

Lesson Plan: Isaiah 2:1-5

Goals:

1. To consider how eliminating the need for an “immediate” solution can help address large scale problems and to reflect on the connection between “non-immediate” solutions and אחרית הימים;
2. To consider how divine sovereignty relates to perpetual peace;
3. To appreciate the rhetorical power of these verses.

Introduction:

Trigger: Ask students for examples of apparently-insoluble problems. Then ask “Are these problems that in principle are completely insoluble, or just insoluble at present?” Try to direct the conversation towards Peace in the Middle East. Note that if one or the other party would change their perspective, peace would be achievable. In other words, the problem is “long-term soluble.”

Play a clip of Naomi Shemer’s song מחר (Words at <http://shironet.mako.co.il/artist?type=lyrics&lang=1&prfid=738&wrkid=2099>)

Note that the key point is peace will be achieved *at some undefined point* in the future. Is Naomi Shemer realistic? Students should recognize that the solution depends on some people undergoing a *fundamental change in attitude*. (Do not engage in a fruitless debate over whether the Arabs or the Zionists need to change their attitude.) Use SLIDE 2 to illustrate this.

Correlation to Previous Material:

Using slide 3, or a smartboard version thereof, ask students to define Isaiah’s “Big problem.” Students should hit on the following issues: (Do not accept “the people are bad” – ask for more precision.)

- The land has been devastated, but people still have not accepted God as sovereign
- People think that if they pay tribute to Assyria, things will be better
- People don’t want to do teshuva

Each of these points can be drawn to the basic issue of “people accepting God as sovereign,” which is central in all of the material we’ve seen so far in Yeshaya. Try to draw students towards this point. Students should recognize that this is the major “unsolved issue,” and that an “attitude transplant” is required. State clearly that this chapter will explain how Yeshaya solves this issue.

Frontal Teaching: Ch 2, v.2

Unpack the phrase “אחרית הימים” – explain it as meaning “some later time.” Students will no doubt ask whether this is the time of Mashiah (question is raised by Radak) but it’s best to leave this in abeyance until after teaching the chapter. Students should clearly understand that this is a problem that will be solved “given infinite time.”

Using slide 4, teach verse 2. Ask students whether the *initial* change is physical or mental. Discuss how/why a physical change can serve as the impetus for a mental one. Note that the initial physical change creates a mental shift, in which people now “flow up” (note the unusual imagery) toward Jerusalem, which becomes the focus of the world.

Discuss how focal point influences perception by using slide 5 – students should understand why a change in focal point is the beginning of the attitude shift, although not its end.

Worksheet: Chapter 2, verses 3-4

Frontal Teaching

Then, using slide 6, and referring back to slide 5, ask students to identify the words said by the nations, and what causes the initial desire to go to Jerusalem (Questions 1-3 on the first page of the worksheet). Students should understand that the nations are not seized by some “spiritual awakening” as much as by the focus on Jerusalem --- Jerusalem is seen as a universally-attractive and “cool” city, and they wish to learn about its Master.

Then, use slide 7 to discuss what Torah means here – what are the nations seeking to learn.

Students should understand that Torah here means “hora’ah,” teaching, and that acceptance of God as the binding guide does not necessarily mean that HE will demand mitzvah-observance from the nations.

After reflecting on what Torah observance means for gentiles, students should reflect on what Torah observance means for Jews --- does it mean “doing specific meticulous deeds,” or does it mean “seeing God as a guide whose decisions are binding?”

Use slide 8 to connect the parallel words in v. 4, and emphasize that this is the epitome of the vision.

Focus on part A, and ask why the nations choose God as their judge, and actually obey him. Emphasize that this is the direct outgrowth of the change in v. 2, viz., seeing Jerusalem as “cool.”

Then, discuss how the change in part A leads directly to the end of war in parts B and C – God is the universal judge.

Thus is universal peace established.

Emphasize that what leads to this change is the focus on Jerusalem, and the attractiveness of Jerusalem in v. 2---- this leads directly to the massive changes described in v. 4. This is why the slide about the focus on Jerusalem is repeated in SLIDE 9.

Discussion

Students should reflect on two related points:

- a. Where are the Jews in all this? Answer: they aren't there. Students should be troubled by this, and that's ok, because Micah, who will show up in the next lesson, is also troubled.
- b. The absence of Mashiah in this vision (assigned as an extension question on the worksheet) is noted by the Radak and others. It seems that Mashiah is absent because this is a vision for the world, not just for the Jews.

But if this is a vision for the world, what can Jews learn in the here and now:

- a. Focussing on a specific point (the focus on Jerusalem) can lead to resolution of apparently irresolvable issues --- slide 10
- b. Torah means accepting God as a guide and judge, and not just specific actions.—slide 11.