



Taste of Chavruta — 5772 — Authority

## KEY QUESTIONS:

- *What sorts of authority are there in ancient and modern Judaism? What about in modern society?*
  - *What is the source of these authorities?*
- *How do we deal with conflicts between Jewish and secular authorities?*
- *How do we reconcile subservience to earthly authorities with acknowledging that God's authority is ultimate?*

## 2. Who rules over Me?

### Babylonian Talmud, *Mo'ed Katan* 16b

*The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said concerning me: "He who rules men justly, he who rules in awe of God..."* (2 Samuel 23:3). What does this mean? Rabbi Abbahu said: 'This means, *The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said, "I rule over man; who rules over Me? The just. For I ordain a decree [of punishment], and he annuls it [by his just life or by his intercessory prayers]."*'

Translation: C. G. Montefiore

תלמוד בבלי, מועד קטן, ט"ז ע"ב  
אמר אלהי ישראל לי דבר צור ישראל  
(שמואל ב' כ"ג:ג) "מושל באדם צדיק  
מושל יראת אלהים." מאי קאמר? אמר  
רבי אבהו, 'הכי קאמר: אמר אלהי  
ישראל: לי דבר צור ישראל, "אני מושל  
באדם, מי מושל בי צדיק. שאני גוזר  
גזרה ומבטלה."

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Le principe de toute souveraineté reside essentiellement dans la nation; nul corps, nul individu ne peut exercer d'autorité qui n'en émane expressément.

The principle of all sovereignty dwells essentially in the Nation; no body, no individual may exercise authority which does not specifically emanate from it.

### *Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen), Article III*

(France, 1789)

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a0/Declaration\\_of\\_Human\\_Rights.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a0/Declaration_of_Human_Rights.jpg)

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### Points to consider

How can God have ultimate authority and yet be ruled over by the deeds of the righteous? Do you agree with Rabbi Abbahu's opinion?

The quotation from the book of Samuel is part of David's last speech to his people. 'He who rules men justly, he who rules in awe of God is like the light of morning at sunrise, a morning without clouds.' What is the significance of the Rabbi's change of context?