



ELECTIONS



The hallmark of a free and democratic society is the ability to hold fair elections to determine any respective leadership. When citizens cast their vote at the ballot box, they exercise their right and civic duty in formulating all levels of government, from the local school district board to the President of the United States. It is a right Americans often take for granted and one that people living under dictatorships can only dream of. The Rebbe provides a unique Torah perspective on this crucial institution of freedom, its source in Torah and pertinent lessons to be derived from it in *avodas Hashem*.

THE SPIRITUAL SOURCE OF ELECTIONS

In describing the proper way for a congregation to select a *shilach tzibbur* to lead the *tefillas*, the Alter Rebbe instructs¹ that it should be “according to the wishes of the majority.” Throughout history, the governing body of a Jewish community, known as “ז' טובי העיר”—the Seven City Elders, was selected by way of a vote, and their mandate was halachically binding in all communal matters.

When a *beis din* is faced with a halachic dilemma, the *halacha* is determined based on the majority opinion. In the hundreds of recorded discussions between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, Beis Shammai submits

to the opinion of Beis Hillel and Beis Hillel is carefully respectful of Beis Shammai. Hence, the opinion of Beis Shammai is always quoted first.

The above serves as the spiritual source for the process of elections employed in every free society today in choosing leadership.

Naturally, when a multitude of people live together there are varying opinions and philosophies with many candidates vying for power. Ideological differences are stark and debate will at times be sharp.

However, when the polling stations close and the votes are counted, the candidate who receives the most votes is proclaimed the leader of all the citizens. The winner is

careful to acknowledge and respect the opponent, and the opponent encourages everyone to support the newly elected leader.

The election also emphasizes how every citizen's impact on the outcome is equal. A powerful politician and a simple teenager are counted equally. This is similar to the idea expressed by the *machatzis hashekel*. As the Torah clarifies “ועשיר לא ירבה”²—the rich and poor are represented equally in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

“RUNNING” FOR OFFICE

One who wishes to hold elected office, needs to “run” for office. Standing or going slowly will not suffice. America expects its leaders to run for the job.

This is a reflection of the idea that a Yid is expected to constantly grow in Yiddishkeit in ever increasing speed—מעלין בקודש! In addition, a Yid is expected to run to do a mitzvah, expressing the love and passion in *avodas Hashem*.

In honor of the 1st birthday
of our son

Levi Yitzchok שיח'י

Backman

3 Menachem Av 5777

By his parents
Bruce and Rochelle
and Family



HOW SHOULD YOU CAST YOUR VOTE?

The Torah describes the relationship between Hashem and the Yidden as one of mutual choice. Hashem chooses the Yidden as His

THE MOST IMPORTANT OFFICE

During the farbrengen of Chof Menachem-Av 5741, several dignitaries approached the Rebbe between the *sichos* to say *l'chaim*. Among them were New York City Mayor Abraham Beame; Brooklyn Deputy District Attorney Norman Rosen, candidate for Brooklyn District Attorney; and Assemblyman John Dearie, candidate for New York City Comptroller. After Mr. Rosen and Mr. Dearie requested the Rebbe's *bracha* for success in their respective elections, a Yid by the name of Chaim Meir Benzion approached the Rebbe.

CMB: I am not running for any office...

Rebbe: You have a very special office: To spread Yiddishkeit around you.

(Living Torah, Disc 31,
Program 121)

nation: "יבחר לנו את נחלתנו את גאון יעקב"¹—He shall choose our inheritance for us, the pride of Yaakov, whom He loves forever." The Yidden choose Hashem, as the *possuk* states "חלקי ה' אמרה נפשי"²—Hashem is my portion,' says my soul."

The Midrash³ provides a parable for the Yidden choosing Hashem. A king once entered a city, and the citizens started inviting the king's ministers and advisors to stay with them. But one smart man proclaimed, "I will take the king!"

At face value, it seems strange to associate choosing the king with a greater state of intelligence. All the ministers and advisors serve at the pleasure of the king. Basic logic dictates that the king is the best choice! Why does the Midrash give this fellow so much credit?

Chassidus explains that being in the presence of the king necessitates one to be in the ultimate state of *bittul*—absolute submission and self nullification to the king. With ministers and advisors, after the initial awe and reverence wears off, one

can start to manipulate them to his benefit. Even though the effectiveness of the minister is dependent on the king, a human being has a hard time relinquishing his identity and self awareness to be so close to the king and would rather befriend a minister and retain his identity.

Appreciating the value of *bittul* and the willingness to surrender completely to the king is a sign of true intelligence.

During an election, a Yid must choose the king, Hashem. Even though Hashem does not appear on the ballot, one must determine his choice based on which candidate will be most beneficial for Shulchan Aruch, for the advancement of Torah, mitzvos and *klal Yisrael*. Disregarding all other calculations and choosing the king is the surest way to achieve spiritual and material success. **T**

1. Iggeres Hakodesh siman 1. See Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 53:23.
2. Ki Sisa 30:15.
3. Tehillim 47:5.
4. Eichah 3:24.
5. Eichah Rabba 3:22.



READ THE ORIGINAL SICHOS:

Purim 5740, Sichos Kodesh 5740 Volume 2 Page 337

Yud Aleph Nissan 5736, Sichos Kodesh 5736 Volume 2 Page 40

Chof Cheshvan 5735, Sichos Kodesh 5735 Volume 1 Page 150