

מַלְכוּת נֶשֶׁל בְּשִׁלוּמָהּ מִתְפַּלֵּל הָיוּ, אֹמֵר הַכֹּהֲנִים סֵגֵן חַנִּינָא רַבִּי
"בְּלַעוּ חַיִּים רַעְהוּ אֶת אִישׁ, מִוְרָאָה נֶשְׂאֵלְמִילָא."

Rabbi Hanina, the vice-high priest said: pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear it inspires, every man would swallow his neighbor alive.

A discussion on **Government** based on **Pirkei Avot 3:2**

A Related Story:

"I grew up eating Jewish food, hearing Jewish jokes and arguments, attending an Orthodox synagogue and its Hebrew school. How could such things not affect my imagination, including my writing? On the other hand, my parents were quite secular in their outlook; "nominally kosher" might describe the household in certain matters. That contradiction, too, is part of me, so of my writing. In particular, I remember amid the terribly long Saturday morning services the beauty of the cantorial singing: the sounds of words in a language I couldn't much understand, but the sound far more expressive than the stiff, boring English translation I might glance at. Like an anchor, or like a life raft? . . . the sounds of words."

Robert Pinsky served as poet laureate at the U.S. Library of Congress from 1997 to 2000.

Some Textual Questions to ask Chanichim:

- Is this Mishna saying we only value the government because they keep society in order, or should we be placing an intrinsic value in there being a proper government?
- Look at the pasuk from Devarim. Do we say an elected government is better than a king?
- Do all government in the modern world fulfil this role of preventing anarchy in society? Does this Mishna behave us to speak out and protest if a government is doing this?
- Would this be different if it was in a foreign country or the UK?
- What about Israel?

Some General Questions to ask Chanichim:

- How can we balance the idea of valuing a government with the theocratic value if we believe in just doing what Hashem wants?
- Is democracy the best form of leading a nation?
- The Pasuk says we should have a king. Does that mean that having a democracy is not the ideal according to the torah? (what is meant by "like all the nations around you")

Some Personal Questions to ask Chanichim:

- Should we be requiring a government and laws to stop is descending into anarchy
- What other methods of checks and balances should we be putting on our lives?
- Should leaders be using fear in order to make sure people follow them? (both context of leading a country but also as a leader of a social group)
- What is the role of national leaders and what should they be prioritising in society? Health and safety? The Economy? Foreign relations?
- Do you think the "torah outlook" is different from the "western outlook"

Some Interactive Resources:

What types of government are these pictures representing are any of them intrinsically good or bad or can it vary?



"Different type of politician, president, prime minister, or ruler of a country giving speech. Artwork depicts the many kind of faces, characters, and personalities of a politician in the government."

Other sources and quotes to bring into discussion:

Winston Churchill

"Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the other."

Alexander Hamilton

"Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of man will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint."

Thomas Hobbes (16th century English philosopher)

"Government is necessary not because man is naturally bad ... but because man is by nature more individualistic than social"

Devarim 17:14

"When you come to the land which the L-rd your G-d gives to you and you inherit it and inhabit it, and you say: I shall place over myself a king, like all the nations that are around me: Place shall you place over yourself a king whom the L-rd your G-d shall choose; from the midst of your brothers shall you place over yourself a king. You shall not be able to place over yourself a strange man, who is not your brother."