

# HAFTORAH COMMENTARY PARSHAS KORACH

*by Rabbi Dovid Siegel*

*Shmuel 1 11:14*

This week's haftorah shares with us a significant perspective about the Jewish government in Eretz Yisroel. The Jewish people had recently approached the prophet Shmuel and requested the appointment of a king over them. The prophet acquiesced to their request and transferred his mantle of leadership to the most worthy candidate in all of Israel, Shaul. Shmuel then proceeded to express to the Jewish people strong words of disturbance over the request. He reviewed with them his personal years of service as their judge and prophet and challenged them to find any fault in his faithful fulfillment of his mission as their leader. After their attesting to his perfect qualities of leadership Shmuel then reviewed with them all of Hashem's favors in always appointing the most capable and appropriate leadership for them. Shmuel said "And now here is the king which you chose and requested; behold Hashem has given you a king. If you revere Hashem, serve Him and follow His voice and you don't rebel against His words you and your king will merit to follow after Hashem. And if you don't adhere..."(12:14). The Malbim understands these passages to mean that if the Jewish people closely follow the path of Torah, Hashem, in effect, will be their leader. But if they don't follow His path closely they will not merit Hashem's guidance and leadership and Hashem will severely punish them for their wrongdoing.

The prophet continued and stated, "Is today not the harvest season? I'll call upon Hashem and He will bring heavy rain. You should see and know the great evil you have done requesting a king for yourself." (12:17) Shmuel admonished the Jewish people for their basic request for a king and regarded it a sinful act. Why would a request like this be considered so wrong? After all, doesn't the Torah provide for this system and dedicate a full section in Parshas Shoftim to the rules and regulations of a Jewish commonwealth? The Malbim explains that in the proper time the notion of a kingdom is certainly acceptable and appropriate. However, during the lifetime of Shmuel Hanavi this request was considered a rejection of Shmuel and the Torah he represented. Shmuel had been faithfully serving his people and judging them with all the fairness the Torah required of him. In Shmuel's eyes, the Jewish people's request indicated a rejection of the perfect system of the Torah and a desire to establish their own control over the land. The Malbim deduces this from the pointed words in their initial request, "Now bestow upon us a king to judge us like all the nations." (8:5) He explains that the Jewish people desired to establish their own judicial system whereby they could have total control of the development of their country. They yearned to be like all other nations whose control over their destiny was in their own hands. They no longer appreciated subjugating

themselves to the dictates of the Torah and following the secret revelations of Hashem to His prophets.

The Malbim concludes that in truth timing was the key factor in this request. Had they waited until the passing of their faithful prophet and judge, Shmuel, the request for a king would have been in line. With the passing of the last of their shoftim a sincere need for direction and leadership would have arisen and the request for a king would have been forthcoming. However, now while remaining under the devoted leadership of Shmuel such a request was inappropriate and sinful. It reflected a new direction for the Jewish people and a sincere interest to be released from the tight control of Hashem. Shmuel responded by asking Hashem for a demonstration of fierce thunderstorms. During the summer months it was customary to dry the fruits of the land on the open fields. The appearance of rain during that season was certainly untimely and was not looked upon favorably. Although rain in general is viewed as a great blessing and necessity, during the wrong times it is considered a sign of rejection and displeasure (see Tractate Sukkah 28b). Shmuel showed them that their request for a king, like rain, was a sign of rejection when not presented in the proper time.

The prophet added in his admonition, "And if you don't adhere to the voice of Hashem but rebel against Him the hand of Hashem will be upon you and your ancestors." Our Chazal (Yevomos 63b) explain this peculiar notion of Hashem's hand plaguing our ancestors. They profoundly state, "Through the sin of the living the deceased are desecrated." The sinfulness of an inappropriate government in Eretz Yisroel is responded to with such severity that it can even provoke the desecration of the deceased. The Mahral (Chidushei Agados ad loc.) explains the association between the desecration of the deceased and the establishment of an improper government in Eretz Yisroel. He explains that the desecration of the deceased is viewed as total disorder. After someone parts from this world he is entitled to rest in peace without disturbance and the desecration of his remains is a violation of his basic human rights. In this same vein it is expected and only proper that the governing principles of Hashem's land should be established by Hashem. Any violation of this and in particular the establishment of an independent control over the land divorced from Hashem is also viewed as total disorder. The Maharal concludes that in Eretz Yisroel total disorder of the deceased comes as a natural result from the total disorder demonstrated by the living.

In these recent weeks we have merited a reversal in the governmental structure in Israel. Let it be the will of Hashem that His Torah be fully respected in His land, the Land of Israel, and that all disorders amongst the deceased and the living be restored to their proper order.

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