



Governmental Authority and Protest

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When Power Exercises Responsible Restraint, Rabbi Noam Kornsgold

Numbers 11:27-29

(כז) וַיֵּרָץ הַנַּעַר וַיֵּגֵד לְמֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְדָּד וּמִדָּד מַתְנַבְּאִים בְּמַחֲנֶה: (כח) וַיַּעַן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נוּן מִשְׁרַת מֹשֶׁה מִבְּחָרָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי מֹשֶׁה כָּלֵאָם: (כט) וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מֹשֶׁה הֲמִקְנָא אֶתָּה לִי וּמִי יִתֵּן כָּל־עַם ה' נְבִיאִים כִּי־יִתֵּן ה' אֶת־רוּחוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם:

(27) A youth ran out and told Moses, saying, “Eldad and Medad are acting the prophet in the camp!” (28) And Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ attendant from his youth, spoke up and said, “My lord Moses, restrain them!” (29) But Moses said to him, “Are you wrought up on my account? **Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets**, that the Lord put His spirit upon them!”

Parashat B’Haalot’kha confronts us with the challenges and possibilities of leadership in times of crisis, offering a vision that resists authoritarianism and embraces shared authority. When Eldad and Medad begin prophesying in seeming challenge to Moses’ authority, Moses refuses to restrain and silence them. He instead proclaims, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets!” This is a radical endorsement of decentralized power and a challenge to centralized overreach. Though he could assert power over Eldad and Medad, Moses exercises restraint. The Torah thus models an ethic of distributed leadership and trust in the moral capacity of the community. We are challenged to build and defend communities where authority isn’t hoarded, but shared.

Rebuke, and Then Rebuke Again, Rabbis Ashira Konigsburg and Noam Kornsgold

Babylonian Talmud, *Arakhin* 16b

מִנֵּין לְרֹאֶה בַּחֲבִירוֹ דְּבַר מְגוֹנָה שְׁחִיב לְהוֹכִיחוֹ? שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “הוֹכִיחַ תּוֹכִיחַ” (ויקרא יט:יז). הוֹכִיחוֹ וְלֹא קִבֵּל, מִנֵּין שְׁיִחְזוֹר וְיִוְכִיחֵנוּ? תִּלְמוּד לומר: “תּוֹכִיחַ”, מְכַל מְקוֹם...עַד הֵיכָן תּוֹכִיחָה? רַב אָמַר: עַד הַכֶּאֱה, וּשְׁמוּאֵל אָמַר: עַד קִלְלָה, וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר: עַד נִזְיָפָה.

From where do we know that one who sees something unseemly in his fellow that he is obligated to rebuke him? As it says, “You shall surely rebuke” (Leviticus 19:17). If he rebukes him and [the latter] doesn’t accept [the rebuke], from where do we know that [the reprover] should return and rebuke him again? The Torah says, “You shall rebuke” - in any event...Until when should the rebuke [occur]? Rav said: Until hitting; and Shemuel said: until cursing and R. Yohanan said: until anger.

Rebuke! When we witness even the spectre of governmental overreach, when power is abused,



when rights are trampled, when justice is denied, we are not permitted to remain silent. Our tradition demands that we raise our voices in protest, not as a one-time gesture, but as a continual act of moral vigilance. *You shall surely rebuke!* A single act or voice of protest is not enough. We are commanded to rebuke and to pursue justice continuously and to always remind those in power that their authority is not absolute and that we the people are watching.

The Separation of Powers and a Community of Trust, Rabbi Noam Kornsgold

Mishnah, Shekalim 5:2

אין פוחתין משלשה גזברין ומשבעה אמרכלין, ואין עושין שררה על הצבור בממון פחות משנים, חוץ
מבן אחיה שעל חולי מעים ואלעזר שעל הפרוכות, שאותן קבלו רוב הצבור עליהן:

We may have no less than three supervisors and seven treasurers. And we do not grant authority over the community with regard to money with less than two, except for Ben Ahiyah, who [treated] intestinal disease, and Elazar, who [oversaw] the curtains, for the majority of the community accepted them.

In describing the operations of the Temple, our Rabbis exhibited a deep commitment to shared authority and communal oversight, especially in matters of public trust. By insisting that even routine roles require multiple officeholders, our Rabbis affirm that power must be diffused to prevent abuse and to cultivate accountability. How much more so is this true for those who hold some of the highest offices in the land! The United States Constitution establishes a separation of powers to ensure that no individual, regardless of electoral success or popularity, can wield unchecked authority. Trust in governance, whether for the Temple or modern democracies, depends on structural safeguards and a recognition that no single person is above communal accountability.