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{ TOPIC }

BERACHA ON WISE PEOPLE AND KINGS (PRESIDENTS)



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BERACHA ON WISE PEOPLE AND KINGS (PRESIDENTS)

An unfamiliar *halacha* is the obligation to recite a *beracha* on wise people and kings, whether they are Jewish or non-Jewish. Does this *beracha* apply today? What are the qualifications of “wise”? Does this *beracha* apply to the President of the United States? What are the criteria involved? How often is one required to recite this *beracha*?

All these and other questions will be dealt with in this issue. We will first deal with reciting the *beracha* on wise people.

Is this *Beracha* Still Relevant?

There is a discussion among the *poskim* whether the *beracha* recited on a wise person¹ is still relevant today. Some suggest that we are not clear how to define a wise person. Therefore, one can recite the *beracha* without *Hashem's* name.² Others say that although our contemporary *chachamim* might not be defined as wise for certain rules,³ but regarding the *beracha* they still are.⁴ This is the accepted custom.⁵

1. There is another *beracha* which is recited on a very smart *Talmid Chacham* (*Chacham Harazim*) but the Shulchan Aruch left this out which indicates that the *beracha* is not relevant (Yechaveh Daas 4:16).

2. Ben Ish Chai Eikev 1:13, Chesed Lalafim 224:12, Kaf Hachaim 224:19, Ohr L'tzyion 2:46:61:footnote 61, Tzitz Eliezer 14:37:3, 22:14:3 (if one recites with the *shem* and *malchos* it may be a *beracha l'vatala*). See Kaf Hachaim 224:19, Rivevos Ephraim 7:page 249, Har Tzvi 1:115.

3. Refer to Rambam Hilchos Rambam 6:12, Rama Y.D. 243:2. See Birchei Yosef C.M. 15:3.

4. Chai Adom 63:5, Yechaveh Daas 4:16, Yalkut Yosef 225:9.

5. Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita. Refer to Shevet Halevi 10:13. See Salmas Chaim 54, 207, Teshuva Mahavah 2:237.



איך לומר ברכה על חכמים וקיסרים? (ברכות ח)

The *Aruch Hashulchan*⁶ says that the parameters of this *beracha* are not clear, so the *beracha* is not said today.

Beracha on Wise People – Source

The *Gemorah*⁷ says that if one sees a wise Jewish person⁸ he recites ברוך..... שחלק מחכמתו ליריאיו. For a wise gentile the *beracha* is: ברוך..... שנתן מחכמתו לבשר ודם.

There are different explanations as to why the *nusach* is different for a wise Jewish person than for a wise non-Jewish person. The *Maharsha*¹⁰ explains that a wise Jewish person acquires his knowledge from the Torah which is a part of *Hashem*, as opposed to the sharpness of a non-Jew. Others explain that the souls of Jewish people are from the throne of *Hashem* as opposed to a non-Jew's.¹¹ The *Levush*¹² says that the wisdom of the Torah is extremely profound, and we can only understand a small portion of its depth. Therefore we say שחלק, which means a portion. However, the non-Jews can only excel in the wisdom that exists in this world. They can acquire all of this wisdom, but they cannot know more. This wisdom is a gift; therefore we recite שנתן, which means that He gave. As far as making the *beracha* for a wise non-Jew, the person has to be wise in the wisdoms of

6. O.C. 224:6.

7. Meseches Berochos 58a, Rambam Hilchos Berochos 10:11, Tur O.C. 224, Bais Yosef O.C. 224, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 60:9.

8. This *beracha* is not recited on a wise Jewish female (Bais Hillel 24-25:page 160).

9. Shulchan Aruch O.C. 224:6.

10. Meseches Berochos ibid. Refer to Bais Yosef O.C. 224, Taz 1, Magen Avraham 4, Pri Megadim M.Z. 1, Mishnah Berurah 9.

11. Levush 224:7. See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 60:9.

12. Ibid.

the world.¹³ It is not common for this *beracha* to be recited today, since they are very few if any who meet the criteria.¹⁴

Criteria of a Wise Person

The *poskim* do not discuss at length the definition of a wise person in regard to these *halachos*.¹⁵ However, the *Shevet Halevi*¹⁶ says: a person who is accepted in his generation as wise from *Torah* and his learning is *lishmah*. Others say that he has to know *kabbalah* as well.¹⁷

Beracha Recited Over the Years

It is reported that when the author of the *Tzafnes Paneach* (the *Rugatchover zt"l*) visited Vienna, the citizens recited the *beracha*.¹⁸ In addition, some recited the *beracha* on the *Chazon Ish zt"l*,¹⁹ and *Steipler zt"l*.²⁰ The *Steipler zt"l* instructed his son to make a *beracha* on the *Brisker Rav zt"l*, and maintained that one should recite the *beracha* on *Harav Aron Kotler zt"l*.²¹ Others have recited the *beracha* on *Harav Moshe Feinstein zt"l*,²² as well as *Harav Elyashiv zt"l*,²³ *Harav*

13. Pri Megadim Eishel Avraham 5, Mishnah Berurah 10. If they are knowledgeable in the wisdom of *avodah zarah* then no *beracha* is recited (Mishnah Berurah *ibid*).

14. Teshuvos V'hanhagos 3:76:2.

15. Refer to Hisoreros Teshuva 2:102, Yevakesh Torah (Berochos) 42, Bais Hillel 38:pages 25-29.

16. 10:13.

17. *Ibid*.

18. *Ibid*.

19. As per the *pesak* of Harav Issur Zalman Melzer zt"l (Masei Ish 1:page 42). See Masei Ish 4:page 114, Halichos Shlomo Tefillah page 294:footnote 157, Pri Baruch page 213, Chut Shani Brachos page 201:footnote 235. Refer to Divrei Yisroel 3:75, Tzitz Eliezer 14:37.

20. Aleh B'tamar page 60.

21. Metzuvei V'osa page 415.

22. Opinion of Harav Elyashiv zt"l quoted in Metzuvei V'osa page 415, see Yevakesh Torah (Berochos) 42.

23. Bais Hillel 38:page 31.

אין על להקדיף הבעולמו אלא י
אמות של הלכה בלבד... (ברכות ה')

Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l, Harav Ovadia Yosef zt"l,²⁴ and Harav Chaim Kanievesky Shlita.²⁵

Seeing the Wise People Through a Window

Even if one does not meet the person face to face, but only sees him through a clear window, he would recite the appropriate *berachos*.²⁶

Jewish and non-Jewish King²⁷

When one sees a Jewish king (at the time of the *Bais Hamikdosh*)²⁸ one says ברוך שחלק מכבודו ליראיו.

If one sees a non-Jewish king he says ברוך שנתן מכבודו לבשר ודם.²⁹

The *poskim* maintain that the *beracha* is also recited on a queen.³⁰ Although one should not look at women,³¹ one may take a peek.³²

There are different explanations as to why there is a change in *nusach* between a Jewish and non-Jewish king.³³

24. Bais Hillel 38:page 31:footnote 1.

25. Metzukei V'osa page 415. In regards to other *gedolim* see M'ein Omer 1:pages 416-417.

26. Sharei Teshuva 224:3. See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 60:10, Beer Moshe 2:13, Toras Chaim page 56:9.

27. Refer to Hisoreros Teshuva 2:102:2 if a Jew is a king over non-Jews (such as was by *Yosef Hatzadik* in *Mitzrayim*) what *beracha* would be recited.

28. Aruch Hashulchan 224:6.

29. Meseches Berochos 58a, Tur O.C. 224, Bais Yosef, Shulchan Aruch 224:8, Mishnah Berurah 12, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 60:10. This even applies to a blind person *r'l* who knows the kings are passing (Magen Avraham 224:6, Elya Rabbah 6, see Mishnah Berurah 11). Refer to Beer Moshe 2:13 about saying the *beracha* for the king is in a boat, plane etc.

30. Betzel Hachochma 2:19, Shevet Halevi 1:35. One should try to see queens as well (ibid). However, see Rivevos Ephraim 3:540:3 who brings other opinions.

31. Shulchan Aruch E.H. 21:1.

32. Betzel Hachochma ibid, Shevet Halevi 1:35.

33. Refer to Maharsha Meseches Berochos 58a.

כל השומה לפנות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (גדה ע"ג)



One should make an effort to see both Jewish³⁴ and non-Jewish kings alike.³⁵

What are the Criteria to Make This *Beracha*?

Some mention that a king is defined as someone who has the ability to order capital punishment.³⁶ Others maintain though that if it is a king which is shown honor it is considered a king in regard to this halacha.³⁷

President of the United States

There is a discussion among the *poskim* whether a president of a democratic country would have the status of a king. Some *poskim* say that since a democratic president does not have the authority to order an execution, the *beracha* is not recited on him.³⁸ Many *poskim* say that one may recite the *beracha* since the president has the ability to pardon a condemned criminal.³⁹

Some maintain that if one sees a president of a country in his royal clothes (not common in the United States) then he can make a *beracha* if he wishes to do so.⁴⁰

34. Meseches Berochos 58a, Tur O.C. 224, Shulchan Aruch 224:9.

35. Shevet Halevi 1:35. Refer to Teshuvos V'hanhagos 2:139. Also non-Jewish queens (Betzel Hachochma 2:19, Shevet Halevi 1:35, Shraga Hameir 7:81, Beer Moshe 2:9:4, see Avnei Yushfei 1:47:3).

36. Refer to Magen Avraham 5, Mishnah Berurah 224:12. See Radvaz 1:296, Aprakasisa D'anya 1:32 Teshuvos V'hanhagos 2:139. Even a wicked king one would recite a *beracha* on (Shearim Metzuyanim B'halacha 60:footnote 5, Avnei Yushfei 1:47:2, see Minchas Elazar 5:7:4).

37. Teshuvos V'hanhagos 2:139.

38. Refer to discussion in Minchas Elazar 5:7:3, Yechaveh Daas 2:28, Yabea Omer O.C. 8:22:25, Yalkut Yosef 225:10, Avnei Yushfei 1:47:1, Ashrei Haish O.C. 1:pages 252-253:4, Teshuvos V'hanhagos 2:139, Bais Hillel 27:pages 25-26, Yevakesh Torah (Berochos) 43, Rivevos Ephraim 3:540:3, 7:54:26, Halichos Shlomo Tefillah page 294:footnote 60. See Beer Moshe 2:9, Tzitz Eliezer 22:14:1.

39. Harav Yisroel Belsky Shlita, see Aprakasisa D'anya 1:32, Halichos Shlomo Tefillah page 294:footnote 60.

40. Yalkut Yosef 225:10:footnote 10.

כל השנה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא... (תורה עב)

Daily Clothes

There is a discussion in the *poskim* if one sees a king in normal clothes would it constitute a *brachah*. This would also apply to the President of a country. Some maintain that one would not say the *brachah* with *Hashems* name in this situation.⁴¹

Watching the President on Television

The *beracha* is only recited if one sees the president live, not if he sees him on television.⁴² The same is true in regards to seeing a wise person etc.

One who sees the vehicle in which the president is traveling, but does not actually see the president, may not recite the *beracha*.⁴³

When to Make the *Beracha*

The *beracha* is not repeated if one sees the same king etc. within thirty days,⁴⁴ but if he sees a different king etc. then he may recite another *beracha*.⁴⁵

Wise King

One who sees a wise king would recite two *berochos*, one for the fact that he is wise and the other that he is the king.⁴⁶

41. Nifchar M'kesef 3. Refer to Higyonei Haparsha 2:page 81, Yevakesh Torah (Berochos) 43.

42. Betzel Hachochma 2:18, 5:8, Yechaveh Daas 2:28, Yabea Omer O.C. 8:22:25, Minchas Yitzchok 2:84, Beer Moshe 2:9:3.

43. Birchei Yosef 224:3, Yalkut Yosef 225:12:footnote 12.

44. Shulchan Aruch 224:13.

45. Magen Avraham 224:10, Mishnah Berurah 17, Aruch Hashulchan 6, Kaf Hachaim 49.

46. Halichos Shlomo Tefillah page 294:42.

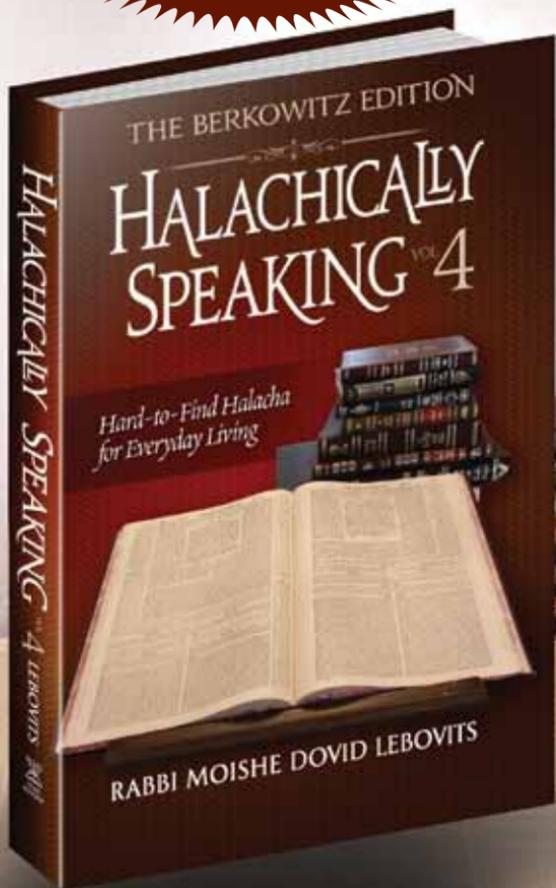
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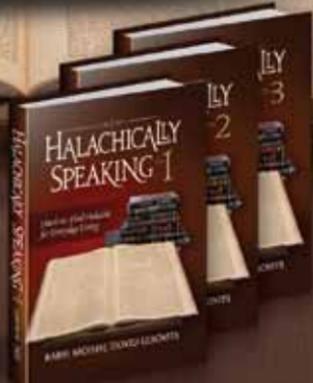
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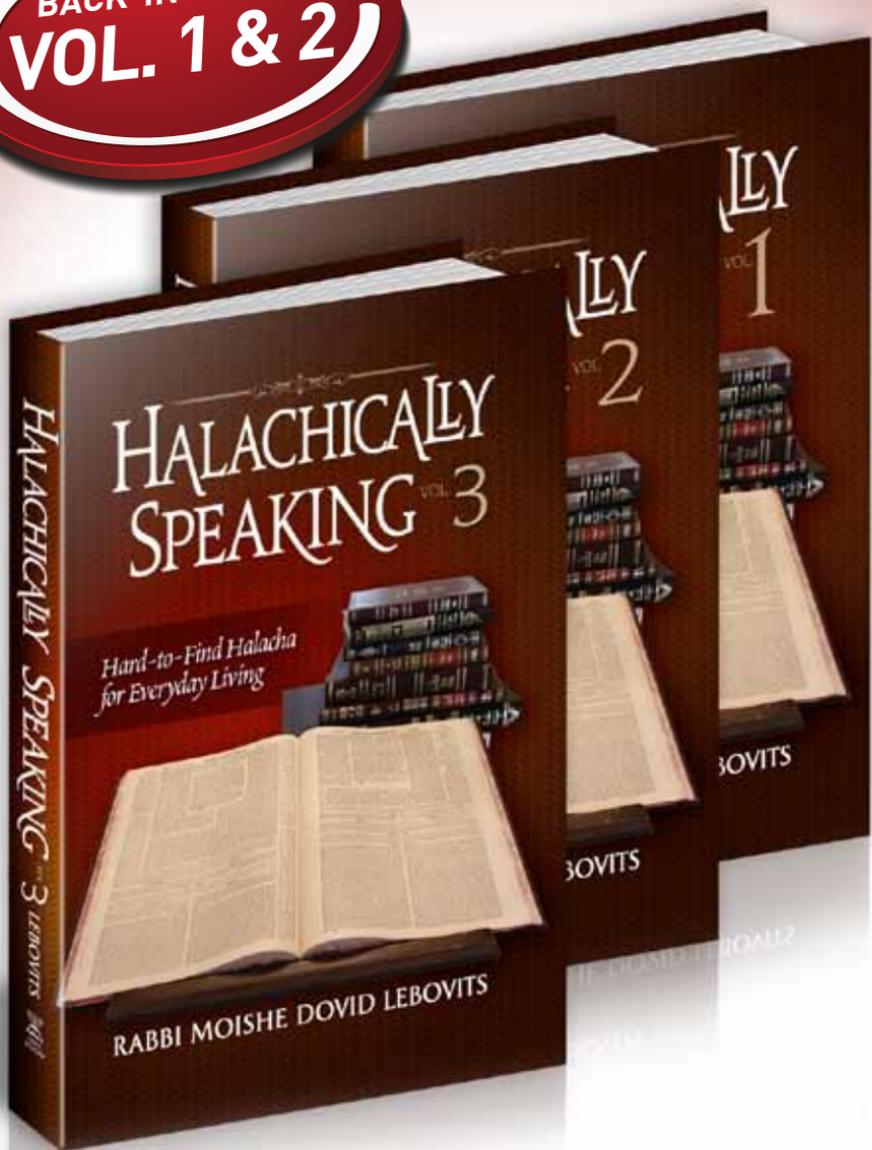
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