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The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana, is to be celebrated this year beginning on Sunday evening, September 25. During the following ten-day period, concluding with the Day of Atonement, Jewish people make amends with those whom they have wronged and repent of their sin. This is in anticipation of an annual evaluation by God. According to Jewish tradition, God may decree that the new year be filled with blessings or with difficulties and heartache on the basis of what he finds. For this reason, Jewish people greet their friends and neighbors with the hopeful words, "May you be inscribed in the book of life" or "May you be inscribed for a good year." This raises the issue of judgment and the role of a judge.

In Exodus 18:13, we read of Moses serving as a judge for the people from morning until evening. His judging was not a condemning or critical type of judging but making decisions regarding disputes or disagreements. If Moses is presented as a judge, the Messianic Prophet of whom he spoke is the ultimate judge. In John 5:22-24, Jesus says, "Not even the Father judges anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son." Jesus tells the parable of the pounds (minas) in Luke 19, in which the "nobleman" returns from "a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself" (v. 12). Upon his return, he would judge the stewardship of those entrusted with his resources. As is clear from the context, the nobleman in the parable represents Jesus.



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Not only do both Moses and Jesus function as judges, but in Exodus 18:21 we read of Jethro's suggestion that men be selected "who fear God, men of truth" (v. 21), who could assist Moses in judging the people. Isn't it interesting that in Matthew 19:28 Jesus addresses the Apostles, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." One commentator says that this "is simply a word of promise. In view of what they have to give up in the present, the twelve are promised an incredible exaltation that is out of all proportion to their present sacrifice." [1]

Therefore, Jesus is predicting a time of renewal when the Twelve will participate in the final establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth, when Israel will be restored to the Land and the Twelve will rule with Jesus the Messiah.[2] This understanding of the Apostles' role is in keeping with the idea of reward, which was the point of Peter's request in Matthew 19:27. Here we have the Prophet-like-Moses not only as the Judge-like-Moses, but he also enlists others to participate with him, even as Moses had.

There is another striking parallel with reference to God's judgment. Apart from a small remnant, the Exodus generation was not permitted to enjoy life in the Promised Land but died in the wilderness forty years following the Exodus. In a similar manner, apart from the remnant of the people, Jesus' generation suffered the ineffectiveness of the temple sacrifices and the absence of God's presence for forty years.[3] This eventually led to the destruction of both the temple and Jerusalem roughly forty years following the crucifixion. Nevertheless, the preservation of the remnant of Jewish believers in Jesus exists to this day as a guarantee that God will yet fully restore the nation to the Land and to himself.

By the way, neither the remnant of Israel nor Gentile believers in Jesus need to worry about the coming year. We have already been written down in the Lamb's Book of Life for all eternity! Nevertheless, this ten-day period is a wonderful time to focus our prayers for the salvation of our Jewish friends who are not yet believers in Jesus as well as for the spiritual restoration of the entire people of Israel.

Footnotes

1. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 517.
2. Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 651–652.
3. See Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 39b, Rosh HaShanah 31b; Talmud of Jerusalem, Yoma 6:IV, A–B.