



Shmuel: What is a Jewish King?

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1. Shoftim 17:6

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיֵּשֶׁר בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה: (פ)

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did as he pleased.

2. Shoftim 8

כֹּב וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-גִּדְעוֹן מִשֵּׁל-בָנוּ גַם-אַתָּה גַם-בְּנֶךָ גַם בְּן-בְּנֶךְךָ כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִיַּד מִדְיָן: כִּג וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים גִּדְעוֹן לֹא-אֶמְשָׁל אֲנִי בְכֶם וְלֹא-יִמְשָׁל בְּנִי בְכֶם ה' יִמְשָׁל בְּכֶם:

22 Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us—you, your son, and your grandson as well; for you have saved us from the Midianites.” 23 But Gideon replied, “I will not rule over you myself, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD alone shall rule over you”.

3. Shmuel I 8

(א) וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר זָקֵן שְׁמוּאֵל וַיִּשָּׂם אֶת בָּנָיו שְׁפָטִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: (ב) וַיְהִי שֵׁם בְּנוֹ הַבְּכוֹר יוֹאֵל וְשֵׁם מִשְׁנֵהוּ אֲבִיהַּ שְׁפָטִים בְּבָאָר שְׁבַע: (ג) וְלֹא הָלְכוּ בָנָיו בְּדַרְכֵי וַיִּטּוּ אַחֲרַי הַבָּצַע וַיִּקְחוּ שִׁחָד וַיִּטּוּ מִשְׁפָּט: פ

4. Shmuel I 8

(ד) וַיִּתְקַבְּצוּ כָּל זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל הַרְמַתָּה: (ה) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אַתָּה זָקֵן וּבְנֶיךָ לֹא הָלְכוּ בְּדַרְכֵיךָ עֲתָה שִׂימָה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטָנוּ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם: (ו) וַיִּרַע הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי שְׁמוּאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ תְּנֵה לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ לְשִׁפְטָנוּ וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל יְקֹוֹק: פ (ז) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹוֹק אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל שָׁמַע בְּקוֹל הָעָם לְכָל אֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרוּ אֵלָיךָ כִּי לֹא אֶתְּךָ מֵאֲסוּ כִּי אֶתִּי מֵאֲסוּ מִמֶּלֶךְ עָלֵיהֶם: (ח) כְּכָל הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ מִיּוֹם הַעֲלִיתִי אֶתְּךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וַיַּעֲזְבֵנִי וַיַּעֲבְדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים כִּן הֵמָּה עֹשִׂים גַּם לָךְ: (ט) וְעַתָּה שָׁמַע בְּקוֹלָם אַךְ כִּי הָעַד תַּעֲדִי בָהֶם וְהִגַּדְתָּ לָהֶם מִשְׁפַּט הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵיהֶם: ס

All the elders of Israel assembled and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and they said to him, “You have grown old, and your sons have not followed your ways. Therefore appoint a king for us, to govern us like all other nations.” 6 Samuel was displeased that they said “Give us a king to govern us.” Samuel prayed to the LORD, 7 and the LORD replied to Samuel, “Heed the demand of the people in everything they say to you. For it is not you that they have rejected; it is Me they have rejected as their king. 8 Like everything else they have done ever since I brought them out of Egypt to this day—forsaking Me and worshiping other gods—so they are doing to you. 9 Heed their demand; but warn them solemnly, and tell them about the practices of any king who will rule over them.”

5. Shmuel I 12

(יב) וַתִּרְאוּ כִּי נָחַשׁ מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן בָּא עָלֵיכֶם וַתֹּאמְרוּ לִי לֹא כִּי מֶלֶךְ יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ וַיִּקְוֶה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִלְּכֶם: (יג) וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר שָׁאַלְתֶּם וְהִנֵּה נָתַן יְקֹוֹק עָלֵיכֶם מֶלֶךְ: (יד) אִם תִּירְאוּ אֶת יְקֹוֹק וְעַבַדְתֶּם אֹתוֹ וְשִׁמַּעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלוֹ וְלֹא תִמְרוּ אֶת פִּי יְקֹוֹק וְהִיתֶם גַּם אִתְּם וְגַם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ עָלֵיכֶם אַחַר יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (טו) וְאִם לֹא תִשְׁמַעוּ בְּקוֹל יְקֹוֹק וּמְרִיתֶם אֶת פִּי יְקֹוֹק וְהִיתָה יַד יְקֹוֹק בְּכֶם וּבְאַבְתְּיֶכֶם:

12 But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was advancing against you, you said to me, ‘No, we must have a king reigning over us’—though the LORD your God is your King. 13 “Well, the LORD has set a king over you! Here is the king that you have chosen, that you have asked for. 14 “If you will revere the LORD, worship Him, and obey Him, and will not flout the LORD’s command, if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, [well and good]. 15 But if you do not obey the LORD and you flout the LORD’s command, the hand of the LORD will strike you as it did your fathers.

6. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 20b

תניא ר"א אומר זקנים שבדור כהוגן שאלו שנאמר (שמואל א ח, ו) תנה לנו מלך לשפטנו אבל עמי הארץ שבהן קלקלו שנאמר (שמואל א ח, כ) והיינו גם אנחנו ככל הגוים ושפטנו מלכנו ויצא לפנינו

It is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Eliezer says: The elders of Samuel’s generation asked appropriately, as it is stated: “Give us a king to judge us” (I Samuel 8:6), since they wanted a steady leader in place of Samuel. But the ignoramuses among them ruined it, as it is stated: “But the people refused to heed the voice of Samuel; and they said: No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and emerge before us, and fight our battles” (I Samuel 8:19–20).

7. Shmuel 9: 1-2

וַיְהִי־אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי־יִמִּין [מִבְּנֵי־יָמִין] וְשֵׁמוֹ קִישׁ בֶּן־אֲבִיאל בֶּן־זֶרֶר בֶּן־בְּכוֹרָת בֶּן־אֶפְיִים בֶּן־אִישׁ יְמִינִי גִבּוֹר חַיִּל: וְלוֹ־הָיָה בֶן וְשֵׁמוֹ שָׂאוּל בְּחֹר וְטוֹב וְאִין אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל טוֹב מִמֶּנּוּ מִשְׁכָּמוֹ וּמְעָלָה גְבָה מִכָּל־הָעָם:

1 There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of substance. 2 He had a son whose name was Saul, an excellent young man; no one among the Israelites was handsomer than he; he was a head taller than any of the people.

8. Shmuel I 9:21

וַיַּעַן שָׂאוּל וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא בֶן־יְמִינִי אֲנִי מִקְטָנֵי שְׁבֻטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִשְׁפַּחְתִּי הַצְּעִירָה מִכָּל־מִשְׁפָּחוֹת שְׁבֻטֵי בְּנֵי־מִן וְלָמָּה דַּבַּרְתָּ אֵלַי כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה: Saul replied, "But I am only a Benjaminite, from the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my clan is the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin! Why do you say such things to me?"

9. Shmuel I 10:27

וּבְנֵי בְלִיעַל אָמְרוּ מֵה־יִשְׁעֵנוּ זֶה וַיִּבְזְאוּ וְלֹא־הִבִּיאוּ לוֹ מִנְחָה וַיְהִי כַּמְחַרֵּשׁ:

But some scoundrels said, "How can this fellow save us?" So they scorned him and brought him no gift. But he pretended not to mind.

10. Shmuel I 11

וַיַּעַל נָחַשׁ הָעַמּוֹנִי וַיַּחֲסֵן עַל־יָבֶשׂ גִּלְעָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל־אֲנָשֵׁי יְבִישׁ אֶל־נָחַשׁ כָּרַת־לָנוּ בְרִית וְנַעֲבֹדְךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם נָחַשׁ הָעַמּוֹנִי בְּזֹאת אֶכְרַת לָכֶם בְּנִקּוֹר לָכֶם כָּל־עֵינַי יָמִין וְשִׁמְתִּיהָ חֶרֶףָה עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו זָקְנֵי יְבִישׁ הֲרֹף לָנוּ שְׁבַעֲת יָמִים וְנִשְׁלַחְהָ מִלְּאֲלִים בְּכָל גְּבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִם־אֵין מוֹשִׁיעַ אֲתָנוּ וַיִּצְאָנוּ אֵלֶיךָ: וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמְּלָאכִים גִּבְעַת שָׂאוּל וַיְדַבְּרוּ הַדְּבָרִים בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשְׂאוּ כָל־הָעָם אֶת־קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ: וַהֲגֵה שָׂאוּל בָּא אַחֲרָי הַבְּקָר מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂאוּל מֵה־לָּעָם כִּי יִבְכּוּ וַיִּסְפְּרוּ־לוֹ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אֲנָשֵׁי יְבִישׁ: וַתִּצְלַח רוּחַ־אֱלֹהִים עַל־שָׂאוּל בִּשְׁמֵעוֹ [כְּשִׁמְעוֹ] אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיַּחֲר אִפּוֹ מָאֵד: וַיִּקַּח צֶמֶד בָּקָר וַיִּנְתְּוֵהוּ וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּכָל־גְּבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד הַמְּלָאכִים | לֵאמֹר אֲשֶׁר אֵינְנוּ יֵצֵא אַחֲרָי שָׂאוּל וְאַחֲר שְׁמוּאֵל כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה לְבַקְרֹו וַיִּפֹּל פָּחַד־הוֹר עַל־הָעָם וַיִּצְאוּ קְאִישׁ אֶחָד: ... וַיֹּאמֶר הָעָם אֶל־שְׁמוּאֵל מִי הָאִמֵּר שָׂאוּל יִמְלֶךָ עָלֵינוּ תָנוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים וְנִמְיָתָם: וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂאוּל לֹא־יִמְיָת אִישׁ בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה־ה' תְּשׁוּעָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: (o) וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל־הָעָם לָכוּ וְנִלְכְּהָ הַגִּלְגָּל וְנַחֲדָשׁ שָׁם הַמְּלוּכָה: וַיֵּלְכוּ כָל־הָעָם הַגִּלְגָּל וַיִּמְלְכוּ שָׁם אֶת־שָׂאוּל לִפְנֵי ה' בַּגִּלְגָּל וַיִּזְבְּחוּ־שָׁם זִבְחִים שְׁלָמִים לִפְנֵי ה' וַיִּשְׂמַח שָׁם שָׂאוּל וְכָל־אֲנָשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־מָאֵד: (פ)

1 Nahash the Ammonite marched up and besieged Jabesh-gilead. All the men of Jabesh-gilead said to Nahash, "Make a pact with us, and we will serve you." 2 But Nahash the Ammonite answered them, "I will make a pact with you on this condition, that everyone's right eye be gouged out; I will make this a humiliation for all Israel." 3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite, so that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel; if no one comes to our aid, we will surrender to you." 4 When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and gave this report in the hearing of the people, all the people broke into weeping. 5 Saul was just coming from the field driving the cattle; and Saul asked, "Why are the people crying?" And they told him about the situation of the men of Jabesh. 6 When he heard these things, the spirit of God gripped Saul and his anger blazed up. 7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them into pieces, which he sent by messengers throughout the territory of Israel, with the warning, "Thus shall be done to the cattle of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel into battle!" Terror from the LORD fell upon the people, and they came out as one man...12 The people then said to Samuel, "Who was it said, 'Shall Saul be king over us?' Hand the men over and we will put them to death!" 13 But Saul replied, "No man shall be put to death this day! For this day the LORD has brought victory to Israel." 14 Samuel said to the people, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and there inaugurate the monarchy." 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there at Gilgal they declared Saul king before the LORD. They offered sacrifices of well-being there before the LORD; and Saul and all the men of Israel held a great celebration there.

11. Shmuel I 17:34-36

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל־שָׂאוּל רַעְהָ הִיָּה עֹבְדֶךָ לְאֲבִיו בְּצֹאן וְכֹא הָאָרִי וְאֶת־הַדּוֹב וְנִשְׂאָ שֶׁה מִהַעֲדָר: וַיִּצְאָתִי אַחֲרָיו וְהִכְתִּיו וְהִצַּלְתִּי מִפְּיָו וַיִּקָּם עָלַי וְהִחֲזַקְתִּי בְּזַקְנוֹ וְהִכְתִּיו וְהִמְיָתִיו: גַּם אֶת־הָאָרִי גַם־הַדּוֹב הִכָּה עֹבְדֶךָ וְהִיָּה הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הָעֹרֵל הַזֶּה כְּאֶחָד מֵהֶם כִּי חָרַף מַעֲרַכְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם חַיִּים: (o)

34 David replied to Saul, "Your servant has been tending his father's sheep, and if a lion or a bear came and carried off an animal from the flock, 35 I would go after it and fight it and rescue it from its mouth. And if it attacked me, I would seize it by the beard and strike it down and kill it. 36 Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and that uncircumcised Philistine shall end up like one of them, for he has defied the ranks of the living God.

12. Shmuel II:6

וְדָוִד מְכַרְפֵּר בְּכָל-עַז לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְדָוִד חָגֹר אֶפֶסֶת בָּדָד: וְדָוִד וְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מַעֲלִים אֶת-אֲרֹן ה' בְּתַרְוִיעָה וּבְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר: וְהָיָה אֲרֹן יְהוָה בָּא עִיר דָּוִד וּמִיֵּכֶל בֵּת-שָׂאוּל נִשְׁקָפָה | בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן וַתֵּרֶא אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד מִפְּגַז וּמְכַרְפֵּר לִפְנֵי ה' וַתִּבְזֶז לוֹ בְּלִבָּהּ: ... וַיָּשֶׁב דָּוִד לְבֵרֶךְ אֶת-בֵּיתוֹ וַתֵּצֵא מִיֵּכֶל בֵּת-שָׂאוּל לְקִרְאֵת דָּוִד וַתֹּאמֶר מִה-נִכְבַּד הַיּוֹם מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר נִגְלָה הַיּוֹם לְעֵינַי אִמְהוֹת עֲבָדָיו כְּהַגְלוֹת נַגְלוֹת אֶחָד הַרְקִים: וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-מִיכָל לִפְנֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר-בִּי מֵאֲבִיךָ וּמְכַל-בֵּיתוֹ לְצִוּוֹת אֹתִי נִגִּיד עַל-עַם ה' עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשַׁחַקְתִּי לִפְנֵי ה': וְנִקְלַתִּי עוֹל מִזֹּאת וְהָיִיתִי שָׂפָל בְּעֵינֵי וְעַם-הָאֲמֵהוֹת אֲשֶׁר אִמְרַת עִמָּם אֲכַבְּדָהּ:

David whirled with all his might before the LORD; David was girt with a linen ephod. 15 Thus David and all the House of Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD with shouts and with blasts of the horn. 16 As the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him for it... 20 David went home to greet his household. And Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, "Didn't the king of Israel do himself honor today—exposing himself today in the sight of the slavegirls of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself!" 21 David answered Michal, "It was before the LORD who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel! I will dance before the LORD 22 and dishonor myself even more, and be low in my own esteem; but among the slavegirls that you speak of I will be honored."