Prof. Karel van der Toorn

University of Amsterdam

Prof. Karel van der Toorn is Professor of Religion and Society at the University of Amsterdam. He studied Theology and Semitic Languages in Paris (Institut Catholique, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes) and holds a Ph.D. (1985) from Free University Amsterdam, and his dissertation was published under the title *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study* (Van Gorcum, 1985). Prof. van der Toorn has published widely on the Hebrew Bible in its Near Eastern context. His books include *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel* (Brill, 1996); *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Harvard University Press, 2007); *God in Context: Selected Essays on Society and Religion in the Early Middle East* (Mohr Siebeck, 2018); *Papyrus Amherst 63* (Ugarit-Verlag, 2018); *Becoming Diaspora Jews: Behind the Story of Elephantine* (Yale University Press, 2019).

Rosh Hashanah with the Early Israelites

The New Year was celebrated on the festival of ingathering of grapes, accompanied by a sacrificial meal and wine. YHWH was declared to be Israel’s king and judge, and his presence, as it was manifest in the ark, was paraded before the Israelites by the king.

[Prof. Karel van der Toorn](https://www.thetorah.com/author/karel-van-der-toorn)



D. Georgiev/123rf, adapted

The Gezer Calendar

The so-called Gezer calendar is one of the earliest Hebrew inscriptions discovered. The small limestone plaque goes back to the tenth century B.C.E., a time when Babylonian month names (from which the Jewish ones derive) were as yet unknown in Israel, nor were the official Canaanite names, such as Bul, Ziv, or Etanim,[1] widely used.

Upon this plaque, Aviya, an untrained scribe who incised his name on the lower left corner, wrote down the order of the year, dividing the months on the basis of the relevant agricultural activities:

ירחו אסף
ירחו זרע
ירחו לקש
ירח עצד פשת
ירח קצר שערם
ירח קצר וכל
ירחו זמר
ירח קץ

Two months ingathering (of grapes and olives);
Two months sowing (of grain);
Two months late sowing;
One month hoeing up of flax;
One month harvest of barley;
One month harvest (of wheat), etcetera;[2]
Two months pruning (the vine);
One month summer fruit.[3]

The year presented here is not an abstract entity of time, but an order of agricultural events divided into one or two lunar cycles.

Beginning the Year with Ingathering

The first entry in the calendar, “Ingathering,” from the root א.ס.פ, marks the season for harvesting of grapes and olives in autumn. This period corresponds to the Jewish/Babylonian months of Tishri and Marcheshvan (roughly mid-September to mid-November).

The Bible marks the harvest with the Feast of Ingathering (חַג הָאָסִיף), which took place בְּצֵאת הַשָּׁנָה, “at the coming forth of the year” (Exod 23:16)[4] or, as the variant expression has it, תְּקוּפַת הַשָּׁנָה, “at the turn of the year” (Exod 34:22). In other words, Ingathering is a New Year festival.[5]

The autumn New Year festival, in its origin, was a local celebration, during which the peasant population of Israel and Judah would go to nearby sanctuaries to give the deity some of the ingathered produce, like tenant farmers giving the owner their cut of the proceeds.[6] Worshippers also took the opportunity to offer a public expression of thanks for divine favors granted,[7] and to petition for rain in the coming season.[8]

Wine and Merrymaking

Two biblical stories set in Shiloh, a cultic center in the 11th century B.C.E.,[9] take place during this festival and highlight some of its aspects. Judges 21:19, which refers to this festival as חַג יְ־הוָה בְּשִׁלוֹ **מִיָּמִים יָמִימָה** “the **yearly** festival of YHWH in Shiloh,” describes how unmarried girls would come out and dance (21:21) in the vineyards, apparently as part of a celebration of the grape harvest.

This same yearly Shiloh festival appears in the opening of Samuel, describing the practice of Elkanah, who would later become the father of Samuel:

שמואל א א:ג וְעָלָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מֵעִירוֹ **מִיָּמִים יָמִימָה** לְהִשְׁתַּחֲו‍ֹת וְלִזְבֹּחַ לַי־הוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּשִׁלֹה...

1 Sam 1:3 This man used to go up from his town **yearly** to worship and to offer sacrifice to YHWH of Hosts at Shiloh…

The festival thus included both sacrifices to the deity as well as an occasion for meeting and merrymaking.[10] Part of the proceedings was a collective meal in the presence of the deity, including meat (which was not often consumed) and wine, to celebrate the grape harvest.[11]

Cases of drunkenness were likely not uncommon. This occurs, for instance, during the celebration of the grape harvest in Shechem:

שופטים ט:כז וַיֵּצְאוּ הַשָּׂדֶה וַיִּבְצְרוּ אֶת כַּרְמֵיהֶם וַיִּדְרְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ הִלּוּלִים וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית אֱ‍לֹהֵיהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיְקַלְלוּ אֶת אֲבִימֶלֶךְ.

Judg 9:27 They went out into the fields, gathered and trod out the vintage of their vineyards, and made a festival. They entered the temple of their god, and as they ate and drank they reviled Abimelech.

The point is illustrated nicely 1 Samuel (vv. 12–15), when the priest Eli sees Hannah praying silently, and suspects she has had one or two cups too many.

The Centrality of the Festival

The festival celebrating the ingathering of grapes was of great importance in many ancient Near Eastern societies. In Ugarit, for instance, it was celebrated for an entire month, referred to as Rashu-Yeni (ראשית היין), equivalent to Jewish Ellul, and ending with the New Year. Like the Israelite festival (in the Priestly texts), the main festivities began on the 15th of the month, lasted seven days, and included many sacrifices and other temple-based rituals, in which the king played a central role.[12]

The Bible considers this festival of paramount importance; Solomon chooses this festival as the best time to consecrate the new Jerusalem Temple:

מלכים א ח:סה וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁלֹמֹה בָעֵת הַהִיא אֶת הֶחָג וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמּוֹ קָהָל גָּדוֹל מִלְּבוֹא חֲמָת עַד נַחַל מִצְרַיִם לִפְנֵי יְ־הוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים...

1 Kings 8:65 So Solomon observed the Festival at that time, and all Israel with him—a great assemblage, coming from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt—before YHWH our God for seven days…[13]

The festival is simply called הֶחָג, “the Festival,” with no need to specify further.

Jeroboam’s Competing Festival

The popularity of this festival is underscored in the story of Jeroboam’s establishing the north as a polity independent of Jerusalem and its king. Jeroboam expresses concern that the people will go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, and thus be reconciled with the Davidic king (1 Kings 12:25–33), so he builds two temples, in northern Dan and southern Bethel,

מלכים א יב:לב וַיַּעַשׂ יָרָבְעָם חָג בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁמִינִי בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ כֶּחָג אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה... יב:לג וַיַּעַל עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בְּבֵית אֵל בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁמִינִי בַּחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּדָא מלבד [מִלִּבּוֹ] וַיַּעַשׂ חָג לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל....

1 Kgs 12:32 And Jeroboam established a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; in imitation of the festival in Judah… 12:33 He ascended the altar that he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month—the month in which he had contrived of his own mind to establish a festival for the Israelites…

While there is reason to doubt the historicity of this account, which seems designed to dismiss the northern festival as illegitimate, the text does reflect the necessity the Northern Kingdom would have had to hold its own Ingathering Festival celebrations.

YHWH as King: Celebrating the Deity’s Mythological Triumph

The New Year festival, especially in the monarchic period, contained rituals and liturgy emphasizing YHWH’s kingship over Israel,[14] which fits with the theme of the new year festival as celebrated among the nations surrounding Israel. In the Babylonian Akitu festival, the population chanted to Marduk as the god made his way to the temple to be seated on his royal throne.[15] At Ugarit, the celebration focused on the storm-god Baal. Having defeated his mythical enemies Yammu and Mot, Baal was hailed once again as king.[16]

Whether or not Israel had a clear parallel to the mythological aspect of the chief god defeating his enemies is uncertain, though it does have:

* The ritual of blowing the *shofar* “ram’s horn” on this festival (Lev 23:24, Num 29:1), which is connected to coronation rituals.[17]
* Psalms alluding to the existence of such stories (Ps 74:12­–17 and Hab 3).[18]
* Psalms discussing the coronation of YHWH and likely connected with the New Year festival (Pss 47 and 93).[19]

In addition, the theme of YHWH’s coronation is especially prominent in three Israelite psalms preserved in a mid-fourth century B.C.E. Egyptian papyrus, which give a glimpse into the New Year festival as it was celebrated in Israel before the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.E.).[20]

YHWH as King in the Psalms of Papyrus Amherst 63

Papyrus Amherst 63, discovered on the island of Elephantine,[21] is an Aramaic document written in Egyptian Demotic (“popular”) script. It is an unusual document in that it constitues the pooled works of three communities: Babylonians, Arameans from Hamath, and Israelites from the northern kingdom.

Part of the Israelite contribution to the papyrus are three psalms, one of which is parallel to the biblical Psalm 20, and the other two unattested in the Bible.[22] These ritual songs combine the celebration of God’s kingship with references to the festival of the new wine (Papyrus Amherst 63, xiii 6-7):

יינא מזגו בגלנא
בגלנא בחדשׁינא
שׁרי יהו בטב אלפא צעא

They have mixed the wine in our jar,
In our jar, at our New Moon festival!
Drink, Yaho, from the bounty of a thousand bowls!

Amid the sacrifices of lambs and sheep (xiii 1), the presentation of pitchers of wine (xiii 5), and to the sound of harp, lyre, and flute (xiii 8-10), the central theme is God’s rule. The appearance of the new moon signals the beginning of the celebration. It is also a symbol of Yaho’s rise to kingship (Papyrus Amherst 63, xii 13-15):

לתחתיכא יהו
לתחתיכא אדני
דאר שׁמין כחולא
יהו דאר שׁמין
קראי אלן מרתך

Beneath you, Yaho,
Beneath you, Adonay,
The host of heaven is like sand.
Yaho, the host of heaven
Proclaims to us your rule.

The “host of heaven” is a designation of the stars, seen here as the symbols of all the lesser gods that have to bow to the supreme ruler of heaven.[23] God’s kingship implies his elevation above the other gods (Papyrus Amherst 63, xiii 11-12):

מא באלהן
באדם יהו
מא באלהן
במלך בל מלך
מא כך יהו באלהן

Who among the gods,
Among humankind, Yaho—
Who among the gods,
Among king and non-king,
Who is like you, Yaho, among the gods?[24]

The polytheistic setting of these songs is a sign of their antiquity. Most of the biblical songs about YHWH’s kingship focus on God’s rule over the foreign nations, rather than his supremacy over foreign gods. Here, Yaho’s rise to kingship implies the submission of the other gods to his rule.[25]

YHWH as Judge

YHWH as judge, a theme that connects to YHWH as king, is also rooted in the earliest celebrations of the New Year. The notion of God’s determining human destinies in the year to come, so central to the post-biblical Rosh Hashanah, appears already in the story of Elkanah and Hannah’s participation in the annual festival at Shiloh.

Reassured by the Eli’s promise that her request would be granted, Hannah gave birth to a son לִתְקֻפוֹת הַיָּמִים, “at the turn of the year” (1 Samuel 1:20), i.e., just before the next New Year festival.[26] By the mouth of the priest, God had fixed Hannah’s fate. Hannah’s hymn in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 elaborates on this theme:

שמואל ב:ה שְׂבֵעִים בַּלֶּחֶם נִשְׂכָּרוּ
וּרְעֵבִים חָדֵלּוּ
עַד עֲקָרָה יָלְדָה שִׁבְעָה
וְרַבַּת בָּנִים אֻמְלָלָה.
ב:ו יְ־הוָה מֵמִית וּמְחַיֶּה
מוֹרִיד שְׁאוֹל וַיָּעַל.
ב:ז יְ־הוָה מוֹרִישׁ וּמַעֲשִׁיר
מַשְׁפִּיל אַף מְרוֹמֵם.

Men once sated must hire out for bread;
Men once hungry hunger no more.
While the barren woman bears seven,
The mother of many is forlorn.
YHWH deals death and gives life,
Casts down into Sheol and raises up.
YHWH makes poor and makes rich;
He casts down, he also lifts high.

The Amherst Papyrus new year psalms also mention God’s power to elevate and to bring down (xiii 5-6):

מגדל רב מרחם
יהו משׁפלי שחא

The Merciful One exalts the great,
Yaho humiliates the lowly one.

Though these songs speak about such acts of God as though they were timeless events, the setting of their proclamation is the New Year festival.

The belief that fate is determined by the divine at the beginning of the year was familiar to the Babylonians too, during whose New Year celebrations the high god Marduk held up the “tablet of destinies” as a kind of program for the year to come.[27]

Procession of the God

Part of the new year celebration ritual in ancient Near Eastern cultures was the solemn procession of the god, whose image would be removed from the temple precinct, paraded, and then returned to it. This ritual served a practical function, since the god’s quarters needed to be purified—a practice referred to in the Bible with the verbs *kappēr* and *ṭahēr*, and associated with Yom Kippur, also part of the New Year season.[28]

In addition, it gave the god’s many non-priestly and non-royal worshipers direct access to the deity, unavailable to them during the year. In the Babylonian New Year festival, the king is reported to have taken the god Marduk “by the hand,” leading the image back into the temple.

In Israel and Judah, a similar ritual appears to have taken place with the portable shrine in which YHWH was mysteriously present.[29] The Ark proceeded amid acclamation (*tĕrûᴄâ*) and blasts of the horn (*qôl šōpār*, 2 Samuel 6:15). In the premonarchic period, this would have been led by the priests, while in the monarchic period, the king would have taken a leading role in these proceedings.

A fine illustration of the king’s role is preserved in the narrative about David’s transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6). Donned like a priest in a linen ephod, David led the Ark to its resting-place. Although the story narrates a one-time event, it is modeled after the annual procession of the Ark.[30] In a similar manner, the Judean kings would have taken the lead in the procession of the Ark.

The participation of the king was a powerful means to consolidate the position of the human king, with rather obvious political implications: God was king on high, and the monarch was his deputy on earth. The few psalms that celebrate the human ruler as God’s son on earth (such as Psalms 2 and 110) likely originated in the context of the New Year celebration. Certainly, the presentation of the king as a priestly figure (Psalm 110:4) is entirely in keeping with his role in the procession.

God’s Anointed One in Hannah’s Hymn

The ending of Hannah’s song illustrates the connection between monarchy and the New Year Festival:

שמואל א ב:י יְ־הוָה יָדִין אַפְסֵי אָרֶץ
וְיִתֶּן עֹז לְמַלְכּוֹ
וְיָרֵם קֶרֶן מְשִׁיחוֹ

1 Sam 2:10 YHWH will judge the ends of the earth.
He will give power to His king,
And triumph to His anointed one.

At the time Hannah is supposed to have spoken these words, there was as yet no king in Israel. In fact, it would be Hannah’s own son who anointed the first one. So the reference to a king is an anachronism—or a prophecy, if you like. But it does suggest that Hannah’s song was at home in a collection of ritual texts for the New Year festival and later inserted in the tale about Hannah’s visit to Shiloh.[31]

The Post-Exilic Fork on the Road

As discussed above, in the monarchic period, the king played a key role in the New Year festival. In the post-exilic era, however, when the Ark was lost (Jeremiah 3:16) and the Davidic monarchy was not successfully restored, the monarchic aspect of festival was no longer significant. The celebration then forked, developing into two distinct festivals: Sukkot (the harvest festival) and the New Year festival, what rabbinic Judaism calls Rosh Hashanah.[32]

**Sukkot**—The agrarian character of the festival is the dominant theme of Sukkot, the Feast of Ingathering. In this period, praising God for Israel’s bounty gained new prominence in the liturgy. Psalm 65 offers an example, as it glorifies God as the bringer of rain and fertility:

תהלים סה:יב עִטַּרְתָּ שְׁנַת טוֹבָתֶךָ וּמַעְגָּלֶיךָ יִרְעֲפוּן דָּשֶׁן.

Ps 65:12 You crown the year with Your bounty; fatness is distilled in Your paths.

We also see an emphasis on agrarian rituals such as the taking of the four species and the building of *sukkot* or “booths,” a reminder of the vineyard bowers set up for protecting those picking the crop, and the crop itself, during the ingathering (Lev 23:39­–43; Neh 8:14–15).[33] Rabbinic texts confirm the centrality of Sukkot, imagining (or recalling) constant celebrations day and night in the Temple on Sukkot, known in the Talmud, following biblical precedent, simply as חג, “the festival.”[34]

**Rosh Hashanah**—While the agrarian festival sheds the theme of New Year celebration (except for the emphasis on rain), the New Year theme becomes dominant on the festival of the first day of the seventh month, Jewish Rosh Hashanah. And while no human king participates in the festival, the description of God as king develops as a major part of the liturgy. So does the idea that God listens to people’s prayers and grants them life or death, wealth or poverty, etc.[35]

Unsurprisingly, the story of Hannah is read on Rosh Hashanah, as is the story of Sarah giving birth to Isaac. Moreover, the holiday has little of the celebratory in its liturgy or ritual, and has come to be known as יום הדין, “the Day of Judgment.” While this is not a biblical name, it is certainly a biblical theme relevant to the New Year. The Talmudic teaching about Rosh Hashanah being the occasion for God to check on or to record the fate of the wicked, the righteous, and those in between is deeply rooted in Israelite—and ancient Near Eastern—tradition.

[View Footnotes](https://www.thetorah.com/article/rosh-hashanah-with-the-early-israelites)

1. These names appear in 1 Kings, 6:1, 6:38, 8:2 respectively.
2. The meaning of the word וכל is debated. Other options are “measuring” or “feasting.” Editor’s note: For a discussion of agricultural activity in ancient Israel, see Oded Borowski, [“What Was Life Like in Biblical Times?”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/what-was-life-like-in-biblical-times) *TheTorah* (2019).
3. See Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*, 3 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979), no. 182.
4. Editor’s note: For the possible meanings of this phrase, see discussion in Harvey N. Bock, [“Is the Autumn Ingathering Festival at the Beginning, Middle, or End of the Year?”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/god-took-us-out-of-egypt-because-of-this) *TheTorah* (2019).
5. Editor’s note: For a discussion of the autumn harvest festival Asif/Sukkot as originally a new year festival, see Zev Farber, [“The Origins of Sukkot,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-origins-of-sukkot) *TheTorah* (2017).
6. Offerings of the produce of the fields appear to have been more frequent that just on this festival, as the biblical festival calendars also mention such a festival for wheat (e.g., *Qāṣîr*in Exodus 23:16). Even so, the New Year offering was special in that was like a final reckoning for the end of the previous year and an expression of hope for the next.
7. Psalms with the theme of God’s kingship, which connect to this festival, also refer to the gift of rain (Psalm 68:10) and provisions of food for the needy (Psalm 132:15).
8. Editor’s note: For more on the centrality of rain related rituals in this season, see Zev Farber, [“ניסוך המים: A Sukkot Rain-Making Ritual,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/water-libation-a-sukkot-rain-making-ritual) *TheTorah* (2015); *idem*., [“The Mystical Ritual of Hoshana Rabbah: Summoning God,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-ritual-of-hoshana-rabbah) *TheTorah* (2013).
9. Editor’s note: For more on Shiloh, see Zvi Koenigsberg, [“The Place(s) that YHWH will Choose: Ebal, Shiloh, and Jerusalem,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-places-that-yhwh-will-choose-ebal-shiloh-and-jerusalem) *TheTorah* (2019).
10. Editor’s note: For the possibility that the fourth year produce law in Leviticus 19:24 is an attempt to curtail the festivities of the vineyard festival, see Itamar Kislev, [“The Law of Fourth-Year Fruit: Restraining the Ancient Vintage Celebration,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-law-of-fourth-year-fruit-restraining-the-ancient-vintage-celebration) *TheTorah* (2015).
11. Qumran records a separate wine festival on the 3rd of Av, at the beginning of the grape harvest, (see discussion in, Marvin A. Sweeney, [“How the Temple Scroll Rewrote the Festival of Bikkurim,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/how-the-temple-scroll-rewrote-the-festival-of-bikkurim) *TheTorah* [2018]), and rabbinic tradition sets this festival on the 15th of Av (see discussion in, Shraga Bar-On, [“Remedying Biblical Trauma with a Festival of Love,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/remedying-biblical-trauma-with-a-festival-of-love) *TheTorah* [2015]). In contrast, the Torah’s Ingathering Festival comes at the end of the grape harvest, not the beginning, and thus overlaps with the beginning of the olive harvest as well. We see something similar with the biblical dates for the spring harvest festival, celebrating the wheat harvest. Exodus 23:16 seems to set the festival at the beginning of the harvest, while Exodus 34:22, and certainly Deuteronomy 16:9–11 and Leviticus 23:15–21 set it for much later in the season.
12. The rituals are described on two separate tablets, RS 1.003, RS 18.056. See discussion in, Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, Writings from the Ancient World 10 (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 63–65. The festival also has parallels to the Zukru festival of Emar. See Noga Ayali-Darshan, [“Sukkot’s Seventy Bulls,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/sukkots-seventy-bulls) *TheTorah* (2016).
13. Editor’s note: The amount of days the celebration lasts is unclear and contradicts the account in Chronicles. For a discussion of this problem, see David Bar-Cohn, [“Shemini Atzeret: Redacting a Missing Festival into Solomon’s Temple Dedication,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/shemini-atzeret-redacting-a-missing-festival-into-solomons-temple-dedication) *TheTorah* (2019).
14. During the tenth century B.C.E., a society based on kinship ties and the authority of local leaders made way for a polity in which ultimate power was vested in the king. The change had an impact on the religious imagination, including on the character of the autumnal New Year festivities. While in the pre-monarchic period, YHWH played the part of the divine warrior and patriarch, in the monarchic period, the metaphor of YHWH as king begins to play a central role. It is quite possible the royal metaphor had been in use before, but God’s kingship acquired a new dimension once the Israelites had come to experience human kingship. Editor’s note: For the almost total absence of this metaphor in the Torah, see Israel Knohl, [“Rosh Hashanah: Why the Torah Suppresses God's Kingship,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/rosh-hashanah-why-the-torah-suppresses-gods-kingship) *TheTorah* (2018).
15. Editor’s note: For more on this festival and its parallels to the Israelite New Year festival, see Uri Gabbay, [“Babylonian Rosh Hashanah,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/babylonian-rosh-hashanah-battle-creation-enthronement-and-justice) *TheTorah* (2014).
16. Baal’s kingship is a central theme of the Baal Cycle. For an excellent English translation, see Mark S. Smith, “The Baal Cycle,” in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker, SBL Writings from the Ancient World, 9 (Atlanta: SBL, 1997), 81–180, e.g. 105, lines 32-33.
17. The Torah does not say explicitly that the ram’s horn is blown, though it uses the term תרועה, “blasting” or “shouting,” which is often used together with the rams horn (see, for instance, the blowing of the shofar on Yom Kippur of the Jubilee Year in Lev 25:9). Editor’s note: Philo assumes the blowing occurs only in the Temple (see TABS Editors, [“Rosh Hashanah between Tanakh and Mishnah,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/rosh-hashanah-between-tanach-and-mishna) *TheTorah* [2014]), while Karaite tradition assumes no blowing at all (see Shawn Lichaa, [“A Shofar-Less Rosh Hashanah: A Karaite’s Experience of Yom Teruʿah,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/a-shofar-less-rosh-hashanah-a-karaites-experience-of-yom-teruah) *TheTorah* [2014]). Its connection to coronation rituals is discussed in David Frankel, “*[Malchuyot](https://www.thetorah.com/article/malchuyot-is-god-king-now-or-only-in-the-future)*[: Is God King Now or Only in the Future?”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/malchuyot-is-god-king-now-or-only-in-the-future) *TheTorah* (2017).
18. Editor’s note: The former is discussed in Gabbay, [“Babylonian Rosh Hashanah,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/babylonian-rosh-hashanah-battle-creation-enthronement-and-justice); the latter is discussed in Marvin A. Sweeney, [“Habakkuk’s Mythological Depiction of YHWH,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/habakkuks-mythological-depiction-of-yhwh) *TheTorah* (2019).
19. Editor’s note: For more on Psalm 47, see Alan Cooper, [“The Psalm of the Shofar: Its Use in Liturgy and its Meaning in the Bible,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-psalm-of-the-shofar-its-use-in-liturgy-and-its-meaning-in-the-bible) *TheTorah* (2014). For more on Rosh Hashanah as a festival celebrating the coronation of YHWH, see Marc Zvi Brettler, [“God's Coronation on Rosh Hashanah,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/coronation-on-rosh-hashanah-what-kind-of-king) *TheTorah* (2014).
20. For a publication of this papyrus, see Karel van der Toorn, *Papyrus Amherst 63*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 448 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2018).
21. Editor’s note: For more on the Elephantine community, see the various TheTorah articles [here](https://www.thetorah.com/topic/elephantine).
22. For more on these three psalms, see Karel van der Toorn, “Celebrating the New Year with the Israelites: Three Extrabiblical Psalms from Papyrus Amherst 63,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136.3 (2017): 633–649. For a brief but accessible discussion of these psalms, including a side-by-side comparison with Psalm 20, see *idem*, [“Egyptian Papyrus Sheds New Light on Jewish History,”](https://www.baslibrary.org/biblical-archaeology-review/44/4/3) *Biblical Archaeology Review* 44.4 (2018): 32–37.
23. Note the similarity to Psalm 97:7.
24. This is very similar to the famous line in the Song of the Sea:

שמות טו:יא מִי כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם יְ־הוָה מִי כָּמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ נוֹרָא תְהִלֹּת עֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא.

Exod 15:11 Who is like You, O YHWH, among the celestials; Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, working wonders!

1. Baal-Shamayin and Baal-Zaphon figure in these psalms in the role of subordinate deities who come to congratulate Yaho on his enthronement (the verb is *bērēk*, to bless, see xii 18; xiii15-16).
2. In his Anchor Bible commentary, P. Kyle McCarter translates “when a year has passed.” While “turn of the year” seems more accurate (see Exod 34:22), either way the reference is to the next New Year festival.
3. For a discussion of fate and the Tablets of Destiny in the ancient Near East, see Jack N. Lawson, *The Concept of Fate in Ancient Mesopotamia of the First Millennium: Toward an Understanding of Šīmtu*, Orientalia Biblica et Christiana 7 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994).
4. Editor’s note: For the connection between Yom Kippur and New Year celebrations, see Isaac Kalimi, [“The Historical Uniqueness and Centrality of Yom Kippur,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-historical-uniqueness-and-centrality-of-yom-kippur) *TheTorah* (2014).
5. Editor’s note: See Tzemah Yoreh, [“The Two Arks: Military and Ritual,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-two-arks-military-and-ritual) *TheTorah* (2020).
6. In later psalms, the story of David’s dance before the Ark came to resonate in the songs composed for the New Year festival. Thus, Psalm 132 links the Ark’s annual entry into the sanctuary (“Advance, O Lord, to Your resting-place, You and Your might Ark!, Psalm 132:8, JPS) with David’s devotion.
7. The reference to the barren woman bearing seven made it a very apt reference. Editor’s note: For a different suggestion on where this psalm derives from, see Marc Zvi Brettler, [“Reciting Ready-Made Prayers in Biblical Times and Today,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/reciting-ready-made-prayers-in-biblical-times-and-today) *TheTorah* (2019).
8. The term is not biblical for the fall new year, which the Priestly text merely calls “the first day of the seventh month.” In fact, the one time “*rosh hashanah*” appears in the Bible, Ezekiel 40:1, is probably a reference to the spring new year beginning on the first of Nissan. The Torah has a third ritual day in this period, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), which was also originally bound up in the one new year festival complex.
9. Editor’s note: For more on how these passages may have developed, see Lizbeth Fried, [“Sukkot in Ezra-Nehemiah and the Date of the Torah,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/sukkot-in-ezra-nehemiah-and-the-date-of-the-torah) *TheTorah* (2015); TABS Editors, [“The First Sukkah,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-first-sukkah) *TheTorah* (2013).
10. See the extensive discussion of this celebration in the Mishnah and the Talmud in the fifth chapter of tractate Sukkah.
11. Editor’s note: See discussion in Rachel Adelman, [“The Paradigm of the Barren Woman: How God ‘Remembers’ on Rosh Hashanah,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-paradigm-of-the-barren-woman-how-god-remembers-on-rosh-hashanah) *TheTorah* (2016); Marc Zvi Brettler, [“Zichronot: Asking an Omniscient God to Remember,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/zichronot-asking-an-omniscient-god-to-remember) *TheTorah* (2017).