# Lesson Plan: Why Israel Needed a King, and Who will Succeed David – Introduction to Shelomo’s Reign (I Kings 1:1-10)

## Objectives:

1. Students will consider differences between the condition of the kingdom at the start of Shelomo’s reign and the condition of the kingdom at the start of David’s reign, thereby emphasizing the increased stability of the kingdom and the accomplishments of David.
2. Students will compare the end of David to the end of other leaders.
3. Students will consider how the different elements in the succession story (chapters 1-2) show that the idea of the kingdom’s existence seems to be beyond dispute, and the only point at issue is the identity of the ruler.

## Part 1: Discussion

Teacher will begin by introducing the historical span of Sefer Melakhim (slide 2) and asking why the book might be titled “Melakhim.” (Be prepared to distinguish between angels and kings.) Note that the historical period of David’s reign is around 1000 BCE (an easy-to-remember date).

Teacher will ask how Israelites were governed during the period before the rise of the kingship.

Emphasize that before the kingship, during the period of the Shofetim (usually translated judges, although this is not the best translation of the term), there were sometimes leaders who rose and whom people \*chose\* to obey. But there was no agreement among all the people that the shofet would be “leader for life” and therefore: 1) people often disobeyed the shofet who could not enforce his will; 2) the shofet did not have an administration or helpers to forcibly collect taxes and allow him to pay an army to fight; 3) when the shofet became less popular or died, there was no longer a leader. In contrast: a king is granted by the people the power to compel people to pay taxes and/or serve in his army and a king creates a dynasty. (I have not created a slide of these contrasts because they are general, and it is best if the teacher illustrates these on the board.)

Teacher should then advance the verses from II Sam 8:19-20 (Slide 3), which describe the people’s demand for kingship. What are the main advantages of kingship which the people mention? How does kingship work in other nations? The key functions of a king are 1) to compel obedience; 2) to create a stable administration which can collect money; 3) to pass on a stable kingship to a successor.

What are the main disadvantages of kingship which Shemuel mentions in the previous verses (11-18 ; slide 4)? What are the advantages? Create a list of both on the board.

Using this list, the teacher should open a debate on the question: Is kingship fair? Why do people prefer government over lack thereof?

The debate should conclude with a statement that people make decisions not based on theory but on experience – The Book of Kings opens with the end of David’s kingship, and like the people of that time, we will consider David’s accomplishments in determining whether kingship is worthwhile.

## Part 2: David’s accomplishments

Teacher should assign students to look at any part of II Shemuel chapter 5 or chapter 6 vv 1-2 or chapter 8 vv 1-8. Students should break up into pairs, read any group of verses for 5 minutes and then report to the class (slide 5): What did David accomplish in the verses you read? Would these accomplishments have been possible without kingship? (Teacher should note that each group of verses involves compelling people to perform actions for the sake of the group that they might be unwilling to perform, since each action involves personal sacrifice.)

Here, emphasize the accomplishments of David’s reign: defeating the Philistines (who are not heard from again during Shelomo’s reign); conquering Jerusalem; bringing the ark to Jerusalem; making Jerusalem central to the Jewish people.

Teacher should then use slide 5 to teach II Sam 8:15-18 in two ways:

First of all, teacher should ask students what are the advantages and disadvantages of having so many administrators? Emphasize how the administrators allow the accomplishments studied in chapters 5,6,and 8 above. Emphasize further that when David became king, there were no administrators. The task of setting up a kingdom with administrators was David’s. Second of all, teacher should ensure that students know the tasks of Zadok, Evyatar, and Yoav.

## Part 3: Introduction to I Kings chapter 1.

Teacher should assign attached worksheet for homework. Students are expected to read first 10 verses of I Kings (preferably in Hebrew), and to answer questions. Part of the goal of assigning this material for homework is to avoid reading first 4 verses of Kings in class. The point of these verses is that David’s lack of interest in Avishag makes it appear to the people that he is not able to function as king. I suggest avoiding a discussion of the statement of Hazal cited in the Radak, since this detracts from the peshat. The second part of these verses show that Adoniyahu takes it for granted that there will be a continuation of the kingdom. No one seems to question that the kingdom will continue, but only who will continue the kingdom.

In reviewing the sheet, focus on this point (slide 6): Adoniyahu starts to rule while David is still alive. How does Adoniyahu’s revolt against David show that the kingdom is actually stable? The key point is that no one disputes that there should be a kingdom. No one tries to throw out the administrators. They only try to pull the administrators to their own side (slide 7).

## Part 4- Comparison to Shaul

Compare to I Sam. 16:14-23, in which Shaul is troubled and can find no comfort. This is similar to David’s end in that both kings are troubled. I Sam 16:14-23 might be a good selection to use dramatically – have students act this section out.

Then ask students the three questions in slide 8:

\* Does Shaul accept that his role as king is over? Does David accept that? – The teacher will have to remind students that Shaul was very jealous of David and did not accept that his role as king was over.

\*Is it certain that the kingship will continue after Shaul? Does Shaul have accomplishments that justify continuing the kingship? And ask the same questions about David?

\*Does Shaul have an administration that will continue after he ceases to be king? Does David have administrators who continue after him?

## Conclusion:

In concluding the lesson, the teacher should highlight the following points:
A. What advantages derive from having a kingdom as opposed to a temporary leader (shofet)? Remember the disadvantages: someone has to pay the salaries of all the administrators, including people like Benaiahu.

B. When Shelomo becomes king, there seems to be no doubt that the kingdom should survive. In effect, everyone has agreed to pay for the administration because David showed that people were better off with a king. This is unlike the situation when David became king.

C. There is a group of administrators who exist at the end of David’s life, and the next king will try to get the administrators on his side.