

*JUNIOR CERTIFICATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE  
SAMPLE LESSON PLAN RESOURCE MATERIALS FOR ELEMENTS OF SYLLABUS*

SECTION C: FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION – MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

**PART 1: THE CONTEXT**

<b>Syllabus Aim</b>	To explore in detail a major world religion* Judaism
<b>Syllabus Objective</b>	As a result of studying this section, the students should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have an understanding of the historical situation at the time of origin or foundation of the chosen major world religion.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Concepts</b>	Location
<b>Description of Content</b>	Identifying the historical and geographical background to life at the time of foundation or origin
<b>Methodology</b>	A variety of methodologies are used including presentation and interpretation of data, group work, discussion and self-assessment activities. In using this variety of methodologies students would be given an opportunity to explore and clarify the concepts, as well as elaborate on their existing knowledge and understanding of the content.

**Procedure**

**Introduction**

Present *Student Work*: THE ORIGINS OF JUDAISM. Draw students' attention to the position of Canaan in relation to Ireland and read the description of the beginnings of Judaism.

- Discuss:
1. With whom did the Jewish religion begin?
  2. What was Abraham?
  3. In what part of the world did he live?
  4. When did he live?
  5. Where did God tell Abraham to go?
  6. What promise did God make to Abraham?
  7. What are the names of the patriarchs?

**Identifying the historical and geographical background to life at the time of foundation or origin**

Present a map of the near east at the time of the patriarchs to the students (e.g. from *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction & Christ With Us: Irish Catechetical Programme 1* ). Draw the students' attention to the following:

- the position of the cities of Ur (where Abraham was born) and Haran (where his family stopped on their way to the Land of Canaan)
- the area of fertile land called the Fertile Crescent
- the three rivers which water the Fertile Crescent i.e. the Tigris, Euphrates and the Nile
- the land of Mesopotamia (Mesopotamia means the land "between the rivers")
- the empires of Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt
- the position of Canaan as a highway or cross-roads between Egypt and Mesopotamia
- the desert and mountains surrounding the Fertile Crescent

Discuss:

1. Looking at the map, why do you think that the area of fertile land between the Persian Gulf and the Nile in Egypt is called the "Fertile Crescent"?
2. Looking at the map, why do you think that Abraham's family did not take the short-cut straight across from Ur to Canaan?
3. Looking at the map, why did people going from Mesopotamia to Egypt travel through Canaan?

Take feedback from students and by way of commentary on the map explain that the founders or patriarchs of Judaism (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph) lived in the Near East sometime between 2,000 - 1,700 BC According to the Book of Genesis Abraham grew up in the city of Ur in Mesopotamia (Gen. 11:27-31). At that time Ur was an important city. There, people lived in well-made houses, traded with far-off places and worshipped the city's main god in a great temple tower. The Book of Genesis tells us that Abraham, his

wife Sarah, his father Terah, and his nephew Lot left this great city “to go into the land of Canaan” (Gen. 11:31). However, when they reached Haran, some 600 miles north-west of Ur, they settled down. There Terah died, leaving his son Abraham as head of the clan. After living there for some time, Abraham obeyed God’s call to go to Canaan, 400 miles away. They travelled slowly, pitching their tents here and there, staying as long as there was enough pasture for their flocks, occasionally even planting their own fields of barley or wheat. Eventually, they reached the land of Canaan. Apart from a short visit to Egypt, Abraham spent the rest of his life in Canaan.

If you look at the map, you will see that on his way to Canaan, Abraham travelled through an area of the Near East known as the Fertile Crescent. Three very important rivers water this area of fertile land: the Nile in Egypt, and the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia. The word Mesopotamia means the land “between the rivers” In Mesopotamia, important city-states developed. These were walled cities surrounded by small villages. Some of these city-states became very powerful and controlled empires. About the time of Abraham and the other patriarchs, Assyria and Babylonia were important empires in Mesopotamia. Another important empire in the Near East was Egypt.

Linking Egypt and Mesopotamia was a narrow strip of fertile land known as Canaan. This narrow strip of land between sea and desert, acted as a highway linking Egypt and the city-states of Mesopotamia. Along this highway passed merchants, visitors, and invaders in search of fertile land for themselves. In the centuries before Abraham, nomadic invaders destroyed city after city in Canaan. However, by the time of Abraham, many of these invaders had settled down in Canaan and cities were rebuilt. Gradually, city-states developed and Canaan became prosperous.

Or *research assignment*: Allow students time to research and complete a fact file on the history, and geography of the Near East at the time of the patriarchs under the headings: 1. Fertile Crescent 2. City States and Empires 3. The Land of Canaan 4. City Life 5. Rural Life

(Possible sources of information include: *The Reader’s Digest Atlas of the Bible: An Illustrated Guide to the Holy Land*, pp. 50-61, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, pp. 1223-1228; *Certificate of Religious Education (NSW) Unit 2: The Scriptures*, pp. 5-8, *The Family Encyclopedia of the Bible*, pp. 44-50, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*, pp. 31-51, & *Christ With Us: Irish Catechetical Programme 1*, pp. 111-114)

Take feedback from students and discuss:

1. In what part of the world did Abraham and the other patriarchs live?
2. Where did Abraham grow up?
3. What evidence is there that Ur was a great city?
4. Where did Abraham and his family stop on their way to Canaan?
5. Who died during their time in Haran?
6. Why did Abraham decide to leave Haran and go to Canaan?
7. What kind of farming did Abraham and his family practice?
8. Name the three rivers that water the Fertile Crescent.
9. What is a city-state?
10. Where did they develop?
11. Name three important empires about the time of Abraham.
12. Why was Canaan an important place at the time of Abraham?
13. Identify one disadvantage of Canaan’s position as a highway between Egypt and Mesopotamia.
14. What system of government was there in Canaan, at the time of the patriarchs?

Or *Table Quiz*: Organise the students into pairs.

Allow students time to review the information about the near east at the time of the patriarchs as this will form the basis of the questions in the Table Quiz. Put two pairs together to form groups of four students. Give each group a number and an answer sheet to begin the Table Quiz.

Round 1 Questions:	5. Name Abraham’s wife.
1. In what part of the world did Abraham live?	6. Where did Abraham and his family decide to travel to?
2. When did Abraham and the other patriarchs live?	7. Who died during their time in Haran?
3. In what city did Abraham grow up?	8. Why did Abraham decide to leave Haran?
4. What evidence shows that it was a great city.	9. Name two crops that Abraham and his family grew.

<u>Round 1 Answers</u> 1. The Near East 2. 2,000 BSc to 1,700 BC 3. Ur 4. Ur contained well-built houses or traded with far-off places or had a great temple tower	5. Sarah 6. The Land of Canaan 7. Terah 8. God called him to go to the land of Canaan 9. Barley and wheat
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<u>Round 2 Questions</u> 1. On their travels in what kind of dwelling did Abraham and his family live? 2. What is the name of the area of fertile land through which Abraham passed on his travels? 3. The Nile and the Tigris are two rivers that flow through this area of fertile land name the third river? 4. What does the word Mesopotamia mean? 5. Describe what a city-state was like? 6. Egypt and Babylonia were two important empires about the time of Abraham - name another? 7. What was the name of the strip of land connecting Egypt and Mesopotamia? 8. What were invaders passing along the highway between Egypt and Mesopotamia were looking for? 9. What kind of states developed in the land between Egypt and Mesopotamia?	<u>Round 2 Answers</u> 1. Tents 2. Fertile Crescent 3. The Euphrates 4. It means the land “between the rivers” 5. A city-state was a walled city surrounded by small villages 6. Assyria 7. The land of Canaan 8. Fertile land for themselves 9. City-states
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*Written Assignment:*

Allow students time to complete the True and False Assignment on *Student Work: THE NEAR EAST AT THE TIME OF THE PATRIARCHS - TRUE AND FALSE ASSIGNMENT*. Correct their answers, using the following:

Statements	True	False
Abraham and the other patriarchs lived between 2,000 -1,700 BC in the Near East.	x	
Abraham grew up in the city of Haran		x
Abraham and his family kept flocks and grew barley or wheat	x	
The Nile, Euphrates and the Thames flow through the Fertile Crescent		x
Mesopotamia means “fertile land between deserts”		x
Three important empires about the time of the patriarchs were Assyria, Babylonia and Greece		x
The narrow strip of land, which linked Mesopotamia and Persia, was called Canaan.		x
In the centuries before Abraham, nomadic invaders destroyed city after city in Canaan	x	
At the time of the patriarchs, merchants, visitors and bus drivers travelled along the route between Egypt and the city states of Mesopotamia		x
At the time of the patriarchs city-states had started to develop in Canaan.	x	

Present students with the map of Canaan and draw their attention to the following:

1. The Mediterranean Sea
2. River Jordan, Sea of Galilee and Dead Sea
3. Places where Abraham lived as he moved around Canaan e.g. Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, Negeb Desert and Beersheba

Allow students to draw this map in their copies and to put in these details (1,2,3,)

*Scripture Assignment:*

Read the passage entitles “Reading the Hebrew Scriptures” on *Student Work: CANAAN IN THE TIME OF ABRAHAM - SCRIPTURE ASSIGNMENT* and have students do the assignments. Take feedback.

*Resources teachers have suggested include:*

A Time to Live New Christian Way Series 3 Veritas, pages 144-145.

All About Faith 2 Gill and Macmillan Series, pages 175, and 194-196.

Atlas of the Bible - Reader Digest

Believe The Good News –The Light of the World Series 2 Unit 4

Certificate of Religious Education (NSW)Unit 2:The Scriptures Sydney, Catholic Education Office, 1996

Christ With Us: Irish Catechetical Programme 1, Dublin: Veritas, 1972.

Community of Faith Veritas, page 74.

Cyberclass Teachers Manual 3 Scholastech

Logos.

Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction. L. Boadt, New York: Paulist Press, 1984.

Show Us The Way New Christian Way Series 2 Veritas, pages 130-138.

The Family Encyclopaedia of the Bible. P. Alexander, London: Chancellor Press, 1988.

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary. R..E. Brown-J.A. Fitzmyer-R.E. Murphy, Edited by (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990)

World Religions and Beliefs, E. Fleming & B. O'Hara

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*Student Work: THE ORIGINS OF JUDAISM*



The Jewish religion began with Abraham. Abraham was a wandering shepherd or nomad who lived in the Near East about 2,000 BC. According to the Book of Genesis, God told Abraham to go to the land of Canaan and gave him a remarkable promise. God promised to make Abraham's descendants into a great nation and that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. Abraham trusted in God and set off with his family to Canaan, the Promised Land. Abraham's descendants and their families inherited the promise. Abraham, his son Isaac, his grandson Jacob and his great grandson Joseph are known as the patriarchs or founders of Judaism.

*Student Work:* THE NEAR EAST AT THE TIME OF THE PATRIARCHS - TRUE AND FALSE ASSIGNMENT

<b>Tick the correct box for each of the following statements:</b>	<b>True</b>	<b>False</b>
Abraham and the other patriarchs lived between 2,000 -1,700 BC in the Near East.		
Abraham grew up in the city of Haran		
Abraham and his family kept flocks and grew barley or wheat		
The Nile, Euphrates and the Thames flow through the Fertile Crescent		
Mesopotamia means “fertile land between deserts”		
Three important empires about the time of the patriarchs were Assyria, Babylonia and Greece		
The narrow strip of land that linked Mesopotamia and Persia was called Canaan.		
In the centuries before Abraham, nomadic invaders destroyed city after city in Canaan		
At the time of the patriarchs, merchants, visitors and bus drivers travelled along the route between Egypt and the city states of Mesopotamia		
At the time of the patriarchs city-states had started to develop in Canaan.		

*Student Work:* CANAAN IN THE TIME OF ABRAHAM - SCRIPTURE ASSIGNMENT

*Reading the Hebrew Scriptures:* When we want to look up something in the Hebrew Scriptures, we do not go by the page number, but by the reference, that is the name of the book, the chapter and verse. Usually, the name of the book is written in an abbreviated i.e. a shortened form e.g. Gen. = Genesis. The abbreviations or shortened names can be found in the Contents page at the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures. Then there are the numbers e.g. Gen. 12:4. The first figure is the number of the Chapter (written in large print) and the second number, separated from the first by a colon or full stop is the number of the verse. So in Genesis Chapter 12, verse 4, we read: “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

Look up the scripture references below and fill in the names of the following places on the map of Canaan:

- the place where Abraham built his first altar to God in the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:6-7).
- the desert through which Abraham passed on his way to Egypt (Gen. 12:9).
- the place where Abraham and Lot separated and went their own ways (Gen. 13:3-9).
- another place where Abraham lived (Gen. 22:19)
- the place where Sarah, Abraham’s wife died (Gen. 23:2)
- Fill in the following names on the map:
- the sea off the coast of Canaan
- the river that Abraham possibly crossed on his way from Haran to Canaan
- the lake through which this river passes
- a sea which is very salty

