

OFF-RAMP TORAH

A JUDICIOUS DEPARTURE FROM
THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION

September 20, 2025



פרוץ אפה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה:

TO START: *Parashat-haShavu'a Stats*

Weekly Portion: Nitzavim Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20

Sequence in Torah cycle: 51st of 54

Sequence in Deuteronomy: 8th of 11



WHERE WE'RE GOING INSTEAD, and why

In preparation for Rosh haShanah, coming up early next week: an exploration of the *shofar*.

A) Leviticus 23:24 -

בחדש השביעי באחד לחדש יהיה
לכם שבתון

On the first day of The Seventh Month,
you shall have a holiday—

זכרון תרועה מקרא קדש
a sacred convocation commemorated
with a *t'ru'ah* [of the trumpet].

B) Numbers 29:1 -

ובחדש השביעי באחד לחדש
מקרא קדש יהיה לכם כל
מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו

And on the first day of The Seventh
Month you shall have a sacred convo-
cation; you are to perform none of your
productive labors.

יום תרועה יהיה לכם
It is to be for you a day of a *t'ru'ah* [of
the trumpet].

noun תְּקִיעָה *t'qiy'ah*

verb תִּקַּע *t-q-* “to blow”

C) Exodus 10:19 -

Then The Eternal One sent a very strong westerly wind,
וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת הָאֲרָבָה וַיִּתְּקֵהוּ יָמָה סוּף
which lifted up the locust swarm and **blew** it out to sea beyond the ends of the earth.

noun תְּרוּעָה *t'ru'ah*




verb רָוַע *r-w-* “to raise a shout”

D) Psalms 98:4 -

פָּצְחוּ וְרָנְנוּ וְזָמְרוּ
Shout out to The Eternal One, all the earth—
burst forth; exclaim in joy; sing aloud!

- more over

Three Almost-Interchangeable Synonyms

noun שופר shofar	noun יובל yoveil	noun חצצרה chatzotzrah
<p>“[a trumpet made of] a ram’s horn”</p> <p>verb ש-פ-ר sh-p-r “be beautiful; be adorned”</p> <p>cf. Assyrian 𐤔𐤏𐤕𐤍 s^ap^ar^u “Bezoar ibex”</p>  <p>Deuteronomy 33:17 - “The glory of the aurochs is his horns”</p>	<p>i) “a ram; a ram’s-horn; a cornet”</p> <p>ii) “a jubilee year” [Leviticus 25:8ff]</p> <p>cf. Phoenician 𐤊𐤎𐤋 yvl “a ram”</p> 	<p>“a trumpet; a clarion; a bugle”</p> <p>verb ח-צ-ר ch-tz-r “to enclose”</p> <p>Cohanim blowing fanfare trumpets Catalan Bible, 14th century</p> 

Three Distinct Trumpet Blasts

noun תקיעה t'qiy'ah “sustained blowing”	noun תרועה t'ru'ah “exulting”	noun שברים sh'varim “quavering”
<p>verb ת-ק-ע t-q-‘ “to blow”</p>	<p>verb ר-ו-ע r-w-‘ “to raise a shout”</p>	<p>verb ש-ב-ר sh-v-r “to be broken”</p> <p>Mishnah: יבבה y'vavah “wailing”</p>

סדר תקיעות שלש

E) Mishnah Rosh haShanah 4:9 The order of the [shofar] **blowings** [in the course of the Rosh haShanah service] is **three** [three distinct portions of the Shofar service—]

Malchuyot	Gates of Repentance p. 139	-	Mishkan haNefesh p. 136
Zichronot	Gates of Repentance p. 143	-	Mishkan haNefesh p. 200
Shofarot	Gates of Repentance p. 148	-	Mishkan haNefesh p. 264

של שלש שלש

- continued

each of which consists of **three** [sets of soundings].

שעור תקיעה כשלש תרועות

The measure of the **sustained note** [*t'qiy'ah*] is three times that of the exulting note [*t'ru'ah*].

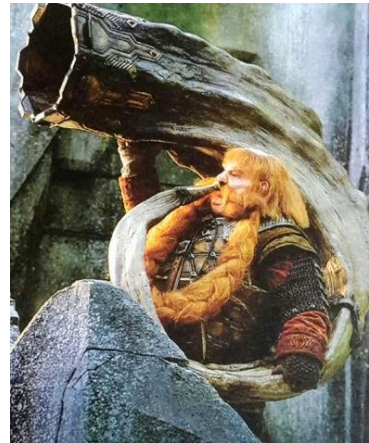
שעור תרועה כשלש יבבות

The measure of the **exulting note** [*t'ru'ah*] is three times that of the quavering / wailing note [*sh'varim*].

F) John Ronald Reuel Tolkein (1892-1973), *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring* -

At that moment, among the trees nearby, a horn rang out. It rent the night like fire on a hill-top. "Awake! **Fear!** **Fire!** **Foes!** Awake!"

Fear!	Fire!	Foes!
1	2	3



The Brandybucks were blowing the Horn-Call of Buckland, that had not been sounded for a hundred years— not since the white wolves came in the Fell Winter, when the Brandywine River had frozen over.

Far away, answering horns were heard. The alarm was spreading.

עשה לך שתי תצוצרות כסף מקשה תעשה אתם

והיו לך למקרא העדה ולמסע את המחנות

G) Numbers 10:2-7 - Make two **clarion trumpets**, forging them out of silver. They will serve you to **summon the assemblage**, and to **signal the journeying of the camps**.

ותקעו בהן ונועדו אליך כל העדה אל פתח אהל מועד

When you **blow a sustained note** [*t'qiy'ah*] with them **both**, let the entire community come to meet you at the entryway of the Tent of Meeting;

ואם באחת ותקעו ונועדו אליך הנשיאים ראשי אלפי ישראל

but if only one of them **is blown a sustained note** [*t'qiy'ah*], then only the chieftains heading those myriads of Israel are to come meet you.

ותקעתם תרועה ונסעו המחנות החנים קדמה

When you **blow** a *t'ru'ah* exulting blast, [that is the signal for] the encampment on the Eastern side to set out;

ותקעתם תרועה שנית ונסעו המחנות החנים תימנה

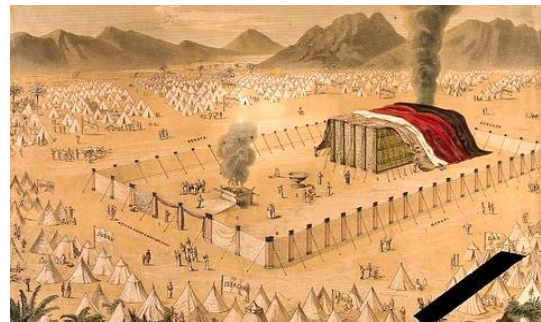
then, when you **blow** a second *t'ru'ah* exulting blast, [that is the signal for] the encampment on the Southern side to set out.

תרועה ותקעו למסעיהם

You are to **blow** the *t'ru'ah* exulting blast [as the signal] for your journey-setting-out,

ובהקהיל את הקהל ותקעו ולא תריעו

while, for your summoning the assemblage in the encampment, you are to **blow a *t'qiy'ah* sustained blast**, and not a *t'ru'ah* exulting blast.



- more over

וְסִפַּרְתָּ לָךְ שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתֹת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת פְּעָמִים וְהָיוּ לָךְ יָמֵי שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתֹת הַשָּׁנִים תִּשְׁעַת וָאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה

H) Leviticus 25:8-10 You are to count yourself seven weeks of years— seven years, seven times, so that the total of the seven weeks of years shall be forty nine years.

וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ שׁוֹפָר תְּרוּעָה בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בַּעֲשׂוֹר לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּיוֹם הַכַּפָּרִים תַּעֲבִירוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּכָל אֶרְצְכֶם

Then send out the **shofar** to sound exulting blasts in The Seventh Month; on the tenth day of The Seventh Month, on The Day of Atonement, send the **shofar** through all your country.

וְקִדַּשְׁתֶּם אֶת שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה וְקִרְאתֶם דִּרְוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל יֹשְׁבֶיהָ יוֹבֵל הוּא תִּהְיֶה לָכֶם וְשַׁבְתֶּם אִישׁ אֶל אֲחֻזָּתוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶל מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ תָּשֻׁבוּ

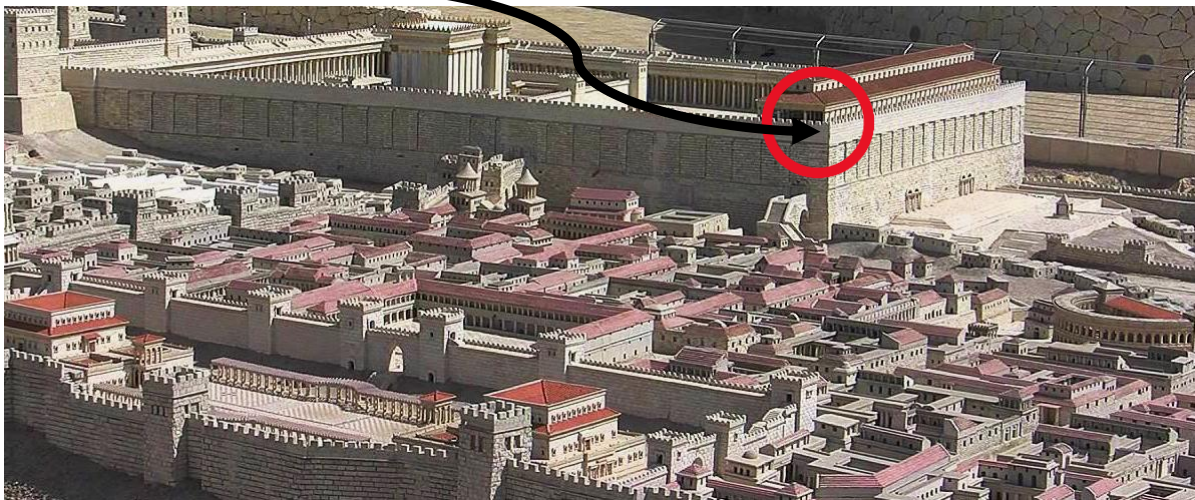
Thereby shall you have consecrated that fiftieth year. Proclaim release throughout the land, to all its inhabitants. It shall be a **jubilee year** for you, when everyone [who had sold off the use of, and access to, it] shall return to his ancestral holdings, and everyone [who had sold himself into indenture] shall return to his own clan.



A broken stone discovered in 1968 pointing to the stairwell leading to the high southwest corner of the Jerusalem Temple.

inscription: **לבית התקיעה**
“to the **t'kiyah**-blowing place.”

“The **T'kiyah** Place” on the model of 1st-century Jerusalem at the Israel Museum



- continued

וַיִּתְקְעוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת הָרָאשִׁים בְּשׁוֹפָרוֹת וַיִּשְׁבְּרוּ הַפָּדִים



I) Judges 7:20 - The three chieftains **blew** their **shofars**, and smashed the jars [concealing their lit torches].

וַיִּחְזִיקוּ בְיָד שְׂמֹאלָם בַּלְפָּדִים וּבְיָד יְמִינָם הַשׁוֹפָרוֹת לְתִקְוָע

Holding the torches in their left hands, and the **shofars** in their right to **blow** them,

וַיִּקְרְאוּ חָרֵב לַיהוָה וּלְגִדְעוֹן

they cried aloud: “A sword for The Eternal One, and for Gid’on!”

וַיִּרַע הָעָם וַיִּתְקְעוּ בַּשִּׁפְרוֹת

J) Joshua 6:20 - All the people shouted in exultation when [the seven Cohanim] **blew** the **shofars**.

וַיְהִי כַשְׁמַע הָעָם אֶת קוֹל הַשׁוֹפָר וַיִּרְעוּ הָעָם תְּרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה

For upon hearing the sound of the **shofars**, the people **shouted with a mighty shout**—

וַתִּפֹּל הַחוֹמָה תַּחֲתֶיהָ וַיַּעַל הָעָם הָעִירָה אִישׁ נִגְדּוֹ וַיִּלָּכְדוּ אֶת הָעִיר

at which the walls [of the city] collapsed from under it, so that the people went up to the city (each one running straight ahead of himself) and so captured the city.



K) Amos 3:4 -

When a **shofar** is **blown** in the city,

אִם יִתְקַע שׁוֹפָר בְּעִיר וְעַם לֹא יִחָרְדוּ
should its residents not take alarm?

L) Isaiah 18:3 -

All you residing in the world,

כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל וְשֹׁכְנֵי אֶרֶץ
and living upon the earth:

When a notice is posted, look to it;

כַּנְשָׂא נֹס הָרִים תִּרְאוּ וּבִתְקַע שׁוֹפָר תִּשְׁמְעוּ
when a **shofar** is **blown**, take heed!

M) Jeremiah 4:5-6 -

וּבִירוּשָׁלַם הִשְׁמִיעוּ וְאָמְרוּ
קְרְאוּ מִלְּאוּ וְאָמְרוּ

הִגִּידוּ בִיהוּדָה
תְּקַעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּאֶרֶץ

Proclaim in Judah,

announce in Jerusalem, and say:

“**Blow** a **shofar** through the land, and proclaim loudly, saying:

אֶל עַרֵי הַמִּבְצָר

הָאֲסִפוּ וְנִבְּאוּהָ

- more over

הָעִיזוּ אֶל תְּעֻמּוֹדוֹ

שָׂאוּ נִס צִיּוֹנָה

“Assemble, and let us go
Post a notice: “To Mount Zion.”

into the fortified cities!”
Take refuge, do not delay—

For I bring evil from the north,

כִּי רָעָה אֲנֹכִי מִבֵּיא מִצָּפוֹן וְשָׁבֵר גָּדוֹל
and great disaster.

וְהַבּוֹנִים אִישׁ חָרְבוֹ אֶסוּרִים
עַל מְתָנָיו וּבּוֹנִים וְהַתּוֹקֵעַ
בְּשׁוֹפָר אֶצְלִי

N) Nehemiah 4:12-14 - Every one
of the builders had a sword sheathed at
his thigh, and the **shofar blower** was
constantly alongside me.

וְאָמַר אֶל הַחֹרִים וְאֶל
הַסֹּגְנִים וְאֶל יִתְרֵי הָעָם
הַמְּלָאכָה הַרְבֵּה וּרְחֹבָה
וְאֶנְחֵנוּ נִפְרָדִים עַל הַחוֹמָה
רְחוֹקִים אִישׁ מֵאֲחִיו



For I had told the supervisors and their assistants, and all the rest of the people engaged in
the labor: “We are numerous, and overly spread out— separated from each other a great
distance in our labors to rebuild the wall.

בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר שָׁמָּה תִּקְבְּצוּ אֵלֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִלָּחֶם
לָנוּ

“At any locale where you hear the sound of the **shofar**, rally to us there— **our God will**
battle for us.”

וְכִי תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאֶרְצְכֶם עַל הָצָר הַצָּרֵר אֶתְכֶם וְהִרְעַתְכֶם בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת

O) Numbers 10:9-10 - And when you go off to war in your land, against an enemy
who harries you, you are to blow a *t'ru'ah* exulting blast with the **silver clarion-trumpets**,

וְנִזְכָּרְתֶּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְנוֹשַׁעְתֶּם מֵאִיְבֵיכֶם

that you may **be remembered** before The Eternal One, your God, and you will be
saved from your foes.

וּבְיוֹם שִׂמְחַתְכֶם

But on your joyous occasions,

Rabbi Shlomo Goren proclaims the reunification
of Jerusalem by blowing the *shofar* in front of the
Western Wall in the Old City - June 07, 1967

וּבְמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם

and at your designated once-a-year feast days,

וּבְרָאשֵׁי חַדְשֵׁיכֶם



- continued

and at your monthly New Moon celebrations,

וּתְקַעְתֶּם בַּחֲצָצְרוֹת עַל עֲלִיתֵיכֶם וְעַל זִבְחֵי שְׁלֵמֵיכֶם **וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְזִכָּרוֹן לִפְנֵי**
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

you are to sound the **clarion trumpets** over your burnt offerings and your celebration offerings, **that there may be a remembrance of you** before The Eternal One.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ זָכְרֵנוּ בְּזִכָּרוֹן טוֹב לִפְנֵיךָ, וּפְקֹדֵנוּ בְּפִקְדֹת יְשׁוּעָה
וְרַחֲמִים מִשְׁמֵי שָׁמַי קָדָם

P) High Holy Days Prayerbook, petitionary prayer - Our God, and God of our forebears: **remember us with a favorable recollection**, and take us into account for redemption and compassion from before You at the highest height.

וְזָכַר לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶהְבֵּת הַקְּדָמוֹנִים אֲבֹרָהֶם יִצְחָק וְיִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדֶיךָ

And remember to our credit, O Eternal One, our God, the love of our forebears— Your faithful servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—

וְאֶת הַבְּרִית וְאֶת הַחֶסֶד וְאֶת הַשְּׁבוּעָה
שֶׁנִּשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ בְּהַר הַמֹּרִיָּה

as well as the Covenant and the kindness and the oath which You swore to our Patriarch Abraham at Mount Moriah.

Genesis 22:17-18 - “I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore . . . and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants.”

Q) Areshet S'fateinu (Shofar hymn from Seder Rav Amram, c. 850) -

אֶרֶשֶׁת שִׁפְתֵינוּ יַעֲרֹב לִפְנֶיךָ אֶל רֶם וְנִשָּׂא

May the offering of our lips be sweet to You, O Got high and exalted,

מִבֵּין וּמֵאֲזִין מִבֵּיט וּמִקְשִׁיב לְקוֹל תְּקִיעֵתֵנוּ

Who heeds, hearkens, and comprehends the sound of our *t'kiy'ah*.

וְתִקְבַּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרָצוֹן סִדֵּר זָכְרוֹנֵינוּ

Accept, then, willingly and with compassion, **our remembrance-plea**.

כָּל הַשּׁוֹפָרוֹת כַּשְּׂרִין חוּץ מִשֵּׁל פְּרָה מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא קָרוֹן

R) Mishnah Rosh haShanah 3:2-4 Any kind of **shofar** is acceptable except for one made from a cow, because it is [not an antler, but rather] “a horn.”

שׁוֹפָר שֶׁל רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה שֶׁל יַעַל פְּשׁוּט וּפְיוֹ מִצּוֹפָה זֶהב

The **shofar** [blown in the Jerusalem Temple] on Rosh ha-Shanah was a **straight one**, made from the horn of an oryx, ► and its mouthpiece was covered in gold.

וּשְׁתֵּי חֲצוֹצְרוֹת מִן הַצַּדִּדִּין

The two silver **clarion trumpets** were blown alongside [the **shofar**], one on either side.



שׁוֹפָר מֵאֵרֶיךָ וְחֲצוֹצְרוֹת מִקְצֵרוֹת שְׁמִצּוֹת הַיּוֹם בְּשׁוֹפָר

- more over

However, the **shofar** sounded a long note, while the **clarion trumpets** sounded shorter notes—for the religious duty of the day focused on the **shofar**.

בתעניות בשל זכרים
כפופין ופיהן מצופה כסף

[The *shofarot* used] on a fast day

were made of rams' horns, **crooked**, and their mouthpieces were covered in silver.

שתי חצוצרות באמצע שופר מקצר וחצוצרות מאריכות שמצות היום בחצוצרות

Rosh haShanah focused on the **shofar**

per Psalm 47:6 -

יְהוָה בְּקוֹל שׁוֹפָר עָלָה אֱלֹהִים בְּתִרְעָה

God is exalted by means of a *t'ru'ah* exulting blast;

The Eternal One, by the sound of the **shofar**!

Fast-day focused on the **clarion-trumpets**

per Numbers 10:9 (Text "O" above) -

וְכִי תִבְאוּ מִלְחָמָה וְהִרְעַתֶּם בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת

When you are in conflict, **blow a *t'ru'ah* exulting blast with the silver clarion-trumpets,**

וְנִזְכָּרְתֶּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה . . . וְנוֹשָׁעֵתֶם

that you may **be remembered** before The Eternal One,

the **shofar** sounded short notes, while the **clarion trumpets** sounded longer notes—for the religious duty of that day devolved upon the **clarion trumpets**.



19th-century Ashkenazic *shofar*

ram's horn boiled, straightened, and pressed flat - engraved with Genesis 22:13

Yemenite *shofar*

polished kudu horn, adorned in silver touched with gold accents



Iraqi *shofar*

natural gemsbok oryx horn, carved with scenes of Jerusalem



- continued

Israeli shofar

ram's horn, partly straightened, and polished, painted with flowers; vines; starry sky; and Jerusalem



אע"פ שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזירת הכתוב רמז יש בו כלומר עורו
ישינים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם

S) RaMBaM (Musa ibn-Maimun, 1135-1204), *Mishneh Torah* – Repentance 3:4 - Even though the **blowing** of the **shofar** on Rosh haShanah is a Scriptural decree, there is an intimation within it as if to say: “Awaken, O sleepers, from your sleepers, and nappers from your dozing.

וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם

“Search your deeds— remember your Creator, and return in penitence!”

לפיכך צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה כאילו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב וכן כל העולם חציו זכאי וחציו חייב

Accordingly each person should view themselves, throughout the year, as if they were half righteous and half culpable (for, indeed, the whole world is half righteous and half culpable!).

עשה מצוה אחת הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף זכות וגרם לו
ולהם תשועה והצלה שנאמר וצדיק יסוד עולם

Perform, therefore, a single *mitzvah*, and thereby one has not only conquered oneself, but also **offset the balance of the entire world in favor of merit**, bringing about redemption and deliverance for all— even as it is said “for the righteous is the foundation of this world” [Proverbs 10:25].

השופר אינו מקבל טומאה

T) RaMBaM (Musa ibn-Maimun, 1135-1204), *Mishneh Torah* – Implements 5:8 - A **shofar** is immune from contracting ritual uncleanness.

