



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Religious Studies A (4050)

Unit 10: Judaism

405010

Report on the Examination

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Unit 10: Judaism

General Comments

This year's paper was well answered, with candidates achieving high marks in most areas. There were questions on all sections of the specification, and all appeared to have been well taught. Candidates made excellent use of key subject-specific vocabulary, for example, when candidates wrote about God they used the word Hashem, and when writing about marriage they used kiddushin. Question B6 was the more popular question choice in Part B.

Part A

Question A1 The Synagogue and Worship

Part (a) targeted knowledge and understanding of the ner tamid. Most candidates knew the answer and were awarded full marks. This was a good start to the examination.

In part (b) most candidates chose the Aron Hakodesh or the bimah as an example of a feature in the synagogue. The answers were well written, and sound knowledge was shown of what these features are used for. The Star of David was also used by some candidates, and the answers again were full of detail describing the importance of King David and how the two triangles represent that Jews cannot be separated from God.

Most candidates knew the role of the chazzan in part (c) and achieved full marks. Incorrect answers confused the role of the chazzan with that of the rabbi and said that the chazzan led the service. Good answers explained that the chazzan led the chanting at Shabbat and taught the boys how to chant their portion of the Torah in preparation for the Bar Mitzvah.

Good evaluation skills were used to answer part (d), with candidates giving two points of view with development. Those that achieved Level 6 gave a comprehensive answer showing two sides of the argument with a good sound conclusion. For example, they mentioned that praying at home showed spontaneity and is less formal, and that some people who could not reach the synagogue due to illness would benefit from praying at home. They also said that people could be distracted by others and not be able to focus on God in the synagogue. On the other side of the argument, candidates suggested that some prayers need a minyan, which is to be found in the synagogue. Also, praying in the synagogue prevents Jews from feeling isolated and gives a great sense of unity. Many candidates went on to analyse the two viewpoints given and draw their own conclusion.

Question A2 Personal Lifestyle

Part (a) was well answered, with most candidates mentioning that the kippah is worn to respect God and to show that he is always above them. Most candidates showed good skills of analysis in part (b). Again the candidates appeared well practised in answering evaluation questions and always gave two different points of view. A few struggled with this question as they could not think of a good reason for orthodox dress.

There was good use of terminology in part (c), where candidates said that the Bet Din authorises gets and hechsher symbols for kosher food as well as the obvious answers, i.e. giving advice, answering questions related to the laws, and solving civil and religious disputes.

Question A3 Beliefs and Sources of Authority

It was good to see that some candidates translated the word 'Shema' – 'hear' – in part (a). This question was very accessible and most candidates remembered the Shema.

Part (b) was well answered, with the majority of candidates agreeing that the Torah was the most important and saying that the rabbi can interpret the Torah in many different ways, so it is best for Jews to read the Torah themselves. Those who said that listening to the rabbi was more important made reference to rabbis being more knowledgeable in the Hebrew language and in the words of God.

In marking part (c) the examiners decided to divide the marks between God as law-giver and God as judge. Up to 2 marks were available for law-giver and 2 marks for judge. On the whole, candidates who answered this well gave an example of Jews following the mitzvot and Ten Commandments in their everyday lives to show God as a law giver. The festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were used as an illustration of God being a judge and how this influences daily life. Some candidates failed to understand the question.

Part (d) was well answered, with candidates looking at the statement and analysing which was more important. In the majority of cases they said the entire covenant was important.

Question A4 Justice and Equality

Part (a) was quite an easy question for candidates to answer, but some were confused by the difference between prejudice and discrimination. To achieve full marks, candidates needed to know that prejudice is pre-judging people without even knowing them while discrimination is taking action against someone due to their prejudices.

Again, part (b) was well answered, with most candidates understanding the concept of how Jews could challenge discrimination. Some suggested that Jews could use the teachings of the Torah to help them challenge it, and others mentioned education, joining J Core or even protesting or writing to MPs.

Candidates achieved good marks in part (c) as they enjoyed the focus on injustice and human rights. Most candidates gave two points of view, and their answers were well structured and showed good development.

Part B

Question B5 Family Life

Those candidates who read part (a)(i) carefully gave good answers. Those that did not read it carefully wrote about the ceremony itself rather than its importance, so no credit was given unless they mentioned the covenant with God and Abraham. Some candidates wrote about the Bat Mitzvah ceremony for this question.

Part (a)(ii) was well answered, with candidates showing clear knowledge of the ceremony for a Jewish girl especially in a Reform synagogue.

In part (b) most candidates gave two clear points of view, although in some cases answers were very one-sided and focused on why Jews should get married. These answers made reference to the Torah, quoting, for example, 'Go forth and multiply,' and, 'It is not good for a man to be alone.' Some candidates found it quite difficult to put another point of view across; they could have said that people should not marry for the sake of it, that there could be a problem for those who are homosexual, or that people can find companionship outside of marriage.

Part (c) was well answered, with most candidates describing shiva. As already stated, candidates were well versed in answering AO2 questions such as part (d). Good responses illustrated the importance of the family and gave examples such as Jewish education beginning in the home and maternal and paternal roles. For their alternative viewpoint candidates referred to the importance of having a personal relationship with God and of synagogue worship etc.

Question B6 Festivals and Pilgrimage

Candidates gave very detailed answers to part (a) on the meaning of the Pesach seder meal. Candidates lost marks when they did not read the question carefully and wrote about Pesach and freedom rather than the food eaten and its symbolism.

In part (b) there were good answers in relation to the importance of Shabbat. Other festivals such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah were mentioned in the second point of view. These were often seen to be more important than Shabbat.

Candidates clearly knew how Rosh Hashanah was celebrated and many gained full marks in part (c)(i). Some candidates even mentioned taschlich – to cast off sins. There was evidence of good teaching on this festival. Some candidates, however, struggled with part (c)(ii) as they just wrote about how the festival is celebrated and not about its importance. Those who did give good answers mentioned the fact that God would be at one with them and that the symbolic wearing of a kittel showed that they wanted to be pure.

Yad Vashem and the Western Wall were two of the places that were mentioned in agreement with the statement in part (d), although some good answers suggested that there was no need to go on a pilgrimage to the Western Wall as the Temple is no longer there and there is no reason to visit a wall. On the whole this question was answered well.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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