



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?*

6. Kingly authority

1 Samuel 8:1-9

¹So it was, when Samuel was old, he set up his sons as judges over Israel. ²The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of the second Abijah; they were judges in Be'er Sheba. ³But his sons did not follow in his ways and and they went after lucre, took bribes, and perverted justice. ⁴So all the elders of Israel came to Samuel at Ramah and gathered against him. ⁵They said to him: 'Look here, you have grown old and your sons do not follow in your ways. Now, institute for us a king to judge us like all the [other] nations!' ⁶This seemed bad to Samuel, when they said 'Give us a king to judge us!' So Samuel prayed to the Lord.

⁷The Lord said to Samuel: 'Listen to the voice of the people in all that they have said to you. For it is not you that they have rejected – it is Me that they have rejected, so that I shouldn't be a King over them. ⁸In all the works that they have done – from the day that I raised them out of Egypt until this very day – they have forsaken Me and served other gods, just as they are doing also for you. ⁹So now, listen to their voice, but seriously warn them and relate to them the judgement of the king that will rule over them.'

Translation: JPS, 1999

שמואל א' ח':א'-ט'

¹וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר זָקֵן שְׁמוּאֵל וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת־בָּנָיו שְׁפָטִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: ²וַיְהִי שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ הַבְּכוֹר יוֹאֵל וְשֵׁם מְשֻׁנְהוֹ אַבְיָה שְׁפָטִים בְּבֵּאֵר שֶׁבַע: ³וְלֹא־הִלְכוּ בְּנָיו בְּדַרְכּוֹ וַיִּטּוּ אַחֲרֵי הַבָּצַע וַיִּקְחוּ־שֹׁחַד וַיִּטּוּ מִשְׁפָּט: ⁴וַיִּתְקַבְּצוּ כָּל זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־שְׁמוּאֵל הַרְמַתָּה: ⁵וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אַתָּה זָקֵן וּבְנֶיךָ לֹא הִלְכוּ בְּדַרְכֶיךָ עֲתָה שְׂיִמְהֵלְנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטֵנוּ כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם: ⁶וַיִּרַע הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינָיו שְׁמוּאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ תְּנֵה־לָּנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטֵנוּ וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל־יְיָ:

⁷וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ אֶל־שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל הָעָם לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֶיךָ: כִּי לֹא אֶתְךָ מָאָסוּ כִּי־אֲתִי מָאָסוּ מִמֶּלֶךְ עָלֵיהֶם: ⁸כְּכָל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ מִיּוֹם הָעֲלִיתִי אוֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וַיַּעֲזְבוּנִי וַיַּעֲבְדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים כִּן הָמָּה עֹשִׂים גַּם־לָּךְ: ⁹וְעַתָּה שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלָם אַךְ כִּי־הָעֵד תְּעִיד בָּהֶם וְהַגַּדְתָּ לָּהֶם מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵיהֶם:

'Well this *is* grand!' said Alice. 'I never expected to be a Queen so soon – and I'll tell you what it is, your Majesty,' she went on in a severe tone (she was always rather fond of scolding herself), 'it'll never do for you to be lolling about on the grass like that! You have to be dignified, you know!'

Lewis Carroll (1832-1898), *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871)

Ned: Stannis is a commander. He's lead many to war, twice. He destroyed the Greyjoy fleet.

Renly: Yes, he's a good soldier. Everyone knows that. So was Robert. Tell me something. Do you still believe good soldiers make good kings?

Game of Thrones, Episode 7 'You Win or You Die' (2011)



6. Kingly authority

Points to consider

In ancient Israel, where does the authority of a king come from? How does that compare to other kings?

Is there inherent irony in the majority choosing a dictator?

What is it about having a king that so bothers Samuel? And is it worse than his corrupt sons?