email file containing the questions, you can use the REPLY feature of your e-mail application to open the file. Enter your responses in the reply message. Then SEND the message to Grace Notes.
- You can enter your answers on these pages, then send the whole file back to Grace Notes as a file attachment. This is handy, but these lessons will average 100K to 200K in size. As an alternative,
- After you answer the questions here, copy and paste the whole list of questions into a new MS Word document; then, send the new file to Grace Notes as an attachment. The new file will, of course, be much smaller than this main file.
- Finally, you can print the Quiz pages on your printer and send your response back to Grace Notes in the regular mail. If you do this, send the mail to:

Grace Notes
% Warren Doud
1705 Aggie Lane
Austin, Texas 78757 USA

Whichever transmission method you use, when Grace Notes receives your response, we will send you the next lesson in the series.

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Questions on The Temple, Lesson 15

1. The actual time of the new moon was reckoned by astronomical calculation. [True/False]

Answer:

2. The blowing of trumpets was not allowed during the Feast of the New Moon. [True/False]

Answer:

3. How did the people know when the Feast of the New Moon was to start?

Answer:

4. The most sacred New Moon was that of the _____ month.

Answer:

5. What are the four periods into which the Mishnah divides a year?

Answer:

6. On New Year's Day, trumpets and horns were blown in the Temple. [True/False]

Answer:

End of Quiz