**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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***PARASHAT HA-SHAVUA***

***PARASHAT BEHA’ALOTEKHA***

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In memory of my amazing mother Ocotian bat Candelaria z”l   
whose yahrzeit is 12 Sivan

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**The Trumpets (*Bamidbar* 10:1-10)**

**Rav Elchanan Samet**

**I. The various uses of the trumpets and the structure of the section**

In the middle of our *parasha*, we encounter a major turn in the Israelites’ situation: their departure from Mount Chorev, where they have camped for close to a year, and the beginning of their journey through the wilderness:

10:11: And it came to pass in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, that the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of testimony.

12: And the Israelites journey by their stages out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud abode in the wilderness of Paran.

13: And they took their first journey, according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moshe.

Much of what appears in our book up to this point is meant to prepare the Israelites, and us readers, for this solemn and uplifting moment of the Israelites’ embarking on their journey and the continuation of their travel through the wilderness.

This is also the role of the two Masoretic sections that precede the description of the Israelites’ embarking on their journey. At the end of Chapter 9, in verses 15-21, a detailed account is given of the manner in which the Israelites are to set out and camp from this point on as they wander through the wilderness:

9:17 And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tent, then after that the Israelites journeyed; and in the place where the cloud abode, there the Israelites encamped.

The next Masoretic section, at the beginning of Chapter 10 — the section dealing with the trumpets (*chatzotzerot*) — is of a different nature, as it is a halakhic section with several *mitzvot*, but it too comes to establish that the "the journey of the camps" — the arrangement of which is fixed in the census of the camps in Chapter 2, and which is implemented in the continuation of Chapter 10 — is to be accompanied by the blowing of trumpets, as commanded in our *parasha.*

This, then, is the context in which the section dealing with the trumpets appears, adjacent to the account of the Israelites’ first departure on their journey. However, this section includes additional commandments as well, some of which are connected to the arrangement of the camp in the wilderness around the *Mishkan* (these too belonging to the present context of the manner in which the journey through the wilderness is managed), while others are connected to life in "your land" (verse 9), these being *mitzvot* for future generations.

Let us examine this section in its entirety, arranged in such a manner that emphasizes its structure and the various *mitzvot* included therein:

10:1 And the Lord spoke to Moshe, saying:

2: Make for yourself two trumpets of silver; of hammered work shall you make them;

**And they shall be to you for the calling of the congregation, and for causing the camps to journey.**

3: And when they shall blow them, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

4: And if they blow but with one, then the princes, the heads of the thousands of the Israelites, shall gather themselves to you.

5: And when you blow an alarm, the camps that lie on the east side shall journey.

6: And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that lie on the south side shall journey; they shall blow an alarm for their journeys.

7: But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm.

8: And the sons of Aharon, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and they shall be to you for a statute forever throughout your generations.

9: And when you go out to war in your land against the foe who distresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets; **and you shall be remembered before the Lord your God,** and you shall be saved from your enemies.

10: Also on your joyous occasions, and on your festivals, and on your new moons, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings; **and they shall be to you for a remembrance before your God:**

I am the Lord your God.

The section relates to four different uses of the trumpets, two in the wilderness and two for future generations even in Eretz Israel. These uses are distinguished one from the other by the quality of the sound to be played: a *tekia* (a simple, continuous blast, which we render “blow”); or a *terua (*a staccato, broken sob-like sound, which we render “alarm”). Onkelos translates the word *terua* as *yabavta,* wail.

1. To gather the congregation to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, they must sound a ***tekia***with two trumpets; to gather the princes to that place, they must sound a ***tekia***with only one trumpet.
2. To cause the camps to move forward, they must first sound a ***terua*** and then the camps camped on the east side (the tribes included in the banner camp of Yehuda) will journey; the sounding of a second ***terua***marks the journeying of the camps camped on the south side (the tribes included in the banner camp of Reuven).
3. When the Israelites go out to war in their land, they must sound a ***terua*** with the trumpets.
4. On days of celebration, festivals and new moons, they must sound a ***tekia***with the trumpets over the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings brought in the Temple.

The structure of the section is now clearly evident: The section is divided into two parts (two halves) that are not equal in length, each part containing commandments about two uses of the trumpets. The first part contains the commandments applying to the time of the Israelites’ stay in the wilderness — the time of camping and the time of embarking on their journey, whereas the second part contains the commandments for future generations — for wartime and for festivals and joyous occasions.

At the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the section, we find general statements that belong equally to each of the two sections: At the beginning of the section we find the instruction to fashion the trumpets out of "silver," of "hammered work"; in the middle of the section appears the instruction that those who blow the trumpets for any of their uses must be priests, the sons of Aharon; at the end of the section, we find the words of conclusion: "I am the Lord you God."

The main part of the section — in both of its parts — describes the various circumstances in which it falls upon the priests (the subject) to make use of the trumpets (the object), and the nature of this use (the type of blast that must be sounded), Based on the different types of blasts, it is easy to see that the two parts of the section stand in chiastic parallelism. The use of the trumpets to gather the congregation or the princes to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting parallels their use on the joyous occasions and festivals over the offerings in the Temple; these uses are characterized by the sounding of a *tekia*. The use of the trumpets to signal that is time to leave parallels their use during wartime; these uses are characterized by the sounding of a *terua*.

This is how the section's structure looks:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | (1-2) Instruction about making two trumpets of silver, a hammered work. |
|  | (3-4) Gathering the congregation or the princes to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting: *tekia.* |
| (5-6) Causing the camps to journey: *terua*. |
| (8) Instruction about who should blow the trumpets: the priests. |
| (9) War: *terua*. |
| (10) Over the offerings brought on joyous occasions and the festivals: *tekia*. |
|  | Closing |

**II. Is there a common rationale for all four uses of the trumpets?**

The obvious question after examining the content of the section dealing with the trumpets is as follows: is there a common denominator for all the different situations in which our *parasha* commands that the Israelites sound the trumpets? Is there **a single principle** that is realized in all four situations in which the Jewish people are commanded to use the trumpets, or perhaps each use of the trumpet stands on its own, and it is only because of the object common to all four cases, i.e., the trumpets, that they are brought together in one section — the section dealing with the trumpets.

On the one hand, the structure of the section makes it easier for us to define the question; on the other hand, it alludes to different directions for seeking an answer to it.

The division of the section into two parts raises the following question: Is there a connection between the dual use of the trumpets in the wilderness to their dual use in later generations? The wording in each part indicates an internal connection between the two uses mentioned in that part.

In the first part there is a heading, which provides a common framework for the two uses discussed in that part:

And they [the trumpets] shall be to you for the calling of the congregation, and for causing the camps to journey.

In the second part, even though there is no such heading, there is a single explanation, which is repeated in connection with each of the two uses discussed in that part:

9: Then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets; **and you shall be remembered before the Lord your God…**

10: You shall blow the trumpets… **and they shall be to you for a remembrance before your God…**

This internal connection between the components of each of the two parts highlights the fundamental difference between these parts. The shared heading for the two uses in the **wilderness** indicates a common explanation for the two of them: summoning the congregation and signaling the camps to journey are essential needs of the camp of the Israelites as they journey through the wilderness. Sometimes the needs of the camp necessitate a gathering, other times they require dispersal and breaking camp. Just as these needs are opposites, so are the sounds that mark each of these activities.

The Gemara in *Sukka* 53b states that, according to Rabbi Yehuda, the sounding of the trumpet blasts in the wilderness "was a mere signal." Rashi explains: "The *tekia* to gather the congregation was merely a signal that was used when Moshe wished to speak to them, and not a commandment." Even according to the Sages, the Gemara says: "It was indeed a signal, but the Torah made it into a commandment." Rashi explains: "That they are commanded to assemble with this signal, and not with a different one." In any event, both according to Rabbi Yehuda and according to the Sages, the trumpets are conceived as a means of communication, as an instrument to produce a loud signal that could be heard throughout the camp, like today's public-address system.

**In later generations,** on the other hand, the trumpets are sounded not for some technical end, but for a religious purpose — to constitute a remembrance before God! It is difficult to understand the common denominator of the two uses, but it is evident that here too they are opposites: war is a time of distress for the Israelites and a time of going out to meet the enemy on the battlefield, whereas the offerings over which the Torah commands the sounding of the trumpets are those brought on joyous occasions and on the festivals, in the center that unites the entire nation: the Temple. Here too, the Torah assigns different blasts to these opposite situations.

Is there then a common denominator between the utilitarian uses of the trumpets in the wilderness as a public-address system, and the religious uses of the trumpets in later generations, as bringing the remembrance of the people before God?

The chiastic structure of the passage, noted in the previous section, points to an affirmative answer to this question. There seems to be a connection between the gathering of the congregation to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting in the wilderness and the offering of the communal sacrifices on the joyous occasions and the festivals in the Temple in later generations: in both situations the Torah commands that a ***tekia***be sounded with the trumpets. Does this connection allude to the fact that even in later generations the blowing of the trumpets is merely a **signal** for the community, who are now offering their sacrifices in the Temple? Perhaps the opposite is true: does this connection attest to the fact that even the gathering of the congregation to the Tent of Meeting has **religious meaning,** and that by way of the blast that gathers the congregation, **it is remembered before God?**

In similar fashion, the chiastic structure of the passage indicates a connection between the journeying of the camps in the wilderness and combat "in your land" — in both situations the Torah commands that a ***terua*** be sounded with the trumpets. Once again we may ask: does this connection allude to the fact that even when the nation goes out to war the *terua* serves as a **signal** to mobilize the people; or perhaps even in the journey of the camps in the wilderness, the *terua* causes the people **to be remembered before God?**

**III. The connection between the various uses of the trumpets:**

**Position of ibn Ezra**

Among the medieval commentators, ibn Ezra stands out in his attempt to uncover the connection between the various uses of the trumpets in our *parasha.* He is driven to do so by the second half of verse 8:

…And they shall be to you for a statute forever throughout your generations.

Verse 8, which follows the first part of the section, poses a difficulty: After all, what is stated in this part relates to the Israelites’ journey in the wilderness, and so, these *mitzvot* do not apply "forever throughout your generations"!

It might be suggested that these words at the end of verse 8 do not relate to the first part of the section, but rather they serve as a heading for the second part: the *terua* when going out to war and the *tekia* over the offerings are what will be a "statute forever throughout your generations."

Ibn Ezra, however, sees these words as linking the two parts of the section. It is as if they were to say: Those blasts about which you have been commanded for the journey of the camps in the wilderness shall be to you a statute forever throughout your generations in your land as well. If this is the intention of these words, they explicitly ask the reader and the commentator to find a common explanation for the two situations in which the people of Israel are commanded to sound a *terua*, and this is precisely what ibn Ezra does:

"And they shall be to you a statute forever" — for the camps are journeying to fight. See the words of Moshe when the ark journeys [below, v. 35: "Rise up, O Lord, and let Your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You"]. This is the meaning of that statute: That you should do this [as with the journeying of the camps in the wilderness], that the priests should sound a *terua* with the trumpets, when the Israelites go out to war to fight in the land of their enemies, and so too when the enemy enters your land and you come to wage war against it.

In the wilderness, as well, the journeying of the camps is considered going out to war, and therefore the *terua* accompanying this process should not be seen merely as a signal, but rather as an action that has religious meaning, the purpose of which is:

… and you shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies.

This result of the trumpet blast, both in the wilderness and when going out to war "in your land," is explained by ibn Ezra in two ways:

"And you shall be remembered" — because you did as you were commanded by the venerable God. The *terua* is also a reminder to cry out to God.

An objection can be raised against ibn Ezra's explanation: what war do the journeying camps wage in the wilderness? It is difficult to argue that he is talking about the battle to conquer Eretz Israel; this campaign is not an issue at this point. Ibn Ezra seems to be referring to fighting that might erupt in the wilderness on the part of unexpected enemies (as has happened in the war against Amalek). However, if this is the case, the Israelites’ situation at the time of the journeying of the camps differs from that of the later verse, "And when you go out to war in your land against the foe who distresses you;" there we are dealing with a real war, not with distant fear about the outbreak of fighting.

In any event, in this explanation ibn Ezra connects the two uses of the trumpets, which according to their respective places in the structure of the section, parallel each other.[[1]](#footnote-1) Ibn Ezra does not explain the connection between the other two uses that parallel each other (to gather the congregation and to accompany the offerings), but he suggests a connection between the two uses of the trumpets for later generations in the second part of the section. In his commentary to verse 10, he writes as follows:

"Also on your joyous occasions" — when you have returned from the land of your adversary, or you have defeated the adversary that came against you, and you have established a joyous occasion like the days of Purim or the seven days of rejoicing by King Chizkiyahu(see II *Divrei Ha-yamim* 30:23)

However, he retreats from this explanation:

But the transcribers [= *Chazal* in *Sifrei*, 77] explain: "Also on your joyous occasions" — Shabbat.

The explanation offered by “the transcribers" suits the context: On Shabbatot, festivals and new moons, special communal offerings are brought to which we may apply the command to blow the trumpets. This is not the case with days that commemorate national deliverance, like Purim, when no such communal offerings are brought.

Ibn Ezra concludes his comment with an explanation of the *tekia* over the offerings:

The *tekia* — that the Israelites should hear and know that the offerings are to be brought, and so they will direct their hearts to God.

If so, the aim of this *tekia* is to stir up the Israelites’ attention to the fact that, at this very moment, offerings are being sacrificed in the Temple. According to this explanation, the goal of the blasts for the purpose of gathering the congregation at the beginning of this section is similar to the goal of the blasts sounded over the offerings at the end of the section: in both cases the blasts come to draw the Israelites’ attention and direct their hearts to the Temple: in the wilderness, to direct them to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; for future generations, to direct their hearts to what is taking place at that time in the Temple. This directing of their hearts will allow the offerings to constitute a remembrance for them before God.

After all this, our question regarding the unity of the passage of the trumpets remains in place. The words of ibn Ezra do not provide a complete and comprehensive answer to this question.

**IV. The passage of the trumpets as part of the command regarding the crafting of the *Mishkan* and its vessels**

In order to advance towards an overall understanding of the passage dealing with the trumpets, let us consider an argument arising in the wake of several troubling questions relating to this passage.[[2]](#footnote-2) We will first formulate the argument itself, and then adduce several proofs to corroborate it.

The contention is that the trumpets are included among the utensils of the *Mishkan*, and that the command about how they are to be made and used is given to Moshe together with the comprehensive command about making the *Mishkan* and its utensils in the Book of *Shemot,* Chapters 25-31.They appear in our *parasha* in the manner of something that takes place earlier but is recorded only later, in order that they be juxtaposed to the account of the departure for the first journey from Mount Chorev. Among the other purposes for which they are made, the trumpets are made in preparation for this journey and for those that follow, but they are made earlier, when all the utensils of the *Mishkan* are made. They are even used to gather the congregation and the princes, and to accompany the communal offerings on joyous occasions and the festivals before the twentieth day of the second month, when the cloud is first taken up from over the *Mishkan.*

From where in the Book of *Shemot* is the section dealing with the trumpets "uprooted"? The answer is clear: from among the appendices to the command regarding the making of the *Mishkan* that are found at the beginning of *Parashat Ki Tisa, Shemot* 30:11-31:17. It stands to reason that its place is adjacent to the command regarding the fashioning of the laver (*Shemot* 30:17-21), either before it or after it, as the laver and the trumpets are both utensils of the *Mishkan* which for various reasons are pushed off to appendices. The other appendices deal not with utensils belonging to the *Mishkan*, but with other matters.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This contention does not accord with the Ramban's remarks in his commentary on *Bamidbar* 9:15:

"And on the day that the tabernacle was set up" – Now [after dealing with the supplemental paschal offering] it goes back to matters pertaining to the journey and the commandments about it, such as the trumpets. **The Israelites received the command now**, as the trumpets are required for summoning the congregation and signaling the camps to journey.[[4]](#footnote-4)

What brings us to consider this argument?

First of all, let us not the style of the instruction given to Moshe:

Make for yourself two trumpets of silver; of hammered work shall you make them.

This is reminiscent of similar commands regarding the making of the *Mishkan*:

* **And you shall make** a candelabrum of pure gold: of **hammered work** shall the candelabrum be made… (*Shemot* 25:31)
* **You shall also make** a laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass… (Ibid. 30:18)
* **Take for yourself** sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum… **And you shall make of it** incense… (Ibid. 30:34-35)

Second, the trumpets are utensils to be used exclusively by the priests, as the Torah orders:

And the sons of Aharon, the priests, shall blow the trumpets.

Only the blasts over the offerings can be considered part of the priestly service in the *Mishkan.* Why does the Torah limit the three other uses of the trumpets exclusively to the priests? The answer to this is that the trumpets are utensils of the *Mishkan*, and playing them is assigned to the priests, just as they are the only ones to use the rest of the utensils of the *Mishkan*.

Furthermore, *Chazal* in the *Sifrei* (75) expound that the sons of Aharon, the priests, who blow the trumpets must be free of physical blemishes, and thus they liken the trumpet blasts to the sacrificial service.

Third, only one of the four uses of the trumpets links this section with what follows, the first journeying of the camps. Two uses of the trumpets, the first and the fourth, become possible immediately once the *Mishkan* is erected; and one use, the third, is reserved for the future, after the people enter the land. There is thus no reason to assume that this complex command is given to Moshe specifically now, before embarking on the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness.

We will see further evidence to support this argument in the next section.

**V. All of the uses of the trumpets are connected to the *Mishkan***

Let us consider that **all four uses of the trumpets** are connected to the *Mishkan*, and thus the trumpets serve as utensils of the *Mishkan* in every context in which they appear.

1. This is clear and simple regarding the fourth use, accompanying the offerings. Indeed, it is in this context that the Rambam mentions the law of making the trumpets in *Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash* 3:5:

On all the days of the festivals and on the new moons, the priests would sound the trumpets while the sacrifice was being offered. At the same time, the Levites would sing. Thus it says: “Also on your joyous occasions, and on your festivals, and on your new moons, you shall blow the trumpets [over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings].” Each trumpet was made from a block of silver. If it was made from scraps of silver, it is acceptable. If it is made from other metals, it is unacceptable.

2. Even the first use — for summoning the congregation or the princes — connects the blowing of the trumpets to the *Mishkan*, as the congregation or the princes are called "to the entrance of the tent of meeting."

This is the way Rav Ovadya Seforno explains the reason for this blowing of the trumpets:

"And they shall be to you for the calling of the congregation" — Because the calling of the congregation and of the princes was to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before the Lord, He wanted the call to be with trumpets in honor of the king.

The trumpets are blown in the *Mishkan* by priests in order to gather the congregation before the Lord to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

3. We will now clarify the reason for the trumpet-blowing to cause the camps to journey. This use of the trumpets seems to belong to the travel arrangements of the congregation, and not to the *Mishkan,* but the matter really needs a thorough examination.

Two blasts are mentioned in our *parasha* in connection with the journeying of the camps:

5: And when you blow an alarm, the camps that lie on the east side shall journey.

6: And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that lie on the south side shall journey; they shall blow an alarm for their journeys.

What happens with the camps on the west and north sides of the *Mishkan*? Do the blast the trumpets a third and a fourth time so that they should journey? This is the view of the Ramban in his commentary to verse 6:

The text spells out two blasts, the first to signal the camps of the east and the second to signal the camps of the south. But it says [at the end of v. 6]: "They shall blow an alarm for their journeys" — that they should sound a blast **for all** of their journeys, that is to say, that they should blow a third *terua* to signal the camps that lie on the west side, and a fourth one to signal the camps that lie on the north side, because each banner camp embarked on its own journey, as it is stated: "And the banner of the camp of the children of Efrayim journeyed" (below, v. 22, and they camp on the west side; 2:18), "And the banner of the camp of the children of Dan journeyed" (below, v. 25, and they camp on the north side; 2:25). Thus it is taught in *Baraita shel Melekhet Ha-mishkan* (Chap. 13):

Nevertheless, this is not ibn Ezra's understanding in his commentary to that verse:

"An alarm the second time" — that the banner of the camp of Reuven [the banner camp camped to the south that journeys second] should journey, **after which the priests would not blow again.** For the Kohathites, and with them the priests who blow the trumpets journey before the camp of Efrayim [the banner camp that journeys third; see below v. 21].

The verse from which the Ramban derives that the trumpets are blown for each direction is explained by ibn Ezra in the opposite manner:

"They shall blow an alarm" — the priests; "for their journeys" — for they journey after the banner of the camp of Reuven.

That is to say, the second trumpet blast that the priests sound to cause the camps that lie on the south to journey is also the blast that they sound "for their journeys" — for their own journey.

Ibn Ezra's argument that the priests do not blow the trumpets for the third and fourth banner camps because they journey before those banner camps is not unassailable. Even if the priests join the Kohathites in their journey through the wilderness, there is nothing that would prevent them from blowing the trumpets for the third and fourth banner camps, and then quickly catching up to the Kohathites.

Rav Ovadya Seforno offers a different, more fundamental reason for why the priests do not blow the trumpets for the third and fourth banner camps:

"And when you blow an alarm, the camps that lie on the east side shall journey” — because those who bear the *Mishkan* would journey with them.

What he means is that, following the departure of the banner camp of Yehuda, the Torah states:

10:17: And the tabernaclewas taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, the bearers of the tabernacle, journeyed.

Thus, the trumpet blast is intended to accompany, not the Israelite travelers, but the disassembled *Mishkan* (carried by the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari) which goes with them. Seforno continues:

"And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that lie on the south side shall journey" — because those who bear the sanctuary [= the Ark and the other holy vessels ]would journey with them.

After the departure of the banner camp of Reuven, which lies to the south, the Torah tells us:

10:21: And the Kohathites, the bearers of the sanctuary, journeyed.

The trumpet blast is intended to accompany the journey of the "sanctuary" in the hands of the sons of Kehat, who journey with the tribes that encamp to the south.

According to Seforno, the trumpets are sounded at the time of the journeying of the camps only to accompany the journeying of the disassembled *Mishkan*.

This is the wayChizkuni explains the matter, even before Seforno, in his first explanation of verse 6:

You might say that just as they blow for [the camps lying in] the east and the south, so too they blow for [the camps lying in] the north and the west. Therefore the verse states: "They shall blow an alarm for their journeys"[[5]](#footnote-5) — specifically for the two camps, **and in honor of the *Mishkan* which journeys after these two camps.**

Notice how Chizkuni interprets the words, "they shall blow an alarm for their journeys," as denoting an exclusion: Only for the journeys of the two camps mentioned thus far shall they blow an alarm, this being the opposite of the Ramban's understanding.

It turns out then that, according to Chizkuni and Seforno, the trumpets are used when the camps journey, not to help organize the travels of the Israelites, nor to prepare for a possible war (as suggested by ibn Ezra), but in honor of the traveling *Mishkan*, and therefore the blasts are sounded by the priests and with utensils of the *Mishkan.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

4. We are left with the task of clarifying how blowing the trumpets when going out to war is connected to the Temple. We will do this in the next section.

**VI. The trumpets: The temple’s representative on the battlefield**

Let us preface with a short halakhic discussion, by way of which we will be able to identify a connection between use of the trumpets when going out to war and use of the trumpets in the Temple.

In the *Sifrei* (76), Rabbi Akiva expounds the words: "against the foe who distresses (*ha-tzar ha-tzorer*) you" as "in the event of every distressing situation (*al kol tzara ve-tzara*)” befalling the community.

Thus, the Rambam writes in his classic work, *Mishneh Torah,* in Chapter 1 of *Hilkhot Ta'anit*:

1. It is a positive biblical commandment to cry out and to sound the alarm with trumpets in the event of any distressing situation which befalls the community, as it is stated: "[And when you go out to war...] against the foe who distresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets." This means that whenever you are in distressing situation, such as famine, pestilence, locusts and the like, you must cry out about it and sound the alarm.

4. In addition, it is a rabbinical ordinance to fast whenever there is a distressing situation that befalls the community until there is a manifestation of Divine mercy. On these fast days, we cry out in prayer, offer supplications, and sound the trumpets only. In the Temple, we sound both the trumpets and the shofar. The shofar blasts should be shortened and the trumpet blasts extended, for the mitzva of the day is with the trumpets. The trumpets are sounded together with the shofar only in the Temple.

The *Magen Avraham* (beginning of *OC* 576) cites these words of the Rambam and continues:

I ask: why is it not our customary practice to blow the trumpets in a time of trouble?... Surely by biblical law there is a mitzva to blow without a fast!

Rav Netanel Weil, author of the *Korban Netanel* supercommentary to the commentary of the Rosh, answers this question in *Netiv Chayim* (on the *Shulchan Arukh*, ad loc.):

This is not difficult, for the verse states: "And when you go out to war **in your land** against the foe who distresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets" — it turns out that the positive biblical precept is [only] in Eretz Israel.

However, as the Chida notes, even in Eretz Israel it is not the customary practice to blow trumpets in times of trouble (apart from those who have tried to renew the practice in our time, owing to the difficulty raised by the *Magen Avraham*).

The solution to the problem seems to lie in what we have been arguing: the trumpets are utensils of the Temple, and the trumpeters are priests, and the entire mitzvais connected to the Temple and does not stand on its own. Just as the other uses of the trumpet mentioned in our *parasha* depend on the *Mishkan* or the Temple, the same is true of the trumpet blasts in times of war and other troubles.

This argument is explicit in the words of the *Sefer Ha-chinnukh*, #384, though we need a short introduction.

The Rambam writes in his *Sefer Ha-mitzvot*, Positive #29, as follows:

The command that we have been commanded to blow the trumpets in the Temple when offering any of the offerings of the festivals, as it is stated: "Also on your joyous occasions, and on your festivals, and on your new moons, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt-offerings"… The laws of this mitzvahave already been explained in the *Sifrei* and [in Tractates] *Rosh Hashana* and *Ta'anit*, for we are commanded to blow the trumpets in times of trouble when we cry out before Him, as it is stated: "And when you go out to war in your land."

We see that, in the Rambam's opinion, the two uses of the trumpets in later generations constitute one mitzva.

The Rambam also maintains this position in *Mishneh Torah*, only that there he counts the mitzva in *Hilkhot Ta'anit* (1:1): “It is a positive biblical commandment to cry out and to sound the alarm with trumpets in the event of any distressing situation that befalls the community," whereas at the beginning of *Hilkhot Kelei Ha-mikdash*, where he spells out the obligation to blow the trumpets over the offerings (3:5), he does not count an additional mitzva. We see then that the Rambam reverses his position regarding the question of which fulfillment of the mitzva is the main one: the one which is in the Temple, accompanying the offerings, or the which is even outside the Temple, in times of trouble.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The *Maggid Mishneh,* at the beginning of *Hilkhot Ta'anit,* is puzzled by the Rambam's position:

I am puzzled… for there are two verses! His position seems to be that there is one comprehensive mitzva: to blow the trumpets in the Temple at the time of the offerings, and in times of trouble whether in the Temple or outside the Temple. Thus, they should not be counted as two *mitzvot*. Nevertheless, the matter requires further study.

Indeed, his answer requires clarification, but the *Sefer Ha-chinnukh*, in its usual manner, follows in the wake of the Rambam in *Sefer Ha-mitzvot*, writing in #384 as follows:

The *mitzva* of blowing the trumpets in the Temple and in war: to blow the trumpets in the Temple every day while offering any sacrifice, **and similarly in a time of trouble.**

We ought to note that on one point he disagrees with the Rambam, who maintains that only on the festivals and special occasions is there a Torah obligation to blow the trumpets.

The *Sefer Ha-chinnukh* then goes on to explain the connection between these two *mitzvot* which are counted as one in the “roots of the mitzva" section, while explicating the motivation of the mitzva:

For at the time of the offering, they had to concentrate their minds on its essence… Similarly in a time of trouble one must strongly concentrate as one pleads before one’s Creator… Therefore we are commanded to blow the trumpets at these times…

Of course, this answer does not suffice to answer the *Maggid Mishneh*'s question, and we will return to it in the next section.

However, the implication of this position, shared by the Rambam and the *Sefer Ha-chinnukh*, is formulated at the end of the latter’s words:

This mitzva applies **in the time of the Temple** and to the priests, upon whom falls the mitzva of blowing the trumpets… If the priests transgress and do not blow at the time of the offering, and similarly, if they do not blow in a time of trouble, they have annulled this positive precept.

It is clear, then, that in his opinion (and apparently also in the Rambam's opinion), even the *mitzva* of blowing the trumpets in times of war and other troubles depends on the existence of the Temple, even though technically it would be possible to fulfill the commandment even without the Temple.

**Returning to the *Peshat***

In order to understand this connection, we must return to the plain meaning of the verse:

And when you go out to war in your land against the foe who distresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets; and you shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies.

In several places in *Tanakh*, it is stated that when the Israelites go out to war, a representative of the Temple goes out with them in one form or another, thus giving expression to God's presence in the Israelites’ military camp.

**In the Torah**

The fundamental formulation of this matter appears in the Book of *Devarim* in *Parashat Ki Teitzei* (23:15):

For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you; therefore shall your camp be holy…

In the preceding section dealing with war in Chapter 20, in *Parashat Shoftim,* we encounter a **priest** (whom *Chazal* refer to as "the priest anointed for war”), who delivers a morale-building speech to the fighters (vv. 2-4).

When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army.He shall say: “Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them.For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”

Earlier, in the war against Midyan which is described in *Parashat Matot*, it is stated:

And Moshe sent them, a thousand of every tribe, to the war, them and Pinechas the son of Elazar the priest, to the war, with the holy vessels **and the trumpets for the alarm** in his hand. (*Bamidbar* 31:6)

Pinechas the son of Elazar the priest and what is in his hand — the holy vessels and the trumpets — represent the *Mishkan* in the military camp. His presence and the presence of what is in his hand in the camp are the tangible expressions of "for the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp."

**In *Nakh***

Here is further support for our claim regarding the connection between the trumpets and the Temple. In II *Divrei Ha-yamim* 13, we are told about a war between King Aviya of Yehuda and King Yerovam of Israel. Aviya delivers a speech on Mount Tzemarayim, with the aim of preventing the war.

He accuses Yerovam and the Israelites of having abandoned God and His Temple, as Yerovam famously kept his subjects in the north from going to Jerusalem, instead placing golden calves for worship at his borders. Not only that, Yerovam also recruited Israelites from all tribes, not descendants of Aharon, to serve as priests in his temples. Aviya contrasts this with the faithfulness of the people of Yehuda:

But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and we have priests ministering to the Lord, the sons of Aharon, and the Levites in their work.

And they burn to the Lord… burnt-offerings and sweet incense; the showbread also… and the candelabrum of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn… for we keep the charge of the Lord our God; but you have forsaken Him. (II *Divrei Ha-yamim* 13:10-11)

Aviya now turns in his speech from a description of the service that is observed in the Temple to the present battleground:

And, behold, God is with us at our head, and His priests with **the trumpets of alarm** to sound an alarm against you. O Israel, fight you not against the Lord, the God of your fathers; for you shall not prosper. (v. 12)

His intention is clear: not only do "we keep the charge of the Lord our God" in His Temple in Jerusalem, but because of this fidelity, a representative of the Temple is found among us here in the battlefield, and God walks in our camp, but you, forces of Yerovam the traitor, will not succeed in your war against God. This representation, of course, includes the trumpets in the hands of the priests.

After the war breaks out, and the people of Yehuda find "that the war was before and behind them," what do they do?

They cried to the Lord, and the priests **sounded with the trumpets.**

Then the men of Yehuda sounded the alarm; and as the men of Yehuda sounded the alarm, it came to pass, that God smote Yerovam and all of Israel before Aviya and Yehuda. (vv. 14-15)

*Chazal'*s expansion of the blowing of the trumpets to any trouble that affects the community cannot be different from its source in the plain sense of the verse: the trumpet-blowing in wartime. Just as the trumpet-blowing represents the Temple on the battlefield, so does it represent the Temple in a time of distress in the rest of the country. However, when the Temple is destroyed, the trumpets of alarm are canceled, as suggested by the *Sefer Ha-chinnukh*. This answers the question posed by the *Magen Avraham*, as to why we do not blow trumpets today in times of trouble.

**VII. The kingdom of heaven is modeled on the kingdom of earth**

In the previous sections, we saw that all four situations in which use is made of the trumpets are connected to the Temple, but we have yet to point to a single principle, a shared explanation, for the command to use trumpets in these situations.

Another matter clarified in the previous sections is that the Rambam and the *Sefer Ha-chinnukh* count in our *parasha* only one positive precept that includes blowing the trumpets over offerings in the Temple and blowing them in times of troubles in all places. The *Maggid Mishneh* points to the difficulty that there are two separate verses. We may add that not only are there two separate verses, but the blowing takes place in two different places: here in the Temple, and there even outside the Temple.

Moreover, according to the plain sense of the verse, the manner in which the trumpets are blown is different in the two situations: Over the offerings, it is stated: **"You shall blow (*utkatem*)** with the trumpets" (though Halakha establishes that this involves a *tekia*, a *terua* and a *tekia*), whereas in war, it is stated: "**You shall sound an alarm (*vahareiotem*)** with the trumpets." Of course, the circumstances are very different in the two situations, and in a certain sense, they are diametrically opposed.

It is clear, then, that the Rambam and the *Sefer Ha-chinnukh* see in our *parasha* **one** mitzva of blowing the trumpets, which is fulfilled in different ways and in different circumstances, but nevertheless realizes one halakhic-conceptual principle.

This is essentially the *Maggid Mishneh*'sanswer to his question:

His position seems to be that there is one all-embracing mitzva: to blow the trumpets in the Temple at the time of the offerings, and in times of trouble whether in the Temple or outside the Temple. Thus, they should not be counted as two *mitzvot*.

However, he does not formulate a shared principle that encompasses the two situations which are so different one from the other. Therefore, he concludes by saying: "The matter requires further study." It is this "study" that we wish to complete at this time.

An examination of real life, with its social customs and accepted rituals, might open our eyes to understand the reasons for the Torah's commandments.

Trumpets — metallic musical instruments with a particularly strong and attention-grabbing sound — are used to this day in various state ceremonies. It is common practice that the public appearance of a king, president or head of state in an official ceremony conducted in a place of special importance is accompanied by the sounding of two trumpets, and the same when the official leaves. This practice is prevalent throughout the world, and it appears to be an ancient custom, not a modern innovation.

"The kingdom of earth is modeled on kingdom of heaven" — so says Rav Sheshet in the Gemara in *Berakhot* 58a (see the context there). For our purposes, we wish to reverse his statement: the kingdom of heaven is modeled on kingdom of earth. God's appearance among his people on solemn occasions requires the trappings of royalty and obligates the Jewish people to show honor in the way that it is shown when an earthly king appears. "Great is the power of the prophets, who liken the creation [man] to its Creator [God]" (*Bereishit Rabba* 27, 1).

Not only do the prophets liken the creation to its Creator (what this actually means is that they liken the Creator to the creation that He created), but this is also what the Torah does with its commandments: "It lets the ear hear what it can hear, and it lets the eye see what it can see" (see *Midrash Tehillim* 1, 4, ed. Buber).

This is the unifying principle that stands behind the entire passage dealing with the trumpets. The use that the Torah commands the people of Israel to make of the trumpets in different situations is a display of honor to God's kingdom when He appears in His Temple among the Israelites and when He goes forth from it.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The connection between the trumpets and their use in all four situations and the Temple, a connection demonstrated in the previous sections, constitutes the foundation for what is stated here. God's appearance in His Temple among the Israelites at special times requires the blowing of trumpets that accompany this appearance.

1. This happens in the wilderness when the Israelites gathers at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting **before the Lord.** As Seforno says:

Because the calling of the congregation and of the princes was to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before the Lord, He wanted the call to be with trumpets **in honor of the king.[[9]](#footnote-9)**

1. This is also fulfilled in later generations "on your joyous occasions, and on your festivals, and on your new moons." When the people of Israel offer the communal offerings that are brought on these special occasions, God appears in the Temple to receive these offerings, and His appearance is accompanied by trumpet blasts.
2. There are, however, times when God leaves His Temple for various reasons, and this public departure as well requires a display of honor by way of trumpet blasts that accompany the king's taking leave.

In the wilderness, the *Shekhina's* departure from the *Mishkan* takes place when it is disassembled and the tribes journey on their way. With the leaving of the disassembled *Mishkan* in the hands of the sons of Gershon and Merari with the journeying of the first banner camp, the trumpets are sounded to announce the journey. So too the journeying of the second banner camp is accompanied by trumpet blasts, for the Kohathites who bear the sanctuary along with them.

1. In later generations, as well, God leaves His Temple and goes out to war with His people against the foe who distresses them. This departure is meant to accompany the Israelites, in the sense of "I am with him in trouble," but in the end this involves a departure from the Temple which is the site of the resting of the *Shekhina*, and such a departure requires that it be accompanied by trumpet blasts.[[10]](#footnote-10)

There are different circumstances that require the use of trumpets, and there are different types of blasts that must be sounded,[[11]](#footnote-11) and those blasts must be sounded in different places. Moreover, the *mitzvot* in the Torah are different: some apply only in the wilderness and others apply for all generations. All of them, however, are directed at one goal, which bestows upon the section its essential unity. The trumpets are utensils which are intended to form sounds of different kinds as a show of royal honor to God, both when He appears among His people in the Temple, and when He leaves the Temple among His people.

Thus, we understand the position of the Rambam and the *Sefer Ha-chinnukh* who count in this *parasha* only one positive precept.[[12]](#footnote-12)

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. He does this, however, not because of the literary parallel between them, but because of what is stated in verse 8, which appears between them. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Raising the questions and reconstructing the thought processes that led to these conclusions would be appropriate, but this would require going off in different directions, causing a total loss of focus. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The section dealing with the Incense Altar (*Shemot* 30: 1-10) may also be seen as an appendix; see our study of *Parashat Tetzaveh*, first series. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Like the Ramban, Rav Ovadya Seforno also explains in his commentary to *Bamidbar* 10:11:

   “And it came to pass in the second year, in the second month, that the cloud was taken up” – **after the impure offered** the supplementary paschal offering on the fourteenth of the month; **and they made the trumpets**, and with them the congregation and the princes were gathered to Moshe; and he informed them of the order of their journeying by way of the trumpets, and the order of the trumpets in the Temple and in war; the cloud was taken up to go to Kadesh Barneia. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Thus far, Chizkuni cited the words of the *Sifrei* (end of 73). However, the *Sifrei* continues: "One blast for the two of them." The commentators (see Ramban) understand this to mean that the trumpets are blown for the camps in the north and the camps in the west, but only one blast is sounded for the two sets of camps. Chizkuni appears to understand the *Sifrei* differently, that the words "for the two of them" refer to the camps to the east and to the south, that only for them is "one blast" blown, that is, one type of blast, but for the camps in the other directions, the trumpets are not sounded at all. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. One other point should be noted with respect to verses 5-6: Why is it stated in these verses: "the camps that lie on the east side shall journey… the camps that lie on the south side shall journey," with no mention of the word "banner" and no mention of the tribe for whom it is named, and not in accordance with what is stated in the account of the journey below: "And the banner of the camp of the children of Yehuda journeyed… and the banner of the camp of Reuven journeyed"?

   The answer to this is that, according to our contention, this passage is conveyed to Moshe at the time of the commandment regarding the building of the *Mishkan*, and at that time the division of the people into banner camps is not yet known, and it is also not yet known which tribes will camp on each side. What is clear to Moshe already at this time is that the moment that the *Mishkan* will be erected, the tribes of the Israelites will camp around it on all four sides, and therefore he could command: "the camps that lie on the east side shall journey… the camps that lie on the south side shall journey." [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In our study of *Parashat Naso* regarding the priestly blessing, we pointed out a similar phenomenon, that in *Sefer Ha-mitzvot* the Rambam maintains that the mitzva is primarily in the Temple, whereas in *Mishneh Torah* he maintains that it is primarily outside the Temple. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Some *midrashim* do in fact perceive the trumpet blasts as an expression of royal manners, but in a puzzling manner, they attribute them to Moshe:

   The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: I made you king… Just as a king, when he goes out they sound the trumpets before him, so too you: “Make for yourself two trumpets of silver.” For when you take the Israelites out and bring them in, they will blow and they will come in. (*Tanchuma*, *Beha'alotekha* 9)

   The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: I have made you king. Just as a king, when he goes out to war they sound the trumpets before him, so too you when you go out to war they should sound the trumpets before you. (*Tanchuma* [Buber], *Beha'alotekha* 17).

   These *midrashim* seem to be based on the phrase "Make for yourself," though this reading in itself and the general reason that these midrashim give for the *mitzva* of sounding the trumpets are far from the plain meaning of the verse.

   By contrast, Rav Ovadya Seforno (in his commentary to v. 2) understands that the reason for sounding the trumpets is a matter of royal manners with respect to God: "He commanded the trumpets **to cry out to the king with them,** when the Tabernaclejourneyed and when the Sanctuary journeyed and when they went out to war." See also the continuation of his words, cited below. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Although in this case, the trumpet blast invites the people to meet with the king in "His palace." [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Even if the site of the trumpet blasts in the war between Aviya and Yerovam is in the battlefield, as is evident from II *Divrei Ha-yamim* 13, the meaning is as we have argued: accompanying God's departure from the Temple and His arrival on the battlefield. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Ramban (s.v. *Terua yitke'u le-maseihem*) explains the difference between the various blasts that must be sounded with the trumpets:

    The *terua* alludes to the attribute of justice… it is what leads to victory in war… and when the congregation is to be assembled, a *tekia* is appropriate, for the simple blast alludes to the attribute of mercy. And it is written: “Also on your joyous occasions, and on your festivals, and on your new moons, you shall blow (*utkatem*),” because war is for *terua*, and the seasons and rejoicing for mercy…. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This position of the Rambam, according to the way we have explained the various uses of the trumpets, may be compared to a similar matter — the mitzvaof *Kiddush* on Shabbat. The Rambam writes in *Hilkhot Shabbat* 29:1 as follows:

    It is a positive biblical commandment to sanctify Shabbat with a verbal statement… This remembrance must be made at Shabbat's commencement and at its conclusion: at the [day's] commencement with the *Kiddush* that sanctifies the day, and at its conclusion with *Havdala*.

    *Kiddush* and *Havdala* differ from each other in their content, and they come in different circumstances of man's encounter with Shabbat, but they both fulfill the positive precept "to sanctify Shabbat with a verbal statement."

    So too, in our case, the *tekia* and the *terua* bear different meanings (as explained by the Ramban; see the previous note), but both fulfill a unified positive precept — to honor the King when He arrives in His Temple and when He leaves it. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)