

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Shoftim 5783

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Moshe continues to instruct Bnei Yisroel about their life in Eretz Yisroel.

כִּי־תבֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ וַיִּרְשָׁתָהּ וַיִּשְׁבַּתָּהּ בָּהּ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲשִׁימָה עָלַי מֶלֶךְ כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתַי:

“Because you will come to the Land that Hashem will give to you, and you shall inherit it and settle in it. And you will say, place upon me a king, like all the nations that are around me.” (Devarim 17:14).

Why is this pasuk in the first person – upon me, surround me? Is this a prophecy that Bnei Yisroel will ask for a king or is this a commandment that they will come to ask for one? Why does the pasuk say it is like the surrounding nations?

The Torah only states the instructions for the king after its instructions for the Shofet. “You shall appoint magistrates and officials over you in all your gates, that Hashem, your Lord, shall give to you, for your tribes, and they shall adjudicate the people in righteous justice.” (Ibid 16:18). Lest one think that this means every tribe will have its own system of courts and justices, the Torah says, “And you shall bring it [your question of law] to the Kohen and the Levi, and they to the Shofet.” (Ibid 17:9). There shall be one Shofet that shall rule over all of Yisroel. Therefore, this is not a system of courts and justices but a system of government. The court system is already in place, through the seventy elders. (Bamidbar 11:25). With that, Moshe already established a system of courts. Lower courts over tens, then courts over hundreds, all the way up to the Sanhedrin—Supreme Court—of seventy. (Devarim 1:15). Therefore, these magistrates and officials were government officials to carry out and enforce the laws.

Bnei Yisroel lived under the era of Shoftim for four centuries. They meted out advice and justice and each tribe enforced the law based on those decision. Then is the subject of monarchs. The king that Bnei Yisroel should set over itself was a king that Hashem will choose from their own people. (Ibid 17:15).

Kings were already predicted and promised to Avraham and Yaakov. When Hashem changed Avraham’s name He said, “I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations out of you, and kings shall come forth from you.” (Bereishis 17:6). At first glance this means that kings can come out of any of the nations that came from Avraham, including Paran, Midyan, and Edom. Hashem clarifies that kings will come from Sarah. (Ibid 17:16). Further, Hashem changed Yaakov’s name to Yisroel and promised him that kings will come from his loins, too. (Ibid 35:11).

Perhaps when Yoseph was made king in Mitzrayim (Ibid 41:46) that fulfilled the promise that kings would come out of Avraham and Yaakov. However, he was a single

king and the promise was multiple kings. Additionally, the promise of kingship was promised to Ephraim and Menashe. (Ibid 48:16). With the promise of rulership, was the promise that they would multiply greatly. (Ibid). This harkens back to the promise to Avraham that kingship comes with creation of nations – multiplying greatly.

Kingship was also predicted through Balaam. In his brocha to Bnei Yisroel he says, לֹא-הָבֵיט אֵינֶן בְּיַעֲקֹב וְלֹא-רָאָה עֵמָל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְיִתְרוּעַת מַלְךְ בּוֹ: "Do not gaze upon trouble in Yaakov and to do see woe in Yisroel, Hashem their Lord is with it, and the kings' proclamations are in it." (Bamidbar 23:21). The kings' proclamation can also mean the proclamation of the kings of Yisroel. Interpret the pasuk as *Hashem is with it, and proclaims kings in it*. Balaam further says, "their rulers shall rise above Agag and their kings shall be exalted." (Ibid 24:7). This is another clear reference to Yisroel kings. Accordingly, why does our pasuk make it seem that only if Bnei Yisroel ask for kings then there will be kings and the kings will be desired only because of the surrounding nations?

We explain our pasuk. "Because you will enter the Land that Hashem, your Lord, gives to you." Entering Eretz Yisroel and being in Eretz Yisroel is a prerequisite to appointing a king over Bnei Yisroel. A king over Yisroel cannot rule from outside the Land. There can be no "Eretz Yisroel sovereignty" in Uganda. Also, merely coming to Eretz Yisroel is not enough to warrant a king.

"And you will inherit it and settle in it." Kings do not come immediately. First Bnei Yisroel has to conquer the land and then settle it. However, that is not enough, either. They have to settle in it. They must be secure in the Land and entrenched as its owner. A king shall not come to determine sovereign rights or to resolve border disputes.

"And you shall say." This must be the will of the people. A king in Yisroel is not forcefully appointed by Hashem, a navi, a shofet, or anyone else. Further, one cannot make himself a king over Yisroel. The King rules at the pleasure of Hashem and by the request of the people.

"Place upon me a king." This request must be unanimous. The pasuk does not say "place upon us a king." That would mean that some want a king and a few are saying place a king upon the many. Every person that will be subject to the king's rule must say "place a king upon me." Each individual must desire it. The singular tense of "place upon me" refers to the nation and also means that Yisroel speaks as one. Yisroel—in one voice—says "place upon me."

"Like all the nations that surround me." This, at first glance, means all the surrounding nations of the world. However, these nations that surround Eretz Yisroel existed since the conquest. They did not move in, suddenly. What is new after Bnei Yisroel conquers, inherits, and settles in the land is that now each shevet is a nation. The promise of multiple nations and the becoming great in the land is now fulfilled. Each of the twelve shevatim are their own nations. All the nations that surround me, make me, protect me, are from Reuven and Gad in Transjordan to Asher in the north and Yehuda in the south. "Like all the nations" means like all the tribes are asking for, in one voice. That is the only way a king can properly work over Bnei Yisroel, when the twelve different tribes are ready to submit to one king to make them one Yisroel.