



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011**

Religious Studies A (4050)

Unit 11: Judaism: Ethics

405011

Report on the Examination

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Unit 11: Judaism: Ethics

General Comments

In this second examination of the new specification there was a wider range of ability than the previous year, including a number of responses that went well beyond the standard expected of GCSE candidates. The more able candidates who were entered for the paper this year understood the questions and responded thoughtfully and competently, producing answers demonstrating accurate and appropriate use of teachings, good depth of understanding, and mature evaluation skills. Examiners felt that the answers candidates gave reflected excellent teaching and careful preparation. Candidates also made good use of techniques to help them develop arguments successfully. Less able candidates had also been well prepared, but had not grasped techniques to help them to structure their answers in order to gain more marks.

All candidates had a good grounding in Jewish teachings, beliefs and attitudes. It was clear that many centres had taught the course from a faith perspective and it was pleasing to see that candidates from both orthodox and non-orthodox centres were able to engage with the questions and answer from their faith experience successfully and to a high level. It was interesting to see the ways in which candidates had been taught; many brought rabbinic discussion and perspectives to their answers, which was very interesting to mark. Examiners gained the impression that candidates had enjoyed the course and been exposed to a wide range of Jewish thinking. The majority of candidates performed well on the AO1 questions that tested knowledge and understanding, and also made competent use of relevant religious material in AO2 questions.

The 3-mark AO2 questions were well answered; for these only the candidate's own view point, supported by evidence and/or argument, is required. Credit was given to two-sided arguments, but in presenting more than one viewpoint, some candidates wrote far more than was required for 3 marks. Candidates need to bear in mind the balance of the paper in terms of mark allocation and leave sufficient time for Part B.

There were many competent responses to 6-mark evaluation questions. Many candidates followed a two paragraph structure, presenting one side of an argument with development in one paragraph, then another supported by evidence and argument in the second. To reach Level 6, a conclusion is not essential, nor does it need to be personal, but if one is given it should do more than simply repeat points already made. An effective conclusion might develop one viewpoint further or explain what is judged to be the clinching argument. Some answers were full of relevant material but lacking in coherent structure. Centres might like to make sure that candidates are drilled in techniques that help them to structure coherent argument and write at length in response to evaluation questions.

Candidates had a lot of material to bring to the paper. It is important to remind them to write in the spaces provided and not in the margins; this sometimes presented examiners with a challenge. Additional pages can be provided if extra space is required. Candidates should clearly write the number and part of the question they are continuing on the additional sheet.

All candidates obeyed the rubric, choosing one question from the two available in Part B. Question B5 was more popular than B6 on the whole.

Question A1 Wealth and Poverty

A large proportion of candidates gained full marks in part (a) by showing a good understanding of the term emergency aid and bringing relevant and recent examples into their answers. Many candidates mentioned the tsunami in Japan and identified kinds of support given in an emergency situation such as help to find survivors, and food and water. Part (b) was also generally well answered. Candidates were able to differentiate between the long and short term aid that World Jewish Relief provides, some linking this to the idea that encouraging self sufficiency was an important aspect of giving within Judaism. Many candidates chose to agree with part (c) of this question, linking their arguments to the mitzvah of tzedaka, the responsibility to treat others as you would want to be treated etc. Those who chose to disagree with the statement did so on the grounds that a person might not have money to support themselves.

Question A2 Relationships and Lifestyle

Part (a) was well answered on the whole. Candidates were aware of the role of the Bet Din, the get and witnesses to the divorce. Many orthodox candidates wrote about how the man had to give the woman the get. Less able candidates tended to lose focus slightly on this question, stating reasons why Jews should not get divorced rather than how they actually do it. Centres might like to spend time discussing and identifying key trigger words in questions to avoid this pitfall in the future.

Part (b) was really well answered. Candidates and teachers had clearly enjoyed this aspect of the specification, mentioning when it is customary to drink alcohol in Judaism, and particularly the tradition of drinking so much during the festival of Purim as to be unable to differentiate between Mordecai and Haman. They balanced this with the mitzvah to preserve life, and also the negative impact that alcoholism can have on family life.

Part (c) generated many responses which contrasted the use of legal and illegal drugs. There were many competent responses and good use of Jewish teachings about the preservation of health, God giving humans the knowledge to preserve life, and the duty to follow the law of the land that you live in.

Question A3 Conflict and Suffering

Part (a) was well answered on the whole, although some candidates felt that anti-Semitism was synonymous with racism and talked about prejudice in relation to different racial or religious groups other than Judaism. Centres might like to stress the importance of learning the key words of the specification, especially to less able candidates, as these can help candidates accumulate marks.

Part (b) generated some really interesting responses, both for and against the statement. Those that chose to argue that Jews do understand suffering linked this to the Holocaust, events of suffering in Jewish history and so forth. Those that argued against took some very interesting lines of argument about how Judaism should move away from the past and concept of a suffering nation, and how other groups had suffered from discrimination in more recent history.

Part (c) was well answered on the whole; candidates were able to link reconciliation to war and peace. Less able candidates tended to interpret reconciliation on a personal level between individuals. Some candidates also mentioned reconciling with God on Yom Kippur. Part (d) generated some passionate responses against the quotation and in defence of the right to go to war. Candidates clearly understood the reasons why Jews would support this view, some of them linking this to the idea to the defence of Israel. They were also able to bring relevant and coherent argument to the opposing view, speaking of the three pillars on which the world stands, the importance of peace and the Messianic age.

Question A4 The Environment

Part (a) was well answered, candidates made appropriate reference to stewardship, God creating the world and the need to preserve it for future generations. Part (b) differentiated well; more able candidates were able to define both concepts and apply what this meant in terms of practical actions such as recycling, not using more resources than necessary etc. Less able candidates tended not to be able to apply the concepts to actions, which capped their level of response to this question. Part (c) generated some really well developed answers about the use of animals. Candidates argued passionately about the care of animals and the interpretation of the concept of dominion. Lots of relevant Jewish teachings and views were brought to this question.

Part B

Question B5 Life and Death

This question tended to be more popular than B6. Part (a) was well answered on the whole; candidates were able to argue from an orthodox and non-orthodox position to answer the question. Candidates were well versed in Jewish teachings and beliefs about contraception; many referred to the acceptance of the pill over the use of the condom, the importance of procreation, and the need to use contraception to space out the birth of children. There were some interesting references to the Talmud and Beraita of three women to outline how women in the past had made use of 'potions' to make themselves infertile.

Part (b) did generate some overlap of creditable material from part (a) in arguments for and against abortion, but many relevant Jewish teachings and attitudes were present in responses to this question.

Part (c) was mostly well answered. Some candidates almost took this as an evaluation question, contrasting orthodox and non-orthodox views on euthanasia in order to answer the question; this was permissible, although not necessary. Many candidates wrote about the importance of preserving life in Judaism, the value and purpose of a person's suffering and the sanctity rather than quality of a person's life.

Part (d) differentiated well. More able candidates were able to contrast teachings in relation to the idea of fearing death. Less able candidates tended to write out what they knew about the afterlife, rather than addressing the question. Centres may want to make sure that candidates read and perhaps highlight the trigger words in questions as practice for the examination.

Question B6 Crime and Punishment

Part (a) was well answered on the whole; candidates tended to choose community service, fines or imprisonment for discussion. More able candidates linked the type of punishment to the aim of punishment that it was intending to fulfil, as well as describing what the punishment was. Less able candidates tended to misread the question and give two aims of punishment rather than two types. Further down in their explanation they might have linked this to a type, therefore achieving some credit for their answer, but not to the highest levels. Again, centres may want to make sure that candidates read and perhaps highlight the trigger words in the question in examination practice.

Part (b) generated some fascinating responses, linked to Jewish ideas about the purposes of punishment. Many candidates wrote about the importance of forgiveness and how reform could be the best possible outcome from a punishment. This was contrasted with other aims; protection, deterrence and retribution were also discussed. Candidates had clearly been well taught on this section of the specification.

Part (c) was answered from different perspectives. Some candidates wrote about historical examples of when the Jews have been punished by God; others wrote about the importance of punishment and justice in Judaism. Some mentioned how children should be punished by their parents for disobeying them. Part (d) was also well answered. Candidates were able to express coherent argument for and against the death penalty, many making reference to Nazi war criminals and debating whether the death penalty made the executioner as bad as the murderer.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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