

Topic: Why is a king so much worse than a prophet?

Text: 1 Samuel 8:1–22

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1. INTRODUCTION

- a. Pre-colonial leadership among the Tiv of central Nigeria at every hierarchy was by council of elders.
 - b. Chieftaincy was introduced during the colonial era.
 - c. My grandfather Chief Anju Gar was among the first set of Tiv chiefs and he lived long
 - d. There were discussions of dethroning, and his bitterness against it was manifested in the names he gave his grandchildren born around that time.
2. Examples of Chief Anju's Children's names
 - a. **Tyotsugh ("my people have deceived me")**
 - b. **Ahungwa-Tor ("They want to dethrone the king")**
 - c. **Mbaduun-Tor (They are initiating the king's dethronement)**
 3. The tantalizing grasp of power on its holder
 - a. Power is a kind of forbidden fruit, once tasted it is hard to let go
 - b. My grandfather and Samuel are similar, bitter at the prospects of the loss of power.
 4. A Summary of 1 Sam 8: Part I

A	The people requests a king of Samuel (8:4–5)
B	The People's request displeases Samuel and he prays to the Lord (8:6)
C	The Lord grants the people's conditionally demand (8:7–9)
D	Samuel educates the people on the evils of kingship (8:10–18)
A'	The people insist on having a king (8:19–20)
B'	Samuel repeats the people's words to the Lord (8:21)
C'	The Lord unqualifiedly grants the people's demand (8:22a)
D'	Samuel disperses the people (8:22b)
 5. Factors that prompted the people's demand
 - a. Samuel's old age rendered him ineffective
 - b. Samuel's son's perversion of justice
 - c. Kingship removes the uncertain of the judges' system
 - d. There was war on the horizon and virile leader insight (cf. 1 Sam 12:8–12)
 6. Samuel's Attitude to the People's Demand
 - a. He took it as personal affront (1 Sam 8:6; cf. 1 Sam 12:1–4): and I sympathize with him because it is not easy to be declared vocationally redundant and have to find your own replacement.

- b. He seems to have attempted stalling the people demand even after divine approval
 - i. God told him to guide the people on how the king would enforce justice (v. 9). I believe in this verse, the author is using a literary device called Hendiadys. “Hendiadys is a form of emphasis, created by using a word structure that is relatively unusual, thereby grabbing attention. In effect, the conjunction both divides and joins, making two separate things as one.”¹ In the English language it is used more of nouns (instead of combining adjective and noun) than with verbs (instead of using adverbs and verbs). The Hebrew language is in short supply of words so it has unique ways creating adverbial phrases and the hendiadys is one of them. Examples in English
 1. *The heat and sun of midday* (instead of the hot midday sun).
 2. *Deceit and words* instead of *deceitful words*)
 3. *Come up and see me sometime* instead of *Come up to see me*)
 4. So in passage God told Samuel to “solemnly warn them and declare to them the justice of the king who will rule over them” this would mean, “solemnly warn them regarding how the king who will rule over them ought to executive justice.” In Deut 17:14-18 God had already anticipated this moment and given direction on how they could have a king that will maintain justice. I believe this is what God was asking Samuel remind the people of. I was only after the election of Saul that Samuel did this in 1 Sam 10:25
 - ii. But Samuel rather went on enumerating how evil the king would be, which could be summarize as military conscription, high taxes, real estate expropriation, cronyism, patronage, sponsorship scandals, and slavery
 - iii. The people were adamant on having a king
 - iv. Samuel reports back to God
 - v. God commands Samuel to give them a king
 - vi. Samuel dismisses the people.
7. Returning to our topic for today, let me modify it slightly to “Is a king so much worse than a judge?” and my response is Not really. Here’s why.
- a. Moshe Garsiel² the issue at state here is evaluation of dynastic succession
8. The problem addressed by the books of Samuel is dynastic success: Note the mention of two sons and their failures

¹ http://changingminds.org/techniques/language/figures_speech/hendiadys.htm accessed 16/6/2019.

² Moshe Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Revivim Publishing House, 1985).

- a. Eli: Hophi and Phinehas (sexual perverts, gluttons and insolent)
 - b. Samuel: Joel and Abijah (corrupt)
 - c. Saul: Jonathan and Ishbosheth (weaklings)
 - d. David: Amnon and Absalom (Violence and civil disorder)
 - e. "It therefore becomes clear that, like leadership by the priesthood, leadership by the judges is not necessarily a guarantee of success when it is transmitted on a hereditary basis, and that one cannot rely on the generalization of 'like father, like son'" (Garsiel 1985: 63).
 - f. The author of Samuel, then, builds around the theme of fathers, sons and hereditary leadership an extended comparative structure which encompasses large portions of the book. The conclusion arising from the four parts of this analogy is that the hereditary principle leads to corruption under a priesthood, to perversion of justice under judges, and to disarray and civil war in a monarchy" (Garsiel 1985: 64).
9. So what is the ideal?
- a. Divinely appointed leaders (cf. **1 Sam 12:8–12**)
 - b. Even in the promise of a dynasty to David, God was to choose among his sons (2 Sam 7:12)
 - c. Leaders who hear from God and obey God
 - d. Leaders who eschew nepotism and seek God for successful successors (Moses; Elijah)
10. Conclusion
- a. In our relationships, when engaged in disputes (or discussions generally) we must learn to detach ourselves from the issues
 - b. Character traits are not transmitted by birth but by discipleship and mentorship
 - c. Leadership is not the imposition of the leaders' whims, but the harnessing of people's aspirations for common good
 - d. Walking with God, hearing his voice and obeying him is the key to success in life and in leadership, particularly (cf. Josh 1:6-9; John 14:21-23)