



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE
Religious Studies

Advanced

PAPER 4: Study of Religion

Option 4E: Judaism

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Introduction

Overall, the standard was good with examples of good quality, competent and outstanding work. Candidates rose to these challenges ably. For example, many candidates used the Anthology passage in 3a in a successful manner. The synoptic question 4 attracted full and well-informed answers with intelligent use of links.

Where it was applicable, candidates made good use of the context of the topic under consideration eg Q03(b) 'Holocaust... a crisis of faith for Judaism'. Work in response to Q02 was good in terms of the range of material offered by many candidates. Generally, candidates were proficient in their use of technical vocabulary. This was seen in answers to Q03(a) showing a good analysis and understanding of the text. There were many examples of good practice in creating high quality work in introductions and conclusions. Some developed effective skills in working on evaluative skills for AO2, often seen in Q04.

Centres and candidates are reminded to check the meanings of the five command words used in the A level papers found in Appendix 1 of the A level Spec. The weightings of AO1 are 40% and AO2 has 60%.

Question 1

This AO1 question required candidates to explore key features of the Jewish values of love and justice. This included the notion of values/justice being based on monotheism and the context within the Torah. A popular topic among candidates was *gemilut hasadim* involving loving kindness without expecting anything in return. Most responses offered by candidates were rooted within a Jewish context, including Jewish sources, and notably referring to the Ethics of the Fathers. Key contributors were mentioned such as Maimonides. Candidates were credited with material on 'love' in relation to tensions with justice but also love in relation to topics such as marriage and homosexuality. Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and focused on the question.

Weaker answers tended to be generalised and lacking in specific engagement with Jewish sources and context.

Question 2

This question was clearly well done by the majority of candidates and nearly all comfortably managed to get full marks for AO1 content. AO2 saw some quality 'assessing' of both scientific and Jewish interpretations reflecting how well-informed candidates were in terms of both scientific and religious arguments. Most candidates were usually consistent throughout the paper in demonstrating sound knowledge and understanding that reflected a clear focus on the precise demands of the question and demonstrated how the symbiotic relationship of Judaism and science was acknowledged with some candidates offering a discussion of science and Judaism in their response that was not simply antagonistic.

Weaker candidates focused on the view that science had replaced religion without evaluating why, how and consequences arising or simply offered an antagonistic view of science and Judaism.

Question 3a

The command word 'clarify' (for AO1 only) means 'to identify key ideas and explain key concepts' and this does not necessitate a sentence-by-sentence analysis. There are many methods candidates may use to clarify a passage and examiners will credit any legitimate method. The extract from Wiesel's 'Night' was used as an impetus to clarify ideas on the 'Final Solution'. Candidates selected some relevant historical context such as the Wannsee Conference together with Nazi ideas based on Aryan supremacy. Some details were given about concentration camps relevant to the passage. The challenge for belief in an omnipotent and benevolent God because of the events of the Holocaust featured in most answers. The lower quality answers almost repeated the passage sentence by sentence without displaying an understanding of the significance of the points mentioned.

For Centre information: in addition beyond Q3a there may be some questions that lend themselves to the content of the Anthology and of course candidates will be credited with relevant use.

Question 3b

There were many excellent and, indeed, outstanding answers to this question. The question required candidates to analyse 'the view that the Holocaust presented a crisis of faith for Judaism' and this attracted a number of very good answers. Some candidates grounded their answer on topics such as theodicies including the free-will defence, punishment and the death of God. In some cases, candidates referred to

contributors such as Fackenheim, Kaplan, Rubenstein, Jonathan Sacks and Wiessel etc. In these cases, candidates analysed their key ideas and emphases. Another popular strategy was to draw on Orthodox and Reform stances regarding the Holocaust.

Overall, a competently answered question by most candidates.

Question 4

Most candidates answered the question effectively as they focused their material on the role of women being leaders in the synagogue claiming it has been the subject of much heated debate within Judaism. The better-quality answers explored the diversity of stances, and this was mainly with reference to Orthodox and Reform Judaism. In some cases, candidates referred to particular female rabbis, notably Regina Jonas. Occasionally the material naturally related to feminist issues, including ideas such as patriarchal groups. The influence of feminist theology in modern Judaism featured in many responses. Many candidates made good synoptic links especially to Religion and Ethics highlighting that in the area of scholarship Jewish women have made inroads because many institutions of advanced Torah studies have enabled the training of female experts in the areas of menstrual law, personal status, marriage and divorce.

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