

**Shayla:** What is the seat of Moses?

Matthew 23:2 HCSB "The scribes and the Pharisees are seated in the chair of Moses.

**Midrash:**

It was the custom to sit while expounding on the law and prophets (Matthew 5:1; Luke 4:20-22). There were different "seats" ranging from local synagogues, to beit dins, all the way up to the Sanhedrin (Exodus 18:19-23). To be able to sit in a teaching chair, they had to demonstrate their ability in lesser roles (Galatians 1:14). Not all teaching seats would be considered "the seat of Moses." Moses was the ultimate authority in the nation, the highest court. In Jesus' day that was the Sanhedrin. To get to the ultimate seat in the Sanhedrin was thus a tremendous honor. So, Jesus is simply giving a specific example of the self-glorifying attitude they struggled with.

Over time, the seat had become conflated with the authority (Matthew 23:1-12). They became focused on the authority granted by sitting there rather than on what was the true authority – the Law of Moses. This caused them to begin adding to the law; what became known as the traditions of the elders (Mark 7:3-13).

**Derashot:**

It is no more wrong to be addressed as "rabbi" as it is to be addressed as "father", "teacher", "master". The issue was not so much the specific title as it was the attitude; the longing for adulation and praise. It is the pride of one's life-style that we should avoid (1 John 2:16).

We should keep in mind that none of us is the Authority. It is only to the extent that we submit ourselves to the Scriptures and teach others to do so that we gain credibility and authority (Matthew 5:19)

Simply accumulating learned people and gathering them together for judgment does not necessarily bring forth justice. It was, after all, a first-century Sanhedrin that pursued the murder of our Lord. This is why a beit din must be characterized more by their fear of God than by their intellectual muscle (2 Samuel 17:15; Psalm 89:7; 107:32; Jeremiah 23:22).