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Give Us a King!

First Samuel 8: 1-9

Give us a king DIG: How should we understand the elders' demand? Why were they not satisfied with Judges? What part did Samuel's sons play in Isra'el's desire for a king? What part was played by their envy of the surrounding nations? Why was Samuel disappointed by the elders' request for a king? How would a monarchy change the lives of the Israelites? What were they gaining? What were they losing?

REFLECT: In your opinion, why did Samuel repeat the same mistake 'Eli had made by appointing his disobedient sons to leadership? What can we learn from their mistakes? How did Samuel respond to the elders' request for a king? How do you respond in similar situations? Are you content to live as God directs, or do you tend to want things your own way? What areas of your life might God want you to submit to Him?

Now give us a king to judge us like all the nations.

Samuel's sons (8:1-3): When Samuel grew old, probably somewhere between 65 and 70 years old, he appointed his sons as judges over Isra'el. His firstborn was named Joel, meaning *ADONAI is God*, while his second son was named Abijah, meaning *ADONAI is my father*. They were judges at Beersheba, in the southern part of the country, so that Samuel would judge from Ramah in the northern part of the country (8:1-2). This delegation was an unusual thing to do. For approximately 350 years, **ADONAI Himself** had selected people to serve as His judges, and they did not choose their successors. We will discover, however, that Samuel's weak spot was indulging his own sons - a failing he shared with 'Eli (to see link click [At](#) - 'Eli's Ineffective Rebuke of His Sons), with similar results.

So Samuel's sons had godly names, given by a godly father, but they did not follow his godly ways. His sons did not follow his way of life, nor imitate the righteousness of their father (8:3a). This is an interesting statement. One would

expect that **Samuel's sons** did not walk in **the LORD's** ways, rather than **Samuel's ways**. It might possibly suggest that **Samuel**, like **'Eli**, had failed to fully instruct **his sons in the ways of the LORD**. It is important to live a life that demonstrates godliness to one's children, but that lifestyle must also be accompanied with clear instruction in **God's Word**. An example without instruction will lead the children to imitate the parent, but we are called to imitate **Messiah (Romans 8:29)**.

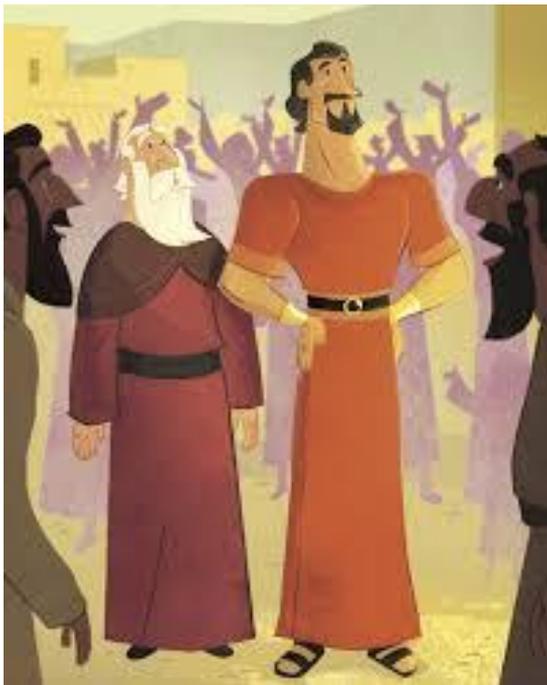
They became morally corrupt and **were greedy for money (8:3b)**. While **judges** were to be incorruptible (**Exodus 23:8** and **Deuteronomy 16:19**), and **Samuel himself** could claim that **he** was blameless in that regard (**12:3-5**), **his two sons** were more interested in lining their own pockets than in maintaining justice. Because of their geographical distance from **Samuel (Beersheba** is about fifty-seven miles south-southwest of **Ramah**), it absolved **him** from any direct complicity in **their** evil deeds. Ironically, this was the third set of **brothers** from **the tribe of Levi** that failed to live up to **their** calling as **priests**. The first set was **Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Bh - The Death of Nadab and Abihu**), the second set was **Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of 'Eli** (see **Ar - 'Eli's Wicked Sons**), and the third set was **Joel and Abijah, the sons of Samuel**. This points to the fact that **the priesthood of Isra'el** cannot save **the nation**. It is only through **the priesthood of Yeshua Messiah** that **Isra'el** can be saved (see the commentary on **Hebrews Au - The Superiority of the Messiah to the Levitical Priesthood**).¹⁸⁴

Although, unlike **'Eli**, while **Samuel** was faithful to **ADONAI**, **his two sons perverted justice by taking bribes (8:3c)**. **Their** actions repudiated **their** names. **'Eli's** sons were members of the priesthood, while **Samuel's sons** were **judges**, or political leaders. While it is true that **Samuel's sons** were in the southern part of the nation, while **Samuel** ministered in the north, and perhaps **he** was away from home too much on **his circuit** ministry to other **cities (7:16)**. However, since **the elders** knew about the **bribes his sons** took, surely **their father** must have also known.¹⁸⁶

The elders' request for a king (8:4-6a): All the elders of **Isra'el** were unanimous, as a result of the attack by **Nahash, king of the Ammonites (12:12)**, **they gathered themselves together, approached Samuel in Ramah and said to him, "Look, you have grown old, and your sons are not following your ways" (8:4-5a)**. **They** were afraid, and instead of relying on **God** to defend **them** as **Hezekiah** had done (see the commentary on **Isaiah Gu - Hezekiah Spread the Letter Before the LORD**), **they** decided that **a king** would be better

to lead **the Israelites** into battle. **Samuel** experienced what **Moses, the prophets**, and even **Yeshua** experienced. **“We do not want this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14).**¹⁸⁷

How should we understand **the elders’** demand? In his commentary on **1 Samuel**, Bill Arnold describes it as sinful in its motives, since their request represented a rebellion against the rule of **ADONAI**; selfish in its timing, since **they** demanded **God’s** provision at the time of their own choosing; and cowardly in its spirit, since they sought a system that would remove the need for faith in **YHVH**.¹⁸⁸ The alternative to **their** demand was a true seeking after **God**, including **their** willingness to walk in **his** ways. But as before, it seemed easier to seek a new gimmick, a new device, rather than the repentance needed to be restored to **the Lord**.¹⁸⁹



The elders’ request for a king (8:4-6a): All the elders of Isra’el were unanimous, **they gathered themselves together, approached Samuel in Ramah and said to him, “Look, you have grown old, and your sons are not following your ways” (8:4-5a).** Because of **Samuel’s** age, and because **they** wanted nothing to do with **his** rebellious **sons**, **the elders** in **their** collective **human** wisdom decided that **a king** would best suit **their** needs. **Samuel** experienced what **Moses, the prophets**, and even **Yeshua** experienced. **“We do**

not want this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14).¹⁹⁰

Now give us a king to judge us like all the other nations. Samuel was not pleased to hear them say: Give us a king to judge us (8:5b-6a). When **the elders** said that, **they** were forgetting that **Isra’el’s** strength was to be *unlike all the other nations*. **The Israelites** were **God’s** covenant **people** (see **Deuteronomy Ah - Treaty of the Great King**), and **He** was **their King**. The Sh’khinah glory dwelt in **their** midst and the Torah was **their** wisdom. But **the elders** were concerned about national security and protection from the enemies around **them**. **The Philistines** were still a powerful nation, and **the Ammonites** were also a threat (**12:12**). **Isra’el** had no standing army and no **king** to lead it. The elders forgot that it was **the LORD** who was **Isra’el’s King** and who gave **her** army the victories.¹⁹¹

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ADONAI’s answer to Samuel (8:6b-9): Samuel was disappointed, at least in part, because **he** felt **the people** were rejecting **him**. **He** had spent **his** whole life serving **God’s people**, first as a boy in the Tabernacle, and then later as the nation’s **judge** and **God’s prophet**. **He** may also have sensed the greater danger behind the request for **a king; the people** wanted a human leader they could see rather than **YHVH** whom **they** could not see.

Nevertheless, **Samuel prayed to ADONAI (8:6b)**. Once again, we get a glimpse into the godly character of this **man**. When **the people** and circumstances went against **him**, **he** did not lash out or retaliate, but turned to **God** for help. **Samuel** demonstrated the attitude **God** desires in all **His** children: trust in **Him** to fight our battles and to guide us.¹⁹⁴

And ADONAI told him, “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected as their King, but Me. As they have done from

the day I brought them out of Egypt until today, by abandoning Me and serving other gods” (8:7-8). It wasn’t Isra’el’s request for a king that was their greatest sin because God had already promised them one (see Deuteronomy **Dh - The King**), it was their insisting that Ha’Shem give them a king immediately. The LORD had a king in mind for them, David son of Jesse, but the time wasn’t right for him to appear. So, YHVH gave them their request by appointing Sha’ul to be their king, and He used Sha’ul to discipline the nation and prepare them for David, the man of His choice. The fact that Sha’ul was from the tribe of Benjamin and not from Judah is evidence enough that he was never expected to establish a dynasty in Isra’el. **So in My anger I gave you a king, and in My wrath I took him away (Hosea 13:11).**¹⁹⁵

So do what they say, but give them a sober warning so that they cannot claim ignorance, **telling them of the judgment of the king who will reign over them (8:9)**. This is a sobering principle: be careful what you ask for because you may get it! ADONAI will eventually give us the things we continually clamor for, even if those things prove harmful to us. He doesn’t do this out of a vindictive spirit, for He will warn us and attempt to steer us in a course that will bring blessing and godly character. However, if we persist in demanding our own way, we run the terrible risk that the Lord will grant us what we stubbornly demanded.¹⁹⁶

Dear Heavenly Father, praise You for being such a wonderful Father to care so wisely and tenderly for me. You give me all that I need! Time seems to fly by while eternity will last forever! It is so much wiser to ask You to guide me and to give me what You know is best for me, than to beg You to give me what might not be good for me. Others may have things that may look nice for a short time, but You can always be trusted to give what is wisest for all eternity. The things of this world will only break, perish and fade away; but a relationship of love with You will last forever! It is absolutely fantastic that You have chosen to indwell me with Your love. And in return, I love You and want to please You so much. You give such a wonderful gift to those who have a loving relationship with You. You will bring me to Your heavenly home for all eternity! Praise you that in Your heavenly home, there will be no crying, dying, sadness nor pain. He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4). Thank you for being such a wonderful heavenly Father who always cares for me and gives me what is best for me! In Messiah Yeshua’s holy



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Name and Power of **His** Resurrection. Amen