

# 1 Samuel 8:4-5

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/1sam/1sam-8/1-samuel-84-5/>

*The local leaders of Israel tell Samuel that his sons are dishonest judges, and that they want a king over the entire nation like all other countries.*

Due to the corruption of Samuel's sons, *all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah* to present their grievance regarding his sons. *Ramah* was the site of Samuel's house (1 Samuel 7:17). The *elders of Israel* would represent the recognized leaders of the tribes and communities of Israel.

When the elders came to Ramah *they said to Samuel, Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.* The elders have a legitimate beef, they have judges who are corrupt. They also have the authority to act; God had given the people the authority to appoint their own judges (Deuteronomy 16:18). They had good cause; God had warned the people to make sure they appointed judges who were honest, and did justice among the people (Deuteronomy 16:18-20). So the elders were actually following God's instructions in insisting that these corrupt judges be replaced.

However, rather than insist on appointing honest judges in their place, according to the commands of God, they now request that Samuel *appoint a king* to rule over them. Here the people give two reasons for wanting a king, but will add an additional reason later in the chapter:

1. The people wanted a king *to judge* Israel. No longer would they have a judge that will be accountable to them, or be accountable to the standard of doing justice. They will now have a human king that can set their own standard. However, they will have less responsibility on themselves. Here they are removing a corrupt judge, as was their right. But they are asking to install a ruler who cannot be removed.
2. They wanted a king who would go out and fight their battles for them (1 Samuel 8:20). Israel had relied on a volunteer army. They now want someone else to take on the responsibility of providing security for the nation.
3. They wanted to have a king *like all the nations*. Israel looked "on the other side of the fence" and saw their neighboring nations' kings and decided "we want to be like them." As we will see, this request was actually a rejection of God's provision for Israel through His covenant with them.

## Biblical Text

**<sup>4</sup>Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; <sup>5</sup>and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."**