Rosh Hashanah Source Sheet

Chronology of Rosh Hashanah on Mount Sinai

1 Vayikra 23: 24-25

(22) G-d spoke to Moshe saying:
(23) Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, there shall be a day of rest for you, a remembrance with Shofar blasts, a holy convocation.
(24) You shall not do any work and you shall offer a burnt offering to G-d.

2 Bamidbar 29: 1-6

(1) In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, there shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall not do any work, it shall be a day of sounding the Shofar for you.
(2) You shall make an elevation sacrifice for a sweet smell for G-d: one young bull, one ram, seven year old unblemished male lambs.
(3) And their meal offering: fine flour mixed with oil; three esronim for each bull; two esronim for each ram;
(4) And one isaron for each lamb of the seven lambs.
(5) One male goat for a sin offering to provide you atonement.
Rosh Hashanah: Yom Tov

Nechemiah 8: 1-3, 10

1. Then all the people gathered together as one, at the plaza before the Water Gate and they asked Ezra the scholar to bring the scroll of the Torah of Moshe, which G-d had commanded to Israel.

2. So Ezra the Cohen brought the Torah before the congregation – men and women, and all those who could listen with understanding – on the first day of the seventh month.

3. He read from it before the plaza that is before the Water Gate, from the first light until midday, in front of the common men and women and those who understood; and the ears of all the people were focused on the Torah scroll.

9. Then Nechemiah, the governor, as well as Ezra the Cohen, the scholar, and the Levites who were helping the people understand, said to all the people, ‘This day is sacred to the L-rd your G-d; do not mourn and do not weep.’ For all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the Torah.

10. He said to them, ‘Go, eat rich foods, drink sweet beverages, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, for today is sacred to our G-d. Do not be sad, the enjoyment of G-d is your strength.’

Rashi Nechemiah 8: 2

On the first day of the seventh month – that day was Rosh Hashanah.
Rosh Hashanah: New Year

Mishna Rosh Hashanah 1: 1

There are four New Years. On the first of Nisan is the New Year for [dating the reign of] Kings and for [the cycle of] festivals. The first of Elul is the New Year for Tithing [newly born] Animals. Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Shimon say the first of Tishrei.

The first of Tishrei is the new year for years, Sabbatical Years, Jubilee Years, planting trees, and for vegetables. The first of Shevat is the New Year for Trees according to Beis Shammai. Beis Hillel say on the fifteenth of that month.
Rosh Hashanah: Day of Judgment

6 Mishna Rosh Hashanah 1: 2

The world is judged at four times. On Pesach it is judged concerning crops. On Shavuos for fruit. On Rosh Hashanah all the inhabitants of the world pass before Him like sheep, as the verse states “Who fashions their hearts together, Who understands all their actions” (Tehillim 33: 15). On Succos it is judged for rainfall.

7 Rosh Hashanah 32b

The Angels said before G-d, ‘why do the Jews not sing Hallel on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?’ G-d replied, ‘could it be that the King sits on the throne of judgment and the books of life and death are open before Him, and the Jews sing Hallel?’

8 Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 1: 3 (quoted in Tur OC 581)

Rabbi Simon said: It is written “Who is like this nation who has righteous laws and statutes…” (Devarim 4: 7). Rabbi Chama from the house of Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Hoshea; one said, What other nation is like this nation? The way of the world is that if a person knows he will be judged he wears black somber clothes and black headdress, and doesn’t shave, since he doesn’t know the outcome of the trial. But the Jews are not like that. They wear white clothes and a white hat, cut their hair and eat and drink and rejoice on Rosh Hashanah because they know that G-d will do miracles for them.
Rosh Hashanah: Day of Judgment cont.

Ran Rosh Hashanah 3a (in the pages of the Rif)

G-d wanted to find the Jewish people meritorious in their judgment. He wanted to judge Israel on a day that was set fixed for atonement and forgiveness. Because G-d was appeased on Yom Kippur, He fixed it as a day of forgiveness for all future generations. Therefore G-d decreed that there should also be judgment on Rosh Hashanah because the completely righteous are written and sealed immediately for life. For the average people the judgment is not sealed and finalized until Yom Kippur, which is a day of forgiveness and atonement, so the Torah gives them time in which to examine their deeds and return to G-d. It is also possible that from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur G-d began to listen to Moshe’s pleas, and on Yom Kippur He was completely appeased. Therefore G-d wanted to judge His creation at a time that was fixed for forgiveness and atonement.
Rosh Hashanah: Day of Creation

10 Rosh Hashanah Mussaf service

This day is the anniversary of the start of Your handiwork, a remembrance of the first day.

11 Tosefos Rosh Hashanah 27a

According to whom do we pray nowadays when we say ‘today is the beginning of Your work’? – This is difficult to understand because the halachah is like Rabbi Yehoshua [that the world was created in Nissan], as we pointed out in the first chapter (12a) where it says ‘we follow the opinion of Rabbi Yehoshua when calculating the solstices’…. And that which Rabbi Eliezer HaKalir established in the prayer for rain on Shmini Atzeres where he writes according to Rabbi Eliezer [that the world was created in Tishrei], and on Pesach where he writes according to Rabbi Yehoshua.

Rabbeinu Tam answers that both opinions are the word of the Living G-d [True]. We can understand that in Tishrei the thought of creation entered His mind (in a manner of speaking), but the world was not actually created until Nissan. We find a similar idea in Eruvin (18a) where it says that G-d’s original intent was to create two people [Adam and Eve] but in the end He only created one [Adam, from whom Eve was later separated].
Rosh Hashanah: Day of Creation cont.

Chronology of the Sixth Day of Creation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TALMUD</th>
<th>MIDRASH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st hour gathered the dirt</td>
<td>thought entered His Mind</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd hour formed the shape</td>
<td>discussed it with the heavenly angels</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd hour drew out the limbs</td>
<td>gathered the dirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th hour blew a soul into it</td>
<td>mixed it with water to make mud</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th hour Adam stood up</td>
<td>formed the shape</td>
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<tr>
<td>6th hour Adam gave names to the animals</td>
<td>shaped the body</td>
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<tr>
<td>7th hour united with Eve</td>
<td>blew a soul into the body</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th hour went into bed as two and came out as four</td>
<td>brought man into the Garden of Eden</td>
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<tr>
<td>9th hour commanded not to eat from the fruit</td>
<td>commanded him not to eat from the tree</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th hour sinned</td>
<td>sinned</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th hour judged</td>
<td>judged</td>
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<tr>
<td>12th hour banished from Garden of Eden</td>
<td>received a merciful verdict</td>
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Rabbi Yochanan ben Chanina says: The [first] day was twelve hours long. In the first hour [G-d] gathered the dirt. In the second He formed the shape. In the third He drew out the limbs. In the fourth He blew a soul into it. In the fifth [Adam] stood up on his feet. In the sixth he [Adam] gave names [to the animals]. In the seventh he was united with Eve. In the eighth they went into bed as two and came out as four. In the ninth he was commanded not to eat from the fruit of the tree. In the tenth he sinned. In the eleventh he was judged. In the twelfth he was banished and left the Garden of Eden.
In the seventh month on the first of the month. This is what the verse means (Tehillim 119: 89) “Forever, G-d, Your word stands firm in the Heavens”. It was taught in the name of Rabbi Eliezer: on the twenty fifth of Elul the world was created. This statement of Rabbi Eliezer is the same as what was taught by Rav, as Rav taught: This day is the beginning of Your work, a remembrance of the first day, “for it is a statute to Israel” (Tehillim 81: 5)... and regarding the countries on this day it is said, ‘who is for the sword and who for peace; who is for famine and who for plenty. On this day the creatures are remembered for life and death’. 

On [the first] Rosh Hashanah, in the first hour the thought entered His Mind; in the second He discussed it with the Heavenly Angels; in the third He gathered the dirt; in the fourth He mixed [it with water to make] mud; in the fifth He formed the shape; in the sixth He shaped the body; in the seventh He blew a soul into it; in the eighth He brought man into the Garden of Eden; in the ninth He commanded him [not to eat from the tree]; in the tenth man sinned; in the eleventh he was judged; in the twelfth he received a merciful verdict. G-d said to man, ‘this will be a sign for your children. Just as you stood before Me in judgment on this day and came out with mercy, so too in the future your children will stand before Me in judgment on this day and will come out with mercy. When will this be? On the first day of the seventh month.
Rosh Hashanah: Day of Creation cont.

14 Rosh Hashanah Mussaf service

Today is the conception of the world. Today all creatures of the world stand in judgment – whether as children or as servants. If as children be merciful with us as the mercy of a father for children. If as servants, our eyes depend upon You until You show us graciousness and release our verdict as good as light, Awesome and Holy G-d.

15 Aruch Hashulchan 592: 6

The explanation of the words is as follows:

‘today is the conception of the world’: Adam was created on Rosh Hashanah. The beginning of creation was on the 25th of Elul, and Adam was created on the sixth day. On that day the ‘pregnancy’ of the world was completed, because Adam was the purpose of the entire Creation. He sinned on that same day by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and was judged on that same day.

Therefore ‘today all creatures of the world stand in judgment’: as it says in the Pesikta (Parsha 23): ‘G-d said to Adam, you are a sign to your children that just as you stood before Me in judgment and left with mercy’ – (because Adam did not die on that same day and lived instead for one of G-d’s ‘days’, which is 1000 years,) - ‘so too your children will stand before Me in judgment on this day’.

Afterwards we say:

‘whether as children, as servants’: This is based on the Talmud in Kiddushin (36a): ‘Rabbi Yehudah thought that when we behave like children, and do the will of our Father in Heaven, we are called children, but if not we are called servants. Therefore we pray that though we don’t know our situation, but either way may You have mercy upon us’.
Shlah on Rosh Hashanah: Torah Or; 63, 65, 67

Since Adam the first man repented completely, why was the decree against him, that he should die, not overturned? Because as soon as he became physical with the advice of the snake, it was naturally impossible because of the barrier of physicality, to attain eternity, like it had been before his sin. The physical is a barrier separating him from intellectual understanding. Therefore it was from G-d’s goodness that man should die so that he could have a means of attaining eternity after his death. Therefore his dying was better for him than living.

Rosh Hashanah: Day of Freedom

Tosefos Rosh Hashanah 11a

On Rosh Hashanah our ancestors were released from working in Egypt: Rabbi Yehoshua agrees with this according to most of the versions of the text. Even though the plagues began in Nisan, because the judgment of the Egyptians was a full twelve months as is taught in Ediyut (2: 10), nevertheless they only stopped working in Tishrei.
The Shofar always represents freedom. We find that on Yovel (the Jubilee year) the Shofar is blown to effect the freedom of the slaves. When crowning a king the Shofar is blown, as we find with Shlomo “And they blew the Shofar; and all the people said: ‘Long live king Shlomo.’” (Melochim 1 1: 39) and Yehu “Then they hurried, and each person took their garment, and put it under them on the top of the stairs, and blew the Shofar, saying: ‘Yehu is king.’” (Melochim 2 9: 13). To show that the king is free from any kind of servitude, and can do whatever he wishes.

Therefore in the Temple, which was the place of G-d’s Kingship, the Shofar was always blown, to show that this is the place of the Divine Presence, and there is nothing else apart from Him. There is no power to any force or demon or magic to act in that place. This is similar to what we find with Rabbi Chanina in Maseches Sanhedrin (67b) that he was not afraid of witchcraft, because the verse states “There is nothing but Him”. Even though witches try to deny (as it were) G-d’s Heavenly entourage, nevertheless, in the place of the Divine Presence, It is freed from any denial.

Also on Rosh Hashanah G-d commanded us to blow the Shofar, to remind us that this is the day of His Kingship, and the attribute of justice has no power to prevent the mercy and His desire to remember His children for good. Similarly in the future He will blow the Shofar of freedom before Israel to show them that they are freed from the slavery of the other kingdoms.
In the actual essence of the day we have to clarify something. From the language of the Sages that ‘all creatures pass before Him single file like sheep’ it seems that the day of judgment includes both Jews and non Jews, people who have free choice and creatures that do not have free choice. This is also implicit in the word of the poem unesaneh tokef ‘You shall count, calculate and consider, the soul of all the living; and You shall apportion the fixed needs of all Your creatures and inscribe their verdict’....

We have to understand how the concept of ‘day of judgment’ applies to something that has no free choice.

Furthermore, we find that even ‘the Angels will hasten, a trembling and terror will seize them –and they will say, ‘Behold, it is the Day of Judgment, to muster the heavenly host for judgment’.

How does it make sense for angels to be judged? Do they have free choice to do as they wish? ... 

This is the concept of law and judgment on Rosh Hashanah. Since this day was the conception of the world, meaning that it is the renewal of creation, therefore everything in creation has to stand in judgment. There is a Heavenly judgment as to whether each part of creation has fulfilled its purpose and goal that G-d
assigned to it when He created the world, based on the deep secrets of creation known to Him.

G-d assesses whether the good of the world outweighs the bad, or Heaven forbid, the opposite. If everything is going against His will there would be no purpose for the world to continue. The depth of this judgment certainly applies to everything in creation, even those creations that have no free will, whether they have caused the world to come closer to the Divine intent for which it was created or not.

We find this idea at the time of the flood, in which everything was utterly destroyed, even things without free choice, and even the earth to a depth of three tefachim, because the damage even extended there...

From everything we said above, the day of Rosh Hashanah is not called the day of judgment so that the wicked are to be punished, because that would only apply to things with free choice. Rather ‘day of judgment’ refers to every created thing, whether its continued existence is justified or not.