Class # 12 - **Parshat Vayechi: Is mocking Trump a religious duty?**

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

Rabbi Pinny Rosenthal - prepared collaboratively with Rabbi Yoni Sacks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Le5kBwN6Vsg>

1. How does Stephen Colbert effectively mock Donald Trump?
2. What is Stephen Colbert position of Donald Trump as President?
3. What are the joys of mocking a President or any leader?
4. Does the Torah endorse “Freedom of Speech”?
5. What is the limitations of Colbert’s mocking of the President?
6. What is the difference between political satire and mocking?

**Satire informs during times of crisis**

Just as only the jester can tell the King the truth, satire performs a vital function in democratic society by using humor to broach taboo subjects, especially in times of crisis, according to a book by Penn State researchers.

"Robust satire is often a sign of crisis and the ability to share and consume it is a sign of a free society," said [Sophia McClennen](https://www.sia.psu.edu/faculty/mcclennen), professor of i[nternational affairs](https://www.sia.psu.edu/) and [comparative literature](http://complit.la.psu.edu/) and director of Penn State's [Center for Global Studies](http://cgs.psu.edu/). "We see satire emerge when political discourse is in crisis and when it becomes important to use satirical comedy to put political pressure on misinformation, folly and the abuse of power."..

 **Parshat Vayechi – Yaakov’s Last days**

48:1 And it came to pass after these things, that one said to Joseph: 'Behold, your father is sick.' And he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. (2) And one told Jacob, and said: 'Behold, your son Joseph comes to you.' And Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

**Rashi:**

**AND ISRAEL STRENGTHENED HIMSELF** – he said, "Although he is my son, he is a king, and I will do honour to him" (Midrash Tanchuma, Bo 6). From this we may infer that we must show honour to a person of royal rank (Cf. Menachot 98a). Similarly, Moses showed honour to the king when he said, (Exodus 11:8) "And all these, thy servants, shall come down to me" (which was only a polite way of saying. "Thou, thyself, wilt be forced to come down to me"); so, too, did Elijah: (1 Kings 18:46) "and he girded up his loins [and ran before Ahab] etc." (Midrash Tanchuma, Bo 7)

6) Is Yaakov bowing to Yosef a function of his new Egyptian identity or his Jewishness?

 7) Why is Yaakov the Navi bowing to his son Yosef the ruler? Should not honoring your parent and your teacher trump this rule?

**The Rule of Law – Rambam, Book of Mitzvot, 176**

The 176th *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to appoint judges to implement the Torah's commands; to force those who have turned away from the path of truth to return to it; to command the performance of good and the avoidance of bad; and to carry out the punishment of transgressors, so that the positive commandments of the Torah and their prohibitions should not be dependent on the desire of every individual.

**Laws of Kings, 1:3**

As an initial and preferred option, a king may be appointed only by a court of 70 elders, together with a prophet, as Joshua was appointed by Moses and his court, and as Saul and David, were appointed by Samuel of Ramah and his court.

**Rambam - Laws of the Kings and their Wars - Ch. 2 - Law 1 & 5**

The king must be treated with great honor. We must implant awe and fear of him in the hearts of all men. The command [Deuteronomy 17:15](http://www.chabad.org/9981#v15): 'Appoint a king' implies the obligation to be in awe of him.

We may not ride on his horse, nor sit on his throne, use his scepter, wear his crown, or use any of his utensils. When he dies, they should all be burned before his coffin….

**Halacha 5** - ….He sits on his throne in his palace and has a crown placed on his head.When he desires, the nation must present themselves before him. They should stand before him and prostrate themselves to the ground.

 Even a prophet must stand before the king and prostrate himself on the ground, as [I Kings 1:23](http://www.chabad.org/15885#v23) states: 'Behold, Nathan, the prophet came before the king and prostrated himself before the king.'

However, a High Priest need not come before the king unless he the High Priest desires to do so. The High Priest need not stand before the king. Rather, the king stands before the High Priest, as [Numbers 27:21](http://www.chabad.org/9955#v21) states: 'And he shall stand before Elazar, the priest.'

Nevertheless, it is a mitzvah for the High Priest to honor the king by having him seated and standing in his presence when he visits him. The king should only stand before him when he consults the *Urim* and *Tumim*.

Similarly, it is a mitzvah for the king to honor students of Torah when they enter his presence. He should stand before the *Sanhedrin* and the Sages of Israel and seat them at his side.

Jehosephat, King of Judah would follow this practice. Whenever even a student of a Torah scholar would come to him, he would rise from his throne and kiss him and address him as 'My teacher and master.'

When does the above apply?

When the king is alone in his palace. Then, in private, before his servants, he should behave in this fashion. However, in public, before the people at large, he should not conduct himself in this manner. He should not stand before anyone. He should not speak gently and should address a person using his name alone in order that the awe of him will be implanted in everyone's hearts.

7) How does the King’s private life and public life balance two competing values?

8) Does the Torah endorse criticism of its leaders?