

Fascinating INSIGHTS

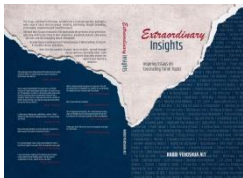
טו' כסלו תשפ"ב

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פרשת וישלח

9th year, edition 411

AN EXCITING NEW BOOK! I am happy to announce the release of the book *Extraordinary Insights*, which is available for purchase and delivery at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09KDW6QVX>. It can also be bought from the author by sending an email to yalt3285@gmail.com. The essays contained in this book, written from a Torah outlook, deal with a wide array of assorted topics that are unique, inspiring, interesting, thought-provoking, encouraging, enlightening, and transformational. The more than 70 topics contained in this book include the greatness of our generation, educating children according to their uniqueness, passionate Judaism, overcoming our fears and the astounding future redemption. The book features *haskamos* from R' Yisroel Reisman, R' Moshe Wolfson, R' Zev Leff, R' Yitzchak Scheiner and others. Over the last number of years these insights have inspired thousands around the world in more than forty countries. This read is for all ages. It has something for everyone, for beginners and scholars, and students and teachers. It makes a great gift for friends, relatives, business associates, and learning partners. *Please spread the word about it.*



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לעילוי נשמת שמואל אביגדור בן יצחק מאיר

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Zionists

On Friday, November 29, 1947, the United Nations debated the issue of partitioning the British mandate for Palestine into two countries—one Arab and one Jewish. R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz (1886-1948) prayed fervently for

partition. He had no radio in his house but that Friday, he borrowed one and set it to the news, leaving it on for Shabbos. He waited with such intense anticipation to hear the outcome of the UN vote that he didn't come to Shalosh Seudos. When he heard the UN's decision to establish a Jewish state, he recited the bracha of הטוב והמטיב.¹ Without losing sight of the antireligious nature of the leaders of Eretz Yisrael, he still saw the creation of the Jewish state as an act of providence and as a cause for rejoicing. At the very least, there would now be one country in the world whose gates would be open to the thousands of Holocaust survivors still languishing in displaced persons camps in Germany and Austria. R' Shraga Feivel once said that even though Eretz Yisrael is controlled by nonreligious and anti-religious Jews, one must still admit the good that Hashem had done in causing the gates to the Land to be open once again to Jewish immigration.

R' Shraga Feivel compared the new state of Israel to a breech birth. When a baby is born normally, head-first, the delivery is easiest and safest for the mother and augurs best for the future development of the infant. In the context of the establishment of Jewish political sovereignty in Eretz Yisrael, a “head-first” birth would have been one in which the great Torah leaders—the real head so the nation—led the way. But even in a breech birth, despite the danger to the infant, one can still hope that it will live and be healthy.²

In 1948, R' Ovadia Yosef was living in Cairo, Egypt. The next year he spoke very optimistically about the possibility that the Jewish people were facing the beginning stages of redemption.³ However, he tempered this enthusiasm by

¹ In 1948, after the Arabs attacked the new Jewish state and soldiers were dying on the battlefield, some Roshei Yeshiva criticized R' Shraga Feivel for having made the bracha. R' Shraga Feivel turned to R' Aharon Kotler who agreed with him that the favorable UN resolution was indeed worthy of a bracha.

² In the 1930s and 40s, there was virtually not an event or simcha in the religious Jewish world that didn't begin with the playing of the Zionist's national anthem, Hatikvah. During its playing, R' Shraga Feivel would sit fixed in his place. He explained, “their hope (tikva means hope) is not ours because it doesn't include the Beis Hamikdash or the coming of Moshiach.”

³ Meor Yisrael, Drushim. R' Ovadia Yosef responded to questions posed by sefardic chief rabbis, heads of batei dinim all over Israel and the globe, to chassidim, kabbalists and Lithuanian rabbis. He answered questions from politicians, his own teachers and rabbis, his students and sons. He had a good relationship with Chassidic rabbis and quotes Likutei Moharan (see for example Chazon Ovadia, Yom Tov, p. 362), the Klausenberger Rebbe (Yabia Omer 9, Orach Chaim, 105), various Lubavitcher Rebbes (Yabia Omer 7, Yoreh Deah 20 and Yabia Omer 10, Even Ha'ezer 25), the Kotzker Rebbe (Shu"t Chazon Ovadia, volume 2, p. 531) and the Satmar Rebbe (Yabia Omer 10, Even Ha'ezer 25). He sent the Lubavitcher Rebbe a letter on his 80th birthday, and another commending the Rambam learning program that the Rebbe instituted. He described a meeting with the Tchebiner Rav as “meeting the Divine Presence” (Yechave Daas volume 3, p. 10, footnote). He exchanged letters with the great R' Menashe Klein, author of Mishna Halachos, who called him “rabbi of rabbis, gaon of gaonim” (Chazon Ovadia, Pesach, volume 2, p. 53). Some of R' Ovadia Yosef's international correspondence are with... the Chevra Kadisha of Mexico City (Yabia Omer 7, Yoreh Deah 30), the head of the Chevra Kadisha of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Yabia Omer 7, Yoreh Deah 32), a rav and posek in Tehran, Iran (Yabia Omer 7, Orach Chaim 25), an av beis din of Glasgow, Scotland (Yabia Omer 7, Yoreh Deah 33), the chief rabbi of Argentina (Yabia Omer 7, Yoreh Deah 35), a rav and av beis din of Mexico City (Yabia Omer 7, Yoreh Deah 1), the chief shochet of Mexico City (Yabia Omer, 7, Yoreh Deah 2), the chief rabbi of Morocco (Yabia Omer 7, Yoreh Deah 4), an av beis din of Marseille, France (Yabia Omer 7, Yoreh Deah 9), the chief rabbi and av beis din of Zurich, Switzerland (Yabia Omer 7, Even Ha'ezer

clarifying that this is not actually the beginning of the redemption but a foreshadowing, a *pekida* of the coming redemption.⁴ As in the exit from Egypt, the way was yet long between the *pekida* and the redemption itself. He warned against the aggressive secularism that was rampant in Eretz Yisrael. He witnessed religious Jews turn their backs on their traditions once they reached Israel. In such cases R' Ovadia insisted that it would be better for them to have remained in their home countries. A response written in 1948 to a Jew in Iraq posits that it definitely is a mitzva to move to Israel nowadays, as it is full of yeshivos and Torah.⁵ Yet he advised that if someone was unsure of which path he would take once he arrived in Israel, better to remain a religious Jew in the diaspora.⁶

Hearing R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz's criticisms of Zionism, someone once said, "I too hate the Zionists. They should be cursed," R' Shraga Feivel said, "G-d forbid. To the contrary, they should be blessed, along with all those who are building up our Holy Land. I only pray that they observe mitzvos but G-d forbid to curse or hate them. They are *tinokos she'nishbu*" (people who never received a Jewish education and so were led astray).

R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was once asked by Chaim Weitzman (1874-1952), president of the Zionist Organization and later as the first president of Israel, how a tzadik could hate the Zionists who are his fellow Jews? R' Yosef Chaim answered, "I will prove that I love the Zionists. For a loved one, a person wishes only the best. To me Torah and mitzvos are what's most precious in the world, and I wish these for every Zionist. I object only to their anti-Torah actions."

In another episode, upon hearing complaints from people that the early Zionists settlers were irreligious and not observing mitzvos, R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932) replied "I hope the merit of their devotion to the Land will help them, and they will repent and eventually return fully to Torah and faith in Hashem."⁷

4 and Yabia Omer, Even Ha'ezer 8), an av beis din of London (Yabia Omer 7, Even Ha'ezer 7), an av beis din of Leon, France (Yabia Omer 7, Even Ha'ezer 16), the chief rabbi and rosh av beis din of Vienna, Austria (Yabia Omer 8, Orach Chaim 16), a rav in Los Angeles (Yabia Omer 8, Orach Chaim 28), an av beis din of Johannesburg, South Africa (Yabia Omer 8, Even Ha'ezer 7), a rav in Brooklyn, New York (Yabia Omer 9, Orach Chaim 61), the rav of Madrid, Spain (Yabia Omer 9, Yoreh Deah 5), "Rabbis of America" (Yabia Omer 10, Even Ha'ezer 18) and the assistant head of the Jewish community in Singapore (Chazon Ovadia, Availus, volume 3, p 245).

⁴ When the state of Israel was founded, a letter from Friday, the 20th of Teves לה' על שוכינו ברוב רהמי וחסדיו לראות את הניצנים תש"ט 1948 begins "הראשונים של האתחלת דגאולה עם הקמתה של מדינת ישראל" ("We thank Hashem that we merited in his abundant mercy and kindness to see, the beginning of the redemption, with the establishment of the state of Israel"). This letter has the name of around 200 rabbanim including R' Tzvi Pesach Frank, R' Yechezkel Sarna, R' Zalman Sorotskin, R' Yechiel Michel Tucazinsky and Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

⁵ Meor Yisrael, volume 1, p. 99.

⁶ In 1977, R' Ovadia Yosef was asked whether the time has come to change the formula of the tefila of Nachem that is recited on Tisha B'av, especially that which we say about Yerushalayim, העיר האבלה והחרבה, the city that is mournful, that is ruined, that is scorned and that is desolate? It seems incongruent with the way Yerushalayim is today, as it is developed and built up with many thousands of Jews? People come from all over the world to the Kosel (Yechave Daas, volume 1, siman 43). In response, R' Ovadia described the low spiritual state of Yerushalayim today, touching on the moral and ethical depravity on the streets of Yerushalayim. Although he marked Yom Yerushalayim with emotional speeches and tearful gratitude for the return of the old city, it was by no means time to trade in the prayer for a truly rebuilt Yerushalayim.

⁷ The Netziv (1816-1893) declares that it is Hashem's will that Eretz Yisrael be settled over time by Jews of all kinds—religious and non-religious, "from the far reaches of the earth." He writes, "we must

In a newspaper interview where the shas party was accused of being anti-Zionist, R' Ovadia Yosef responded: "What is anti-Zionist? It is a lie. It is a term which they concocted themselves. I served for ten years as a chief rabbi—a key public position in the state of Israel. In what way are we not Zionists? We pray for Zion, for Yerushalayim and its inhabitants, for Israel, and the rabbis and their students. What is Zionist? By our understanding a Zionist is a person who loves Zion and practices the commandments of settling the land. Whenever I am overseas, I encourage Aliyah. In what way are they more Zionists than we?"⁸

Bungled Blessing

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach⁹ says that one does not recite a bracha if he consumes that which the doctors forbade him to since it will cause him harm. This is because his act of consumption violates the Torah's command to maintain one's physical wellbeing.

R' Nissim Karelitz¹⁰ ruled that one who is not allowed to eat something for health reasons (such as sugar) and eats it anyway still says a bracha, since ultimately he is deriving pleasure from that food when he eats it. However, if it irritates him when he eats it, then he should not say a bracha.

R' Eliyashiv¹¹ said that even if one ate something he is not allowed to eat for health reasons, he should still say the bracha before eating it (bracha rishona), but he might be exempt from reciting the bracha after eating it, since one says a bracha rishona even on a crumb and such a small amount presumably does not undermine his health. In spite of this, R' Eliyashiv¹² ruled that even in such a case, one should still say a bracha achrona since eating just a *kzayis* wouldn't endanger him (and the obligation to recite a bracha achrona already comes from eating just the first *kzayis*).

What should a person do if he recited a bracha over food in the morning and then realized that he had not yet davened shacharis (and therefore he is forbidden to eat due to the prohibition against eating before shacharis)? R' Ovadia Yosef writes that he should taste the food so that his bracha will not have been recited in vain.¹³

What should a person do if he recited a bracha over milk or dairy food within six hours of eating meat? Many poskim rule that he should take a sip of the milk or a bite of the food so that his bracha will not have been recited in vain. The rationale for this ruling is that the prohibition against consuming milk within six hours of eating meat is less severe than the prohibition of reciting a bracha in vain.

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Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of three books including the recently released *Extraordinary Insights*, in addition to being the host of *The Fascinating Insights Podcast*. His writings, some of which have been translated into Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:21] where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

awaken to the voice of the will of Hashem...in every place in the world where our brothers—Jews of every kind—are to be found...to do everything within their power...to make Aliyah, to go up and settle the land and build it up" (Ha'Netziv Mi'Volozhin B'ma'aracha L'maan Yishuv Eretz Yisrael U'kedusha, volume 11, part 1).

⁸ Regarding protests against Zionists and the secular Israeli government, the Brisker Rav said that he himself is a Zionist. In Russia, Lithuania, Hungary, and similar countries no Jew would protest like that because he would then be killed. Why is it done in Israel? Because it's a Jewish country and government and thus they can do what they want, knowing that they won't be killed.

⁹ Halichos Shlomo, Seder Leil Pesach, p. 225.

¹⁰ Chut Shani, Brachos, p. 184.

¹¹ Chashukai Chemed, Brachos, p. 225. Ashrei Ha'ish 1, 36:15.

¹² Shiurai Maran Hagaon R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Brachos, p. 378.

¹³ Yabia Omer, volume 10, Orach Chaim 6.