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Halachos compiled by HaRav Chaim Bleier – Translated from the Hebrew edition by R' Zerachya Shicker

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Honor for Royalty

Parshas Ki Savo 5782

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Obligation to Honor Non-Jewish Royalty

Mitzvah to See Non-Jewish Kings

1. It is a mitzvah to make an effort to see kings, even non-Jewish ones (ברכות נ"ח ע"א, שו"ע או"ח סי' רכ"ד ס"ט), because if one is zocheh, he will discern between Jewish and non-Jewish kings. Rashi (שם) explains that if one is zocheh in Olam Haba [the time of Moshiach] and he sees Moshiach's honor, he will discern how much greater the reward for mitzvos is than the honor of the nations in this world.
2. **Seeing the king's honor.** Even if one will not see the king himself, there is a mitzvah to try and see the great honor accorded in his presence, as that will also accomplish the purpose mentioned in the above Gemara (שו"ת שבט הלי ח"א סי' ל"ה).
3. Some hold that one must make physical efforts for this, but it is not enough of an obligation that one would need to spend money (ענינים למשפט). Others hold one is responsible to spend money for the obligation to see a king (המקור חיים קיצ' הלכות ס"ט).
4. **One time.** If a person sees a king one time and learns the above lesson ["if one is zocheh, he will discern..."], he should not take away any more time from learning to see the king again, unless the king is coming with a greater show of honor (מ"ב סק"ג).

Overriding an Issur D'Rabanan

5. The Gemara in Brachos (דף י"ט ע"ב) says that R' Elazar bar Tzadok – who was a Kohen (גמ' בכורות דף ל"ו ע"א) – would jump over coffins with bodies in them to greet Jewish kings, and even to greet non-Jewish kings. The Gemara explains that the issur for a Kohen to jump over a coffin is only d'rabanan. Although most coffins have a tefach of space to contain the tumah, Chazal made a gezeirah because of the coffins that do not. The Gemara concludes that they waived the gezeirah for the honor of kings.
6. The Yerushalmi in Brachos (דף ל"ה ע"א) says that when the Roman caesar Diocletianus came to Eretz Yisroel, R' Chiya bar Abba was stepping over kevarim to see him. Also, R' Chizkiyah and R' Yirmiyah quoted R' Yochanan that it is a mitzvah to see great royal figures so that when the kings of Beis Dovid come, we will know how to distinguish between the kingdoms.
7. **Violating an issur d'rabanan for non-Jewish kings.** The poskim argue whether one may violate an issur d'rabanan to see non-Jewish kings. Some hold this is only for Jewish kings (מג"א סי' רכ"ד סק"ז).
8. However, the Rambam (פ"ג אבל הי"ד) holds that a Kohen can jump over coffins even to greet non-Jewish kings, as it is an honor for the king when people come to greet him. His source is the above Yerushalmi and Gemara in Brachos, that this idea also applies to non-Jewish kings.
9. **Halachah.** Most Acharonim rule in accordance with the Rambam (שו"ת חת"ס) (מ"ב סי' רכ"ד סק"ג), and that it is d'oraisa (שו"ת חת"ס) (א"ח סי' קנ"ט). They prove this from the fact that Yosef HaTzaddik got a haircut on Rosh Hashanah (גמ' ר"ה דף י"א ע"א) in honor of the king (רש"י בראשית מ"א י"ד, חת"ס בתורת משה) and Moshe accorded honor to Pharaoh (ה' שם י"ג, שם י"ג, חת"ס בתורת משה).
10. **Possible avodah zarah.** If there are avodah zarah images or figures on the king or in his entourage, it is assur to go see him (ספר חסידים, דעת תורה).
11. **Final respects.** If one goes to pay his final respects to the Queen of the UK, Elizabeth II of blessed memory, to share in the sorrow of her family and of the nation, he should do so outside. He should not enter the building, as there is an image of a cross next to her

coffin and one may not accord honor to royalty when there are avodah zarah symbols present (above, 10). This even applies when the Queen's coffin is in the Palace of Westminster; all the more so when it is in Westminster Abbey. One may not go in there at all.

Avail Shaving in Honor of a King

12. I remember from my youth that Baal Chesed, R' Ephraim Zalman Margulies ז"ל of London, who had a connection with the royalty, was once sitting shiva when he received an invitation from the Queen's palace to participate in a garden party with other distinguished people. This raised a shailah whether he was allowed to attend. He received a psak that he was obligated to go out of honor for the royal family, and he was also obligated to shave for the same reason.

Davening for the Peace of the Kingdom

13. It says in Avos (פ"ג מ"ב): R' Chanina S'gan HaKohanim said, "Daven for the peace of the kingdom, because if not for this fear [of the kingdom], man would swallow his fellow alive." This applies to non-Jewish kingdoms too (רע"ב). One should also daven for the wellbeing of royal officials and advisers (תוי"ט).
14. There is a longtime minhag to daven for the wellbeing of the kingdom on Shabbos after kerias haTorah and maftir with a special text beginning, "הנותן תשועה למלכים וכו'" (סידור לובלין שנת תל"ח). To this day, there are shuls that recite this text and daven for the wellbeing of the king and his kingdom. This past Shabbos, in the U.K. they adjusted the text from the feminine form, which was in honor of the Queen, to the masculine in honor of his Majesty the new King.

Brachah on Seeing a Non-Jewish King

Brachah on a King

15. Upon seeing a Jewish king, one should say "ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך ה' העולם שחלק מכבודו ליראיו (שו"ע או"ח סי' רכ"ד ס"ח) "ברוך וכו' שנתן מכבודו לבשר ודם". Upon seeing a non-Jewish king, one should say "ברוך וכו' שנתן מכבודו לבשר ודם". The poskim discuss whether we make this brachah on various types of kings, officials, and heads of state today, as we will explain.
16. **King.** Some hold that we only make a brachah on a king who has the authority to decide if a subject will live or die (קב"ט ד"ה והנה מה שכתב שו"ת חת"ס או"ח סי' קנ"ט).
17. However, many hold that only a governing official under a king must have the authority to kill or let live in order to make the brachah. Since a king or queen is the most honored person in a country or nation and receives unparalleled respect, one should make a brachah on them even if they cannot give a death sentence without consulting judges and leading officials (שו"ת שבט הלי ח"א סי' ל"ה, שו"ת שרגא המאיר ח"ז סי' פ"א, שו"ת נחלת פנחס סי' א' אות כ"ט).
18. **In royal attire.** Some say that the brachah on a king is only made when he is wearing his royal attire and accompanied by his honorable escort. When he is dressed like a commoner and goes about like a regular person, one does not make a brachah, at least not with Hashem's Name and Malchus (שו"ת ציץ אליעזר ח"ב סי' י"ד).
19. **Once in thirty days.** The brachah on a king is made upon seeing him once in thirty days. If one sees a different king, he should make the brachah even if it is within thirty days of making the brachah on the first king (מ"ב סק"ז).

Actually Seeing the King

20. **Blind.** If a blind person who once saw and knows what it means to see (פמ"ג א"א סק"ו) is in the presence of a king and feels the atmosphere and respectful awe of the king and his entourage, he can make the brachah even though he cannot actually see the king (גמ' ברכות דף נ"ח, מ"ב סק"א).

21. **King's face.** One does not need to see the king's actual face. As long as he sees the king in his glory, surrounded by his guards and entourage and reflecting majesty to everyone present, he can make the brachah.
22. **In a vehicle.** If one knows that the king is traveling through the area in a vehicle with his entourage, surrounded by a convoy with vehicles of honor, he can make the brachah even if he does not actually see the king himself (ע"פ ברכי יוסף).
23. **Picture of the king.** One can only make the brachah if he sees the king and his entourage in person, even if only through binoculars (ש"ת משיבת נפש ח"ב סי רמ"ד). However, one does not make the brachah upon seeing a picture or a screen with a live broadcast. Only with an actual view can a person be impressed, awed and properly feel the king's honor (ש"ת בצל החכמה ח"ב סי י"ט).

Official, Judge

24. **Official with authority to kill.** One makes the brachah on a royally appointed official with the legal authority to judge and sentence to death if he does not have the king on top of him overriding his words (הראב"ד הובא בארחות חיים הל' ברכות אות מ"ט, ש"ת רדב"ז ח"א סי' רצ"ו, מג"א סק"ה, מ"ב סק"ב).
25. **Judge.** Even if a judge has the authority to give the death penalty, e.g., the *kadi* in Mediterranean lands, no brachah is made upon seeing him (כף החיים סק"ו).

US President

26. Some hold that the brachah should be made on the US President. Even though he does not have the power to give a death sentence, since he has the power to grant or reject a pardon for someone sentenced to death by the courts, it is as if capital punishment is in his power and he is like a king who judges and kills by law. Even though the president is only elected for a specific term and does not retain power until the end of his life like a king, since he has the title of president, one can make the brachah (ע"פ ספר תורת חיים) (סק"י, ש"ת אפרקטא דעניא סי' ל"ב, ש"ת שואל ונשאל ח"א סי' ע"ג).
27. However, most Acharonim hold that no brachah is made over the US President, as he cannot be described as a king, just as a man with great authority and power. Also, other than his ability to grant a pardon, he cannot decide if someone will live or die (ס' אור עולם) (אות צ' פרק ד' דף ל"ט ע"ג, הגרשוני, הליכות שלמה תפלה פכ"ג הע' ס'). Of particular significance, he does not wear royal clothes; he just wears a nice suit like a regular citizen might. Also, his bodyguards are there for security, not honor; he can be removed from the presidency; and there is no legal prohibition to insult him to his face [many, in fact, have the minhag to do so...].

Brachah on a Queen

28. Some hold that this brachah was not instituted for a queen since it is assur to gaze at women.
29. However, most poskim hold that a king and queen are no different in this regard. One makes a brachah on a queen as well, as the brachah is on the honor surrounding the monarch, not specifically on seeing her (תשובות והנהגות ח"ב סי' קל"ט). It is no different than the halachah about a blind person making the brachah (ש"ת שבט הלי' (הני"ל). One doesn't specifically need to look at her to say the brachah.

Kings of the United Kingdom

30. **Queen Elizabeth II.** Throughout the seventy-year reign of the Queen of the UK of blessed memory, the minhag of the Jews of the UK was to make a brachah upon seeing and meeting her. Although she did not have the power to kill or let live and she did not have a say in the running of the country, every new law that passed in Parliament had to get her signature before taking effect. Also, the display of honor around her was one of the most impressive in the entire world (תשובות והנהגות ח"ב סי' קל"ט), and a king or queen does not need to have the right to kill (ש"ת שבט הלי' הני"ל). The UK has a royal dynasty passed from one generation to the next with a tradition for every detail and no one can depose the kings [other than themselves...]. Thus, kings of the UK are fitting for the brachah. This was the minhag of R' Yosef Tzvi Dunner Raavad of London, the Gaavad of Gateshead זצ"ל and many rabbanim in England.
31. **Queen Consort.** In the rules of the UK monarchy, when a daughter inherits the throne, e.g., Queen Elizabeth II, she become queen, but her husband is a prince, not the king. When a son inherits the throne, e.g., His Majesty, the new King Charles III, he becomes king and his wife becomes what is called Queen Consort, a title she carries only while her husband is king. After his death in its time, his heir inherits the throne and she loses her title of Queen.
32. No brachah is made upon seeing a queen consort alone, without the king, since she does not have the title of Queen forever and she has no power whatsoever. Her honor is not due to her independent status; it is out of honor for her husband.

33. **Changing of the Guard in the royal palace.** If one sees the display of honor at the Changing of the Guard at the royal Buckingham Palace or the like, no brachah is made even if the king is in the palace. The brachah is only said upon seeing the king or feeling his presence and the honor displayed for him, not when one only sees formal honors without him present (תשובות והנהגות שם).

יתנו לך כתר מלוכה

The purpose of these halachos is to learn a lesson and to gain a clearer sense of the honor and reign of the King of all kings. Hashem orchestrated these events right before Rosh Hashanah. Thus, an inseparable part of knowing the halachos is to understand the lesson – "If he is zocheh, he will distinguish..."



Kingdom in Shomayim Like the Kingdom on Earth

34. It is only a few days before Rosh Hashanah, the day when we are zocheh to crown Hashem anew, as Chazal say, "Say before Me Malchiyos so that you crown Me over you." For us to feel this tangibly, sometimes we need to see the royal honor given to a human king; this makes it easier to picture what it means to crown a king. Chazal tell us that the Kingdom in Shomayim resembles the kingdom on earth (ברכות דף נ"ח) – everything done for royalty in this world is akin to that which is done in the Kingdom in Shomayim.
35. "הממליך מלכים ... ולו המלוכה." How fitting is this idea now, when there is a current occasion to illustrate the glory of His reign: the crowning of a new king in the UK amid much splendor, lavishness, and honor. If we are moved in any way by the honor accorded to a human king, it is a tiny fraction of the impression and excitement we should feel at crowning Hashem, the King of all kings.
36. "ויעשו כולם אגודה אחת וכו'." When a new king is crowned, we see how many types of soldiers work together, all wearing various types of royal clothing, with trumpets and other instruments playing. Everything is with precise order, coordination, and direction, and there is great honor between the officials. All of this is for one purpose – to glorify the monarchy.
37. Hashem's malachim do the same thing. As we say in tefilah, "וכולם מקבלים עליהם עול מלכות שמים זה מזה, ונותנים באהבה רשות זה לזה, להקדיש ליוצרם וכו'." The Ofanim, Chayos HaKodesh, and Serafim – different types of malachim – all unite to praise Hashem from their places, though they all have different attributes.
38. We must also learn from this that Hashem's honor is more glorious when everyone does His will amid mutual respect even though we wear different clothes and have different paths in avodas Hashem. This is what we daven for in the tefilah of the Yamim Nora'im: "על כל מעשיך ... על כל מה שבראת ... ובכן תן פחדך ... על כל מעשיך ... על כל מה שבראת ... וישתחוו לפניך כל הברואים ויעשו כולם אגודה אחת לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם." Then we will be zocheh to His true Kingship.

The King Is in the Field

39. As per the custom in the UK, at this time, before the Queen's funeral, the new king will go about in the cities he is to rule over in order to give and receive blessings for his new reign.
40. In a similar vein, the Sefarim HaKedoshim (בעל התניא) explain that in Elul, Hashem leaves His house, so to speak, and walks in the fields among people to take note of what is happening among His people. Anyone can easily approach the king, even simple people, with requests. Then, on the day of inauguration – Rosh Hashanah – Hashem goes back to His palace to sit and judge the world based on people's actions. A king with the power to kill or let live has the status of a king according to everyone (see above, 16).
41. **Story with the Gaavad.** Maran the Gaavad זצ"ל used to tell how when he was a young bochur at the beginning of World War II, in the year 5700 [1939], King George VI, king of the UK, passed through the Jewish area in Gateshead. As he was traveling through, one of the child refugees jumped out and approached the king, begging tearfully to get entry permits for his parents and family who were stuck in Europe. His pleas worked. The king had pity on him and made sure the visas would be granted. The boy was thus zocheh to save his family. The Gaavad would tell this to demonstrate how he saw clearly the concept mentioned in the sefarim about Elul, that when "the King is in the field," one can approach Him, beg, and accomplish a lot, more than during the rest of the year (רבינו הגדול אמרו עמ"י הע' כ"ג).

May we all be zocheh to come close to Hashem during these days and improve everything that needs improvement so that we can easily crown Hashem King over us anew. May we be zocheh to a kesivah vachasimah tovah.