

# *Shofar*

## *Hearing and Answering God's Call*



**by Jamie Lash**

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## **Dedication**

To my husband, Neil,  
who blows the shofar in love  
and obeys the voice of God.

## **Acknowledgments**

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## Preface

A rabbinic parable, *The King in the Field*, is a tale about a certain king, who lived in his palace most of the year. During one month, however, he left the palace to go into the field where his subjects lived. He descended to their level, interacted with them, and became real and accessible to his people.

The King is God. The people are Israel. The month is Elul. The shofar, blown each day during this sixth month of the year, prior to the fall High Holy Days, announces to Israel that God is "in the field." His people are invited to relate to Him, as His presence is made manifest to them.

As Messianic Jews, we rejoice that the King of Kings, Yeshua HaMashiach, is "in the field" every month of the year, making the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob real to us. We have heard His voice, like a shofar, calling us to repentance and salvation.

Now we, as the representatives of The King, sound the shofar in the "harvest field," where Yeshua is Lord of the harvest, revealing Himself to His brothers according to the flesh.



## A Sacred Instrument

The *shofar* (the ram's horn, in Hebrew sho-FAR) is the ritual horn of the Jewish people and their most ancient musical instrument. It is often a ram's horn, but can also be made from the horn of a wild goat, antelope, *kudu* or gazelle. There are two types of shofars, the ram's horn shofar and the Yemenite shofar. The Yemenite shofar is the larger of the two, usually 3-4 feet long, with a double or triple twist. Every shofar has its own distinct sound. No two are alike, making them very unique instruments. The ram's horn shofars are often said to have a repentant-type sound, while the Yemenite have a more jubilant, celebratory sound.

As a special, God-ordained trumpet, seen throughout the Holy Scriptures, both in the Tanach and the Brit Hadasha, the shofar is both a symbol of God's activity among His people, and a direct, concrete way in which He interacts with them.

The first mention of a shofar in the Torah is at the revelation of God at the Giving of the Law in Exodus 19. When the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai, three months after having left Egypt, Moses went up to God on the mountain. God gave Moses instructions for the people, including instructions to consecrate them, because the LORD planned to come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. They would know when to approach, but not touch the mountain, when they heard the sound of the shofar: *"When the trumpet (שופר) sounds long, they shall come near the mountain"* (Ex. 19:13). *"Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled."* *"And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice."* (Ex. 19:16, 19)

The first time a word appears in the Bible is said to have special significance, indicating an underlying meaning or importance. In the case of "shofar," a strong connection is made between the sound of the shofar and God speaking, revealing Himself in power with the human response being awe and trembling. Who blew the shofar on Mt. Sinai? It appears to have been God Himself (vs. 19)! This is quite possible, given the prophetic word found in Zechariah 9:14-15, *"...The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet...The LORD of hosts will defend them..."* That makes the shofar a very special instrument indeed, directly connected with the revelation of God to mankind.

The Bible tells us that God's people were terrified when they heard His voice: *"Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die'"* (Ex. 20:18-19).

The truth is: When we hear God speak to us, and reveal Himself to us, we do die! That is precisely His will for us—to die to ourselves that we might live for Him. The Messiah expressed this truth as follows: *"...unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."* (John 12:24; See also Col. 3:3.)

Since we are dead to sin, but alive to God through Yeshua (Rom. 6:1), the shofar sound of revelation is real to us today. God speaks to us through His Word, His *Torah*. The Word is like a shofar calling to our spirit; we just need to have our spiritual ears opened to hear it.

As we meditated one year on Exodus 19 and 20 and the shofar call of God, the Lord revealed to us why He had Moses tell the men of Israel not to come near their wives, in order to be ready for the "third day." Today, and throughout history, weddings in Israel often take place on the "third day," since this day of the week was twice blessed by God at creation (Gen. 1:9-13). God married Israel at Mt. Sinai. As a holy Bridegroom, God wanted all Israel set apart for Him on that third day. God is a jealous God, who loves His people passionately. That is one of the most important messages of the shofar.



## A Stirring Sound

The sound of the shofar is a sound unlike any other. It is a sound that stirs both Jews and Christians alike. It is a spiritual sound, that both satisfies and excites at once. It calls forth a reverence for God, even the fear of the Lord at times. The sound of the shofar inspires awe and worship of God; if one waits in quiet and stillness following a shofar blast, a sense of the presence of a holy God is experienced. The shofar is supposed to evoke trembling, as expressed in Amos 3:6, "*When a trumpet (שופר) sounds in a city, do not the people tremble?*" (NIV version).

Samson Raphael Hirsch, a traditional Jew, called the sound of the shofar "The Piercing Summons." In his words, "With the sound of the shofar, God once called us together on Sinai, with it He will once again gather us together. The sound of the shofar used to call the slave to freedom, the poor man to his prosperity, the dispossessed to his home. Even so the sound of the shofar at every Tishri calls us all to God. It calls the slave to sensuality to Divine freedom; it calls poor and rich to true riches; it calls the most distant wanderer to his own home; it calls every heart and spirit to a glorious jubilee."

The shofar can also call God's people to seek Him in fasting. One example of this is found in Joel chapter 2:15-17:

*"Blow the trumpet (שופר) in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders...Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, 'Spare Your people, O LORD...'"*



## A Symbol of Submission

While a shofar can be made from the horn of a goat, antelope, *kudu* or gazelle, it can never be made from the horn of a cow or a steer. Why? Because of the rabbinic tradition that the Jewish people do not want to remind God of their sin in making the Golden Calf as an object of worship (Ex. 32:1-4).

The ram's or wild goat's horns are the preferred horns for *shofarot* (show-far-OAT, plural of shofar) because they are CURVED. The curve is said to represent man's will bending to the will of God, and his heart bowing to the King. When the shofar was sounded on Mount Sinai, as God gave His people the Torah, all Israel promised: "*All that the LORD has said, we will do...*" (Ex. 24:7). This promise of submission to the will of God was impossible for them to keep. That is why God sent the Messiah, the One promised by the Jewish prophets, who related to the Father in perfect submission. We hear His voice in the prophetic words of Psalm 40:7-8: "*...Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.*"

Yeshua's submission to the will of God resulted in His death on the tree, as atonement for our sin. Submission of His will was expressed in the Garden of Gethsemene when Yeshua prayed, "*O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will*" (Matt. 26:39). His embracing of the cup of cruel sufferings made the cup of the New Covenant possible.

When we partake of the "cup of the New Covenant," the law of God is written on the tablets of our heart through the power of the Holy Spirit, and we are able to do the will of the Father in heaven. However, there is a process involved as believers in the Messiah learn true submission to the will of God. This process closely parallels the process of making a shofar. We learned this through first-hand experience, when we visited a shofar factory in Tel Aviv many years ago, where we were shown the four steps involved in making a shofar:

1. The horn is heated and pressure is applied to strengthen the end of the horn to make a more attractive shofar. We, as believers, experience heat and pressure as the Lord works in our lives. As the prophet Malachi declares, "...*He is like a refiner's fire*" (Mal. 3:2).

2. The horn is pressed against the grinding wheel and turned from side to side. As the rough exterior is removed, the beautiful texture and coloration of the horn is exposed for all to see. Our "rough exterior" includes the vestiges of the old man, the old life, the old habits and ways of thinking. These are smoothed out as we submit to the dealings of God, who molds us and makes us into new creations in Messiah. "*But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.*" (Isa. 64:8) "*He has made everything beautiful in its time.*" (Ecc. 3:11)

3. A drill is used to open a path for air to flow through the horn. We are being made into vessels through which God's *Ruach* (Spirit) flows.

4. A special polishing compound is used to smooth out the roughness left by the grinding process to produce a glossy shine. Yeshua commanded us concerning shining: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*" (Matt. 5:16). What makes a believer in Yeshua shine? Faith, working through love. Selflessness and sacrifice. Joyful obedience and submission to the will of God. Being filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God.



## Announcing Beginnings

The shofar is used, in the Holy Scriptures, as God's chosen way to announce the beginning of something new. For example, God instructed the children of Israel to sound the shofar at the beginning of each month: "*Blow the trumpet שופר (shofar) at the time of the New Moon...*" (Ps. 81:3). The shofar was also blown at the beginning of a feast or a special celebration: "*Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings...*" (Num. 10:10).

When a king was anointed, to take his place as ruler over Israel, the shofar was blown. King David instructed Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, to take his son Solomon to the Gihon spring to be anointed as his successor: "*There let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel; and blow the horn (שופר), and say, 'Long live King Solomon!'*" (1Kin. 1:34).

There is a rabbinic saying that the shofar will be sounded at the time of the coming of the Messiah, who will initiate God's Kingdom on earth. As believers in the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua, we expectantly await the day when He calls us to gather together to meet Him in the air. This gathering will be preceded by the sound of the shofar: "*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Messiah will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord*" (1 Thes. 4:16-17).



## A Memorial Before God

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath—rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.'" (Lev. 23:23-24) This memorial or "*zikhron*," (zeekh—ROHN) in Hebrew, is known as "*Yom Teruah*," the day of the blast of the shofar. It is more commonly known as Rosh HaShanah, the holiday celebrated in the month of *Tishri* as a New Year festival.

The shofar takes center stage during Yom Teruah. It is sounded in traditional synagogues 100 times on this *Yom HaZikharon*, this "Day of Remembrance."

Traditional rabbis believed that *hasatan* (the adversary) especially liked to accuse the Jewish people on Rosh HaShanah, bringing up before the Lord all their sins. Therefore, they encouraged the numerous blasts of the shofar, so that the devil would be confounded and confused.

It is a *mitzvah*, sometimes viewed as an obligation, to hear the sounding of the shofar. Private shofar blowing sessions are always arranged for those confined to home or to a hospital. The sounds of the shofar blasts for Yom Teruah are the same for all branches of Judaism:

*tekiah*: one solid blast, between five and ten seconds long

*shevarim*: a broken sound, three bleeps, altogether equaling the length of one tekiah (One tradition explains this as the sound of God's broken heart over sin.)

*teruah*: an alarm sound, nine rapid-fire bleeps, approximately the length of a tekiah (If shevarim is a broken heart, this is a weeping one.)

For Messianic Jews, Yom Teruah, the Feast of Trumpets, is a particularly joyful holiday since most congregations encourage anyone whom God has anointed to be a "*ba'al tekiah*," a master of the blast, to participate during the Yom Teruah services.

In our home congregation in Fort Lauderdale, it is not unusual to hear a dozen shofars sounding either at once or responding to each other's call. Our hearts are truly prepared to hear from God. The shofar on Yom Teruah announces the Ten Days of Awe (*Yamim Noraim*) which conclude with *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement or Covering. When the final shofar blast occurs during the *Neilah* (closing) service of Yom Kippur, we, as Messianic Jews, have the assurance that our names are forever inscribed in the Book of Life because of the once-for-all eternal sacrifice of the Lamb of God. We long for our Jewish brothers and sisters to have this same confidence. In the Messiah Yeshua, the devil is not only confounded and confused, but defeated!



## Remembering Abraham

Perhaps the most famous account in Scripture of the shofar blown as a memorial before God is the binding of Isaac in Genesis chapter 22. This story, also known as the "*Akedah*," is about Abraham, God's friend, whose faith was greatly tested when the Lord asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Abraham's immediate response to God's request was, "*Hineni*," "Here I am." As Abraham was about to slay his son, the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and told him not to continue with the sacrifice.



Instead, a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns, was provided in Isaac's stead. *"And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided'."* (Gen. 22:14)

According to Jewish tradition, God, hearing the sound of the ram's horn, remembers Abraham's willingness to sacrifice that which he loved most dearly. In some way, Abraham's obedience, humility and fidelity are credited to his seed, the Jewish people. In fact, the shofar has been blown throughout the history of the Jewish people as if it were a "prayer without words," bringing Abraham's deed to God's remembrance.

For Ethiopian Jews, the first of Tishri is known as the "Commemoration of Abraham," and worshippers are encouraged to remember the virtues of Abraham. This calls to mind Isaiah 51:1-2: *"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father..."*

The sound of the shofar also causes man to remember—to thank God for His mercy, not only to Abraham and Isaac, but to all mankind. Messianic Jews remember the Son who was not spared. What God did not require of Abraham, He required of Himself: *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Rom. 8:32).

The shofar is a symbol of God's provision. It reminds us that God provided The Lamb, Yeshua, as the final sacrifice for sin. Just as God provided the ram for Abraham so that Isaac his son might be spared, God has provided Yeshua for all mankind, that we might be spared!



## A Call to Repentance

The shofar has been used for centuries to call God's people Israel to repent of their sin. Repentance, *teshuvah* in Hebrew, is the fifth blessing in the *Amidah* prayer, the most important prayer in the traditional Hebrew prayer book. Repentance, in this prayer, is understood to mean a turning away from sins both of commission and omission, and turning toward God: "Bring us back, our Father, to Your Torah, and bring us near, our King, to Your service, and influence us to return in perfect repentance before you. Blessed are You, *Hashem*, Who desires repentance."

The Hebrew root of shofar includes the idea of "improvement." Therefore, when used for the purpose of arousing Jews to return or repent, the shofar becomes a clarion call to improve the quality of one's life. This is done by returning to God and His Word, His *Torah*.

*Teshuvah*, or repentance, is a major theme of the High Holy Days. Beginning a month before *Yom Teruah*, the first of these feasts, the shofar is blown daily in synagogues all around the world. This is done today, as it has been for hundreds of years, during the month of Elul, which occurs in either August or September. Elul is an entire month of repentance. As the shofar is sounded daily, the following saying of Maimonides, the principal Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages, expresses God's message to our Jewish people: "Awake, awake, O sleeper from your sleep, O slumberers arouse ye from your slumber; and examine your deeds; return in repentance, and remember your Creator." The Brit Hadasha expresses a similar thought, one that Messianic Jews ponder as we hear the shofar blown in our synagogues during the month of Elul: *"Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Messiah will give you light. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil"* (Eph. 5:14-16).

The shofar is again sounded to announce the beginning of the "Ten Days of Awe," which begin on *Yom Teruah* and end on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. As the sun sets on *Yom Kippur*, a final shofar blast, *"tekiah gedolah,"* signals the closing of the "Books" for another year.

We see God calling His people to repentance before the "day of the LORD": "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand..." "'Now, therefore,' says the LORD, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.' So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm" (Joel 2:1, 12-13).

The shofar call to repentance is a blessed sound for those who heed its plea, since repentance leads to reconciliation with the God who welcomes the contrite in heart with open arms. King David knew this when he wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation..." (Ps. 51:10, 12).



## A Weapon of Warfare

Throughout Israel's history, the shofar was used as a weapon of warfare, as commanded by God in Numbers 10:9, "When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies." This is certainly not a "conventional" weapon as we understand weapons of war today. And, yet, the shofar was instrumental in winning wars because it sent forth a sound that both acknowledged and pleased God. The shofar sounded to affirm that Israel was inviting the Lord of Hosts, *Adonai Tzva'ot*, to fight for them. God's people recognized their need of Him, and His power to deliver them.

The shofar has been successful in sending an enemy's camp into confusion, so that Israel's foes turned on each other with the sword. We read about one such case in the Book of Judges where Gideon and his men defeated the Midianites. Gideon had overheard a man from the enemy camp recounting a dream in which God delivered Midian and the whole camp into Gideon's hand. This gave him the courage and assurance he needed to believe that victory was theirs. Gideon put a shofar into every man's hand, along with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. He gave instructions about blowing the shofars, breaking the pitchers, and crying, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!" "And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man's sword against his companion throughout the whole camp..." (Judges 7:20-22) Gideon went on to deliver his people from the hand of Midian. It all began with the blast of shofars.

The shofar was used to stop a battle in 2 Samuel 2:28. This time the war was between two groups of Israelites, those following Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah (or the followers of Saul vs. the followers of David). Abner called to Joab, encouraging him to call off the pursuit of his "brethren." "So Joab blew a trumpet (שופר); and all the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, nor did they fight anymore." (2 Sam. 2:28)

The importance of the sound of the shofars as evidence of God coming to rescue and fight for His people is made clear in Nehemiah 4:20. The people of Israel were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, during the time of Nehemiah. The enemies of Israel, Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites conspired together to attack Jerusalem, kill the Jews, and cause the work on the walls to cease. The people of Israel cried out to God: "Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night" (Neh. 4:9). Due to the great distances separating men on the wall, the shofar was used to call them together, especially in the event of an attack. Nehemiah told his people, "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us" (Neh. 4:20).

The sound of the shofar also accompanies the judgment of God on His enemies in Amos 2:1-2, "Thus says the LORD: 'For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment,

*because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting and trumpet (שופר) sound."*

The shofar can be used today as a weapon of spiritual warfare, bringing victory over our spiritual enemies. The Brit Hadasha makes it clear that we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12). The devil, *hasatan* in Hebrew, is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). His legions of demons operate in that realm. When the shofar is sounded by faith, as an instrument of spiritual warfare, there can be a great change in the spiritual realm. Strongholds are broken, evil spirits are forced to flee, and the very atmosphere is changed. The shofar blown under the anointing of the *Ruach HaKodesh* is a powerful weapon of warfare and deliverance. The traditional rabbis have been correct in saying that the sound of the shofar frightens *hasatan*, the devil!



## The Shofar in Worship

When used in worship, the shofar helps usher in the presence of Almighty God. We read about the shofar as an instrument of worship in the Book of Psalms: *"With trumpets and the sound of a horn (שופר); shout joyfully before the LORD, the King" (Ps. 98:6). "Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet (שופר)..." (Ps. 150:3)*

The shofar is used in this way in many Messianic congregations. We even sound the shofar in our worship services on Shabbat, something which is not generally done in traditional Jewish Shabbat services.

The shofar is used as an instrument of worship because we have returned to Davidic praise and worship, as found in the Psalms. Therefore, we feel free to praise the Lord, not only with the shofar, but with guitars, tambourines, flutes, trumpets, and even loud clashing cymbals (Ps. 150:3-5)! We experience a tangible, awesome presence of the Lord as we passionately pursue His heart in worship.

When the shofar sounds in our Messianic congregation, it may be either a call to God, or an answer from Him! Either way, His presence is made real to the worshippers. Psalm 47:5 becomes real to us: *"God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet (שופר)."*



## Who Blows the Shofar?

We have already seen in Exodus 19:16-19 that God Himself blew the shofar at the Revelation at Mt. Sinai. We read in the *Torah* that the sons of Aaron, the *cohanim* or priests, were the next ones to sound this sacred instrument: *"The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations" (Num. 10:8).*

We read a stirring account of one hundred and twenty *cohanim* blowing shofars in 2 Chronicles 5:13-14, where we find the story of the dedication of Solomon's temple:

*"... indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying: 'For He is good, For His mercy endures forever,' that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering*

*because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God."* This is what can happen when 120 shofars sound *b'yachad*, in unity!

In ancient Israel, Jewish bridegrooms used to return for their brides with the sound of the shofar and a shout: *"Behold, the bridegroom is coming..."* (Matt. 25:6)! In like manner Yeshua, our Bridegroom, will return for His bride with the sound of the shofar. It seems that angels will announce His coming with their shofars: *"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"* (Matt. 24:30-31).

Is it kosher (O.K.) for Messianic Jews to blow the shofar? Yes. Both men and women. According to the Brit Hadasha, believers are part of a New Covenant royal priesthood. Our High Priest or *Cohen Gadol* is Yeshua, the Messiah. We like to think that we are fulfilling the ancient command, given to the "*ba'al tekiah*" (master of blowing the shofar) at *Yom Teruah*, to "blow the shofar in love."

On our 2012 Mercy Mission to Israel, during the Hebrew month of Elul, we blew the shofar throughout the Land, calling individual Israelis to prepare themselves to hear the voice of God speaking to them. We trust that many of these divine appointments bore fruit for the Kingdom of God. Although our tour group was very blessed as they blew their *shofarot* in God's Land, we reminded them daily that it is more blessed to HEAR the shofar than to BLOW it!



## Proclaiming Liberty and Victory

The sound of the shofar is a sound of liberty and victory. Just as liberty and victory are part of the Messianic Redemption, ushered in by the shofar sound at the return of the Messiah, those joyful realities were part of the biblical Year of Jubilee. The *Torah* introduces the Jubilee (*yovel* in Hebrew) as follows: *"And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet (שופר) of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants..."* (Lev. 25:8-10). When the shofar sounded in the Jubilee throughout the Land of Israel, land was returned to its original owner, slaves were set free, and all debts were cancelled. The shofar sound of the fiftieth year was definitely a "jubilant" sound!

We, as Messianic Jews, sound the shofar to proclaim liberty (in the spirit of Jubilee) to those who are captives of sin. We were once slaves to unrighteousness, and have experienced the glorious liberty of salvation through the Messiah Yeshua. That is why we are compelled to share the *besorah*, the "Good News" with others, especially with our brethren of the House of Israel. Our call, our mission, is beautifully articulated by the prophet Isaiah: *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD..."* (Is. 61:1-2).

True liberty is only possible when we know the truth— according to the Word of God—about sin and forgiveness of sin through the Messiah Yeshua. When we heed the call of the shofar, repent, and receive God's gracious gift, we are set free. Then, we understand the New Covenant verse: *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (Jn. 8:32).

The shofar is the sound of victory as well as the sound of liberty. Most people are familiar with the victory of Joshua and the Israelites at Jericho. The walls of the enemy city were brought down, not with



battering rams, but with the sound of the shofar. *"So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets (shofarot). And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city."* (Josh. 6:20)

Most people have some type of wall in their life, a bondage that needs to be broken. Victories over addictions of all types have been experienced as the shofar is blown in faith. Believers have been set free from fear, rejection, and emotional wounds of every kind, and also healed of various diseases, as the shofar is sounded. How is this possible? There is something spiritual, powerful, even supernatural about the sound of God's special trumpet, mixed with the faith of His people.

The shofar sound, resounding as the voice of the Lord, might just evoke the anointing mentioned by King David in Psalm 29:4: *"The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty."* When King David brought the ark of God up to Jerusalem, from the house of Obed-Edom, where it had been temporarily lodged for three months, there was great gladness. We read in the Holy Scriptures that David danced before the LORD with all his might: *"So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet (שופר)"* (2 Sam. 6:15). Victory was proclaimed through that sound. The ark of the LORD had finally found its resting place, in the *mishkan* or tabernacle that David had erected for it.

A victory yet to come will be announced by the last or final shofar: *"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed...then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'"* (1 Cor. 15:51-54).



## The Voice of God

Hearing the voice of God brings great joy, making the shofar sound a sound of joy. The book of Psalms attests to this: *"Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long..."* (Ps. 89:15-16).

It is a tremendous blessing to hear the voice of the "Beloved," *Kol Dodi*, speaking to one's heart. The Song of Songs, *Shir HaShirim* in Hebrew, mentions this voice that calls to our spirit: *"I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, 'Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one...'"* (Song of Sol. 5:2).

As Messianic believers, we, like Yochanan the Immerser, rejoice in hearing the voice of Yeshua, our Heavenly Bridegroom and Friend: *"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice..."* (John 3:29). Our Messiah promised that those who belong to Him would know His voice, and hear it. Yeshua said: *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"* (John 10:27).

The final book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, contains two powerful verses connecting the shofar with the voice of God. They are part of the vision of the Apostle John, on the island of Patmos, where he was exiled because of his faith in Yeshua the Messiah. *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last'..."* (Rev.1:11) This is Yeshua speaking, the Messiah's voice being compared to the sound of the shofar.

In Rev. 4:1, John takes us into the throne room of heaven where we hear God speak: *"...And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.'"* God's voice, as a shofar, is still calling His children to come up higher. As we arise and come away with Him, the Lord gives us revelation and shares sacred secrets with

us. This reminds us of the call in Isaiah 2:3: "...Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways..."

Jews, and born-again believers, are all commanded to HEAR: "*Shema Yisrael...*" (Deut. 6:4-5). This command implies much more than auditory function. It includes the idea of obedience. We have not heard, in the true biblical sense, until we have obeyed what we hear! May this be the case with the voice of God, as we heed the sound of the shofar, whether it be a call to repentance, a proclamation of victory, the announcement of a new beginning, a call to assemble, a call to spiritual warfare, a call to remember, or simply a word from God deposited into our spirit.

It is our prayer that the cry of both your heart and ours would always be, "*Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.*" We also pray that we might be empowered to obey the command of Isaiah 58:1 which charges Messianic believers with the awesome task of being a shofar for God, in other words, speaking on His behalf to a lost and dying world: "*Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*" (Is. 58:1).

Be a shofar for Yeshua, but always remember to speak the truth in love, taking to heart the admonition found in 1 John 4:7-10: "*Beloved friends, let us love one another; because love is from God; and everyone who loves has God as his Father and knows God. Those who do not love, do not know God; because God is love. Here is how God showed his love among us: God sent his only Son into the world, so that through him we might have life, Here is what love is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the kapparrah for our sins*" (JNT version). That is the shofar sound of salvation—A joyful sound indeed!

## **The Sounds of the Shofar**

**(a traditional Jewish prayer; source unknown)**

May the sound of the Shofar shatter our complacency and make us conscious of the corruptions of our lives.

May the sound of the Shofar penetrate our soul, and cause us to turn back to our Father in Heaven.

May the sound of the Shofar break the bonds of the evil impulse within us, and enable us to serve the Lord with a whole heart.

May the sound of the Shofar renew our loyalty to the one true King, and strengthen our determination to defy the false gods.

May the sound of the Shofar awaken us to the enormity of our sins, and the vastness of God's mercy for those who truly repent.

May the sound of the Shofar summon us to service, and stir us to respond, as did Abraham, "Here am I."

May the sound of the Shofar recall the moment when we stood at Mount Sinai and uttered the promise: "All that the Lord has spoken, we will keep and obey."

May the sound of the Shofar recall the promise of the ingathering of the exiles, and stir within us renewed devotion to the Land of Israel.

May the sound of the Shofar recall the vision of the prophets, of the day when Egypt, Syria, and Israel will live in peace.

May the sound of the Shofar awaken us to the flight of time, and summon us to spend our days with purpose.

May the sound of the Shofar become our jubilant shout of joy, on the day of the promised, long-awaited redemption.

May the sound of the Shofar remind us that it is time to "proclaim liberty throughout the land and to the inhabitants thereof."

May the sound of the Shofar enter our hearts, for blessed is the people that harken to its call.

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## About the Author

Jamie Suzanne Lash has been involved in full-time ministry with her husband Neil since 1979. They are the directors of Jewish Jewels, a Messianic Jewish ministry based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, which shares the Good News of Yeshua with the Jewish people and teaches the Church about its Jewish roots.

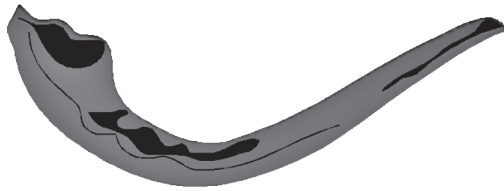
Jamie graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University with a B.A. in Spanish and from the University of Missouri with an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education. She ministers, together with Neil, at worship services and marriage retreats, and by herself at women's groups and seminars.

Jamie is the researcher, writer and co-producer of *Jewish Jewels*, a weekly half-hour Messianic Jewish television program seen all over the United States. She is also the author of **Righteous Rhymes**, a two-volume book and CD series for children which God has used to lead hundreds of children to the Lord, and **A Kiss A Day**, a devotional commentary based on the Song of Songs. **A Kiss A Day** is a seventy-seven day immersion in the Love of God which is being greatly used in the preparation of the Bride of Messiah.

Jamie is the mother of two sons, Jonathan and Jesse. The Lash family lives by faith. Their ministry is supported solely by voluntary contributions and is a non-profit organization. God has been faithful and has always supplied their needs. Jamie's "life verse" is also her testimony: *"Love never fails"* (1 Corinthians 13:8).

**God is Love; He never fails.**

## Traditional Blessing Before Blowing the Shofar:



*“Shema Yisrael...” (Deut. 6:4)*

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם,  
אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו  
לשמע קול שופר.

**Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam  
asher kidshanu bemitzvotav vetzeevanu leeshmo'ah  
kol shofar.**

Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the  
universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments,  
and commanded us to listen to the sound of the shofar.