

Lesson 10: Rehav'am and Shishak

Goals:

1. Students will appreciate that some events in Tanakh are recorded in history outside of Tanakh, and that it is not possible, from a secular perspective, to convincingly argue that most of Tanakh is “myth.”
2. Students will consider how the split of the kingdom weakened the Jewish people, and how this weakness encouraged foreign attacks. Students will appreciate how these attacks lead gradually to a further weakening and ultimately to exile.
3. Students will appreciate the gap between event and narrative, and how many different narratives can be developed out of a similar series of events. Students will appreciate that this process is present in narratives in Tanakh, and can account for gaps between Biblical and extra-biblical narratives.
4. Students will appreciate that Sefer Melakhim uses a standard “framework narrative” to recount the actions of many different kings, and that there are certain common features to all of these “frameworks.”

Part 1: Melakhim Alef 14:21-24.

Begin by reading the first part of 14:21, stopping at the word ביהודה. The remainder of the verse, dealing with chronological correlations between Israel and Judah, will be explored in homework.

Then, ask students to look at vv. 22-24. Ask students how the actions described differ from those of Yarov'am. (The teacher may wish to use slide 2, or to force the students to remember Yarov'am's sins on their own.) Some students will no doubt answer that there are no differences – it is true that both Judah and Israel decentralize worship – the במות in v. 23 are evidence of this. However, there are important differences:

- Yarov'am initiated new images for the worship sites. No new images are said to have been established in Judah.
- Yarov'am initiated the establishment of new worship sites. Rehav'am is not said to have done so.
- Verses 22-23 imply that Judah did actions similar to those of their ancestors (גם הם). But Yarov'am clearly initiates a new trajectory.

Students should appreciate that both in Israel and in Judah, worship is not centralized in the Temple. Students should recall the material from Kuntillet Ajrud covered in Lesson 5, and the

reality that restricting sacrifice to a single location is very difficult in a society in which worship of God is expressed primarily through sacrifice. To try to draw an analogy to contemporary life, ask students to imagine what life would be like if a one-week trip were required every time a person wanted to say a tefilla. Students should understand that Torah is aware of how hard it is to avoid sacrifice outside of Jerusalem, yet nevertheless makes this demand, perhaps because it is so important to avoid the impression of multiple gods at multiple worship sites.

Students should also realize that there is one further difference between the sins of Yarov'am and the description of Judah under Rehav'am: no punishment is recorded in these verses.

Then ask students to look at 14: 25-28, and ask each student to state one event that is narrated in these verses. Use slide 3 to record these events. Ask: are these events the direct result of Rehav'am's sins? No clear answer to this question is presented in the pesukim. Ask students for their opinion, simply in order to open the discussion. Students will probably assume that the juxtaposition of Rehav'am's sins with vv. 25-28 indicates that the latter is the punishment for the former. Emphasize that that no such statement exists in Melakhim, but that it is a possible interpretation. (It is the way Baal Divre Hayyamim [the author of the book of Chronicles] understands these verses, in II Chron. 12.) Leave the question open; it is enough for students to have considered it.

Return students' attention to slide 3, in which they recorded the events of vv. 25-28. Tell students that they are now studying the first historical event in Tanakh that is clearly recorded in a text from outside Tanakh. Tell students that we know who Shishak was (a Libyan who became king of Egypt and ruled from beginning in 930 BCE, approximately) and that his inscription in ancient Egyptian (slide 4) which was inscribed on the walls of the temple at Karnak, in which he describes his invasion of Eretz-Israel, has been discovered and translated. This is interesting because while earlier events in Tanakh (such as the entry of the Israelites into the Land of Israel, and the reigns of David and Shelomo) fit into history, this is the first event for which there is a clear extra-biblical text. This will be important to students who are already aware (probably from the internet) of the claims that the Bible has no connection to history. Be sensitive to students who are not aware of these claims; there is no need to exaggerate their importance.

Explain that we will now compare the Biblical narrative of these events to the way Shishak tells about his invasion. If students ask "well how could the two narratives differ, if they're about the same event", then tell them to wait and see.

Ask students to go back to the points summarized in Slide 3 and ask students what the main effect of Shishak's campaign was. On what areas did Shishak concentrate his campaign? Students should realize that the campaign described in Melakhim Alef 14:25-28 focuses almost solely on Jerusalem. Ask students what were the goals of Shishak's campaign: they should realize that the goals were to take spoils and enrich himself at the expense of Judah.

Then, present slide 4 with Shishak's inscription, showing the larger artistic context. Show slide 5, which shows the "Northern List" in larger resolution, and explain that each circle contains an image of a "prisoner" taken by Shishak together with a name of a city in hieroglyphs. Say that the inscription has been transcribed into Hebrew, as shown on slide 6. Ask students what the inscription seems to tell about – students should recognize that it's an itinerary, a list of cities Shishak reached in Eretz Israel.

The following paragraph is relevant for brighter students: In presenting such a list of cities in the Temple at Karnak, he joins a long list of Egyptian kings from the 15th-12th centuries BCE, who all listed the cities they conquered in Eretz-Israel on lists in Karnak and in other temples. The Egyptians considered Eretz-Israel their "backyard" and were interested in showing that they dominated it. The lists were designed to show the cities they conquered. Slide 7 shows the dates of some of these kings' campaigns. Students should note the big gap – when were there no campaigns? Students should recognize that the 10th c., in which we have no recorded lists of Egyptian campaigns, corresponds to the period of the United Kingdom of David and Solomon. (It is difficult to prove the existence of the united kingdom from the absence of Egyptian campaigns, but the absence of Egyptian campaigns does fit with the united kingdom. Also note the campaign to Gezer, recorded in Melakhim Alef 9:16, in which an unnamed Pharaoh gave the conquered city to Shelomo.) From slide 7, students should understand that the split kingdom was substantially weaker than the united kingdom.

The following paragraph is for brighter students, or those with geographic ability: Students should then look at the maps in slide 8 (they can be enlarged) showing the different campaigns and compare them to slide 9, which shows a map of Shishak's campaign. Ask students what areas Shishak seems to reach that previous kings didn't reach.

Students should appreciate that Shishak diverges from the standard coastal route of other kings by reaching into the hill-country around Gibeon (numbers 23-26 on the list, see on the map north of Jerusalem), and by crossing over the Jordan to reach Penuel (number 53, the first syllable is missing), Sukkot (55) and Adam (56). Ask students what they think Shishak is looking for in these places, to which previous Egyptian kings did not go. Ask students if they remember anything about Penuel. Students should remember that Yarov'am built Penu'el as a royal city. Students should understand that if Shishak is looking to enrich himself, then a royal city, in which the tax money is collected, would be a good place to find wealth.

Then ask students what Shishak might be looking for at Gibeon. Students should realize from the map that Gibeon is near Jerusalem (it lies on the natural road to Jerusalem, which follows the route of highway 443 today). If Shishak is clearly seeking to enrich himself, Jerusalem is a reasonable place to seek riches, and Gibeon is on the way. Why might Shishak have stopped at Gibeon? What might he have received at Gibeon? Ask students to look again at Melakhim Alef 14:25-28. Students should realize that the pesukim refer to Shishak heading towards Jerusalem (עלה על ירושלים), but do not necessarily refer to his entering the city. Perhaps he stopped when

he reached Gibeon, in return for taking the Temple treasures. Students should realize that if he received the Temple treasures, he had no further need to proceed all the way to Jerusalem.

By combining the inscription with the pesukim (slide 10), we can reach the following reconstruction: Shishak headed toward the land of Israel to raid and plunder, as previous Egyptian kings had done. Unlike many previous Egyptian kings, he headed to the royal centers where the Israelites had accumulated taxes. He reached Penuel and took Yarov'am's money, and headed towards Jerusalem. When he reached Gibeon, Rehav'am went to meet him, gave him the Temple treasury, in return for which Shishak did not enter Jerusalem.

This is not a reconstruction that appears in any single story, but emerges from both of them read together. (This integrative method will become more important during the semester as we read more and more stories which have parallels in extra-biblical inscriptions.)

If students balk and say "well it's two different stories and therefore two different events," perform the following experiment. Student A gets 60 seconds to do a performance in front of the classroom of whatever actions he chooses. After the performance, student B is asked to block his/her ears, while Student C tells what happened. Then Student B unblocks his/her ears and tells his/her story. Ask whether B or C's story is correct. If they're different, are they about the same event. Students will see how two different narratives can be told about the same event.

Using slide 11, show students what aspects of the story Melakhim emphasizes (the threat to Jerusalem) and what aspect Shishak emphasizes (conquest throughout the land). Students should appreciate that the two sources are not contradictory.

Part 3: Conclusion

As a concluding assignment, have a debate in the classroom of Rehav'am's advisers. Shishak has reached Bet-Horon (show on map) and is approaching Gibeon. Should Judah stand and fight? Should they wait for Shishak to reach Jerusalem? Should they give him the Temple treasures? Each side should defend its position.