

Sounding the Shofar

The Torah describes counting a cycle of seven seven-year periods—forty-nine years in all—and then sounding the shofar to announce the beginning of the yovel (Jubilee) year, during which land returns to its original owners and slaves go free.

(ח) וְסַפַּרְתָּ לָךְ שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת
 שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת פְּעָמִים
 וְהָיוּ לָךְ יָמֵי שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָתוֹת
 הַשָּׁנִים תִּשְׁעַת וָאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה :
 (ט) וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ שׁוֹפָר תְּרוּעָה
 בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּעֶשְׂרֵי לַחֹדֶשׁ
 בְּיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים תַּעֲבִירוּ שׁוֹפָר
 בְּכָל אֶרֶצְכֶם : (י) וְקִדְשְׁתֶּם
 אֶת שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה
 וְקִרְאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל
 יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹבֵל הוּא תִּהְיֶה לָכֶם
 וְשַׁבְתֶּם אִישׁ אֶל אַחֲזָתוֹ וְאִישׁ
 אֶל מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ תָּשֻׁבוּ :

⁸You shall count off seven weeks of years—seven times seven years—so that the period of seven weeks of years gives you a total of forty-nine years. ⁹Then you [singular] shall sound the horn loud [literally, pass the sound of the shofar]; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month—the Day of Atonement—you [plural] shall have the horn sounded [literally, pass the shofar] throughout your land ¹⁰and you shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to his holding and each of you shall return to his family.

We associate the shofar primarily with Rosh Hashanah, which is known in the Torah as Yom T’ruah (the day of sounding the shofar). Texts in this section ask about the connection between these two instances of sounding the shofar: yovel and Rosh Hashanah.

As you explore these texts, consider what the shofar of yovel is designed to evoke. Why is this practice so central in the biblical text? What might sounding the shofar as individuals or in community awaken in us as we approach this fiftieth anniversary?

I. Shofar is *Yovel's* Essence

A1. Yovel means shofar: Rashi on Leviticus 25:10

הוא—שנה זאת מובדלת משאר שנים בנקיבת שם לה לבדה. ומה שמה, יובל שמה, על שם תקיעת שופר: “It is *yovel*”—this year is distinguished from all other years by its specific name. What is its name? *Yovel* is its name, named for the sounding of the shofar.

- » *What does the shofar mean to you? What associations do you have with sounding the shofar? What feelings does the sound of the shofar provoke in you?*
- » *Rashi proposes that the entire year of yovel is named for the sound of the shofar. What can you suggest about a year named after the shofar? What demands might this year make on us?*

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, France 1040-1105) is perhaps the best known commentator on the Bible. His commentary includes *midrash*, as well as explanations of *p'shat*—the surface meaning of the text.

A2. Yovel/shofar at Sinai: Exodus 19: 11-13, 18-19

(יא) וְהָיוּ נֹכְחִים לַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי כִּי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי יֵרֵד ה' לְעֵינֵינוּ כָּל הָעָם עַל הַר סִינַי: (יב) וְהִגְבַּלְתָּ אֶת הָעָם סָבִיב לְאֹמֶר הַשְּׁמֵרוּ לָכֶם עֲלוֹת בְּהָר וּנְגַע בְּקַצְהוּ כָּל הַנֹּגַע בְּהָר מוֹת יוֹמָת: (יג) לֹא תִגַּע בּוֹ יָד כִּי סָקוֹל יִסָּקֵל אוֹ יָרֵה יִיָּרֶה אִם בְּהֶמָּה אִם אִישׁ לֹא יַחֲיֶה בְּמִשְׁךְ הַיָּבֵל הַמָּה יַעֲלוּ בְּהָר:

(יח) וְהָרַסִּינִי עֲשׂוֹן כָּלוּ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יֵרֵד עָלָיו ה' בָּאֵשׁ וַיַּעַל עֲשָׂנוּ כְּעֲשׂוֹן הַכֹּבֵּשׂוֹן וַיִּחַרְדַּד כָּל הָהָר מְאֹד: (יט) וַיְהִי קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר הוֹלֵךְ וְחֹזֵק מְאֹד מִשָּׁה וַיְדַבֵּר וְהָאֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶנּוּ בְּקוֹל:

¹¹Let them be ready for the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down, in the sight of all the people, on Mount Sinai. ¹²You shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Beware of going up the mountain or touching the border of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death: ¹³no hand shall touch them, but they shall be either stoned or shot; animal or person, they shall not live.' When the *yovel* [ram's horn] sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain."

¹⁸Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the Lord had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently.

¹⁹The blare of the *shofar* grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder.

A3. Yovel bringing down the walls of Jericho: Joshua 6:4-5

(ב) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ רְאֵה נָתַתִּי בְיָדְךָ אֶת יְרִיחוֹ וְאֶת מְלֶכֶה גְבוּרֵי הָחָיִל : (ג) וְסַבְּתֶם אֶת הָעִיר כָּל אֲנָשֵׁי הַמְּלָחָמָה הַקִּיף אֶת הָעִיר פַּעַם אַחַת כֹּה תַעֲשֶׂה שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים : (ד) וְשִׁבְעָה כֹהֲנִים יִשְׂאוּ שִׁבְעָה שׁוֹפְרוֹת הַיּוֹבְלִים לִפְנֵי הָאָרוֹן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִסָּבּוּ אֶת הָעִיר שִׁבְעַ פְּעָמִים וְהַכֹּהֲנִים יִתְקְעוּ בַשׁוֹפְרוֹת : (ה) וְהָיָה בַּמָּשָׁךְ בְּקִרְוֹ הַיּוֹבֵל כִּשְׁמַעְכֶם אֶת קוֹל הַשׁוֹפָר יָרִיעוּ כָּל הָעָם תְּרוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וְנָפְלָה חוֹמַת הָעִיר תַּחֲתֶיהָ וְעָלוּ הָעָם אִישׁ נֹגְדוֹ :

²The Lord said to Joshua, “See, I will deliver Jericho and her king [and her] warriors into your hands. ³Let all your troops march around the city and complete one circuit of the city. Do this six days, ⁴with seven priests carrying seven *shofarot* of *yovelim* [ram’s horns] preceding the Ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests sounding the *shofarot*. ⁵And when a long blast is sounded on the *yovel*—as soon as you hear that sound of the *shofar*—all the people shall give a mighty shout. Thereupon the city wall will collapse, and the people shall advance, every man straight ahead.”

- » *In each of these circumstances, at Sinai and at Jericho, what is the role of the shofar/yovel? What does the sound invite from us? Evoke in us? How do you imagine the experience of people hearing the sound? In each text, what does the sound change about the surrounding circumstances and conditions?*
- » *Which of these concepts of shofar feels most relevant to you, as we approach this fiftieth anniversary? To which should we be responding now?*

B. Sounding shofar is essential to yovel: Babylonian Talmud, *Rosh Hashanah 9b*

תנו רבנן : (ויקרא כה) יובל היא, אף על פי שלא שמטו, אף על פי שלא תקעו. יכול אף על פי שלא שלחו— תלמוד לומר היא, דברי רבי יהודה.

Our Rabbis taught: “It is *yovel*” [Leviticus 25:10]—even though they did not observe the release of fields, even though they did not observe the sounding of the shofar. I might say [that it is still *yovel*] even though they did not observe the freeing of slaves. Therefore it says, “it is.” So Rabbi Yehudah [holds that releasing slaves is essential to *yovel*].

רבי יוסי אומר : יובל היא, אף על פי שלא שמטו, אף על פי שלא שלחו. יכול אף על פי שלא תקעו—תלמוד לומר היא. וכי מאחר שמקרא אחד מרבה ומקרא אחד ממעיט, מפני מה אני אומר יובל היא אף על פי שלא שלחו ואין יובל אלא אם כן תקעו?

Rabbi Yosi said: “It is *yovel*”—even though they did not release fields, even though they did not dismiss slaves. I might think [that it is still *yovel*] even if they did not sound the shofar. It therefore says, “it is.” Now since one text brings some cases under the rule and another text excludes others from it, why should I interpret: *yovel*, even though they did not dismiss [slaves], but it is not a *yovel* unless they blew the shofar?

לפי שאפשר לעולם בלא שילוח עבדים ואי אפשר לעולם בלא תקיעת שופר.

Because it is possible that there should be no [opportunity for] dismissing slaves, but it is not possible that there should be no [opportunity for] sounding the shofar.

- » *Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yosi are both reading the same two words from Leviticus 25:10, יובל היא, "it is yovel" but understand these words differently. How do their interpretations of these two words suggest different ideas about what is essential to observing yovel? How might each make his argument about what is essential about calling or not calling a year "yovel"?*
- » *Rabbi Yosi suggests that there might be a situation in which it is impossible to release slaves. Can you imagine such a situation? In what cases do we find ourselves stuck in trying to enact justice or reverse injustice—even to the point of believing that doing so is impossible?*
- » *How and where might you sound the shofar to mark this fifty-year period since 1967? What would this sounding of the shofar mean to you? How would you want others to perceive it?*

The Talmud is a compilation of law, narrative, folk wisdom, and more. It consists of the *Mishnah*, probably compiled around 200 CE, and the *Gemara*, compiled around 500 CE or later.

The Talmud is divided into 63 tractates, each mostly focused on one subject (but often including much material on other subjects as well).

When we refer to "The Talmud," we usually mean the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), codified in Babylonia. There is also a second Talmud, known as Talmud Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud), codified in the Land of Israel somewhat earlier. The latter is less complete and has been less central to the development of law.

II. What Does Shofar Evoke in Us?

A. Yovel as making sound: *Midrash Lekah Tov, Vayikra, Parshat Behar, 71a*

יובל היא. על שם השופר שיוביל הקול נקרא יובל. "It is *yovel*"—*yovel* is named after the shofar that brings about [*yovil*] the sound.

- » *This midrash links the meaning of the word yovel to the action embodied by its Hebrew root—bringing something about. What impact would you want the sounding of the shofar to have during this fifty-year anniversary?*

Lekah Tov is an 11th century commentary written by Rabbi Tobiah ben Eliezer (Bulgaria/Palestine), which incorporates both *midrash* and grammatical comments.

B1. Publicizing a decree: Rashi on Leviticus 25:9

והעברת—לשון (שמות לו ו) ויעבירו קול במחנה, לשון הכרזה : *Then you [singular] shall sound the horn loud [literally, cause the sound of the shofar to pass]—this is like [Exodus 36:6] Moses had this proclamation [literally kol, voice] made to pass throughout the camp [to ask the Israelites to stop bringing gifts for the tabernacle]—it is like a decree.*

B2. Celebrating the joy of release: Sforno on Leviticus 25:9

שופר תרועה. לשמחת חירות העבדים והשבת השדות לבעליהם : *Sound the horn loud—for the joy of freeing the slaves and returning of fields to their owners.*

- » *Rashi sees the shofar sound as a decree to stop contributing to the tabernacle—an action that, while well-intentioned, had become overwhelming and counterproductive; Sforno hears the shofar as an exclamation of joy, at the freeing of slaves and the returning of fields. To what extent and how do each of these interpretations resonate for you during this fifty-year anniversary? Why?*
- » *In our contemporary context, what might be the decree you want to make or to hear during this fiftieth year? What needs to stop? What merits celebrating in joy?*

Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (Italy, c.1475-1550) was a biblical commentator, physician, and philosopher. His commentary on the Bible is known for its humanism and compassion.

The text below draws on mystical imagery for what the shofar evokes; for more on the mystical imagery of yovel, see the introduction to this volume.

C. Shofar sound evokes smashing: Zohar (Spain, 13th century) Vol. 3, Parashat Emor, 92b, Translation adapted from Daniel Matt

כתיב (שם כה) והעברת שופר תרועה בחדש השביעי וגו' שופר תרועה אמאי אלא שופר דמתבר שלשלאין דמתבר שולטנותא מכל עבדין *It is written: You shall sound a blasting shofar; in the seventh month on the tenth of the month, on Yom Kippur, you shall sound a shofar throughout your land [Leviticus 25:9]. Why “shofar t’ruah,” a blasting shofar [using the term associated with a shofar blast broken into nine short notes]? Well, a shofar that smashes chains, breaking the power over all slaves.*

- » *How does the Zohar understand one particular shofar sound as particularly relevant to the yovel year? What might this “broken” sound mean to you this year?*
- » *Can you imagine a ritual for beginning the yovel year that would evoke the kind of freedom for Israelis and Palestinians that you want to bring about this year? What would it look (sound, feel...) like?*

The Zohar is the primary text of Jewish mysticism. It was written in Spain in the thirteenth century by Moshe de Leon, though de Leon attributed it to the Talmudic sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

D. Shofar as sound (rather than speaking): *Kedushat Levi*

Reading these two texts together gives a sense of the distinction common in Hasidic literature between sound and speaking, and two possible readings of the nature of the shofar's sound.

D1: Kedushat Levi on Parshat Bereshit

והנה כל מה שיש ברוחניות יש כמוהו בגשמיות. והנה בגשמיות יש קול ודיבור, הקול הוא כלול, והדיבור הוא הצימצום להקול באותיות הדיבור. והנה כן בראש השנה, הקול שופר הוא השפע מהבורא ברוך הוא הוא הכלול, ומה שאנו אומרים מלכיות זכרונות ושופרות הוא הצימצום שאנו מצמצמים בהאותיות את השפע מהבורא ברוך הוא כל אחד כפי הרצון שלו.

Everything that exists in the spiritual realm has a parallel in the physical realm. In the physical realm, there is sound and there is speaking. Sound is all-encompassing, and speaking is the restriction of sound to the letters of speaking. So on Rosh Hashanah, the sound of the shofar is outpouring abundance from the Blessed Creator—that is all-encompassing. And what we say in our prayer services (*malchuyot*, *zichronot*, and *shofarot*) [the sections of the Musaf service on Rosh Hashanah] is the restriction that we put in the form of letters onto the outpouring abundance from the Blessed Creator, each according to our own desires.

D2: Kedushat Levi on Rosh Hashanah

כל העמים תקעו כף הריעו לאלהים
 בקול רנה (תהלים מז, ב). יבואר על
 דרך משל, עבדי המלך האהובים למלך,
 כאשר באים לפני המלך לבקש חפצם,
 אז מגודל גדולת והתנשאות המלך, נופל
 עליהם פחד לדבר לפני המלך, כי יראים
 אולי לא יוכלו לדבר כראוי, ויהיה פתחון
 פה להמקטרג להסטין עליהם, רק
 מבקשים רצונם וחפצם ברמז בעלמא,
 והמלך ממלא שאלתם.

כמו כן בראש השנה, אשר אנחנו עמו
 בית ישראל מתעלים לפני הבורא ברוך
 הוא, אזי אימה ויראה גדולה נופל עלינו,
 אשר אנחנו יראים לדבר לפניו, כי אולי
 נהיה נכשלים חס ושלום באיזה דבר
 ויהיה פתחון פה להמקטרג להסטין,
 לכן צועקים אנחנו בקול בלא דיבור,
 היינו בקול שופר שהוא קול פשוט,
 צעקה רבה מעומק הלב, והבורא ברוך
 הוא בוחן לבות ויודע נסתרות ממלא
 משאלותינו לטובה.

“All you peoples, clap your hands, raise a joyous shout for God” (Psalm 47:2). This can be explained through a parable. When the king’s beloved servants came before him to ask for what they desired, because of the king’s greatness and remove, they were afraid to speak to him. Because they were concerned that they might not be able to speak correctly, making an opening for the accuser [a figure from the cosmic realm who tempts and challenges] to draw them astray, the servants would request their wants and desires in a hidden way, and the king would fulfill them.

So too on Rosh Hashanah, when we the people of Israel go up before the Blessed Creator, a great fear falls upon us, and we are afraid to speak before God, lest we be found lacking in something, God forbid, and the accuser find an opening to undermine us. Therefore we yell in sound without speaking, that is, through the sound of the shofar, which is simple sound, a great cry from the depths of the heart. The Blessed Creator who investigates hearts and knows hidden things fulfills our desires for good.

- » *How do you understand the distinction in each of these texts between sound and speaking? In thinking about current debates about the future for Israelis and Palestinians, how might this distinction between sound and speech play out? How might each side both express and listen to both sound and speech.*
- » *These texts suggest that the sound of the shofar may come from God or from us. How do you hear God’s voice in the shofar? How do you hear our human voices? Which do you most long to hear during this fiftieth year since 1967? Why? What do you want the shofar to express for you?*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (Ukraine, 1740–1809) was an important Hasidic leader known for his prayers, songs, and for his most famous work, the commentary *Kedushat Levi*.

Marking fifty years since 1967 brings us to consider the nature of relations between Jews and Palestinians in the land of Israel, and to ask fundamental questions about self and other in the current moment of our people. Two classic midrashim on the sound of the shofar evoke this juxtaposition, setting out to understand the three kinds of shofar sounds we hear on Rosh Hashanah:—the tekiyah (the longest, solid blast), the t’ruah (the nine short notes), and the shevarim (the three longer broken notes)—anchoring the meaning of these sounds in human experience. In these texts, all of these sounds carry profound emotions. See what you “hear” as you read them.

E1. Sisera’s mother sighing or crying: Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 33b

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| <p>שיעור תרועה כשלוש יבבות.
אמר אביי : בהא ודאי
פליגי, דכתיב (במדבר כט)
יום תרועה יהיה לכם,
ומתרגמינן : יום יבבא
יהא לכון.</p> | <p>The length of the <i>t’ruah</i> is equal to the length of three <i>yevavot</i> [sobs or wails].</p> |
| <p>וכתיב באימיה דסיסרא
(שופטים ה) בעד החלון
נשקפה ותיבב אם סיסרא.
מר סבר : גנוחי גנח, ומר
סבר : ילולי יליל.</p> | <p>Abaye said: Here there is really a difference of opinion—It is written [Numbers 29] “It shall be a day of <i>t’ruah</i> for you,” and we translate [in Aramaic], “it shall be a day of <i>yevava</i> [wailing] for you.”</p> <p>It is written of the mother of Sisera [Judges 5], “Through the window she looked forth and wailed [<i>va-teyabev</i>].” One authority thought that this means drawing a long sigh [<i>ganah</i>], and the other that it means uttering short piercing cries [<i>yalil</i>].</p> |
- » *In the Book of Judges, Sisera is a general in the Canaanite army killed by Yael, a Kenite woman who serves him milk to make him sleep and puts a tent peg through his head. Sisera’s death and defeat in battle bring about forty years of peace in the land of Israel. This text is striking in its demand that we hear the grief even of our enemy. What are some of the ways the lesson of this midrash might guide us in thinking about Israelis and Palestinians, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories?*

E2. Sarah crying after the binding of Isaac: Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer, Chapter 31

וכששב אברהם מהר המוריה חרה אפו של סמאל שראה שלא עלתה בידו תאורת לבו לבטל קרבנו של אברהם אבינו, מה עשה הלך ואמ' לשרה הלא שמעת מה נעשה אח' ר בעולם, אמרה לו לאו, אמ' לה לקח אברהם את יצחק בנו ושחטו והקריבו על גבי המזבח לעולה, התחילה שרה לבכות ומיללת שלשה יבבות כנגד שלשה תקיעות שלשה יבבות יללות כנגד שלשה יבבות, ופרחה נשמתה ומתה, ובא אברהם ומצאה שמתה

When Abraham returned from Mount Moriah, Satan became infuriated. He had not gotten what he desired, which was to thwart the sacrifice of Abraham. What did he do? He went to Sarah and asked: "Did you hear what happened in the world?" She answered, "No." He said, "Abraham took Isaac his son and slaughtered him, offering him up on the altar as a sacrifice." Sarah began to cry and moan [*meyalelet*] the sound of three wails [*yevavot*] which correspond to the three *tekiyot* of the shofar, and her soul burst forth from her and she died. Abraham came only to find that she had died.

- » *These two midrashim together invite us to hear the voices of grieving mothers in the sounds of the shofar. Why mothers' voices in particular? What do you make of the pairing—of hearing both Sarah, fundamentally "of us" and Sisera's mother, fundamentally "other?"*
- » *In the contemporary context of Israelis and Palestinians, how would you understand hearing, in this particular "yovel," both of these voices of grief in the sound of the shofar?*
- » *We have seen the shofar described as an instrument giving voice to both grief and joy. This year, people of different backgrounds and political persuasions will be both celebrating and mourning the impact of the Six-Day War. How do you think about this juxtaposition of joy and grief? Which feels stronger for you? How can a person take in and experience both? How might the shofar help us do so?*

Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer is a collection of *midrashim* on the Torah, probably compiled in the Land of Israel during the third century.

III. Shofar Links *Yovel* to Rosh Hashanah

The Torah mentions just two specific times for sounding the shofar—each year on Rosh Hashanah, and every fifty years at the outset of the yovel. Drawing this connection brings yovel into Rosh Hashanah and Rosh Hashanah into yovel—that is, the shofar invites us to consider the connection of teshuvah (reflective self-transformation) to yovel, and the connection of liberation to Rosh Hashanah.

A. Different purposes: Rambam, *Sefer HaMitzvot*, Mitzvah 137

הנה התבאר (מתני' ר"ה כו ב) ששוע
היובל לראש השנה לתקיעה ולברכות. ...
וידוע שהתקיעה הזאת ביובל אמנם היא
לפרסם החרות ושהוא מין מן ההכרזה
והוא אמרו וקראתם דרור. ואין ענינה
ענין תקיעת ראש השנה כי היא זכרון
לפני י"י (אמור כג) וזו להוציא את
העבדים כמו שבארנו :

In the Mishnah on Rosh Hashanah [26:2], it says “*Yovel* is equivalent to Rosh Hashanah for shofar soundings and blessings...”

It is known that the shofar soundings for *yovel* are specifically to publicize freeing the slaves, that they are a sort of decree, which is what it means when it says “proclaim release.” This is not the same reason for the shofar sounding on Rosh Hashanah, which is to be a reminder for God [*Parashat Emor*, 23]—here it is to free the slaves, as we have explained.

- » *Why do we sound the shofar on yovel? Why do we sound the shofar on Rosh Hashanah? What are the similarities and differences? How might you see them connected in ways that Maimonides did not?*
- » *What might be the meanings intended by, and heard in, sounding the shofar on this fiftieth year?*

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, known as the Rambam or Maimonides (Spain/Egypt 1135-1204), was one of the most influential Jewish philosophers and legal authorities, as well as a doctor and community leader. *Sefer HaMitzvot* is his enumeration of, and commentary on, the 613 commandments.

B. Sounding vs. hearing: *Teshuvot Re'em*, 40

גבי יובל שהדבר תלוי בתקיעה כדי להכריז על הדבר ולפרסמו והיא עיקר המצוה כתב מצות עשה לתקוע ראש השנה דאין המצוה אלא בשמיעה כתב לשמוע.

With *yovel*, where the act itself depends on sounding the shofar in order to make the decree and publicize it, sounding the shofar is the essential aspect of the *mitzvah* and so he [Maimonides] wrote that it is a positive commandment to sound it. For Rosh Hashanah, where the *mitzvah* is to hear the shofar, he wrote [that it is a positive commandment] to hear it.

- » *Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi notices that Maimonides distinguishes between sounding the shofar (the obligation on yovel) and hearing the shofar (the obligation on Rosh Hashanah). Why is this difference important? How does each reflect the role of the shofar on the respective occasions (at least, according to Maimonides and this source)?*
- » *On this fiftieth year, in what ways do we need to have the shofar sounded? In what ways do we need to hear it?*

Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi (Constantinople, c. 1455—c.1525), more commonly known as the Re'em, was a Talmudist and legal scholar. This text comes from his collection of *teshuvot* (legal opinions).

C. Freedom on Rosh Hashanah: *Mareh Yechezkel*, Moadim, Rosh Hashanah

עלה אלקים בתרועה כי במזמור זה יש ז"פ אלקים ואומרים אותו ז"פ שהוא מ"ט ליכנס בעלמא דחירות, ושנת היובל והשופר מורה ג"כ על הדרור כידוע לקרוא דרור על גאולתינו וימתקו הדינים

“*Elohim* (God) went up in the *t'ruah* [sound of the shofar] [Psalm 47]:” In this Psalm, [the word] *Elohim* appears seven times, and we say the psalm seven times [on Rosh Hashanah, in the *shofar* service]. This makes forty-nine, to enter into the world of freedom. In the *yovel* year, the shofar also teaches about *d'ror* [release], as is known, to proclaim release for our redemption and to sweeten the judgment.

- » *The Mareh Yechezkel links yovel to liberation. What kinds of liberation do we seek on Rosh Hashanah? On Yovel? What liberation do we seek this year? How are these different, and how are they related?*

Rabbi Ezekiel Panet (Transylvania, 1783–1845), was the leader of the Jewish community in Transylvania. The *Mareh Yechezkel* is a collection of writings on Torah and on the festivals.

D. Teshuvah on Yovel: Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel, *Ohev Yisrael*, Pesach Writings

וקראתם דרור בארץ שינקה ויטהר לבבו
מכל חטא ופשע לבל ישוב לכסלה לעולם
שכבר נמאס אצלו הדבר. וזהו ועובר
על פשע (מיכה ז, יח) שיעבור על הפשע
באותו מקום ובאותו מעשה ונבזה בעיניו
נמאס, וזה לא יעלה על לב האדם, שהיא
השכינה יסיר כל המעיקים ויכול לבטל
ולשבר כל כח התאוות (אפילו מהגזל)
[הגשמיות] בסוד ומלכותו בכל משלה.
וזהו בחינת יום הכפורים שהוא ועובר
על פשע ורוח עברה ותטהרם בחינת דרור
והארה גדולה מאין סוף ועד אין תכלית.

“Proclaim release throughout the land”—that you should clean and purify your heart from any transgression or sin, so that you will not ever return to that foolishness, for you have had enough of it. And this is [what is meant in] “Who is a God like You, forgiving iniquity and remitting transgression” [Micah 7:18]—that you will pass by that transgression, the same act in the same place, and it will be despicable to you, and won’t even arise in your consciousness, because the *Shechinah* [the Divine presence] will annul any physical desire for it, the secret of “God’s dominion [*malchut*—another name for *shechinah*] rules over everything.” This is Yom Kippur—this aspect of “remitting transgression” [in Micah] and “a wind passed by and purified them” [Job 37:21]. And this is *d’ror* [liberation]...

- » *The Ohev Yisrael invites us to consider the process of teshuvah (reflective self-transformation), which is the core practice of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, as a kind of liberation. What sort of teshuvah would you hope the shofar of our yovel might evoke? What might change as a result?*

Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel (Poland, 1748-1825), known as the Apter Rebbe, was a Hasidic leader of his time. The *Ohev Yisrael* consists of his commentary on the Torah, including many mystical elements.

Final questions

- » *What might sounding the shofar mean during this fiftieth year commemoration? Who should sound this shofar? How?*
- » *What message should we hear in the sounding of the shofar this year?*
- » *What should be the impact of sounding the shofar? What do you hope will change as a result? What liberation might sounding the shofar engender?*