

Do Karaites believe in a Central Government or Organization?

By

Yochanan Zaquantov

One of the accusations against the Karaite Jews is that since we have differing opinions on the interpretation of scripture, we can never be a group. Without a central authority or organization to tell us what to do we would never be able to be a group. So because we don't accept the central authority of the Rabbis and their interpretation this accusation exists. So is it true are we so different that we can never be a group. Do we so reject the interpretations of others that we can never submitted to an authority whether central or other.

What does the Tanakh say on authority? Is there a central authority in the Tanakh? How is that authority chosen? Will we as Karaite Jews accept that authority? That is what we will be looking at today, authority and organization in the Tanakh.

Zaqen is Hebrew for one old in age. But it is also used for those who were selected to serve. It is zayin-qof-nun soft and reference number 2205. It is found on pages 392-392 in the NEHC and starting page 278 in the BDB.

Bereshit/Genesis 18:11 (10-11)

10 Then one said, "I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son!" Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, which was behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah **were old (zaqenim זְקֵנִים)**, advanced in years; Sarah had stopped having the periods of women.

Here we see that zaqan is used to denote age not a position.

Shemot/Exodus 3:16,18 (16-18)

16 "Go and assemble the **elders of Israel (ziq'nei Yis'ra'el זְקֵנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)** and say to them: Yehovah, Elohey of your fathers, Elohey of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has appeared to me and said, 'I have taken note of you and of what is being done to you in Egypt, 17 and I have declared: I will take you out of the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' 18 They will listen to you; then you shall go with **the elders of Israel (ve'ziq'nei Yis'ra'el וְזְקֵנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)** to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, 'Yehovah, Elohey of the Hebrews, manifested Himself to us. Now therefore, let us go a distance of three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to Yehovah Eloheynu.'

So you can see that this group of elders (ziq'nei) existed far before Moshe arrived on the scene. It does not say how they were appointed but they held a position of authority before Moshe arrived. Likely they may have been the heads of their tribes or families.

Shemot/Exodus 12:21

21 Moses then summoned all the **elders of Israel (ziq'nei Yis'ra'el זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)** and said to them, “Go, pick out lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover offering. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and to the two doorposts. None of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. 23 For when Yehovah goes through to smite the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, and Yehovah will pass over the door and not let the Destroyer enter and smite your home. 24 “You shall observe this as an institution for all time, for you and for your descendants. 25 And when you enter the land that Yehovah will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. 26 And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this rite?’ 27 you shall say, ‘It is the passover sacrifice to Yehovah, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses.’”
The people then bowed low in homage. 28 And the Israelites went and did so; just as Yehovah had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

Here we see the ziq'nei Yis'ra'el were like the chain of command from Moshe and Aharon. The command they were given was delivered to all the Yis'ra'elim.

Shemot/Exodus 17:5, 6 (1-6)

1 From the wilderness of Sin the whole Israelite community continued by stages as Yehovah would command. They encamped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 The people quarreled with Moses. “Give us water to drink,” they said; and Moses replied to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you try Yehovah?” 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and the people grumbled against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” 4 Moses cried out to Yehovah, saying, “What shall I do with this people? Before long they will be stoning me!” 5 Then Yehovah said to Moses, “Pass before the people; take with you **some of the elders of Israel (mizziq'nei Yis'ra'el מִזִּיקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)**, and take along the rod with which you struck the Nile, and set out. 6 I will be standing there before you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock and water will issue from it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of **the elders of Israel (ziq'nei Yis'ra'el זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)**.

The Ziq'nei Yis'ra'el continued on as a group of leaders that conveyed to Am Yis'ra'el what they needed to know like the staff of Elohim providing water for them from the rock.

Shemot/Exodus 18:12

12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices for God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to partake of the meal before God with Moses' father-in-law.

When the Am Yis'ra'el met up with Moshe father in law the Ziq'nei Yis'ra'el went with Aharon to meet him. They continued to exist even before Yithro's advice to Moshe right after this.

Shemot/Exodus 19:7

7 Moses came and summoned the **elders of the people** (leziq'nei ha'am לְזִקְנֵי הָעָם) and put before them all that Yehovah had commanded him. 8 All the people answered as one, saying, "All that Yehovah has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the people's words to Yehovah.

Yehovah summoned the elders of the people. They convey the message to the people and brought back the response. This was even after the assigning of those ruling over the people and the elders appear to continue to be a group.

Shemot/Exodus 24:1,9, 14

1 Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, **and seventy elders of Israel** (veshiv'im mizziq'nei Yis'ra'el וְשִׁבְעִים מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), and bow low from afar.

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel (**veshiv'im mizziq'nei Yis'ra'el** וְשִׁבְעִים מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) ascended;

14 To the **elders** (hazaqenim הַזְּקֵנִים) he had said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. You have Aaron and Hur with you; let anyone who has a legal matter approach them."

We see the first reference to the seventy from elders (shiv'im mizziq'nei). Yet we don't hear about them until Bamidbar 11. The seventy were selected from the elders (hazaqenim).

Vayiqra/Leviticus 4:15

13 If it is the whole community of Israel that has erred and the matter escapes the notice of the congregation, so that they do any of the things which by Yehovah's

commandments ought not to be done, and they realize their guilt—14 when the sin through which they incurred guilt becomes known, the congregation shall offer a bull of the herd as a sin offering, and bring it before the Tent of Meeting. 15 The **elders of the community** (**ziq'nei ha'edah זִקְנֵי הָעֵדָה**) shall lay their hands upon the head of the bull before Yehovah, and the bull shall be slaughtered before Yehovah.

Bamidbar/Numbers 11:16, 24-25, 30

16 Then Yehovah said to Moses, “Gather for Me **seventy of Israel’s elders** (**shiv'im ish mizziq'nei Yis'ra'el שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**) of whom you have experience as **elders** (**ziq'nei זִקְנֵי**) and officers of the people, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting and let them take their place there with you. 17 I will come down and speak with you there, and I will draw upon the spirit that is on you and put it upon them; they shall share the burden of the people with you, and you shall not bear it alone.

Literally they were to be seventy men from the elders of Yis'ra'el. They had to have experience being an elder or officer over the people. One who had to be able to rule over and teach people.

24 Moses went out and reported the words of Yehovah to the people. He gathered **seventy of the people’s elders** (**shiv'im ish mizziq'nei ha'am שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ מִזְקְנֵי הָעָם**) and stationed them around the Tent. 25 Then Yehovah came down in a cloud and spoke to him; He drew upon the spirit that was on him and put it upon the seventy elders. And when the spirit rested upon them, they spoke in ecstasy, but did not continue.

The seventy were given the spirit on Moshe but did not become prophets.

26 Two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, had remained in camp; yet the spirit rested upon them—they were among those recorded, but they had not gone out to the Tent—and they spoke in ecstasy in the camp. 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 Yehovah’s people were prophets, that Yehovah put His spirit upon them!” 30 Moses then reentered the camp together **with the elders of Israel** (**veziq'nei Yis'ra'el וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**).

Thus, there were 72 men who the Spirit on Moshe was placed upon. Thus, it also shows us that Yehovah places his spirit upon his prophets whether we see each case specifically.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 5:20 (19-20)

19 Yehovah spoke those words—those and no more—to your whole congregation at the mountain, with a mighty voice out of the fire and the dense clouds. He inscribed them on two tablets of stone, which He gave to me. 20 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, you came up to me, all **your** tribal heads **and elders** (**veziq'neikhem וְזִקְנֵיכֶם**),

The Elders who as listed here with the tribal heads were those who the older ones in the tribes. From the book of Bamidbar/Numbers they are leaders under the tribal heads. They could be of the ones later selected as Yithro had advised Moshe.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 27:1

1 Moses **and the elders of Israel** (**veziq'nei Yisrael וְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**) charged the people, saying: Observe all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you this day.

The ziq'nei were there with Moshe communicating his words to the people.

Rut/Ruth 4:2, 4, 9, 11

2 Then [Boaz] took **ten elders** (**esarah enashim mizziq'nei עֶשְׂרָה אַנְשִׁים מִזִּקְנֵי**) of the town and said, “Be seated here”; and they sat down.

3 He said to the redeemer, “Naomi, now returned from the country of Moab, must sell the piece of land which belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. 4 I thought I should disclose the matter to you and say: Acquire it in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of **the elders of my people** (**ziq'nei ami זִקְנֵי עַמִּי**). If you are willing to redeem it, redeem! But if you will not redeem, tell me, that I may know. For there is no one to redeem but you, and I come after you.” “I am willing to redeem it,” he replied.

5 Boaz continued, “When you acquire the property from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabite, you must also acquire the wife of the deceased, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate.” 6 The redeemer replied, “Then I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own estate. You take over my right of redemption, for I am unable to exercise it.” 7 Now this was formerly done in Israel in cases of redemption or exchange: to validate any transaction, one man would take off his sandal and hand it to the other. Such was the practice in Israel. 8 So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Acquire for yourself,” he drew off his sandal. 9 And Boaz said **to the elders**

(**lezzaqenim לְזִקְנֵים**) and to the rest of the people, “You are witnesses today that I am acquiring from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. 10 I am also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, as my wife, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate, that the name of the deceased may not disappear from among his kinsmen and from the gate of his home town. You are witnesses today.”

11 All the people at the gate **and the elders (vehazzaqenim וְהַזְקֵנִים)** answered, “We are. May Yehovah make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem!

Thus, we see that the elders of the City with the people of that city were witnesses on the matter.

Divrei Hayamim Bet/2 Chronicles 5:2, 4

2 Then Solomon convoked **the elders of Israel (ziq’nei Yisrael זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)**—all the heads of the tribes and the ancestral chiefs of the Israelites—in Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from the City of David, that is, Zion.

4 When **all the elders of Israel (kol ziq’nei Yis’ra’el כָּל זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)** had come, the Levites carried the Ark.

We see that Ziq’nei continued to be around even during the time of Melekh Shlomo’s reign.

Ezra 10:8, 14

7 Then a proclamation was issued in Judah and Jerusalem that all who had returned from the exile should assemble in Jerusalem, **8** and that anyone who did not come in three days would, by decision of **the officers and elders (hasarim vehazzaqenim הַשָּׂרִים וְהַזְקֵנִים)**, have his property confiscated and himself excluded from the congregation of the returning exiles.

9 All the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled in Jerusalem in three days; it was the ninth month, the twentieth of the month. All the people sat in the square of the House of HaElohim, trembling on account of the event and because of the rains.

14 Let our officers remain on behalf of the entire congregation, and all our townspeople who have brought home foreign women shall appear before them at scheduled times, together with **the elders (ziq’nei זִקְנֵי)** and judges of each town, in order to avert the burning anger of Eloheynu from us on this account.”

Like in the early days of Yisrael the ziq’nei played a role investigation and deciding matters in the town or community they lived.

Sar is Hebrew for a ruler or prince. It is sin-resh and reference number 8269. It is found on pages 1214-1217 in the NEHC and starting page 978 in the BDB. It is from the verb Sarar (Sin-Resh-Resh) that means to rule. It is found in the NEHC on page 1219.

Bereshit/Genesis 39:1

1 When Joseph was taken down to Egypt, a certain Egyptian, Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh and his chief steward, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there.

Bereshit/Genesis 40:2 (1-2)

1 Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt gave offense to their lord the king of Egypt. 2 Pharaoh was angry with his two courtiers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,

Shemot/Exodus 1:11

11 So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses.

Shemot/Exodus 2:14

14 He retorted, “Who made you chief and ruler over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Moses was frightened, and thought: Then the matter is known!

Shemot/Exodus 18:21, 25

19 Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and Elohim be with you! You represent the people before HaElohim: you bring the disputes before HaElohim, 20 and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. 21 You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear Elohim, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as **chiefs (Sarei שָׂרֵי)** of thousands, (Sarei שָׂרֵי) hundreds, (Sarei שָׂרֵי) fifties, and (veSarei וְשָׂרֵי) tens, and 22 **let them judge the people (veshaf'tu et-ha'am וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם)** at all times. Have them bring every major dispute to you, but let them decide every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the burden with you. 23 If you do this—and Elohim so commands you—you will be able to bear up; and all these people too will go home unwearied.” 24 Moses heeded his father-in-law and did just as he had said. 25 Moses chose capable men out of all Israel, and appointed them **heads (rashim רָאשִׁים)** over the people—**chiefs (Sarei שָׂרֵי)** of thousands, (Sarei שָׂרֵי) hundreds, (Sarei שָׂרֵי) fifties, and (veSarei וְשָׂרֵי) tens; 26 **and they judged the people (veshaf'tu et-ha'am**

(וְשָׂפוּ אֶת־הָעַם) at all times: the difficult matters they would bring to Moses, and all the minor matters they would decide themselves.

These became the officers of the people. They lead the people but also acted as decision makers and teachers of the people. As Moshe lead all the people, they lead thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

Bamidbar/Numbers 31:14, 48, 52, 54

14 Moses became angry with the commanders of the army, **the officers** (Sarei שָׂרֵי) of thousands **and the officers** (veSarei וְשָׂרֵי) of hundreds, who had come back from the military campaign. 15 Moses said to them, “You have spared every female!

48 The commanders of the troop divisions, **the officers** (Sarei שָׂרֵי) of thousands **and the officers** (veSarei וְשָׂרֵי) of hundreds, approached Moses.

52 All the gold that was offered by **the officers** (Sarei שָׂרֵי) of thousands and **the officers** (Sarei שָׂרֵי) of hundreds as a contribution to Yehovah came to 16,750 shekels.

53 —But in the ranks, everyone kept his booty for himself.—54 So Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted the gold from **the officers** (Sarei שָׂרֵי) of thousands and the officers of hundreds and brought it to the Tent of Meeting, as a reminder in behalf of the Israelites before Yehovah.

The same officers led the people into battle.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 1:15 (9-17)

9 Thereupon I said to you, “I cannot bear the burden of you by myself. 10 Yehovah Eloheykhem has multiplied you until you are today as numerous as the stars in the sky.— 11 May Yehovah, Elohey of your fathers, increase your numbers a thousandfold, and bless you as He promised you.—12 How can I bear unaided the trouble of you, and the burden, and the bickering! 13 Pick from each of your tribes men who are wise, discerning, and experienced, and I will appoint them as your heads.” 14 You answered me and said, “What you propose to do is good.” 15 So I took your tribal leaders, wise and experienced men, and appointed them heads over you: **chiefs** (Sarei שָׂרֵי) of thousands, **chiefs** (veSarei וְשָׂרֵי) of hundreds, **chiefs** (veSarei וְשָׂרֵי) of fifties, **and chiefs** (veSarei וְשָׂרֵי) of tens, **and officials** (veshot'rim וְשׂוֹטְרִים) for your tribes.

16 I charged **your magistrates (shof'teikhem שֹׁפְטֵיכֶם)** at that time as follows, “Hear out your fellow men, and decide justly between any man and a fellow Israelite or a stranger. 17 You shall not be partial in judgment: hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is Elohim’s. And any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it.” 18 Thus I instructed you, at that time, about the various things that you should do.

Here we see that the same event in Shemot 18 repeated here and expounded upon by Moshe on how they were chosen by the people first and then installed into position by Moshe. He also taught them how they were to judge the people. They stood in the minor matters as Moshe once did.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 20:9 (3-9)

3 He shall say to them, “Hear, O Israel! You are about to join battle with your enemy. Let not your courage falter. Do not be in fear, or in panic, or in dread of them. 4 For it is Yehovah Eloheykha who marches with you to do battle for you against your enemy, to bring you victory.”

5 Then the officials (hashshot'rim 7870 הַשְּׁטָרִים) shall address the troops, as follows: “Is there anyone who has built a new house but has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another dedicate it. 6 Is there anyone who has planted a vineyard but has never harvested it? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another harvest it. 7 Is there anyone who has paid the bride-price for a wife, but who has not yet married her? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another marry her.” 8 The officials (hashshot'rim הַשְּׁטָרִים) shall go on addressing the troops and say, “Is there anyone afraid and disheartened? Let him go back to his home, lest the courage of his comrades flag like his.” 9 When the officials (hashshot'rim הַשְּׁטָרִים) have finished addressing the troops, army **commanders (Sarei שָׂרֵי)** shall assume command of the troops.

Here we see there is the commander or ruler and there is officers. The Sarei lead the troops.

Yehoshua/Joshua 5:14 (13-15)

13 Once, when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him, drawn sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and asked him, “Are you one of us or of our enemies?” 14 He replied, “No, I am **captain (Sar שָׂר)** of Yehovah’s host. Now I have come!” Joshua threw himself face down to the ground and, prostrating himself, said to him, “What does my lord (adoni אֲדֹנָי) command his servant?” 15 **The**

captain (Sar שַׂר) of Yehovah’s host answered Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Here we see that even among the tzeva (army) of Yehovah there are commanders or rulers.

Ezra 8:20, 24, 25, 29 (20-29)

20 and of the temple servants whom David **and the officers (vehasarim וְהַשָּׂרִים)** had appointed for the service of the Levites—220 temple servants, all of them listed by name.

21 I proclaimed a fast there by the Ahava River to afflict ourselves before Eloheynu to beseech Him for a smooth journey for us and for our children and for all our possessions;

22 for I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us against any enemy on the way, since we had told the king, “The benevolent care of Eloheynu is for all who seek Him, while His fierce anger is against all who forsake Him.” **23** So we fasted and besought me Eloheynu for this, and He responded to our plea. **24** Then I

selected twelve of **the chiefs (misarei מִשָּׂרֵי)** of the priests, namely Sherebiah and Hashabiah with ten of their brothers, **25** and I weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the vessels, the contribution to the House of Eloheynu which the king, his counselors

and officers (vesarayv וְשָׂרָיו), and all Israel who were present had made. **26** I entrusted to their safekeeping the weight of six hundred and fifty talents of silver, one hundred silver vessels of one talent each, one hundred talents of gold; **27** also, twenty gold bowls worth one thousand *darics* and two vessels of good, shining bronze, as precious as gold. **28** I said to them, “You are consecrated to Yehovah, and the vessels are consecrated, and the silver and gold are a freewill offering to Yehovah Elohey of your fathers. **29** Guard them diligently until such time as you weigh them out in the presence of **the officers (sarei שָׂרֵי)** of the priests and the Levites and the officers of the clans of Israel in Jerusalem in the chambers of the House of Yehovah.”

The Sarei here were the selected of the Priests. It also shows that Ezra appointed this men. Nehemyah also lists a great many men who were made Sarei or Commanders/Rulers especially in chapter 3.

Nehemyah/Nehemiah 3:9,12,14,15,16,17,18,19

9 Next to them, Rephaiah son of Hur, **chief (sar שַׂר)** of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired.

12 Next to them, Shallum son of Hallohesh, **chief (sar שַׂר)** of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired—he and his daughters.

14 Malchijah son of Rechab, **chief (sar שַׂר)** of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate; he rebuilt it and set up its doors, locks, and bars. 15 Shallun son of Col-hozeh, **chief (sar שַׂר)** of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate; he rebuilt it and covered it, and set up its doors, locks, and bars, as well as the wall of the irrigation pool of the King's Garden as far as the steps going down from the City of David. 16 After him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, **chief (sar שַׂר)** of half the district of Beth-zur, repaired, from in front of the graves of David as far as the artificial pool, and as far as the House of the Warriors. 17 After him, the Levites repaired: Rehum son of Bani. Next to him, Hashabiah, **chief (sar שַׂר)** of half the district of Keilah, repaired for his district. 18 After him, their brothers repaired: Bavvai son of Henadad, **chief (sar שַׂר)** of half the district of Keilah. 19 Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, the **chief (sar שַׂר)** of Mizpah, repaired a second stretch, from in front of the ascent to the armory] the angle [of the wall].

In Nehemyah's day he was the governor of the Yehudim and so he was the central governmental authority and while Ezra was the central religious authority. Nehemyah was appointed by the King and not specifically by a prophet or priest.

We have seen that the Sar and Zaqen were both leaders and even rlers of some of the people. We see that Nehemyah was a Pechah or Govenor. So lets see how they were established and what they did.

Pechah is Aramaic for a govenor. It is Pey-Chet-Hey and reference number 6346. It is found on pages 1016-1017 in the NEHC and starting page 808 in the BDB. Also related to this is Pechah from the reference number 6347. You will find this term mostly in Ezra and Nehemyah.

Melekhim Aleph/I Kings 10:15

13 King Solomon, in turn, gave the queen of Sheba everything she wanted and asked for, in addition to what King Solomon gave her out of his royal bounty. Then she and her attendants left and returned to her own land.

14 The weight of the gold which Solomon received every year was 666 talents of gold, 15 besides what came from tradesmen, from the traffic of the merchants, and from all the kings of Arabia **and the governors (ufachot וּפְחֹת)** of the regions.

Here we see that these governors came from areas outside the Land of Israel.

Nehemyah/Nehemiah 2:7,9

7 Then I said to the king, “If it please the king, let me have letters to **the governors** (**pachovot פַּחְוֹת**) of the province of Beyond the River, directing them to grant me passage until I reach Judah; 8 likewise, a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the King’s Park, directing him to give me timber for roofing the gatehouses of the temple fortress and the city walls and for the house I shall occupy.” The king gave me these, thanks to my God’s benevolent care for me. 9 When I came to **the governors** (**pachovot פַּחְוֹת**) of the province of Beyond the River I gave them the king’s letters. The king also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

Nehemyah/Nehemiah 5:14, 15, 18

14 Furthermore, from the day I was commissioned to be **governor** (**Pecham פֶּחַם**) in the land of Judah—from the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes until his thirty-second year, twelve years in all—neither I nor my brothers ever ate of **the governor’s** (**haPechah הַפֶּחַח**) food allowance. 15 The former **governors** (**hapachot הַפַּחֹת**) who preceded me laid heavy burdens on the people, and took from them for bread and wine more than forty shekels of silver. Their servants also tyrannized over the people. But I, out of the fear of Elohim, did not do so. 16 I also supported the work on this wall; we did not buy any land, and all my servants were gathered there at the work. 17 Although there were at my table, between Jews and prefects, one hundred and fifty men in all, beside those who came to us from surrounding nations; 18 and although what was prepared for each day came to one ox, six select sheep, and fowl, all prepared for me, and at ten-day intervals all sorts of wine in abundance—yet I did not resort to the **governor’s** (**haPechah הַפֶּחַח**) food allowance, for the [king’s] service lay heavily on the people.

Here we see that indeed Nehemyah was the appointed Govenor.

Nehemyah/Nehemiah 12:26

26 These were in the time of Joiakim son of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and in the time of Nehemiah **the governor** (**HaPechah הַפֶּחַח**), and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

Here Nehemyah is clearly the governor.

Shafat is Hebrew for decider or some say a judge. It is Shin-Fey-Tet and reference number 8199. It is found on pages 1319-1320 in the NEHC and starting page 1041 in the BDB. The title for the book of Shofetim is derived from the verb. Weven the word Mish’pat which is known as judgement is from this word in the form Min-Shapat or from Judging.

Bereshit/Genesis 19:9

9 But they said, “Stand back! The fellow,” they said, “came here as an alien, **and already he acts the ruler** (vayish’fot shafot וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שָׁפוֹט)! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” And they pressed hard against the person of Lot, and moved forward to break the door.

Here we see that Lot is accused of being one who decides and directs.

Shemot/Exodus 5:21 (20-21)

20 As they left Pharaoh’s presence, they came upon Moses and Aaron standing in their path, 21 and they said to them, “May Yehovah look upon you **and punish you** (veyish’fot and he decide/judge וַיִּשְׁפֹּט) for making us loathsome to Pharaoh and his courtiers—putting a sword in their hands to slay us.”

Here we see that the people call upon Yehovah to bring into judgement Moshe and Aharon because of the harm they perceive.

Shemot/Exodus 18:16, 22, 26 (18-26)

15 Moses replied to his father-in-law, “It is because the people come to me to inquire of Elohim. 16 When they have a dispute, it comes before me, **and I decide** (veShafat’tiy וְשִׁפְטֵתִי) between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of HaElohim.”

17 But Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing you are doing is not right; 18 you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19 Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and Elohim be with you! You represent the people before HaElohim: you bring the disputes before Elohim, 20 and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. 21 You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear Elohim, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs (Sarei) of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and 22 **let them judge** (veShaf’tu וְשִׁפְטוּ) the people at all times. Have them bring every major dispute to you, but **let them decide** (yish’patu וְיִשְׁפְּטוּ) every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the burden with you. 23 If you do this—and Elohim so commands you—you will be able to bear up; and all these people too will go home unwearied.”

24 Moses heeded his father-in-law and did just as he had said. 25 Moses chose capable men out of all Israel, and appointed them heads over the people—chiefs (Sarei) of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens; 26 **and they judged** (veshaf’tu וְשִׁפְּטוּ)

the people at all times: the difficult matters they would bring to Moses, and all the minor matters **they would decide** (yish'putu יִשְׁפֹּטוּ) themselves.

Here we see that the Sarei who were put in place by Moshe helped him to decide on matters of dispute. Thus, the people followed their direction.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 16:18 (18-20)

18 You shall appoint **magistrates (Shofetim שֹׁפְטִים)** and **officials (veshoterim וְשֹׁטְרִים)** for your tribes, in all the settlements that Yehovah Eloheykha is giving you, and they shall govern (veShaf'tu וְשָׁפְטוּ) the people **with due justice (mish'pat-tzedeq/righteous judgement מִשְׁפַּט-צְדָק)**. 19 You shall not **judge (mish'pat מִשְׁפַּט)** unfairly: you shall show no partiality; you shall not take bribes, for bribes blind the eyes of the discerning and upset the plea of the just. 20 Justice, justice (tzedeq tzedeq/ Righteousness צְדָק צְדָק) shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that Yehovah Eloheykha is giving you.

Here Moshe tell the people to set up deciders of the disputes. They are responsible to decide rightly.

There are more references to these but let summarize for today.

1. The First type of Central Authority was the Patriarch. We ruled and decided justice in his family and was the single authority for the family. This remains today in many cultures.
2. The next central authority became the Zaqen or elder of the tribe or tribes.
3. The next central authority was the Kohen (Priest) for religious matters and the Shofet (Decider or Judge) for other matters. They were referred to as magistrates. Also during this time the Zaqen continued and added to this were Sarim or Sarei who would assist the deciding process. The people chose the Ziq'nei and Sarei. They were taught in how to judge matters.
4. The Prophet (Navi) was also there from the time of Avraham through Moshe and to the prophets (Nevi'im). Their role mainly was judging and showing the people their failing on keeping the Torah.
5. Later came the King or Melekh who was the leader, judge, ruler or the people. What they said was to be done. (Seferim Shemu'el and Melekhim)

6. Lastly, we see the Kings kept the authority over matters of non-religious dispute while the High Priest (Kohen Gadol) was over the religious matters. (Divrei HaYamim/2 Chronicles 19:5-11)

In the end the Tanakh, speaks of a central governing authority and in the future will be established as the descendants of David and Zadoq. In the meantime and until it comes to pass, we as people can and do set up authorities over ourselves. There Hakhamim or the wise men who teach people the Tanakh. These are in many cases the Ziq'rei or Sar which we have chosen. We have also seen that while Elohim did give approval for the main leaders there was not always approval shown to be necessary for someone to be the Head of a people like Nehemyah and he in turn appointed other Sarei to lead.

Karaites believe in a central authority and organization because the Tanakh tells us there was, is and in the future will be. However, because of the situation we find ourselves no group of people can proclaim themselves as the leaders and arbiters of us as a people. Only one of the Line of David and Zadoq can proclaim themselves as Central Authority over all of us. We eagerly wait that day. Until then we assign the Ziq'nei and Sarei to lead over us and teach us and those are the Hakham who are learned of Tanakh.