

## Lesson 13

### Goals:

1. Students will question the relationship between ruler and populace and ask whether a ruler who serves his own interests, rather than that of the population, can endure long. Students will reflect on the ideal role of a ruler, and the question of "To whom does the state belong?" Students will correlate these questions to the series of failed kings in Israel between Baasha and Omri (Elah-Zimri-Tibni)
2. Students will use the war story of Asa and Ba'asha to ask about the role of foreign relations in statecraft. What goals ought a king to set in seeking alliances with foreign states? Students will correlate this question to evaluating Omri's alliance with the Phoenicians
3. Students will consider the relationship between king, people, and God in a hierarchical structure, and understand the political meaning of God as sovereign.
4. Students will develop language skills in reading Vav-Hahippuch forms with only two root letters (נח"י) such as ויעש, ויבן, ויח"ל
5. Students will reflect on foreign cultural influence, and the ideal balance between cultural openness and cultural isolation. Students will correlate this question to the religious influences of Phoenicia under Ahab described in I Kings 16:32-33

### Lesson:

1. The teacher will begin by putting on the board the question of "To whom does the state belong?" (slide 1). Ask students to imagine themselves as either Israelite or Judahite men who fought under Asa and Baasha in the war studied in Lesson 12, and ask them to correlate this question to their own experiences. The teacher should elicit the tension between the state "belonging to the citizens," a position taken by those who oppose the war since it hurts the population, and the state as a projection of the ruler's ego. One can imagine that Asa's ego was inflated by the treaty with Aram-Damascus, since the king is now considered a ranking international player.
2. Then, ask students to imagine the answer that Ba'asha would give to this question, were he to be challenged as to why he fought the war. Highlight how the war takes Ba'asha from being the "chief" of a group of tribes to also become a "real king," in the sense that he is a player on the international scene, someone worthy of being attacked by Aram-Damascus.
3. The focus on Ba'asha's (imaginary) perspective leads to the critique of Ba'asha in 16:2. Introduce the passage by reading v. 1, noting that we know nothing about the background of Yehu b Hanani.
4. Then use slide 2 which shows the first half of v. 2. Ask students to identify the word describing where Ba'asha began, and get them to focus on העפר – draw a diagram of Ba'asha at the "bottom." Which word describes where Ba'asha ends? Get students to focus on גיד. Brighter students who don't know the meaning of this word can be asked to look at Shemuel Bet 7:8. Alternatively, the teacher can ask students what word they see in גיד, and illustrate the meaning by telling the student "I'll tell you

what to do" (from להגיד, to instruct, as in Devarim 4:13) and asking what relationship that creates. Students should then understand that נגיד is the higher position in the hierarchy and the teacher should illustrate this in the diagram. (The students should understand that נגיד means leader or prince, and after the students have worked through vv 2-4, the teacher should open a discussion of why מלך is not used here. The answer relates to the "standing" of Ba'asha – he was not supposed to be an "international player" or king, but to take care of Israel's needs. He was supposed to be Israel's chief, not a member of the international powers club.)

5. Using the worksheet supplied, students should work through vv 2-3, highlighting who does the various actions. Please direct students to the relevant pages of the seven-page grammar summary, or to some other reference as needed. The point of the exercise is to develop grammatical skills, but also to illustrate how God raises up the king and puts him down.
6. At the end of the worksheet, ask students to use slide 3 to illustrate the hierarchical relationship between people, God, and king. Show slide 1 again, and ask "to whom does the state belong?" Students should understand the key point: people are subservient to God, the king is supposed to assist the people.

In a brief frontal lecture, move quickly through the kings Elah, Zimri, Tibni, from v. 8 to v. 22. The time allocated to these kings (less than a minute each) is proportionate to their importance in the book. Slide 4 flashes the names of the three kings, and students should understand that each of these kings "reigns" very briefly and that none of them does anything for the people. Here are some suggested steps:

7. Look at v. 8, using a "fast-acting buzzer" format, ask students how long Elah reigned. Students should realize (from the chronology lesson) that he reigned "in two years" (not two full years) and probably didn't reign more than a few months.
8. Look at v. 9, ask for a one sentence character sketch of Elah. Students should realize "he's a drunk". Mention v. 10, that Zimri killed Elah and family, noting that it does not take a lot of bravery or power to kill a drunk man.
9. Ask students to read vv. 15-16, and ask them who opposed Zimri. Students should realize that the army opposed Zimri, and chose Omri.

Before moving forward, go back to slide 3, illustrating the responsibility of the king to serve the people, and ask what qualities Omri has to fulfil his role. Students should realize that if Omri has the confidence of the army, he may be the type of person who can succeed militarily and politically.

10. Using slide 5, illustrate that Omri ends the instability of Israel. He and his descendants reign over Israel for a relatively long time. He and his son Ahab are associated with each other, and their policies were similar.
11. Ask students to read through vv. 23-32, and make an "accomplishments" and "errors" list evaluating whether Omri and Ahab served the people of Israel. There is no point to separate Omri and Ahab in this list. If the class is weaker, the teacher should ask students to focus specifically on v. 24 and 25, 30 and 31 only. Use worksheet 2 to get students to know the verbs with final weak letters (קנה, בנה, עשה).
12. In reviewing students' work, focus first on the "accomplishments." Students should recognize the importance of the city of Shomeron (mentioned in v. 24) as a new capital for Israel. The buildings dated to the period of Ahab and Omri, discovered in

excavations, are illustrated in slide 6. This slide also includes an image of one of the Samaria ivories, which are collections of ivory carvings found in the archaeological excavations of the period of Ahab in Samaria, which have artistic similarities to ivory carvings from this time popular among the wealthy elite in Assyria and Phoenicia. (Delay detailed discussion of these carvings till slide 10, below, where the issue of economic gaps is discussed.)

13. Ask students to explain why it might be important to move the capital – note the map in slide 7. Explain the topography - the highest mountains are in the area around Shechem, where we find Har Gerizim and Har Eval (teach students to use the topographical maps at [www.amudanan.com](http://www.amudanan.com)). Historically, both Tirzah and Shechem served as the capitals, and Shechem was the largest city – these capitals were on the east side of the mountains, towards the Jordan, linking the two sides of the Jordan.
14. Ask students what Omri is expressing by moving the capital to the west side of the range, closer to the sea? As you see from slide 8 (where the circle designates Shomron/Samaria, and the line designates a flat route to the sea), it's not just a question of distance as the bird flies, but primarily of topography – to get from the sea to Samaria you don't have to cross the mountains! It's much easier access to the sea from Samaria than from Tirzah, and somewhat easier than from Shechem. Students may answer that he likes to go to the beach, but direct students to think about what sorts of boats might be at anchorages along the coast. By moving Israel towards the sea, Omri opens the possibility of Israel participating in sea-based trade, which is the fastest way to earn wealth in the ancient world.
15. Ask students if they can identify one other "accomplishment" in these verses. Students should look at v. 31, and recognize in it an important accomplishment – Omri's son Ahab is considered important enough to marry the daughter of the king of Tzidon. (Tzidon = Sidon; Tzor=Tyre; these two cities are the centers of the Phoenician nation and culture.) Look at the map in slide 9 – and ask students to think what the economy of Tzidon is based on. Throughout the ancient world, we find "dynastic marriages" – marriages where two kings form an alliance by the marriage of their children. Students should realize that both from Omri's location of the capital and from Ahab's marriage that Israel is positioning itself to share sea-trade with Tzidon, and in fact in the subsequent years, archaeology shows that sea trade becomes an increasingly important part of the economy of the kingdom of Israel.
16. Two problems regarding sea-trade need to be emphasized. First, using slide 10, look at the schema of the city of Shomron (which is still standing, and can be visited, either by coordinating with the IDF or by organized tours in Arabic that leave from Nazareth). On the left is a sketch which gives you a sense of the size of the mountain (all of which was built up in the Roman period). On the right are the walls of the "upper city" or "acropolis," roughly equivalent to the rectangle on the left of the sketch. This shows how the city of Omri and Ahab was divided into an inner city, in which the large buildings housing wealth are located, and an outer city, (whose Biblical layers haven't been excavated and about which we know little). This is not an accident. Ask students whom they think makes money in sea-trade? Is it the sailors on the boats? The merchants who run the trade are the ones who make the profits because they buy the commodities and ship them and earn the extra money when the commodities sell in a new location at higher prices– it takes capital to earn wealth. The sailors, in contrast, earn a low salary. In contrast to agriculture, sea

trade tends to concentrate wealth in the hands of "the top 2%" (or 5% or 10%), while agriculture, which had previously been the only business in Israel, tends to spread profits more evenly. So Israel under Omri becomes a society in which the upper levels pull in wealth, and this has implications for the future of the kingdom of Israel.

17. A second problem is stated clearly in the verses. What does Ahab do that previous kings had not done – look at vv. 30 and 31. Ask students regarding v. 30 (slide 11) what מכל means. Students should realize that the "mem" means "more than". Using slide 13, show them that the word repeats again in the summary at the end of v. 33.
18. Ask what Ahab did that previous kings did not do? Students should answer based on vv. 31-33, which are in slide 12. Students should recognize that Ahab's introduction of Baal and Ashera worship is here connected to his alliance with Tzidon. While Yaravam may have worshipped God in forbidden ways, Sefer Melakhim credits Ahab with introducing worship of Baal and Ashera into Israel. We know that both Baal and his wife (usually called עשתרת) were worshipped in Tzidon, and it seems that Ahab accepts this part of Phoenician culture and introduces it into Israel.
19. In an honest discussion, ask students whether they believe Ahab and Omri could have done a better job: is it possible to enjoy the profits that come from being part of the world economy (sea-trade) without accepting foreign cultural practices? This is not an easy challenge; no king in Sefer Melakhim negotiated the tension completely successfully, and the difficulty has not dissipated with the passage of time. Demonstrate this in practical contemporary ways, related to business and life. Sefer Melakhim frames the tension, but doesn't provide easy answers, perhaps because there aren't any.
20. Go back to the key slide – slide number 3, and ask students whether Omri and Ahab on balance fulfil the role of a king. Students should realize that while they do improve the economic situation of the Jewish people, and in that sense serve the people, they do not lead the people to an acknowledgement of God as sovereign.
21. Perhaps as a homework assignment, ask students to consider how and why v. 34 represents a rebellion against God – students should read all of Joshua chapter 6. (Students should realize that the conquest of Jericho represents God's ownership of the land of Israel – because God, rather than the Jews, fight the battle. Ahab's reign represents a repudiation of God's ownership of the land, because they acknowledge another god.)