

**Who interprets the מקרב אחיך (to exclude עבדים); it is the רבנן.**

### Overview

הורדוס, who was an עבד כנעני, became the king of the בני ישראל. There were however many misgivings about his regal status since he was an עבד. The תורה states clearly מִקִּרְבֵי אֶחָיִךְ תִּשִּׂים עֲלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ. The king must be appointed from the midst of the Jewish people. מִקִּרְבֵי אֶחָיִךְ as an עבד was not anticipated, that seemingly הורדוס' anger should not have been directed to the רבנן. The פסוק states מִקִּרְבֵי אֶחָיִךְ. Why was he angry at the רבנן? They did not institute this ruling.

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תוספות explains:

**פסוק מקרב אחיך תשים עליך מלך – דפשטיה דקרא – לא משמע למעוטי עבד** from becoming a king. The reason is –

**שהוא אחיך במצות – for the עבד is indeed your brother<sup>1</sup>** in regards to observing the מצות. An עבד is obligated to perform the מצוות like a woman.

**אלא עובד כוכבים – rather** the term מקרב אחיך would imply that a **gentile** be excluded from becoming a מלך. A gentile is not obligated in any מצוות; therefore he cannot be considered אחיך. This is how we would have interpreted this verse were it not for the רבנן. הורדוס then would have been accepted as king.

**However the רבנן interpreted** the פסוק מקרב אחיך to mean –

**ממובחר שבאחיך – from the choicest<sup>2</sup> of your brothers.** A king has to appointed from the highest quality of the Jewish people. An עבד, obviously does not fulfill that criterion. This is the reason why הורדוס became enraged against the חכמים. For if not for the חכמים he would have been accepted fully as a proper king.

### Summary

The רבנן interpret the term מקרב אחיך to mean ממובחר שבאחיך; thus excluding even עבדים from becoming king. Without this דרשה, we may have thought that it comes to exclude עכו"ם.

### Thinking it over

Why would it have been necessary for the תורה to teach us that a gentile cannot be appointed as a מלך? Would someone have thought otherwise!

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<sup>1</sup> See previous תוספות ד"ה כל.

<sup>2</sup> It would seem that the רבנן interpret the word מקרב 'from the midst', to mean those from the core; not from those on the periphery.