# Lesson 3: Shelomo's Administration of the Kingdom

# Goals:

1. Students will connect the historical aspects of Shelomo's kingdom, both those emerging from archaeology and those emerging from the geographic descriptions in Kings, with the narrative in Kings
2. Students will consider how Shelomo was able to rule over the large population of the land of Israel, including the non-Jewish population.
3. Students will consider the difficulties Shelomo faced in ruling his kingdom, especially the economic and practical difficulties.
4. Students will begin to consider methods of historical reconstruction, which require consideration of information from different passages in Tanakh and placing these passages within their geographic context to see how the narrative describes historical realities in different parts of the country. This requires students to develop a more nuanced approach to the history of the Biblical period, rather than saying “in the time of Shelomo, all was good.” This is particularly important for brighter students, who are exposed to such methods in history classes and may wonder about the disconnect between Bible and history.

## Part 1: Frontal lesson

Begin by using slide 2 to ask students: who were the different groups in the Land of Israel at the time when Shelomo began to reign? Write students' answers on the board.

Students will probably come up with the names of all the different tribes.

But then have students look at Judges 1:19 – Note that the "emeq" here refers probably to Emek Ayalon, the flat area east of Gezer (map and picture in slide 3; the map in slide 3 is taken from Anson Rainey and Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge* [Jerusalem: Carta, 2006], p133, and picture from p 135. The book is an invaluable and very dense resource for study of any issues of history or geography in the Biblical period. This specific map illustrates the locations mentioned in Judges chapter 1.) Students should realize that the "inhabitants" in this verse are the Canaanites or Amorites, who remain in the lowlands near Judah's inheritance.

Students will say – so this was one group.

Then have students look at Judges 1:27 and realize that there is a whole chain of Canaanites who remain in Emek Yizre'el (the valley of Jezreel) between Taanakh and Megiddo. Map in slide 4.

Students should appreciate that no verses in the Judges or in the David story tell about the elimination of these groups, and that there is no real reason to assume that they vanished before Shelomo's kingdom.

Shelomo faces a challenge: How can he rule the land of Israel in which there are substantial non-Jewish populations? How can he provide for each group's needs, and ensure support from all?

Teacher will expose challenge frontally, and ask students how the tax burden ought to be distributed. Then read I Kings 4 verses 2-5. Without going into the jobs of each of these people, it's clear that they are all supported by the king and get salaries. Who pays for their upkeep? Who pays the needs of the king's household?

Part 2: Worksheet  
Teacher will read verse I Ki. 4:7 with the students and ask them what the job of the "Netsivim" is – Students should understand that the Netsivim extract agricultural produce (or other wealth) from productive people, who produce agricultural products or other products or who trade, and transfer the wealth to the king's household (slide 5).

Who were these people? Which areas were taxed?

The teacher should explain that verses 8-19 contain the list of the Netsivim, and the regions for which they were responsible. Were these regions only of Jews? Or did the Canaanites also pay into this system?

Then give students the map of the tribes and the worksheet. The worksheet asks them to identify the different areas, and to write on the map which of the Netsivim's regions were inhabited by the tribes of Israel, and which by other groups.

Then, after completing the worksheet (which should take only a few minutes), the teacher should ask students to put their work on the board – have students mark districts containing Israelite tribal names or sub-tribes with a blue square and those without Israelite tribal names with a red circle.   
Some of the districts are certainly those of the Israelite tribes – verse 8 (number 1) – verse 16 (number 9) – verse 17 (number 10) – verse 19 (number 11) and verse 20 (number 12). The teacher will have to explain that Gilead is part of Manasseh.

Some of the districts are clearly not Israelite – verses 11 and 12 are both very clear examples – the teacher should have students compare this verse with Judges 1:27 and realize that this is the same region where the Canaanites were said to live. Verse 9 is the region of the Valley of Ayalon, alluded to in Judges 1:19 as a non-Israelite area, although students will need to use a map to recognize that.   
Many other regions are unclear – such as verse 10 and verse 14.These aren't so important for our discussion.

Each student should understand that the list contains both Israelite tribal areas and non-Israelite areas.

In summarizing the discussion, use slide 6, which contains the full map of the areas (from the Sacred Bridge p. 175). Districts containing Israelite tribal names or sub-tribes are marked with a blue square and those without Israelite tribal names with a red circle. Students should realize what Shelomo did – he created \_economic union\_ in which the Israelite and non-Israelite populations both paid taxes to support the royal household.

Students should realize who was excluded from payment of taxes – the tribe of Judah. This creates resentment which is expressed much later, in chapters 11-12.

### Part 3:

Students should realize that besides a tax on products, administered by the Netzivim (which is NOT called MAS anywhere in Tanakh), Shelomo also demanded that people work for the government.

Making people work for the government is called MAS in Hebrew. (The technical term used in academic English is corvée.) Part of Shelomo's large series of building projects are described in I Kings 9:15, and others in verses 17-19 in the same chapter.

Looking on the map (slide 6), students will realize that these building projects are very close to the areas coloured in red circles on the previous map – the non-Israelite tribal areas.

Students should also see verses 20-22, which describe how Shelomo forced the non-Israelites to build these and other building projects. Students ought to complain about the obvious discrimination against non-Israelites.

And the teacher should then introduce I Kings 5:26-28, which describes the corvee labour of the Israelites who chop down trees in Lebanon.

The verses describe the corvee labour of the Canaanites as "mas-oved", while the Israelite forced labour is simply "mas". The practical distinction escapes me, but it is worth discussing this in class. Perhaps the work of chopping trees is less arduous than construction work (doubtful). Perhaps the lure of foreign travel made the Lebanon work assigned to the Israelites more attractive (even more doubtful). But it is important that students know about the Israelite forced labour because it figures prominently in the split of the kingdom.

## Historical and Geographical Backround for Teacher

### Why did Shelomo chose to fortify cities in non-Israelite areas?

There is a good historical-geographic reason for Shelomo building cities and building projects in these areas. It does not appear that Shelomo sought to defend himself against political threats, but rather that Shelomo was motivated by geography.

* Hazor is located in the Great Rift Valley, near the former Lake Huleh, on the main north-south road between Syria and Israel
* Megiddo is located in the Jezreel Valley, farther south on the same north-south road, leading towards Egypt
* Gezer is located near the Ayalon Valley, which is on the branch of this road leading towards Jerusalem (to the northeast) and Ekron (to the south)

Each of these cities is located near a valley – in the valleys, grain can more easily be grown than in the hill-country. Therefore, control of the valleys was historically important to the Egyptian empire which governed the land of Israel before the Israelite period. The grain was used to feed the empire's armies. Moreover, the valleys were also important because they were on trade routes. Therefore, the Egyptian empire took pains to maintain control of these areas. When the Israelite tribes entered the Land of Israel, they did not take over these areas from the Canaanites, who acted as local agents for the Egyptians, and therefore the non – Israelite population continued to live in these areas.

Shelomo seems to have chosen these three sites for fortifications for reasons similar to the Egyptians: a) control of Hazor and Megiddo, in particular, ensure control of international routes, which are useful for taxing caravans of international trade on these routes; b) control of the grain areas near Megiddo (Jezreel valley) and Gezer (Ayalon valley) provides grain for armies and for trade. It seems that the land in these valleys was considered "state land" owned by whichever empire controlled the area (On the history of these areas, especially the Jezreel Valley, see Nadav Na'aman, "Pharaonic Lands in the Jezreel Valley in the Late Bronze," in *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean [c. 1500-1000 B.C],* edited by M. Heltzer and E. Lipinski [Leuven: Peeters, 1981])

### "Solomonic gates"?

In slides 7-9, I present images from the "Solomonic gates" at Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor, the three cities mentioned in I Kings 9:15. These are six-chambered gates which were excavated at different points in the late 19th and 20th centuries, and were identified by archaeologist Yigal Yadin as dating from the period of Solomon (10th c BCE). More recently, archaeologist Israel Finklestein challenged this dating and argued for a later, 9th c BCE date. The simple truth is that the ceramic ware from the period of about 980-850 BCE is fairly similar. Since archaeological dating is largely based on the date of the ceramic ware, it's quite difficult to date these gates to a specific part of the range 980-850. Nevertheless, based on the walls to the west of the gates, excavated recently by Steve Ortiz, it appears that the gates at Gezer are more likely to be 10th c., and the archaeologist excavating Hazor, Amnon-Ben-Tor, has also argued, based on the stratigraphy at Hazor, that the gates at that site are 10th c.

A good summary of the discussions up to 1997 can be found in an essay entitled "Monarchy at Work: The Evidence of the Three Gates," from Biblical Archaeology Review 23 (July-Aug 1997).