



פרשת וירא
מרחשון תש"פ

HIGH SCHOOL LEARNING

Kollel has started a new learning initiative for High School boys.

Each Friday night, between Mincha a Kabolas Shabbos, there is a shiur in the Sichos of the Rebbe from 5710. These sichos, which were said in the year of the histalkus of the Friedlike Rebbe, are the fundamentals of Hiskashrus.

In Kollel with Rabbi Johnson.

CHASSIDUS BEIS MIDRASH

This Monday night all men and Bochorim are invited to celebrate the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab at our upcoming Chasidus Beis Midrash evening.

We will be dividing up the Maamarim that were said by the Rebbe on or in connection to Chof Cheshvan

November 18, 8:00-9:00pm in the Goldhirsch Hall. Refreshments served.

SIYUM DAF HAYOMI

On Monday December 16th, the Melbourne Jewish community will be celebrating the Siyum Hashas of the 13th cycle of learning Daf Yomi.

Bookings can be made online at trybooking.com/BGBUA

The new cycle will start on January 4th, 2020. The Kollel has a daily shiur each morning.

If you would be interested in joining a night shiur option, please contact Rabbi Shlomo Barber.

A collection of Torah thoughts produced by Kollel Menachem

אין בית המדרש בלא
חידוש Chiddush



Sunday morning Shaalos Uteshuvs shiur

In this Edition

A Bracha for Donald Trump

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Sources in the Gemara

The Gemara¹ teaches one who sees kings of Israel should recite the Bracha ליראיו מברוך שחלק מברוך ליראיו, *Blessed... Who has given from His glory to those who fear Him*. One who sees a king of the nations of the world should say the Bracha ליראיו מברוך שחלק מברוך ליראיו, *Blessed... Who has given from His glory to flesh and blood*.

In both cases, the Braisa is using an abridged text. The Bracha would be said in full using the formula ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, *Blessed are You Hashem our G-d, king of the universe*. The full formula which includes Hashem's name and His Kingship is referred to as "*Shem Umalchus*".

The Gemara continues with a ruling of Rabbi Yochanan that one should strive to run to greet the kings of Israel. They should even run to greet the kings of the nations of the world².

The reason one should run to greet the kings of other nations is so that if one merits to see King Moshiach, they will see the difference between the honour given by Hashem to the kings of Israel who observe the Mitzvos, than to the kings of the nations in this world.

The Gemara elaborates on the reciting of this Bracha with an account of the sage Rav Sheshes. Rav Sheshes, who was blind, once joined others who were going to greet the king. Even though he could not see, when silence descended he said "Certainly now the king is coming" and began to bless him.

Earlier in the Gemara³, Rabbi Elazar bar Tzadok recounts that they used to leap on the coffins of the dead to be able to see the king, not only the kings of Israel but also the kings of the nations of the world, for the same reason quoted above. It appears from this Gemara that Rabbi Elazar bar Tzadok was a Kohen⁴.

The Gemara is bringing proof that one may violate a Rabbinic prohibition⁵ (Kohanim becoming impure) in order to show respect to kings.

The Shulchan Aruch and Poskim

The Shulchan Aruch⁶ brings the reciting of these

Brachos as Halacha. In the next law, the Shulchan Aruch brings the Gemara's teaching that it is a Mitzvah to strive to see a king, even the kings of the nations.

One recites the Bracha on seeing a Jewish king even if they are wicked and idolatrous like king Achav and Yerovaam⁷.

Just as one may violate a Rabbinic law of Tumah to greet a king, one may also stop their study of Torah to go and see a king. However this should only be done once⁸.

Who is a king for the purpose of this Bracha?

The commentaries and Poskim discuss who qualifies as a king for the purpose of reciting this Bracha. Even though the Gemara uses the title Melech, the ruling applies more broadly.

The Bracha would apply to a female ruler or queen as well, as long as they also meet the criteria discussed below⁹.

The Magen Avraham¹⁰ rules that one makes this Bracha on seeing any leader who does not have the authority of a king above them who is able to change or nullify the ruler's decrees and they have authority to judge and execute people. This ruling is based on the Sefer Haeshkol¹¹.

The Chasam Sofer¹² writes that the definition of a king in relation to this Bracha is that they have the ability to determine the fate of life or death, even if it is only in their own city. One makes a Bracha on seeing such a king even if they are in another city or country where they do not have this power.

The Radba"z

The Radba"z (Rabbi Dovid ben Zimra) lived in the 1600s in Egypt at a time when it was under Ottoman rule. In one of his responsa¹³, he addresses the question whether one makes a Bracha on seeing the governor that was sent by the Ottoman king to rule over Egypt.

The governor in Egypt does not have the ability to issue life and death sentences. This is the jurisdiction of the judges and courts. Therefore it would

seem that he does not match the criteria of the Sefer Haeshkol.

Nonetheless he suggests that this is under the normal judicial mechanism. However, in a state of emergency, the governor has rights to be able to execute even without the knowledge of the highest judge and even without a hearing. If so, the governor does indeed meet this criteria and one should make the Bracha.

The fact that such a governor could be removed from his post by the king does not change their status while they hold the position.

However, the Radba"z concludes that since the Ottoman king has the ability to overrule the decisions of the governor (as we have seen), one cannot recite the Bracha with "*Shem Umalchus*". They should however recite the Bracha without "*Shem Umalchus*".

(At the end of the response, he adds that one would not make the Bracha on seeing a judge, even if they have the ability to issue the death penalty).

Modern day rulers and Heads of State

In Teshuvos Kiryas Chana David¹⁴, Rabbi David Sakli¹⁵ writes that based on this, one should not make a Bracha on seeing a king or similar ruler. This is because heads of state and leaders today do not have the power over life and death anymore.

Concerning the President of the USA, the **Be'er Moshe**¹⁶ writes that whilst they have tremendous power, they do not have the power of life and death. This is the jurisdiction of the court system.

In places where every death sentence must be signed by the President, one would make the Bracha on seeing them. However in most countries the ruler does not have this power and one should only say the Bracha without "*Shem Umalchus*".

Rav Ovadiah Yosef¹⁷ suggests that if the President or leader has the ability to issue pardons (or commute sentences) to those who have been sentenced to death by the courts, this would qualify as having power over life and death.

The fact that the President is elected by the public and only serves for a fixed term does not change their status¹⁸.

Nonetheless, Rav Ovadiah Yosef also con-

cludes that one should make the Bracha without "*Shem Umalchus*". He basis this on the fact that the when one sees world leaders today such as the President of the USA, they are not dressed in royal robes, but rather in similar clothes to the civilian population. Since one is not seeing the 'king' in their glory, one does not recite the Bracha which refers to the glory Hashem gives to the kings¹⁹.

Seeing the king in his glory would also include seeing the king accompanied by his entourage (chariots and soldiers) that accompany and travel before him for honour. Soldiers and guards for security do not count.

There is basis to say that the Bracha is not dependent on seeing the king in his glory, but rather on their power²⁰. There are also Poskim who rule that one even makes the Bracha on seeing the boat in which they know for certain that the king is travelling in²¹.

Both of these views seem to say that one says the Bracha on seeing a king irrespective of what clothing he is wearing.

Nonetheless, Rav Ovadiah concludes that based on the principle that in a case of doubt whether to recite a Bracha or not, we rule leniently and do not permit the reciting of the Bracha, so too one should not recite the Bracha on seeing a ruler in regular clothing, even if they have the power to pardon prisoners who have been sentenced to death.

Rav Moshe Shternbuch²² writes that when the President of the USA visited Eretz Yisroel, the rabbis disagreed on whether to treat him like a king or not. His view was that since the President is only in power for a limited period of time, and is based on a decision of the people, and because his powers are limited constitutionally, we do not need to say a Bracha when we see him.

He distinguishes between the President of the USA and the monarchs of the UK whose power is passed down hereditarily. Furthermore, the queen is actually royalty, unlike in America where it is just an elected office.

When President Obama visited Israel, **Rav Shlomo Aviner** ruled that one should not recite the Bracha on seeing him. He gave the following 4 reasons;

1. The President of the United States does not have absolute authority as he must defer to the will of the Congress.
2. Whilst he has the power to grant life by issuing a pardon, he does not possess the power

of death.

3. The President of the United States wears a suit and not special royal clothing.
4. While the President travels with many guards, it is for his protection and not as a retinue of honour.

Whilst there is a view that one can recite the full Bracha on seeing the President of the USA, based on the discussion and references discussed above, it would appear that consensus is that one should recite the Bracha without "*Shem Umalchus*".

Respect for the government

The above does not detract at all from the highest levels of honour that one must show to the government and Heads of State and the gratitude that we are obliged to show to them, especially those nations who have made life easier for the Jewish people and protect us and who believe in G-d, love kindness and respect our Torah²³.

Reciting the Bracha without "*Shem Umalchus*" is also a sign of honour, leaving out Hashem's name is based on Halachic technicality.

1. Brachos 58a
2. Based on the commentary of Rashi
3. Brachos 19b
4. Rashi. See Pesach Enayim recording a dispute and contradictory sources as to whether Rabbi Elazar bar Tzadok was a Kohen or a Yisrael. See also Tosfos Eiruvin 41.
5. Even though a Kohen is Biblically forbidden from becoming impure via contact with the dead, the Gemara discusses a case where there is a Tefach of airspace between the corpse and the lid of the coffin. In such a case, the Tumah of touching the coffin is only Rabbinic.
6. OC 224 8
7. Orchos Chaim Spinka 224:1
8. Magen Avraham 224:7 quoting Sefer Chassidim 950
9. Be'er Moshe
10. OC 224:5
11. Rabbi Avraham ben Yitzchak of Norbonne (1100s)
12. OC Siman 159
13. Volume 1 Siman 296
14. 2:36
15. Morocco/Algeria 1861-1948
16. 2:9
17. Yechave Daas 2:28
18. Yechave Daas ibid. quoting Toras Chaim Sofer 224:10. Be'er Moshe ibid. See below those who dispute this.
19. Nivchar Mikeseif Siman 3
20. Radba"z
21. Birkei Yosef 224:3. Based on the fact that Rav Sheshes who was blind still made the Bracha because he knew that the king was present. Whether Rav Sheshes actually made the Bracha or not is subject to dispute (see Elya Rabbah who disputes the ruling of the Magen Avraham that a blind person may make this Bracha). Chasam Sofer writes that even though a blind person makes the Bracha, this is because he is in the presence of the king. Therefore no deduction can be made to seeing the boat (or plane) on which the king is travelling.
22. Teshuvos Vehanhagos 2:139
23. Divrei Chaim Yoreh Deah 1:30