



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Religious Studies 4050

Unit 11: Judaism: Ethics

405011

Report on the Examination

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Unit 11: Judaism: Ethics

General Comments

In this academic year, there was a wide range of ability levels evident, including a number of responses that went well beyond the standard expected of GCSE students. Many students made use of continuation sheets to complete their answers, rather than writing in the margins which is not helpful. In future examinations, more lines will be given in the examination paper answer booklet to ensure that the students have enough space to complete their answers.

Teachers are reminded of the importance of giving students plenty of timed examination paper practice, so that they select the most relevant material to reach the higher levels rather than writing everything that they know on a topic. The students had so much to write that, in some cases, they rushed to write everything down, which also affected the legibility of papers as well as their ability to complete Part B questions in sufficient depth.

The most able students entered for the paper gave superb responses, making excellent use of Jewish teachings and attitudes, demonstrating a good depth of understanding and sophisticated evaluation skills. Examiners felt that students had been very thoroughly prepared in techniques to enable them to achieve the higher levels for both AO1 and AO2 questions. Less able students also made a very good attempt to answer the questions but seemed to struggle with presenting another viewpoint on AO2 questions. There were many passionate accounts of how students felt about an issue, often with enough detail to reach a Level 4, but the less able ones seemed unable to consider the issue from a different viewpoint. This capped the level that they could be awarded.

All students had a thorough understanding of Jewish teachings, beliefs and attitudes. It was clear to see that many schools and colleges had taught from a faith perspective, and it was pleasing to see that students from both orthodox and non-orthodox backgrounds were able to engage with the questions and answer from their faith experience successfully and to a high level. Many students were able to correctly contrast differences between orthodox and reformed positions, particularly on the issues of homosexuality in Part B. Many students brought relevant rabbinic discussion and perspectives to their answers, and had clearly enjoyed the contrast of opinions and lively debate that they had engaged in to prepare for the examination. The vast majority of students performed really well on the AO1 questions that tested their knowledge and understanding and were able to bring relevant Jewish material to AO2 questions. Some students managed to get Jewish material into both sides of the argument for AO2 questions, which was most impressive. In the minority of cases, less able students seemed to confuse Judaism with Christianity and brought Christian teachings and perspectives to the paper. Some less able students also gave some purely secular response to the question and needed to include relevant Jewish teachings to their answer.

The 3-mark AO2 questions were very well answered; for these only the student's own viewpoint, supported by evidence and / or argument, is required. Credit was given to two-sided arguments, but in presenting more than one viewpoint, some students wrote far more than was required for 3 marks. Students need to bear in mind the balance of the paper in terms of mark allocation and leave sufficient time for Part B. It would be advisable for teachers to stress that students should spend 30 minutes on Part B to ensure that they do justice to the questions and the balance of the paper and do not run out of time.

There were many excellent responses to the 6-mark evaluation questions. Many students followed a two paragraph structure, presenting one side of the 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 the arguments already made. An effective conclusion might develop one viewpoint further or explain what is judged to be a clinching argument.

Schools and colleges had clearly taken note of the advice given in last year's report on the examination and had worked hard to ensure that students made use of techniques to help them to structure coherent argument and write at length in response to evaluation questions. A small minority of students ignored this, perhaps under the pressure of examination conditions.

Part A

Question A1: Conflict and Suffering

The large majority of students gained full marks on this question. Question A1 (a) on pacifism challenged the least able students, as they were only able to write one sentence as a definition, rather than expand on the idea of what pacifism meant. It may be helpful for teachers to stress that, for 2 marks, students need to be presenting two relevant points or developing one point. A1(b) was well answered, with students giving reference to 9/11 and the London bombings. A1(c) generated some responses which were more about peace than war. It may be helpful to encourage students to highlight trigger words in the paper so that they don't move away from the target of the question. A1(d) created some really high quality responses, with reference to Jewish teachings about stewardship and the teaching to not wantonly destroy the environment. Many students referred to Israel's nuclear capacity, arguing against the quotation.

Question A2: Crime and Punishment

This question differentiated well, and more able students gave some superb responses. Students tackled A2(a) with reference to the aims of punishment, which gave them plenty to discuss. Many responded well to the stimulus picture, and talked about how community service helped criminals to make reparation to the community that they had affected, as well as how the high visibility of the work would act as a deterrent to criminals. Less able students were able to collect at least 2 marks on this question by simply explaining the purpose of community service. A2(b) differentiated well, again, and many able students took the line of discussing how imprisonment met the aims of punishment, which gave them plenty of material to bring to the question. Others took a different approach, stating how prisoners should be treated with compassion, and how punishment needs to take place in order to gain God's forgiveness. Both approaches were equally creditable. A2(c) was confidently answered with references to capital punishment in the Torah, the duty to follow the law of the land, counterbalanced with the teaching of 'an eye for and eye' and proportionality of response to criminal activity.

Question A3: The Environment

A3(a) was well answered by the majority. Students were able to contrast the use of animals for medical research and cosmetic research, as well as the differences within Judaism of views on both activities. Again, the students responded well to the stimulus picture, and discussed the relevant importance of human life over that of the rats pictured. It was clear that students felt strongly about the issue of animal rights in experimentation, and A3(b) enabled them to pursue further these ideas. Some students wrote about the concept of dominion, and therefore humans have a right to use animal life as a resource to benefit mankind. This was a creditable and valid approach to the question. A3(c) was well answered, responses providing valid Jewish attitudes about stewardship, working in partnership with God to preserve the planet, and the importance of protecting the planet for future generations. Some less able students interpreted 'the environment' as 'animals', however. Again, it may be helpful to encourage students to highlight trigger words in the paper, so that they keep their focus on the question.

Question A4: Jewish Attitudes to Fertility Issues

A4(a) on fertility issues was very well answered, with students making clear reference to Jewish teachings about adultery, Jewish identity and masturbation. The statement in A4(b) was mainly agreed with, again with clear Jewish teachings used to support the argument, particularly the mitzvah to be 'fruitful and multiply'. A4(c) was really interesting to mark, as students were able to draw on arguments for and against genetic engineering with reference to crops and 'designer babies'. Students were well aware of the issues, and able to discuss the role of medical science 'playing God' and Jewish objections to this, balanced with teachings about the importance in Judaism of preserving life.

Part B

Question B5: Relationships and Lifestyle

B5 was a more popular choice of question than B6. B5(a) was superbly dealt with. Many students were able to correctly contrast differences between various Jewish traditions on the issue of homosexuality. There was discussion of the orthodox position and relevant teachings from the Torah, reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, and good coverage of the points indicated in the mark scheme. Question B5(b) produced some thoughtful responses; there was discussion about the different roles of men and women in the Jewish household, and the responsibilities of the husband and wife in raising children and observing the faith at home. These ideas were contrasted with the capacity of divorced and homosexual couples to raise children. Some students struggled to present a second point of view on the issue, and while they gained 4 marks for a well developed response giving an orthodox view point, could not move beyond this, as these questions require reasoned consideration of two different perspectives. It will be helpful for students to at least consider reasons why others might hold views with which they disagree, so that they can gain the maximum marks. B5(c) was well answered; the students clearly enjoyed the question, and brought relevant Jewish perspectives to their answers. Many of these responses were reflective of the content indicated in the mark scheme. B5(d) was a joy to mark and it appeared that students and teachers had clearly enjoyed this area of the specification. Students were able to discuss celebrations when wine was part of Jewish life, mentioning Shabbat, Purim, Brit Milah and Pesach. They also explored the mitzvah to preserve human life, and also the negative impact that alcohol can have on the family unit.

Question B6: Wealth and Poverty

B6(a) was really well answered in the main. It was impressive to see how students were able to apply the concept of righteousness to tzedaka; many made reference to Maimonides' levels of giving and to the principle of giving anonymously to help a recipient to become self sufficient. B6(b) generated a wide variety of discussion. Many students focused on the importance of following all mitzvah, the importance of a Jew's relationship with God, and the importance of family life in Judaism. This was contrasted with the importance of tzedaka. B6(c) was really well answered; a number of students gave several examples of the work of Jewish agencies at home and abroad, including the work of World Jewish Relief. In B6(d) references to the different circles of giving, and the responsibility to put those at home first, ahead of the wider community, contrasted with the idea that fellow Jews in Israel should be prioritised, along with those of the greatest need.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [AQA results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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