

Lesson Plan (60 minutes)

When Did Judaism Become a Religion?

Essential Questions/Big Ideas:

What deep questions and enduring understandings do we want students to be grappling with?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Is Judaism a religion or a nation? | 1. Judaism is a religion, nation and culture and can be manifested in a variety of ways. |
| 2. Why does defining Judaism matter? | 2. Judaism wasn't officially defined as a religion until the late 19th century by some Jews. |
| 3. When did Judaism actually begin? | 3. Jewish identity is national as much as it is personal. |

Step 2: Learning Plan

Hook/Trigger: (15 minutes)

Will I use a UED video, question, scenario...

Video and Kahoot: Watch the [When did Judaism become a religion video](#) and play the [Kahoot](#)/review questions.

Based on the video, when did Judaism become a religion?

Learning Activity: (30 minutes)

What am I using from UED resources (video, discussion question, game, debate)? Do these materials fit the unit goals/essential questions?

1. Discussion: Choose one of the following questions to discuss (10 minutes)

- Does defining Judaism as a religion or a nation matter? Why is this such a heated debate, and are there practical ramifications to it?
- **Israel's Jewish identity**

The question of Jewish identity is national as much as it is personal. Since the inception of the State of Israel, there's been much debate over the identity of the Jewish State. Some Jewish leaders believe that a Jewish state should mean a country with a Jewish majority, some believe that the country should be [inspired by Jewish culture and tradition](#), and some even believe that Israel should be [governed by Jewish law](#).

 - What do you think it should mean to be a "Jewish state"?
 - Should Israel be the state of the Jews or the state of Judaism? (listen to this [podcast episode](#) for a deeper conversation on this question)

2. Learning activity: (20 min)

- **Jewish identity gallery walk**

Together with your students, brainstorm different descriptive words for what Judaism is (ie. religion, nationality, ethnicity, culture and community). After developing the list, paste the words around the room and ask your students to stand next to the word that best represents their personal Jewish identity. Then open the conversation to the whole group so students can explain their stances. Students may change where they stand based on the conversation.
- **Debate Judaism's origin story**

Choose one of the following times in which the argument can be made that "Judaism began" as a religion:

 - Avraham (the first Jew)
 - Moshe and receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai
 - 1885 when the Pittsburgh Platform referred to Judaism solely as a religious community
 - Other

Your students should put together a one-page argument about why their chosen time period is the one in which Judaism began as a religion. After

your students present their findings, hold a class vote with [mentimeter](#) to determine when the students believe Judaism began as a religion.

Reflection: (10 minutes)

How can I help students connect with the material on a deeper and personal level?

1. Rank the following aspects of Jewish identity in order of importance for your life:

Feel free to add more while you're working on it.

- Torah and ritual observance
- Ethnicity
- Israel
- Humor
- Jewish denomination
- Jewish culture
- Values
- Food
- Social justice
- Language (Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino etc)
- Family history

Step 3: Assessment

Checking for Understanding: (5 minutes)

Were my learning goals met?

Ask students: How would you define your Jewish identity — as a religion, culture, people, nation, tribe, ethnicity, religion, nationality, family, or a combination or something else all together?

What to think about when lesson planning:

- ☐ Is my lesson being driven by the goals/essential questions?
- ☐ Is the UED video the hook or the learning activity?

☐ Do I have to adjust for the age levels of my students (excerpts, simplify the questions...)?