

# Beit Rabban Parashah Page

## Parashat Shoftim

Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9

## פרשת שופטים

דברים טז:יה-כא:ט

Among the many commands in Parashat Shoftim, we learn about what kind of king B'nei Yisrael may appoint. The Torah describes that when B'nei Yisrael enter the Land of Israel, they will want to have a king "like all of the other nations" (Deut. 17:14). They are told (Deut. 17:15):

You may have a king—one chosen by HaShem your God: Be sure to set as a king over yourself one of your own people, you may not set a foreigner who is not one of your own people.

שׁוֹם פְּשִׁים עַלְיךָ מֶלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר יִבְחרֶה  
ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּו: מִקְרָב אֲחֵיכָה, פְּשִׁים  
עַלְיךָ מֶלֶךְ—לֹא תּוּכֶל לְמַתֵּחַ עַלְיךָ  
אִישׁ נָכְרִי, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-אֲחֵיכָה הוּא.

The words here are different from other mitzvot: this is not a *command* to have a king—it is **permission** to have a king. HaShem will allow B'nei Yisrael to have a king but there are a number of rules about who this king should be and how he should behave (Deut. 17:15-20).

Why might B'nei Yisrael have wanted a king "like all the other nations?" Why do you think HaShem agreed to let them have a king? Why do you think it was important that this king be an Israelite? How do you think a good king should behave?

The instructions conclude with ". . . so that his heart will not be raised above other people" (Deut. 17:20). In some ways, the king will have to be above other people; he is in charge and will need to tell people what to do. What do you think this instruction about "his heart will not be raised" means? Why is it important for leaders to follow the rules like everyone else? What connections do you see between the rules for a king and the way you want the people in charge of things in your life to behave?