



Lesson Plan

The Rabbi Who Saved Judaism

[Link to video](#)

Time: 45 minutes

Age Group: Middle School and High School

Facilitated Instruction

Materials Needed

- Device to show Unpacked video

Set Induction / Hook

The Rambam wrote that without Rabbi Saadiah Gaon's contributions, "The Divine religion might as well have disappeared." Who do you think he was talking about? Students should brainstorm a few answers. Then, tell students today's lesson is about Rabbi Saadiah Gaon's leadership.

Lesson Objective

- The Learner will understand three ways that Rabbi Saadiah Gaon preserved Jewish tradition and fought for the Jewish people.
- The Learner will consider the type of leader that Rabbi Saadiah Gaon was.
- The Learner will reflect on what lessons about leadership they can learn from Rabbi Saadiah Gaon's choices.



Lesson Activity

- Students should be split into three groups and assigned a different section of the classroom. They should summarize the articles they are reading in three sentences.
 - a. Section A: Students should learn about the Karaites by reading [this article](#).
 - b. Section B: Students should learn about the Jewish calendar by reading [this article](#).
 - c. Section C: Students will read [this Wikipedia page about David ben Zakkai](#) with a focus on the inheritance part of the page.
- Using the jigsaw method, students will be rearranged into groups of 3 - one representative from Section A, one representative from Section B, and one representative from Section C. They should share the information they learned with each other.
- Using that background, show the Unpacked video of Rabbi Saadiah Gaon. At the completion of the video, discuss each of the three topics the students learned about and analyze why Rabbi Saadiah Gaon was vocal in each of these debates.
- Students should create a Facebook (or Fakebook) page for Rabbi Saadiah Gaon. Specific instructions can be found [here](#).

Assessment / Check for Understanding

- Throughout Rabbi Saadiah Gaon's life, he faced intense battles with individuals in his pursuit to do the right thing. These included his debates with the Karaites, his back-and-forth with the Jewish Academy in Israel about the calendar, and his denouncement of the Exilarch's willingness to rule in a judgment in which he personally benefited. What lessons can we learn about leadership from Rabbi Saadiah Gaon's story?