Prayer Study # 428
THE SHOFAR
First Love Ministries, Inc. of Perry, GA, USA

The Epworth Retreat begins with the blowing of a Jewish musical instrument, the shofar. The shofar is usually made from a bent ram's horn and has the sound of a trumpet without a mouthpiece. It cannot be made artificially and must be naturally hollow. To be kosher, a requirement of the Jewish religion, the horn must be taken from an acceptable animal, such as a sheep or goat.

Sharon Penn tells us that the blowing of the shofar in Biblical times was a really big deal to the Jewish people. In Exodus the people trembled when they heard the sound of the shofar, coming from a thick cloud on Mount Sinai and accompanied with thunder and lightning. It is believed that this sound marked the time when the Jewish people received the Torah. The sound caught the attention of the masses, much as an air raid siren would catch the attention of people today and marked a time for the Jewish people to strengthen their commitment to the Torah and to God.

The learned blower of the Shofar generally uses different sounds. This expert blower is called a *Tokea* (literally a *blaster*). There are many different patterns and sounds of the instrument, controlled by the blaster. The most common are the *Tekiah* and *Tekiahha* or *Tekiah gedolah,* the *Shevarin, and* the *Teruah.* The long blast or *Tekiah* reminds us that God is the King of the universe. The first act of Adam in the Garden of Eden was a proclamation of God as King. The *Tekiah* was also used at a king's coronation. The *Tekiahha* or *Tekiah gedolah* is a *Tekiah* held out as long as the blaster can blow the shofar.

The *Shevarin* sound is three medium, wailing blasts. This symbolizes the sobbing of the heart as we realize that we have sinned and failed to live up to our full potential in the Lord. It is therefore a sound signifying repentance.

The *Teruah* sound is nine quick blasts in succession. This is to remind us of an alarm clock that is arousing us from spiritual slumber.

Some of the Biblical reasons for blowing the shofar are as follows:

1. To celebrate special days, such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kipper, as a time to renew one's faith
2. To reflect on one's deeds during the last year and to commit to personal growth in the Lord God
3. To announce the anointing of a new king
4. To sound alarms
5. To convene assemblies
6. To lift up praise to the Lord during worship

7. To point to the future glorious redemption of both natural and spiritual Israel (we are spiritual Israel) at the end of the age
8. To announce the year of Jubilee
9. To usher in the Day of the Lord
10. To signal the advent of the Messiah
11. To call to repentance
12. To call to warfare

In the future the shofar will be sounded at harpazo when the dead in Christ are resurrected, and the living saints of God are caught up with those formerly in the graves to meet the Lord in the air (1st Thessalonians 4:16-17). It will be sounded when God judges the earth during the Great Tribulation, and it is the sound of God's voice throughout the book of Revelation.

Why do we Gentiles blow the shofar at Epworth Retreats? We are not Judiazers, but we celebrate and appreciate the Hebraic roots of the faith and find teachings on the Jewish religion very helpful for a more complete understanding of the scriptures and of Biblical symbolism. We recognize that the Jews are God's chosen people, and we stand with Israel.

We also are convening an assembly of God's people, reminding ourselves that we are called to warfare against the wicked one, focusing on the Lord who speaks with the sound of the shofar and who is the King we seek to coronate in our own hearts, recognizing our need for repentance, initiating a special day for this ministry, and doing an act of worship by the blowing of the shofar.