



Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Rosh Hashana / ראש השנה 5781

Coronating God in Yerushalayim

This year the first day of Rosh HaShanah occurs on Shabbat and therefore we refrain from blowing the shofar. While this is the universal Jewish practice nowadays, the Mishna teaches that in the Beit HaMikdash they would blow the shofar on Shabbat.¹ Rambam, in his commentary to the Mishna, asserts that this is true throughout the city of Yerushalayim.²

On one level, the Gemara explains the uniqueness of the Beit HaMikdash and Yerushalayim as revolving around a technical issue. Elsewhere we are concerned that a person will inadvertently carry the shofar to an expert and violate Shabbat while in Yerushalayim where the High Court sits, such a concern is unfounded. Many commentators, though, can push farther and find deeper understandings of the unique connection between shofar blowing and Yerushalayim which justifies blowing there on Shabbat.

Perhaps one approach is rooted in the following words that the Talmud places in God's mouth, so to speak:³ "Let the Jewish people recite the verses of Malchiyot (kingship) in order that they coronate Me as their king... and with what – the shofar." In other words, one of the main functions of Shofar is to coronate the King. We see from Tanach that in the ancient world one of the ways of coronating a king was by blowing the shofar.⁴ Similarly, on Rosh HaShanah we declare God to be the ultimate King of the world through the shofar.

This theme also appears in the chapter of Tehillim that we read before the shofar blasts which juxtaposes God's kingship with the shofar:⁵

¹ Mishna, Rosh Hashana 4:1.

² Commentary of Rambam to that Mishna.

³ Rosh HaShanah 16a.

⁴ Melachim 1, 1:39.

⁵ Tehillim chapter 47. Translation is adapted from Chabad.org.



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For the Lord is Most High; yea, feared; a great King over all the earth. God shall be exalted with the trumpet blast; the Lord, with the sound of the shofar. Sing to God, sing; sing to our King, sing.

The shofar is the tool through which we declare God as king.

If this is the case then it makes perfect sense that blowing the shofar in Yerushalayim is accorded a unique halachik status. While on Rosh HaShanah we declare God as the king of the entire world, the capital of God's earthly kingdom is the city of Yerushalayim. It is there that God's throne rests as we are taught by Yirmiyahu:⁶ "At that time, they will call Yerushalayim The Throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it in the name of the Lord, to Yerushalayim."

Perhaps it is this unique form of shofar blasts that lies in the background of the distinction between Yerushalayim and the rest of the world regarding Rosh HaShanah which occurs on Shabbat. While we might sadly give up on shofar in the rest of the world due to concern for the sanctity of Shabbat, we still must coronate God in His own capital city – Yerushalayim.

⁶ Yirmiyahu 3:17.