

Islam and Judaism

Listed Scriptures

Gen 15–18, 21:1–21, 25:1–27; Gal 4:21–31

Lesson Aim

- 1) To understand that the belief in Jesus Christ as our Savior is absolutely essential to our salvation.
- 2) To understand the importance of obeying every part of the Bible because it is the inspired word of God.
- 3) To learn that being devout and earnest in one's faith does not necessarily lead one to salvation.

Memory Verse

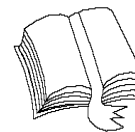
"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city."

(Rev 22:14)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Deut 7–8, 12:29–13; Hos 4

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Islam is a monotheistic faith that incorporates elements of Judaism and Christianity and Arab traditions that were prevalent during its inception. The prominent figure of the religion is Muhammad. He was born in 570 AD in Mecca. This was a very busy trading center considered to be a holy city by its inhabitants.

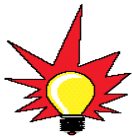
Muhammad's family was part of the Hashim clan. He was orphaned shortly after birth and raised in poverty by his uncle. At the age of 24, he married a wealthy widow and returned to Mecca to live the life of a prosperous merchant in his community.

When he was about 40 years old, Muhammad began to have a series of revelations from God through the angel Gabriel. He received these revelations while praying and meditating in a cave near Mecca. Gabriel presented the message of Islam, which was to confirm what the previous prophets of Judaism and Christianity had taught, and correct the mistakes that had entered the teachings of these faiths.

After receiving these revelations, Muhammad began to preach to the people of Mecca. He proclaimed the absolute one-ness of Allah, denounced idolatry, and urged the rich to give to the poor. His teachings met with resistance, as the people of the region worshiped a number of gods. He was persecuted and went to Yarthrib (later known as Medina, the City of the Prophet), where he converted a number of followers. In the summer of 622 AD, he organized an exodus of his followers at Mecca to go to Medina. This journey is called the Hegira and marks the beginning of the Muslim era.

Converts to Islam grew. By 630 AD, Muhammad was able to return to Mecca as a victorious religious leader. Ten years after that, the whole Arabian Peninsula was converted to Islam. Within one generation, an area almost as large as the United States was converted. Within a century, Islam had spread to Spain and Morocco in the west and India and Thailand in the east. Shortly after the consolidation of an Arab Islamic state, Muhammad died in Medina in 632 AD.

W A R M U P



Prepare a chart paper. Divide the paper into two columns. On one side write "Islam" as a heading, and on the other write "Judaism" as the heading. Put this up at the board or on the wall. Divide students into groups—2 or 3 should do. Tell them that one student from each group will be asked to give an answer for the group, but they don't know which student. You will pick the student randomly so everyone will have to be involved in the discussion.

Give the students a few minutes to think about the two religions and test their prior knowledge. They may need a piece of scratch paper to jot down ideas. When the time is up, pick a student from each group. You could pick in any way you choose: those wearing red, the student nearest the board, the tallest of the group, etc. You might wish to pick particular students, but do so discreetly. Or you could number the students: 1, 2, 3. Ask all the number 2's to speak, etc. As each student reports, write their points on the chart paper. This

will give you an idea of how much the class already knows, how much stereotyping is involved, misinformation, etc. At the end of the lesson, you could come back to the chart, and compare what is on the chart with what they have learned.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1 Islam

A. *Brief Outline of Islam*

In Arabic, Islam means "purity, by submission to Allah's will" and "obedience to Allah's laws." Allah is the God of perfection and beauty; Islam is the religion based on the revelations and teachings of Allah to his prophet Muhammad.

These revelations were said to have occurred around 610 AD. The angel Gabriel (Jibril) appeared to Muhammad and told him to "recite." He refused three times, until the angel said, "Recite in the name of the Lord who created." The revelations received during the encounter became the opening lines of the Qu'ran, or "recitation." The Qu'ran is the sacred text of the Muslims.

Muslims believe that Muhammad had many divine encounters over the years that inspired the remainder of the Qu'ran, which was compiled by his secretary, Zaid, in Thabit. There were different versions of the Qu'ran until the time of the Caliph Uthman. A caliph is the leader of the Islamic faith, essentially the ruler of the Islamic empire. Twenty years after the death of Muhammad, Uthman ruled in favor of Thabit's version of the Qu'ran and all other versions were destroyed.

B. *The Qu'ran*

The Qu'ran was written in Arabic and considered authoritative only in that language. It consists of twelve chapters, or "suras." It contains three kinds of teachings:

- a. direct doctrinal messages
- b. historical accounts that also have metaphorical meanings

- c. mystical expressions of sublime beauty that inform and support a divine message.

The key messages in the book deal with:

- a. the importance of faith in Allah and the consequences of unbelief
- b. moral duties to one another
- c. Allah's unity
- d. the need to acknowledge the believers' dependence upon Allah
- e. the believers' ultimate unity with Allah
- f. human life being a test: we are rewarded or punished according to our actions in this short life
- g. reward and punishment being given immediately after the funeral, but there will also be a Day of Judgment and a resurrection

It also contains a number of stories that parallel events familiar to Jewish and Christian faiths. For instance, Muslims consider themselves children of Abraham. However, they claim their genealogy from Ishmael. Muslims say that Ishmael came to Mecca and settled there, and his descendents became Muslims. Therefore they consider themselves direct descendents of Abraham. Like the Hebrew Bible, the Qu'ran acknowledges that Isaac's descendents formed the tribes of Israel.

C. The Five Pillars

The Five Pillars are considered the anchor in a Muslim's life. They are:

- a. Recitation of the Shahadah: This is a profession of faith stating that there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.
- b. Salat: Daily prayers. A Muslim must pray five times a day facing Mecca—before sunrise, just after noon, later in the afternoon, immediately before sunset, and after dark.
- c. The Zakat: Almsgiving. A purification tax on property is paid by all Muslims for the benefit of the poor. The amount is fixed, usually about two and a half percent of one's wealth, although it could be more.
- d. Saum: Fasting. A Muslim must fast during the month of Ramadan (the ninth Muslim month). Fasting begins at sunrise and ends at sunset.
- e. Hajj: Hajj means "pilgrimage." A Muslim must make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime, as long as they are physically able and can afford it financially.

Today, there are two main divisions within Islam: the Shiite sect and the Sunni sect.

The Sunni sect is much larger. They are culturally and religiously diverse. Instead of trying to arrive at one united doctrine, Sunni Islam has opted for a more general set of theological principles. The Shiites places heavy emphasis on individual leaders and clerical authority. One other group that had an influence on Islam was the Sufis. Sufis were mystics. They sought union with God through contemplation, asceticism (living a deliberately deprived lifestyle), and prayer.



Part 2 Judaism

A. Brief Outline of Judaism

As we know about the origins of Judaism, which is also the origin and history of the people of Israel (of which we are the spiritual descendents), this section will deal mainly with the beliefs of modern Judaism. There are various branches of Judaism today, but regardless of denomination or sect, practicing Jews believe:

- a. That there is one and only one God with whom each individual has direct personal experience, and to whom prayers are addressed.
- b. God is the ultimate authority and has final dominion over the universe.
- c. Life is holy.
- d. The Torah is the guide to good moral living and reveals the words of God.
- e. Group worship and prayer are a must in righteous living.
- f. Jews all over the world share a broad common destiny and a sense of collective purpose and responsibility to one another.

There are three main Jewish sects today: Orthodox, Reform and Conservative.

- a. Orthodox Jews keep very strictly to Mosaic Laws as laid down in the Torah, including foods they may or may not eat and keeping the Sabbath. They desire to live according to the faith and have no wish to conform to new social conventions. They believe the old traditions reflect God's will and are not subject to debate or revision. They seek to pass on existing traditions without changing them.
- b. The Reformed Jews modify the Mosaic Law to conform to modern life. For instance, men and women may sit together during worship (this is not allowed in Orthodox synagogues). For Reformed Judaism, the entire Torah is inspired by God but it is open to study and interpretation. God's relationship with Jews is a process that is ongoing for them. They accept that Jews are citizens of the

nation in which they live and not bound by narrowly interpreted traditional and historical laws.

- c. Conservative Jews fall somewhere in the middle of the above two, and form the largest group in modern Judaism in America. They reject the principle that there can be no contact with new societies and cultures, but they try to retain as much continuity with the ancient traditions as possible. Appropriate traditions are preserved and honored, but not all the old ways need to be retained.

There are many different movements within Judaism. One is a movement called Hasidism, which is a more mystical movement. Hasidism focuses on the “*devekut*,” or communion with God’s presence in all things, trying to sanctify every day.

B. The Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections:

- a. The first five books of the Torah, also known as the Pentateuch, comprise the most important section and are placed right at the front of the Hebrew Bible. These are the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).

Study of the Torah is part of the act of worship. It is read religiously every Sabbath. Over the course of the year, the entire Torah will be read on Sabbath and festival days. Daily and weekly classes are usually available for those who wish to study the Torah.

“Talmud” means study or learning. The Talmud is a reference book to help in the interpretation of the Torah. The Talmud is the sourcebook of the Law, as it takes all the rules and regulations listed in the Torah and describes how to apply them under different circumstances. The first part of the Talmud is called the “Mishnah.”

- b. The second section is the *Nevi'im*, or Books of the Prophets. The *Nevi'im* is divided into two sections; the former prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings) and the latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi).
- c. The third section of the Bible contains what is called “The Writings.” This is a collection of poetry and proverbs. The books contained in this section are:

Psalm, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Chronicles.

The books listed above are in the order that they appear within the Hebrew Bible.

C. Profession of Faith: The Sh'ma

Originally, it was a requirement to study the Torah night and day. This was later recognized as a very difficult thing to do, so a confession of faith called the Sh'ma (Shema) was created using three scriptural passages from Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Sh'ma became the minimum requirement of study, and Jews will memorize the Sh'ma as their confession of faith. Some say that pious Jews hope to die with the Sh'ma on their lips.

The Sh'ma

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Never forget these commands.... Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away.... Tie them on your arm and wear them on your forehead as a reminder. Write them on the doorposts of your house. (Deut 6:4–9)



Part 3

Devotion Without Obedience is Empty

A religion that believes there is only one God is called a monotheistic religion (monotheism). One that believes in many gods is polytheistic (polytheism). There are only three major religions in the world that are monotheistic: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. All three draw upon the same origins. All three believe that Abraham is a significant character and all believe in the prophets. However, each has gone its different way. Although they have created traditions and rites to enable them to draw closer to God and become more devout, they have nevertheless wandered far from God’s original teachings. They replace God’s divine commandments with human will.

Read the following passages. What do they tell us?

- a. Luke 10:16
- b. Mt 10:40

- c. Jn 12:44–45
- d. Rev 22:12–16

(Each passage tells us that we must accept Jesus as Christ if we accept God—Jesus is God Himself. To accept one without accepting the other would not be possible. When we believe in Jesus Christ we really believe in God. When people looked upon Jesus Christ, they saw God. Jesus Christ tells us in Revelation that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. He is therefore God, and if we don't accept Jesus Christ, we cannot accept God.)

Based on what you learned in the above passages as well as what you have learned in this lesson, can you say what is the most significant mistake that Islam and Judaism have made? (Accept any reasonable answer, i.e. They both deny that Jesus Christ is God; they both do not accept Jesus as the Savior; Islam has changed much of the Bible, thus changing the message that God has given us; the Hebrew Bible only regards the Old Testament as revelation, completely denying the message of grace in the New Testament, thus ignoring the prophecies of their own prophets regarding the Messiah.)

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 What does Islam mean?
- 2 What kinds of teachings are found in the Qu'ran?
- 3 What are the key messages in the Qu'ran?
- 4 What are the Five Pillars? List them.
- 5 What are some common beliefs of all Jews?
- 6 What are the three main Jewish sects today?
- 7 Name the three sections of the Hebrew Bible.
- 8 What is the Sh'ma?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N

Debates



Ask students to continue preparing for the basic doctrines debates. This will take place at the end of the next class.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



As we can see, being devout will, in itself, not lead us to salvation. There are many devout Muslims and Jews, yet they will not receive salvation because they do not follow the commandments of God. Satan is cunning and deceives many people into imagining that they have the true path of salvation. However, we must always measure what we think against the words of God. That is the only way we will truly know if we have followed everything that He asks us to do in order to gain salvation. In our prayer let us ask God to show His mercy to all those who are lost, so that more will find their way into His fold. Let us pray.