

The Legacy of David

INTRODUCTION

Overview:

When the Jewish people settled in Canaan following four decades of nomadic wandering, they formed a new civilization. Faced with an onslaught of threats from neighboring peoples, the Jews implemented a strategy utilized by other nations – they elected a king in 1020 BCE. This significant departure from Jewish tradition (until then, the role of monarch had been exclusively reserved for the divine) ushered in the leadership of Israelite kings, most notably the famous King David.

This lesson looks at the historical forces that gave rise to the monarchy, allows students to debate the wisdom of electing a king, examines the biblical and archaeological basis for reign of King David, and considers the legacy of King David in art and culture.

Grade Level: Middle School, High School

Subjects Covered: World History, Geography, Art History, Language Arts

Goals:

Students will understand the formation of the Jewish community in Canaan and the factors that led to the election of its first monarchy. Students will investigate the highlights of the reigns of Saul and David. Students will also explore the lasting impact of ideas about King David on Jewish tradition and Western culture.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. locate Canaan on a world map;
2. explain the reasons behind the Jewish people's decision to elect a king;
3. describe the reigns of Saul and David;
4. suggest reasons why King David has had an enduring impact throughout history.

Suggested Time Frame: Two to three 45-minute class sessions.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Before you begin

Teachers should be sure to explore all bookmarked pages of the DVD-ROM used in this lesson.

Introductory Activity:

1. Ask students if they know any stories about famous kings. If they do, invite them to summarize them briefly.
2. Ask students if they know any stories about the kings of Israel. If they cannot recall any, ask if the students know the story of David and Goliath. You may want to share this story (I Samuel 17:8-54).
3. Explain that in this lesson we will explore the origin of the monarchy in Israel and discuss the reigns of its first two kings, Saul and David.

Learning Activity 1: Settlement in Canaan

The Bible says that after forty years of wandering in the desert, the Israelites entered the land of Canaan and began a new phase of their history. They would encounter new threats and circumstances that would help shape their young religion and identity as a people.

1. Before discussing the origin of the Israelite monarchy, give students a brief historical overview of how the Jewish community in Canaan formed.
2. Watch the video [Settlement in Canaan](#), which describes the arrival of the Philistines, a warring sect that invaded Canaan by way of the sea, altering the social structure of the Hebrew people.

Stop the video when Eban says, “It gave them a critical edge in warfare.”

3. Ask students:
 - Who were the Philistines?
 - How did their arrival in Canaan affect the social structure in the land?
 - What is the significance of the term “Apiru”?
 - How were the early Hebrew people organized with regard to social structure and authority?

Learning Activity 2: The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy

The continuing threat from the Philistines led the Israelites to demand a king who could protect them from their enemies. The main sources of documentation about the rise of

the monarchy are the biblical books of Samuel. (The books of Kings and Chronicles also address the monarchy from David on.)

1. Watch the video [King David](#) (part 1). In the video, Abba Eban explains that the institution of a monarchy was a drastic change for the Israelites, as their religion was based on the premise that the only sovereign ruler was God.

Stop the video when Eban says, “That era of fateful and dramatic change, of rise and decline, ushered in by the reign of David.”

2. Ask students:

- What impact did the anointing of a king have on Israelite society?

3. Display the map of [Canaan](#), scrolling from 1220 to 967 to 928 BCE so that students can visualize the changes that take place in the region during this period. Explain that the years between 1220 and 928 BCE saw drastic changes in the social structure of the Hebrew people. The Israelites formed a monarchy and an empire of their own, the scattered Hebrew communities were united into one people, and the Philistines were defeated.

4. As you click on the years to see shifts on the map, ask students to identify changes that occurred from one period to the next. Ask them what role they think the monarchy played in these changes.

Learning Activity 3: Debate Over the Monarchy

In this activity, the class will debate the question of whether the Israelites should be allowed to elect a king.

1. Divide the students into two groups of “elders,” one arguing for kingship and the other arguing against kingship. This may also be done as an independent writing assignment.

2. Use the following biblical excerpts to inform the debate:

Israel Demands a King (I Samuel 8:4-22)

The military power of the Philistines and the continuing development of the Israelites as an independent people sparked the desire for a king among much of the populace.

Saul Is Anointed King (I Samuel 9:1-2, 15-17, 10:1)

According to the first book of Samuel, Saul, the first king of Israel, was chosen by God; the reason for this choice of leadership is never given.

The Limits on a King’s Authority (Deuteronomy 17:14-20)

In this text from the book of Deuteronomy, God's acquiescence to the Israelite's demand for a king was not without its limitations. These limits ensured that the mortal king would never place himself above God or his people.

3. Have the class list the main arguments and conclusions of their debate. Was there a clear winner?

Learning Activity 4: David, King of Israel

David, Israel's second king, is by far the most famous of the Israelite kings. Many great accomplishments are attributed to him, including the writing of the biblical Psalms, the unification of the scattered communities of Israel, and the expansion of its empire. David received the divine promise that his descendants would be rulers of the Jewish people.

1. Ask the class what they know about David, including his important accomplishments.

2. Write the responses on the board.

3. View the video [King David](#) (part 2). Continue the video from where you left off earlier. End at "...the splendid Temple of Jerusalem."

4. After viewing the video, ask students:

- What were some of David's greatest accomplishments?
- How did David's son Solomon build upon his father's successes?

5. Note that the biblical stories of King David are regarded as mythical tales by some, and an accurate historical record by others. Historical evidence provides some clues as to the likelihood of his existence. Corroboration of the biblical stories of David is difficult, as they were written hundreds of years after his reign.

6. View the multimedia [King David](#), which discusses archaeological and historical support for the existence of King David – and whether scholars believe this evidence is sufficient.

Ask students:

- What archaeological and historical evidence is there to support the existence of King David?
- Do you think this evidence, along with the biblical accounts, is enough to prove he existed?
- When were the accounts of King David written?
- How did this affect the written accounts of his life and deeds?
- What are the important themes expressed in the Biblical stories of King David?

Learning Activity 5: David in Art and Culture

Whether historically accurate or not, the legends of King David have had significant impact on Jewish identity and inspired peoples of other religions throughout history.

1. Explain that David's reign has had an enduring impact on Jewish religion and culture. The following presentation illustrates how David has inspired artwork throughout the ages. Depictions of David differ by region and time period, but most portray him in an admirable light, as evidenced by the examples presented here.

2. Click through the screens of the multimedia [Images of David](#). Have students describe what they see, and read or summarize the descriptions.

3. Ask students:

- How do the art images reflect the themes noted in the multimedia presentation?
- What contemporary images might be incorporated into a "modern day David" painting or sculpture?

4. You may wish to present other works of art. A few suggestions are:

- Donatello

David, ca. 1432.

http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/d/donatell/1_early/david/2david_1.html

- Michelangelo

David, 1504.

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/m/michelan/1sculptu/david/david.html>

- Lucas Cranach the Elder

David and Bathsheba, 1526.

<http://www.abcgallery.com/C/cranach/cranach50.html>

- Caravaggio

David, 1600.

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/c/caravagg/06/31david.html>

David, 1610.

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/c/caravagg/11/70david.html>

- Rembrandt

Saul and David, 1630.

<http://www.stetenvertaling.net/kunst/grootbeeld/115.html>

Biblical Scene, 1642.

http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/r/rembran/painting/biblic3/david_an.html

Ask students:

- What stories and scenes are portrayed in these paintings?
- Why do you think David (the king and the man) has been remembered through such prolific art throughout the ages and within so many world cultures?

Culminating Activity: The Absence of a King

Have students respond to the following writing prompt:

Imagine that the Israelites had decided not to elect a monarchy. Based on what you've learned in this lesson, how do you think the early history of the Israelites would have been altered? Do you think David would have risen to prominence in some other fashion, as a judge perhaps?

Instruct students that there is no right or wrong answer, but that they should strive to support their hypotheses with historical evidence.

Extension Activity (Optional)

For individual assessment, have students write an essay comparing King David with a great modern-day ruler. What traits do they share? How are they different?

MATERIALS

Tanakh

STANDARDS

Arts and Communication

Standard 3: Uses critical and creative thinking in various arts and communication settings. Level IV.

Historical Understanding

Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective
Level III and IV

World History

Standard 9: Understand how major religious and large-scale empires arose in the Mediterranean Basin, China, and India from 500 BCE to 300 BCE.

DVD-ROM BOOKMARKS

Settlement in Canaan (Video > A People is Born > Building a Nation > Settlement in Canaan)

King David (Video > A People is Born > Building a Nation > King David)

Canaan (Atlas > 1220 > Zoom in on Canaan, repeat for years 967 and 928)

Israel Demands a King (Video > A People is Born > Building a Nation > King David > Explore Topic > Historical Documents > Israel Demands a King)

Saul is Anointed King (Video > A People is Born > Building a Nation > King David > Explore Topic > Historical Documents > Saul is Anointed King)

The Limits on a King's Authority (Video > A People is Born > Building a Nation > King David > Explore Topic > Historical Documents > The Limits on a King's Authority)

King David (part 2) (Video > A People is Born > Building a Nation > King David)

King David Multimedia (Video > A People is Born > Building a Nation > King David > Explore Topic > Play)

Images of David (Video > A People is Born > Building a Nation > King David > Explore Topic > Images of David)