

# Haftarah Helper 5781: Korach

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## 1 Samuel 11:14-12:22

Since Joshua's era, ad-hoc "judges" led the Israelites, mustering troops as needed against enemies. All were militarily inspired by God but while some had superior character and spiritual vision, others did not. The greatest of them was Samuel, a prophet and Nazirite who judged the peoples' disputes, and whose powerful prayers prompted God to save them from the Philistines. Yet Samuel's sons, the potential heirs to his roles, were corrupt. At the same time, a new enemy, neighboring Ammon, threatened. Similar to the rebellion against Moses' leadership in the Parashah, the people therefore sought to replace Samuel with a new leader- a king to judge and fight for them. Although this request displeased God and Samuel<sup>1</sup>, God instructed him to anoint a king, Saul, who then defeated the Ammonites at Jabesh-Gilead and forgave his opponents.

The Haftarah begins as Samuel rallies the people to publicly rejoice in Saul's rule. He then critiques them three times. Echoing Moses's self-justification in the Parashah, Samuel challenges the people to proclaim the selflessness of his leadership. He then recounts how God had defeated their enemies since the Exodus. Replacing their true king, God, with a man was unnecessary- yet God will tolerate it so long as they serve only Him. Finally, Samuel prays for God to demonstrate His closeness, power, and displeasure by sending rain on their harvest, endangering their lives. He again warns the people and Saul to remain loyal to God who, nonetheless, will never abandon them.

## Haftarah Breakdown

**Verses 11:14-15:** After Saul's initial, decisive victory against Ammon as anointed king, Samuel instructs the entire people to gather in nearby Gilgal to reconfirm and celebrate Saul's kingship.

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| I Samuel 11:15   | שמואל א י"א:ט"ו  |
| All the people went to Gilgal. There they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal. There they slaughtered peace offerings before the Lord, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly. | וַיֵּלְכוּ כָּל־הָעָם הַגִּלְגָּל וַיַּמְלִכוּ לְשָׁם אֶת־שָׁאוּל לְפָנָיו ה' בַּגִּלְגָּל וַיִּזְבְּחוּ־לַעֲשֵׂם זִבְחֵים שְׁלָמִים לְפָנָיו ה' וַיִּשְׂמַח עֲשֵׂם שָׁאוּל וְכָל־אֲנָשֵׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־מְאֹד: (פ) |

**Verses 12:1-5:** While peacefully transferring his life-long authority as judge to God's newly anointed king, Saul, Samuel has the people testify that his judgments had been just, and not for personal gain.

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| I Samuel 12:5  | שמואל א י"ב:ה   |
| And he [Samuel] said to them, "The Lord is a witness against you, and His anointed [king, Saul] is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." [The people] said, "[We are your] witness." | וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־יָהּוָה עֵד ה' בְּכֶם וְעַד מְשִׁיחוֹ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי לֹא מִצְאָתֶם בְּיַדִּי מְאוּמָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֵד: (פ) |

**Verses 12:6-12:** To rebuke the Israelites for requesting a human king to lead them against neighboring Ammon, Samuel reviews generations of righteous victories that God, their King, granted them since they arrived in Egypt.

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| I Samuel 12:12  | שמואל א י"ב:י"ב   |
| When you saw the Ammonites' king, Nahash, come against you, you said to me, "No, but a king shall reign over us" - [but] the Lord your God was your king. | וַתֵּרְאוּ כִּי־נִחַשׁ מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן־בָּא עֲלֵיכֶם וַתֹּאמְרוּ לִי לֹא כִּי־מֶלֶךְ יִמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ וְה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מֶלֶכְכֶם: |

<sup>1</sup> [Malbim](#) and [others](#) offer many different explanations for what was wrong with the people's request.

Verses 12:13-15: The people and their king must loyally serve God or He will punish them.

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| I Samuel 12:15  | שמואל א י"ב:ט"ו   |
| If you will not obey the Lord's voice and rebel against the Lord's [word], then the Lord's hand will be against you [as it was] against your fathers. | וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹל ה' וּמָרַתֶּם אֶת-פִּי ה' וְהִיתָה יַד-ה' בְּכֶם וּבְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם: |

Verses 12:16-19: Samuel shows His ability to punish by having Him send a thunderstorm during harvest season. This shows God's presence among them, the needlessness of replacing God with a king, and His resulting anger.

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| I Samuel 12:17   | שמואל א י"ב:י"ז   |
| Is it not the wheat harvest today? I shall call to the Lord, that He will send thunder and rain. Know and see that your evil is great, which you have done in the Lord's eyes, to ask for yourselves a king! | הֲלוֹא קִצִיר-חֲטִיטִים הַיּוֹם אֶקְרָא אֶל-ה' וַיִּתֵּן קִלְוֹת וּמָטָר וַיִּדְעוּ וַיֵּרְאוּ כִּי-רָעַתְכֶם רַבָּה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם בְּעֵינֵי ה' לְשֹׂאֵל לְכֶם מֶלֶךְ: (ס) |

Verses 12:20-22: Samuel again reminds the people to follow God, reassuring them that, despite His anger, God will never abandon them for the sake of His Name; i.e., lest the nations consider God impotent to save His people.

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| I Samuel 12:22  | שמואל א י"ב:כ"ב  |
| For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great Name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. | כִּי לֹא-יִטֹּשׁ ה' אֶת-עַמּוֹ בְּעָבוּר שְׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל כִּי הוֹאִיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶתְכֶם לְוָעָם: |

**Connections**

The Midrash derives a lesson about the leaders of one's own generation from Samuel's own description of God's chosen leaders throughout the generations.

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| Kohelet Rabbah 1:4   | קהלת רבה א:ד  |
| Let the incoming generation be in your eyes like the generation that passed. Do not say, "If Rabbi Akiva was alive... or if Rabbi Zeira or Rabbi Yochanan were alive. I would learn before them." Rather, your era's generation and your era's sage are like the past generation and the earlier sages that preceded you.<br>Rabbi Yochanan [similarly] said: "It is written (1 Samuel 12:6), 'It is the Lord who made Moses and Aaron'; and (ibid, 12:11), 'The Lord sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Yiftach, and Samuel' <sup>2</sup> ; and (Ps. 99:6), 'Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them who call His name.' Scripture equates three light historical figures with three great historical figures, to teach you that Jerubbaal's court is as great and important before the Holy One, Blessed be He, as Moses' court, that Samson's court is like Aaron's court, and that Yiftach's court is like Samuel's court." | הִנֵּה בְּעֵינֶיךָ דוֹר שֶׁבָּא בְּדוֹר שֶׁהָלַךְ, שֶׁלֹּא תֹאמַר אֵלּוּ הֵיךָ רַבִּי עֹקֵיבָא קָנָם... אֵלּוּ הָיוּ רַבִּי זִירָא וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן קָנְמִין הֵייתִי שׁוֹנֵה לְפָנֵיהֶם, אֶלָּא דוֹר שֶׁבָּא בְּנַמְיָךְ וְחָכָם שֶׁבְּנַמְיָךְ בְּדוֹר שֶׁהָלַךְ וְחָכְמִים הִרְאִישׁוּנִים שֶׁהָיוּ לְפָנֶיךָ. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בְּתִיב (שְׁמוּאֵל א יב, ו): ה' אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֶת מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת אֶהֱרֹן וְגו', וּכְתִיב (שְׁמוּאֵל א יב, ו): וַיִּשְׁלַח ה' אֶת יִרְבֵּעֵל וְאֶת בְּדָן וְאֶת יִפְתָּח וְאֶת שְׁמוּאֵל... וּכְתִיב (תְּהִלִּים צט, ו): מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּכֹהֲנָיו וְשְׁמוּאֵל בְּקֹרְאֵי שְׁמוֹ, שֶׁקָּל הַכְּתוּב שֶׁלִּישָׁה קָלֵי עוֹלָם עִם שֶׁלִּישָׁה גְּדוּלֵי עוֹלָם, לְלַמֶּדֶךָ שֶׁבֵּית דִּינּוֹ שֶׁל יִרְבֵּעֵל גְּדוֹל וְחָשׁוּב לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא כְּבֵית דִּינּוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה, וּכְבֵּית דִּינּוֹ שֶׁל שְׁמִשׁוֹן כְּבֵּית דִּינּוֹ שֶׁל אֶהֱרֹן, וּכְבֵּית דִּינּוֹ שֶׁל יִפְתָּח כְּבֵּית דִּינּוֹ שֶׁל שְׁמוּאֵל. |

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<sup>2</sup> The Midrash (ad loc.) identifies Jerubbaal as Gideon and Bedan as Samson.