

## Islam and Judaism: From Muhammad to the Ottoman Empire

### Overview:

This lesson is not intended to extend to the modern-day Arab-Israeli conflict or the broader conflict between radical Islam and the West. Rather, students will expand their knowledge and understanding of culture, religion, geopolitical realities, and the changes and interrelationships in these arenas with regard to Judaism and Islam over the centuries.

### Goal:

This lesson helps students learn about Judaism and Islam as religions and cultures, and explores their interrelationships.

### Objectives:

Students will:

- explore the rise of Islam; Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire; Jewish life under Muslim rule in various lands during the eighth through twelfth centuries; and the role of Jews and Jewish culture within the context of the dominant Islamic culture at that time;
- consider the cultural interplay between language, literature, and literacy, and consider how cultures relate to and influence each other;
- participate in class discussions and engage in individual and small-group research, creating a research presentation that incorporates the use of the HERITAGE DVD-ROM.

### Subjects Covered:

World History, Comparative Religion, Cultural Studies

### Suggested Time Frame:

The entire lesson plan can be completed in approximately five to nine 45-minute sessions. Individual learning activities may break down as follows:

In the Beginning... (1-2 sessions)

Jewish-Muslim Relations in Islamic Lands (2-3 sessions)

The Rise and Fall of the Ottoman Empire (2-4 sessions)

## Learning Activity 1: In the Beginning...

Students will gain basic knowledge about the early beginnings of Islam, as well as a broader view of the growth of Islam as a religion and culture.

1. Ask students what they know about Islam. Write their responses on the board, then restate their responses and organize them into useful categories - who, what, when, where, why, how.
2. Introduce the HERITAGE: CIVILIZATION AND THE JEWS DVD-ROM. (See Tips for Using Lesson Plans in Your Classroom for ideas about how to do this.)
3. Look up "Islam" in the Concise Judaica. Students should begin their research with the Concise Judaica, and they may want to use the other components of the HERITAGE DVD-ROM for additional research.

Additionally, the following Web sites offer basic information on Islam:

- Islam: Empire of Faith  
<http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/index.html>
- Islam Chronology  
<http://campus.northpark.edu/history/WebChron/Islam/Islam.html>
- History of Islam  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/religion/islam/history.html>

4. Break into small groups and have students discuss and answer questions from the handout "Early Islam:"

- Who were the important people in early Islam?
- What were the central events in the early story of Islam?
- When did the central events in the early story of Islam occur?
- Where did the central events in the early story of Islam occur?
- Why did these things happen, and why did Islam emerge as a distinct religion and culture?
- How was this able to happen? How did the events of the time affect what happened?

5. Ideally, each group will have a computer to work with. After students have had time to discuss the questions generally, assign each group one of the six questions to respond to and write up on large paper. Students will present the work of their small group to the class as a way of sharing and incorporating the research.

6. Say to students: "Now that we've got some basic information, let's look at the map and see what else we can learn." Divide students into groups of two or three and distribute the "Atlas Exploration" handout. (Note: This activity could take an entire class period. If you only have

one computer, this can be done as a whole-class activity.) Ask students to review the materials outlined in the handout, and to complete the assignment:

Go to the Atlas, 72-732 CE and click on Summary

- Read the World summary.

Zoom in on Europe/Near East/North Africa and click on Summary.

- Read the summary for this segment.

Zoom in on Near East.

- Read the summary for this segment.

Look at the same maps in different time periods.

- Read the summary for the segments.

Remember, you can flip between the historical and modern-day views of these maps.

You can be more or less directive with students in terms of what you'd like them to look for in their Atlas exploration. There is much to be gleaned from expanding the time and geographical parameters (looking in-depth over several eras and areas), just as there is from asking students to limit their explorations to specific times and locations. While exploring the Atlas, have students complete the following assignment:

- Using the Atlas feature of the HERITAGE DVD-ROM, write down five interesting facts or important bits of information.
- Write down at least three questions that came up as the result of your Atlas exploration. For instance: How did Islam gain such a strong foothold in the Arabian lands?

## **Learning Activity 2: Jewish-Muslim Relations in Islamic Lands**

In this learning activity, students will gain a better understanding of the relationship between Judaism and Islam. The focus will be on the rise of Islam and the early relations between Islam and the other major religions of the region, Judaism and Christianity.

1. Before beginning this activity, ask students to share their questions from the “Atlas Exploration” assignment in Learning Activity 1. Write their questions on large sheets of paper and place them around the room. This exercise will help the students begin to think critically about the complexity of the relationship between religions, cultures, societies, political systems, etc. You might choose to help the students categorize their questions by type and clump the related questions, physically, in groups.

(Note: If you did not do Learning Activity 1 with the students, you may instead begin by having the students work in small groups to discuss what they know about the origins of Islam. Ask students to write the information and questions they generate from discussion on large pieces of paper and post these on the walls of the room. Then, discuss students' thoughts with the whole class.)

2. Distribute copies of the “Jewish-Muslim Relations” handout, and ask students to watch the multimedia presentation *Ishmael's Children*. Make sure to leave enough time for questions.

Ask the class:

- What does this presentation tell us? Does anyone have any questions?
- Read the explanation at the end of biblical text on *Ishmael's Children*.

3. Play the multimedia presentation *Muhammad* and explore the options at the end of the presentation - especially *A Verse from the Quran and Muhammad Debates The Jews*, including the explanations. Have students form small groups and respond to the questions on the handout:

- With these materials in mind, how would you depict the early stages of Islam?
- What was the impact of Muhammad (the individual) and Islam (the new religion) on the region?
- What was the relationship between Judaism and Islam according to Muhammad? According to the Jews of the Arabian lands?
- Was there a difference between how Islam related to Jews and Christians?

4. Distribute the “Arab Age” handout. View the video segment *The Arab Age* (just under four minutes long). At the end (after the words, “And to him, we surrender”), click on “Explore Topic” (make sure “The Arab Age” is still highlighted and not “Jews In Muslim Lands”). Read the text on the left-hand side and then click on “Historical Documents.”

You may have students explore each of the Historical Texts, however they should focus on:

- Negative Views Of Jews In The Quran
- The Pact of 'Umar

Have the students return to their small groups and respond to the questions on the handout. This is complicated, and the teacher should pay careful attention to analyzing the texts along with the students to provide them with deeper understanding of the relationship between early Islam and the Jews.

- How do these texts jibe with the views expressed in the video section?
- What do these texts convey about the treatment of the “People of the Book”?
- Do you sense any conflicting positions on the part of Muhammad/Islam relative to the “People of the Book”?
- What was the purpose of the different types of stipulations in these documents?

- Does the legal formulation of the "The Pact of 'Umar" correspond in any ways to the views expressed in the Quranic verses?

5. At this point, review the information regarding the rise of Islam and Muhammad. Ask students: What do you know after looking at this material? What questions do you have? Remember to keep the discussion focused on this early period and not to spend much time comparing this early stage of Islam to modern day Islam, especially as it relates to current politics. Although it would make for a fascinating discussion, it would lead students far afield of the topic at hand! Write down on the board what the students say and encourage them to take notes.

6. Show *Jews In Muslim Lands*, which describes Jewish life under Muslim rule in various lands, particularly Spain, during the eighth through twelfth centuries. Discuss the following questions with the class:

- How do the treatment and success of Jews during this time period fit in with the views of Jews expressed in the Quran and the treatment of non-Muslims reflected in the Pact of Umar?
- At the end of the video segment, Abba Eban states, "Never before had the Jews found themselves in such a position." To what is he referring? Why is the status of Jews so special at this point in time?

Note to teachers: For more information regarding Jewish life in Spain during the time period discussed above, refer to the lesson "The Roadmap to the Jewish Golden Age of Spain."