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The Rise of Sha’ul
First Samuel 8:1 to 12:25



Many of the nations surrounding **Isra’el** considered **their** kings to be gods, whether by divine adoption or through self-deification **(Isaiah 14:4** and **13-14; Ezeki’el 28:2, 6,** and **9)**. In **Isra’el** such a claim was unthinkable since **the king** possessed neither deity nor absolute authority **(Second Kings 5:7)**, but the temptation and danger was always present. To be sure, **Isra’el’s king** was to exercise “political and military power, but **he** stood under the authority and judgment of **Ha’Shem**. Finally, discussion of monarchy among **God’s people** must take into account the will of **ADONAI**.

It was not **God’s** will for **Isra’el** to have **a king** in the way **they** were asking for it. Still, God’s resulting principle, what **His** “permissive will” came to be, was to direct **Samuel** to anoint **Sha’ul** as **king** out of the tribe of **Benjamin**. Three important distinctions need to be observed. First, **God relented** and agreed to give **the people** a king only because **they** had changed. This can also be seen in the book of **Jonah. Ha’Shem** had threatened destruction on **the Ninevites,** but **when God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He relented** with compassion **and did not bring on them the destruction He had threatened** because **they** had changed **(Jonah 3:10).** Secondly, **God** performed the very act that **the people** wanted; but, while **their** motive was wrong and in that act **they** became guilty, **God’s** motive was right and in the very same act **He**

did not assume any of the guilt. Thirdly, **ADONAI** was grieved over **their** apostasy **(8:7)**, but **their** act of defiance resulted in **His** divine love. In spite of **their** wanting **a king** despite already having **a King**, **YHVH** delivered **them** several times **(First Samuel 9:16, 10:9** and **24, 11:13)**. Thus, **the people’s** desire for **a king** did not surprise **God**, for **Sha’ul** had been a part of **God’s** plan from the very beginning, and **He** used the rebellion of **the people** to praise **Him (Psalm 76:10)**.

Clearly **Chapters 8** to **12** constitute a literary unit, for **they** are immediately preceded by the story of the last **judge** (**to see link click Bn – Repentance and recommitment at Mitzpah: All the Days of Samuel**), and immediately followed by the beginning of the rise of the monarchy (see **Bq – Give Us a King**). The divisions of the whole unit alternates between negative and positive attitudes toward the monarchy: **8:1-22** (negative), **9:1** to **10:16** (positive), **10:17-27** (negative), **11:1-11** (positive), and **11:12** to **12:25** (negative).[181]