



PO Box 1076 Jerusalem 91009 \* Tel. 972-2-628-4101

# Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

## Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner on...

---

3 Shevat 5768

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Friedfertig

Subscribe: [RavAviner-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:RavAviner-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

archives: [www.ateret.org.il/new/home.php](http://www.ateret.org.il/new/home.php)

---

### Reciting a Blessing on Seeing the President of the United States

---

President George W. Bush arrived in Israel today and Rav Aviner discussed this question today during lunch at the yeshiva.

Question: If someone sees President Bush should he recite the blessing of "Baruch...she-natan michvodo le-vasar ve-dam - Blessed are You...who has given of His glory to flesh and blood"? (In the Gemara in Berachot 58a, our Rabbis teach that one who sees a non-Jewish king recites the blessing. It is recorded in the Rambam, Hilchot Berachot 10:11 and Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 224:8. The Magen Avraham (224:5) writes that one should recite this blessing upon seeing any ruler, who judges and metes out capital punishment lawfully, and whose edicts cannot be altered by the king. The Chatam Sofer, Orach Chaim #159, rules that even if one sees the king outside of his area of "rule," one must still recite the appropriate blessing).

Answer: No, the President of the United States not a king. Halachic authorities mention four criteria in order to be considered a king for this purpose.

1. One must be the absolute ruler of his kingdom or country (Abudraham, Hilchot Berachit #49, Shut Ha-Radvaz vol. 1 #296). The President of the United States does not have absolute authority. He must bend to the will of the Congress whether he likes it or not.
2. The king must have the ability to administer capital punishment (Shut Chatam Sofer ibid.). The President does not possess this power. While he does have the power to grant life by issuing a pardon, he does not possess the power of death (Shut Be'er Moshe of Rav Moshe Stern vol. 2, # 9). If he issues a pardon to Jonathan Pollard, we can discuss this further.

3. The king must have royal clothing. The President of the United States wears a suit like everyone else (Shut Yehaveh Da'at, vol. 2, #28 and Shut Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot vol. 2, #139).

4. The king must have an entourage (see Shut Teshuvot Ve-Hanhagot ibid. Rav Sternbuch writes there that he heard that Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the great Rav of Yerushalayim before the establishment of the State, once had a private meeting in a tent with the King of Jordan and he recited this blessing). While the President is traveling with 400 guards, it is because he is scared.

People get very scared about what the President says, but there is no need. What he says does not mean that this is the way it is. This is for two reasons. 1. The United States does not help us simply to be kind, but because they profit from it. They need us militarily. We handle this part of the world. They need us technologically. They make planes in the US, and then bring them here and the "chevra" makes them into super-planes. The biggest plane manufacturer has a plant here. It is not to be kind, but to profit. They need us. 2. The President must bend to the will of Congress. The Congress was pro-Israel even before the establishment of the State. The reason is that 98% of Americans believe in the Tanach and it says something as the Land of Israel for the Nation of Israel. The Monroe Doctrine was stated by President James Monroe that Europe would no longer interfere with the affairs of the US: America for Americans. Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, applied this doctrine to us: We will not interfere with what America is doing and America should not interfere with what we are doing here.

The President of the most powerful country, with the biggest army, the largest economy, the super-power of the world is visiting the tiny State of Israel, and some people say that this is not "Atchalta De-Geulah – the beginning of the Redemption." Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach in Shut Minchat Shlomo (the last responsum in vol. 1) writes that one is obligated to recite four blessings when the Messiah arrives. 1. "Baruch...Chacham Ha-Razim – Blessed are You...Knowers of secrets" which is recited when seeing 600,000 Jews together and certainly at least this many Jews will go out to greet the Messiah. 2. "Baruch...she-chalak mechomato lirei'av – Blessed are You...who has appointed of His knowledge to those who fear him" which is recited when seeing an outstanding Torah scholar and the Messiah will certainly fit this criteria. 3. "Baruch...she-chalak michvodo lirei'av- Blessed are You...who has appointed of His glory to those who fear him" which is recited when seeing a Jewish king. 4. "Shechechyanu" – Blessing Hashem for having arrived at this moment. We still are waiting for this time to arrive, but we are continuing to advance. After all, the

President of the United States is visiting the State of Israel. Instead of reciting a blessing over the President, I recommend reciting two prayers for the Nation of Israel which we recite every day before the Shema. Blessed are you, Hashem, who chooses His Nation of Israel with Love. Blessed are you, Hashem, who love His Nation of Israel.