

Concerns Regarding the Monarchy

Introduction

Contradictory Attitudes toward Kingship

Does Tanakh view the monarchy as a positive or negative institution? On one hand, already in the Patriarchal period, Hashem promises Avraham and Yaakov that "kings will emerge" from their descendants.¹ In Devarim 17, too, the Torah instructs, "שִׁוּם תִּשִּׁים עֲלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ", commanding (or at least permitting) them to anoint a king.² Sefer Shofetim similarly ends with a call for kingship as it criticizes the prevailing anarchy:³

Yet, when the nation requests a monarch in Shemuel I 8, they encounter resistance:

(ו) וַיֵּרַע הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי שְׁמוּאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ תְּנֵה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטֵנוּ וַיִּתְּפִל שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל יְיָ. (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל הָעָם לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֶיךָ כִּי לֹא אֶתָּד מֵאֲסוּ כִּי אֲתִי מֵאֲסוּ מִמֶּלֶךְ עֲלֵיהֶם.

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אַתָּה זָקֵן וּבְנֶיךָ לֹא הִלְכוּ בְּדַרְכֶּיךָ עֲתָה שִׁימָה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטֵנוּ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם.

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(6) But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said: 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. (7) And the Lord said unto Samuel: 'Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them.'

How are we to understand these contradictory attitudes towards kingship? Why do Hashem and Shemuel find the people's request for a king so problematic?

King as Warrior or Judge?

What did the nation expect of their king? Were they looking for him to fill an administrative, judicial, or military role? They tell Shemuel:

(ה) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אַתָּה זָקֵן וּבְנֶיךָ לֹא הִלְכוּ בְּדַרְכֶּיךָ עֲתָה שִׁימָה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטֵנוּ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם.

(5) And they said unto him: 'Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.'

The explicit mention of judging ("לְשָׁפֵטוֹ") and the fact that the request is connected to criticism of the corrupt practices of Shemuel's sons suggests that the people saw the judicial role of the king as primary. Later on, however, the people reword their request, adding in a military component:

(כ) וְהָיִינוּ גַם אֲנַחְנוּ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם וְשָׁפֵטנוּ מִלְכֵנוּ וַיֵּצֵא לְפָנֵינוּ וְנִלְחֵם אֶת מִלְחַמֹּתֵינוּ.

(20) that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.'

Is this second formulation simply a clarification of their original petition, or did the people modify their request due to Shemuel's initial negative reaction? Did Shemuel and Hashem view any type of king as problematic, or might there be a difference between a warrior-king and one whose main tasks were judicial in nature? If the latter, which is preferred?

Additional Questions

Several other verses deserve closer inspection, as they might shed light on the questions above:

- **"וְהָיִינוּ גַם אֲנַחְנוּ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם"** – Is there anything wrong with the fact that the people desire to be like other nations? Though intuitively many readers assume that this is problematic, in Devarim, Hashem employs the very same language when speaking of anointing a future king, suggesting that this is not an issue.
- **"לֹא אֶתְךָ מָאָסוּ כִּי אֲתִי מָאָסוּ"** – Hashem's words imply that though Shemuel had felt personally rejected by the people's request, in reality the nation was rejecting not him but Hashem. Yet, in the very next verse, Hashem tells Shemuel, "כֵּן הָיָה עִשָּׂיִם גַּם לָךְ", suggesting that Shemuel, too, had been wronged. Was the people's petition for a king an affront to Hashem or Shemuel or both?
- **Comparison to idolatry** – Hashem compares the nation's actions here to past misdeeds including forsaking Hashem to worship foreign gods. How is the request for a monarch similar to idolatry?
- **"מִשְׁפָּט הַמֶּלֶךְ"** – Shemuel tells the nation how their future king will expropriate their children and possessions to serve him. Is this description simply a warning of what a tyrant might do, or are these legitimate and permissible actions? How do they compare to the laws of a king as described in Devarim 17?
- **Granting the request** – If appointing a king was not desirable, why in the end does Hashem nonetheless grant the people's wish?

Shemuel's Later Rebukes

On two other occasions Shemuel speaks negatively about the people's longing for a king.

- When anointing Shaul in Shemuel I 10, he reminds the nation of how Hashem has been their savior in the past and tells them that in asking for a king, they are forsaking God.
- In his farewell address in Shemuel I 12, too, Shemuel reminds the people of their wrongful choice to anoint a king. After proclaiming his rectitude as a judge, he moves into a discussion of how Hashem has always sent saviors to the nation when needed, and concludes by warning the nation to keep Hashem's commandments or they and their king will both be doomed. To underscore the people's wrongdoing, Shemuel then brings a thunderstorm in the midst of the dry season.

What do these two speeches teach about the problems of anointing a king? Why does Shemuel feel the need to profess his honesty before rebuking the people? Finally, is there any significance to the specific sign he chooses to bring?

¹ See Bereshit 17:6 and Bereshit 35:10-11.

² The Sages disagree about whether the passage is meant to be understood as a positive commandment, or simply as a granting of permission to anoint a king. See the conflicting opinions in Sifre Devarim 156 and Bavli Sanhedrin 20b. For a comprehensive review and analysis of the views of Torah commentators to the question, see R"E Samet, "פרשת שופטים - מצוות מינוי מלך ושאלת המשטר המדיני הרצוי על פי התורה".

³ This sentence serves as a refrain throughout the final chapters of the book. On the other hand, earlier in the book, when Gidon is asked to rule as king, he refuses, telling the people that only Hashem can reign as king.

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Exegetical Approaches

This topic has not yet undergone editorial review

Overview

In attempting to discover what was so problematic about the people's request for a king, commentators mine almost every word of the people's request looking for the source of Shemuel and Hashem's ire. Radak asserts that the people's desire that the king "fight our wars" is the problem as it portrays a lack of belief in Hashem as the nation's true savior. Others maintain that the description of the monarch as one who "shall judge us" was the issue. Ramban sees in the request for an alternate ruler a personal affront to the prophet Shemuel, while the Ran views it as an inappropriate mixing of the roles of king and judge. A third group of commentators pick up on the desire to "be like all the nations". Ralbag understands this language to mean that the people wanted a ruler who would not be subject to Torah law, while Sforno maintains that it refers to dynastic rule. Finally, Malbim maintains that there was nothing wrong with either the content or language of the request, only with the timing. In a period of miraculous leadership, such as that found during Shemuel's tenure, there was no need for a human king.

Rejection of Hashem for Human Military Leader

In requesting a human monarch to fight their wars, the people betrayed a lack of faith in and recognition of Hashem as their warrior and savior.

SOURCES: R. Eliezer in Bavli Sanhedrin according to Rashi, Radak, Or HaChayyim, Netziv,¹ R. David Zvi Hoffmann, Prof. Y. Elitzur²

"וַיֵּצֵא לָפָנֵינוּ וְנִלְחָם אֶת מִלְחַמָּתֵנוּ" – Rashi and Radak point to these words of the nation as evidence that the people were not requesting a king who would serve a judicial purpose, but rather one who would act in a military capacity. They claim that this focus on the military aspect of the king's leadership is what troubled Hashem.

"שִׁימָה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשֹׁפֵט" – One might argue that in their initial request, the people actually make no mention of any military role, but only a judicial one (לְשֹׁפֵט). Prof. Elitzur responds that the people were using the verb "שפט" in the military sense of the word,³ asking for a king who would serve as a שופט, like the leaders of the Book of Judges who were mainly saviors in war.

What is wrong with desiring a military leader?

- **Lack of trust** – Radak asserts that the desire for a human warrior displays a lack of trust in Hashem to save the nation.
- **Attribution of success to self** – Or HaChayyim adds that having a king makes it likely that the people will attribute all their successes to their human leader⁴ as opposed to Hashem.⁵ This, in turn, will result in their not even turning to Hashem for aid when needed, as they replace Him with their new king.⁶

- **Misconception as to causes of war** – R. D"Z Hoffman⁷ adds that the request betrays the people's lack of understanding that wars and troubles come as a result of sin.⁸ The solution was not to find a king, but rather to repent and return to God.⁹

"כָּל הַגּוֹיִם" – These sources differ in how they evaluate this choice of language:

- **Problematic** – Radak suggests that the people should not have asked for a king "like all the other nations" since they were not like other nations. As long as they observed Hashem's laws, Hashem would fight for them. Thus unlike others, Israel really did not need a warrior-king. Or HaChayyim similarly finds the phrase problematic, suggesting that it is this phrase which points to the desire for a military leader, since that is the role played by other monarchs.¹⁰
- **Not problematic** – R. D"Z Hoffmann and Prof. Elitzur, in contrast, see nothing wrong in this formulation pointing out that it is identical to Hashem's language in Devarim. In fact, the people of Shemuel's time might simply be echoing Hashem's own words.

"וַיִּרְעוּ הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי שְׁמוּאֵל כְּאִשֶּׁר אָמְרוּ תְּנֵה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטָנוּ" – Shemuel apparently misunderstood the people's request, understanding "לְשִׁפְטָנוּ" in its judicial sense. He took their request as a personal affront, as he assumed that they found him lacking.

Hashem's response: "כִּי אֲנִי מָאֻסִּי" – Hashem here corrects Shemuel's misconception and explains that the people's desire for a king is really a rejection of Hashem, not Shemuel.

Comparison to idolatry – Since the monarchy means that the people depend on their king rather than Hashem, it is similar to idolatry.¹¹ It, too, will eventually lead the people to forsake Hashem.

"כֵּן הָמָּה עֹשִׂים גַּם לָךְ" – According to Radak, in these words Hashem tells Shemuel that the people actually did rebel against the prophet as well, but in his military rather than judicial role. Until now the prophet had led them in battle through his spiritual role, by bringing them back to Hashem. In fact, he was so successful that they were hardly threatened by war anymore. Thus, in asking for a king, the people were rejecting both Hashem and Shemuel.

Positive mentions of monarchy

- Prof Elitzur claims that the Torah is not against monarchy per se, only against the hopes the people put into the change of regime.¹²
- Alternatively, in Devarim (and elsewhere) Hashem is referring to a king whose primary role was not military in nature but judicial or spiritual. Such a monarch would not have been problematic, yet, even so, Hashem enacts laws to curb his power and remind him that he is subservient to Hashem.

Is it obligatory or permitted to appoint a king?

Shemuel's speech when anointing Shaul – When Shemuel appoints Shaul as king, he reminds the people that it is Hashem, not their new king, who is their true savior: "וְאַתֶּם הַיּוֹם מֵאַסְתֶּם אֶת אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוּא מוֹשִׁיעַ לָכֶם" (Shemuel I 10:18-20). This further supports this position's understanding of the people's flawed request.

Shemuel's speech in Chapter 12 – R. D" Z Hoffmann points out that throughout his speech, Shemuel brings examples of how, in the past, when the Israelites found themselves in danger, they would cry out to Hashem, recognizing that they had sinned. This, he implicitly rebukes the people, is what they were

supposed to do. Similarly, Shemuel might intentionally bring a sign from non-seasonal rain since, in Torah, rain and the lack thereof is a barometer of the people's observance of Hashem's commandments (the true reason for military success) and a reminder of our dependence upon Him.

Parallel to Gidon – After Gidon's victory over Midyan, the people make the same mistake they do here, requesting that Gidon lead them as king because "you saved us from Midyan". Gidon refuses, teaching the nation: "לֹא אֶמְשָׁל אֲנִי בָכֶם וְלֹא יִמְשָׁל בְּנִי בָכֶם י"י" (Shofetim 8:22-23).

Granting a king – If Hashem thought that having a military-monarch was dangerous for the people spiritually, it is not clear why He agreed to the request.



Rejection of the Shofet

The people's desire for a king "to judge us" was problematic either because it was a personal affront to Shemuel specifically or because it usurped the institution of judges as a whole.

Insult to Shemuel

Though the institution of monarchy is not in and of itself problematic, asking for a king to serve as a judge when Shemuel was still judging the nation was an insult to his honor.

SOURCES: Rambam, Ramban, Malbim #2, Hoil Moshe

"לְשַׁפְטֵנוּ" – These sources pick up on the nation's request "שִׁימָה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשַׁפְטֵנוּ", claiming that Shemuel is upset specifically by the people's request for a king who "will judge us."¹³ It was this aspect which led to Shemuel's feelings of rejection; for they were asking to replace him and his position.

Shemuel's sons – The fact that the people preface their request for a king with their complaints about Shemuel's sons not following in their father's way, supports the idea that their request for a king stemmed from a desire to replace Shemuel and his family.¹⁴

Shemuel's speech in Chapter 12 – The first half of Shemuel's speech is devoted to Shemuel's insistence that he was always honest in his dealings with the nation. This focus further supports the idea that Shemuel had felt that the people doubted his abilities and functioning as a judge.

"כָּל הַגּוֹיִם" – These sources see nothing wrong in the desire "to be like the nations". After all, in Devarim when Hashem speaks of appointing a king, He Himself says that the people will request a king "like all the nations". Moreover, if this was problematic either Shemuel or Hashem should have emphasized that aspect of the request in their speech.

Hashem's response: "כִּי אֶתִּי מָאָסוּ" – Hashem's response to Shemuel "כִּי אֶתִּי מָאָסוּ" would seem to go against this position as it suggests that Hashem does not see in the nation's request an affront to Shemuel. The Hoil Moshe explains that Hashem isn't denying the insult, but comforting Shemuel by telling him that the people treat Hashem the same way, constantly turning away from Him and choosing idols in His place. Thus, Shemuel should not take it unduly to heart: "דִּינָא לַעֲבֹד שִׁיחִיָּה כְּרַבּוֹ". Hoil Moshe further proves that Hashem isn't trying to dismiss Shemuel's concerns from His final words, "כִּן הִמָּה עֹשִׂים גַּם לָךְ".

Is appointing a king obligatory or permissible? Rambam and Ramban both maintain that it is a positive commandment to appoint a king. After all, the monarchy in general is a desired institution.¹⁵ In Sefer Shemuel, the anger at the nation comes not from the content of the people's request but from the manner in which they ask it.

Granting a king – Hashem granted the request since there was really nothing wrong with asking for a monarch. The people's sin was only an interpersonal one.

Shemuel and Shaul – See opinions in Shaul's Sin in Gilgal which suggest that throughout Shaul and Shemuel's relationship there was a certain tension caused by this initial feeling of rejection.



Usurping the Role of Judges

The nation's request was problematic because they wanted a king to fulfill a judicial rather than a political or military role.

SOURCES: R. Yosef ibn Kaspi, Ran

"לְשָׁפְטֵנוּ" – As above, these sources note that Shemuel focuses specifically on the nation's request "שִׁמָּה לָנוּ" "לְשָׁפְטֵנוּ", proving that what he found problematic was the desire for a king who "will judge us."

Shemuel's sons – The people's request for a king comes on the back of their complaints about Shemuel's sons. This further supports the assertion that they desired a king who would serve in the capacity of judge.

What is wrong with a king who judges? The Ran explains that a king's tasks are political and military, while the judge's job is spiritual. The latter necessitates having a Divine spark (עֵינֵן אֱלֹהִי) which the monarch might be lacking. As such, the two positions were meant to remain distinct.¹⁶

"כָּכָל הַגּוֹיִם" – According to this approach neither Shemuel nor Hashem were upset by the nation's choice of language, "to be like the nations".

Hashem's response: "כִּי אֲתִי מֵאִסּוּ" – The Ran explains that Hashem is telling Shemuel that in asking for a purely political ruler to take on a spiritual role, the people were denying the need for a "Divine spark" and thus rejecting Hashem.

Monarchy in Devarim – Ibn Kaspi points out that since Devarim 16 and Devarim 17 speak of two distinct institutions, that of judges and that of kings, it is evident that an Israelite monarch was not supposed to serve as both. Had the people asked for a king without elaboration, or one that would serve a military role, Shemuel and Hashem would not have resisted, since that was the original intention and command.¹⁷

Shemuel's speech in Chapter 12 – Shemuel focuses much of his speech on his honest dealings as judge, perhaps to highlight to the people what they will be missing when they have a politically minded king play that role in his stead. The Ran suggests that Shemuel brings a miraculous sign (a thunderstorm out of season) to show that an individual with a Divine spark is not subject to the laws of nature, again highlighting what a judge-king will lack.¹⁸

Granting a king – According to the Ran, after Shemuel's rebuke, the people changed their request, this time adding that the king must play a military role: "וַיֵּצֵא לָפָנֵינוּ וְנִלְחָם אֶת מְלִיכֵי מִצְרָיִם". Though they were not willing to totally forego a judge-king, they at least made concessions due to Shemuel's rebuke, and so Hashem granted their request.



Rejection of Torah Law

Hashem was upset by the people's request since they desired a king who would be like the other nations and not subject to the laws of Torah.

SOURCES: R. Nehorai in Sifre Devarim,¹⁹ Ralbag, bishop cited by Abarbanel, Malbim #3

"כָּל הַגּוֹיִם" – These sources focus on the people's request that they have a king "like the other nations," understanding this to mean that they desired a king who would act like Gentile rulers, deciding the law on his own rather than following Torah law. Thus, while the Torah speaks of a constitutional monarchy, the people requested an absolute monarchy.

Hashem's mention of "כָּל הַגּוֹיִם" in Devarim – One may question how asking to be "like the nations" could be problematic if Hashem uses the very same language when speaking of anointing a king in Devarim. Malbim responds that in Devarim, the phrase "כָּל הַגּוֹיִם" is linked to the words "אֲשִׁימָה עָלֶי מֶלֶךְ" so Hashem is simply saying that the people will want to appoint a monarch just as other nations have such a leader. In Shemuel, however, the words "כָּל הַגּוֹיִם" refer back to the verb "לְשַׁפְּטֵנוּ" which changes the people's intent totally, for here they are instead asking for a king whose *judgement* will be like that of other nations.

"לְשַׁפְּטֵנוּ" – This approach must explain why, when the verses describes Shemuel's distress at the people's request, they make no mention of the fact that the nation desired a king "like all the nations" emphasizing instead that they wanted one to "judge" them. These sources respond that Shemuel mentions the aspect of judgement, since this is the area in which the king won't be abiding by Torah law, as he will, instead, be making his own code.

Hashem's response: "כִּי אֲתִי מֵאִסוּ" – In choosing a king who won't follow the Torah's dictates the people in effect reject Hashem.

Comparison to idolatry – Hashem recognizes that such a king will turn the people away from Hashem and thus the request is similar to the people's history of idol worship.

Is appointing a king obligatory or permissible? Ralbag asserts that it is a positive commandment to appoint a king, but that this must be according to the conditions set forth in Devarim. These include that the king be chosen by God and be of the Israelite nation, for such a king will follow the dictates of Hashem's Torah.

"מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ" in Devarim versus Shemuel – Since Torah calls for a constitutional monarchy, Devarim commands that a king must write his own Sefer Torah, highlighting how he, too, is subservient to the Torah's laws and not above them. In Sefer Shemuel, in contrast, the prophet warns the nation what an absolute monarch is like. He will extort the people and take of their property and children to serve him.

Shemuel's speech in Chapter 12 – At the end of his speech, Shemuel repeatedly warns the people that if they listen to Hashem's laws then all will be well, but if they don't disaster will come. In this warning, Shemuel is in effect telling the nation that as long as their monarch abides by Torah law, and does not "judge like all the nations", Hashem will help them.

Granting the request – Hashem grants the request despite its problematic nature, leaving it to the nation to ensure that they do not stray and allow their king to abandon Torah.



Desire for Dynastic Leadership

Hashem and Shemuel were opposed to the concept of a dynastic leader who would bequeath the position to his sons after him.

SOURCES: Sforno

"שימה לנו מלך לשפטנו ככל הגוים" – Sforno understands the request "ככל הגוים" to mean a dynastic leader, the mode of government found among the other nations. In Israel, in contrast, leadership should have taken the form of Shofetim, who ruled on their own with no expectation that they would pass the mantle to their children after them.²⁰

What is wrong with a dynasty? Sforno does not address the issue but one could say that dynastic rule runs the risk of inferior leadership since it is not merit based and allows for the possibility that someone who is not qualified, whether morally or politically, will nonetheless rule. In addition it means losing out on the constant intervening of Hashem to appoint an appropriate leader and thus on the continuous feeling of Hashem's providence on the nation.²¹ Finally, as Shadal says, it leads to a feeling of entitlement and arrogance which might express itself in abuse of the people.²²

Is appointing a king obligatory or permissible? Sforno maintains that the Torah does not command the nation to appoint a king, but rather permits it as a concession to human nature. Knowing that the nation will be obstinate in their desire for a king, the Torah regulates the appointment, ensuring that the ruler be picked by Hashem, and that he not be haughty. Sforno compare it to the case of a beautiful captive woman, which is also only permitted as a last resort.²³

"משפט המלך" – According to Sforno, Shemuel explains to the nation that the inevitable result of appointing a dynastic ruler will be his extortion of the people.

Granting the request – Hashem grants the request, but lets it be known that the people will pay the price.



Wrong Timing

Though there is nothing inherently wrong with kingship, in this era of miraculous providence, there was no need for a king.

SOURCES: R. Yehuda in Sifre Devarim,²⁴ Malbim #1

"שימה לנו מלך לשפוטנו ככל הגוים" – This position does not see anything wrong in either the content or manner of the request.

Why is the timing wrong? Malbim explains that a king is only necessary in an era in which the people are living under the laws of nature and chance. In the time of Shemuel, however, there was miraculous providence, making such a position redundant.

"כי תבא אל הארץ... וירשתה וישבתה בה" – Malbim claims that the verses in Devarim specify that the nation should only ask for a king after conquest and settlement, since beforehand Hashem's providence was very prevalent. Only afterwards were there various time periods in which Hashem left the people to nature. It was for such eras that the institution of monarchy was meant.

Hashem's response: "כי אתי מאסו" – In choosing to forego providential leadership, the people turned their back on Hashem.

Supernatural signs – In Chapter 12, Shemuel rebukes the people again for desiring a king, and accompanies his words with a supernatural sign. This served to remind the people that they had chosen to forsake miraculous leadership for natural government.²⁵

Is appointing a king obligatory or permissible? Malbim maintains that it is obligatory to appoint a king, but only when the people are left to nature and don't merit Divine providence.

Granting the request – Since a king in itself is not negative, Hashem granted the request.

¹ Netziv believes that asking for a king to be either a military leader or a judge is problematic, and thus combines this approach with the position below "Usurping the Role of Judges".

² See his article, "שמואל הנביא והמלוכה", in עיונים בספר שמואל (Jerusalem, 1986): 7-12.

³ See also Radak's second possibility in explaining the word "ושפוטנו" in verse 22: "או פירושו יקח משפטינו מיד" "ויצא לפנינו ונלחם את מלחמתנו", "אויבינו". According to this understanding, the last two clauses of the verse, "ושפוטנו מלחנו", clarify what is meant by the initial phrase, "ושפוטנו מלחנו".

⁴ See Shaul's Sin in Gilgal and Shaul's Sin in the Battle with Amalek that Shaul's downfall might have been this very issue, an attribution of success to himself rather than Hashem.

⁵ See the Minchah Belulah (and R. D"Z Hoffmann, similarly) on Devarim 17, who asserts that the nation was not permitted to appoint a king until after the Conquest so that they would not attribute it to their human leader instead of Hashem.

⁶ In fact, in contrast to Sefer Shofetim which is filled with phrases such as "and they cried out to Hashem", after our chapter, such language is absent from the books of Shemuel, Melakhim and Divrei HaYamim.

⁷ See also Prof. Elitzur who elaborates on the idea.

⁸ They believed that the cause of their enemies' attacks was natural, the lack of a king, not realizing that the true reason was that they did not listen to Hashem.

⁹ In fact, appointing a king would exacerbate the problem of sin and punishment. Beforehand, when troubles came, the people would at least then remember Hashem and turn to Him. Now that would no longer be the case.

¹⁰ He explains that though in Devarim Hashem uses the same language, He is doing so only in order to say that that is not what is wanted. Hashem tells the people that if they desire a king like all the nations they

should **not** appoint such a king but rather a king "whom Hashem shall choose".

¹¹ See Rashbam on Shemot 16:4 who similarly points out that dependence on Hashem instills belief in Him.

¹² It was their assumptions that changing their ruler, rather than changing their ways, would make them victorious in battle and usher in peace, that was problematic.

¹³ The Malbim points out that had they asked for a king without elaboration or for a military leader, that would not have been problematic. The Rambam similarly asserts that had they requested a king with the intention of fulfilling the commandment, that would have been commendable.

¹⁴ Hoil Moshe points to an inconsistency in the nation's request which proves that their motives were not pure. The people complain about Shemuel's sons not following in his ways, but nonetheless ask specifically for a dynastic ruler where the same issue of an unfit son inheriting the position is likely! This proved to Shemuel that the people were simply looking to reject him and his family.

¹⁵ As such, elsewhere, too, Tanakh looks upon it favorably.

¹⁶ Ibn Kapsi points out that in Torah these constitute two separate commandments, "שְׁפָטִים וְשֹׁטְרִים תִּתֶּן לָךְ בְּכָל" (Devarim 16) and "שׂוֹם תִּשִּׂים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ" (Devarim 17)

¹⁷ These sources would likely explain that other places in Tanakh where the monarchy is viewed positively are similarly speaking of an institution which is not judicial in nature.

¹⁸ Cf. the Malbim below who explains the choice of sign similarly.

¹⁹ R. Nehorai focuses only on the fact that the king will be idolatrous.

²⁰ As a source for appointing such a non-dynastic leader, he points to Moshe's request that Hashem find the nation a leader, "וְלֹא תִהְיֶה עֲדֹת ה' כְּצֹאֵן אֲשֶׁר אֵין לָהֶם רֹעֶה"

²¹ See R"E Samet who develops this idea.

²² It should be noted that though Shadal sees this as a danger of dynastic leadership, he himself does not agree that therefore a dynasty is necessarily problematic. In certain eras and societies, this could still be the preferred form of government. He suggests that the problem in the people's request was that they were motivated by a desire for glory. They were no longer satisfied with a ruler who had no wealth and no entourage and desired a monarch with all the accompanying pomp and ceremony. Thus the desire for a king is not in itself an issue, but what their request betrayed about their values (that they had become an honor-seeking nation), was cause for sorrow.

²³ He adds that just as marrying such a woman inevitably leads to hating her and rebellious children, so too, anointing a king will result in abuse and the people's crying to Hashem as described by Shemuel (Shemuel I 8:11-18).

²⁴ R. Yehuda does not elaborate as to why this was the wrong time to ask for a king.

²⁵ See the Ran above who has a similar take on both the sign and the problems with a king.