Judaism: Belief and Teachings Practices
Exam Info

Written examination: 1 hour
25% of qualification
60 marks

Learners should be aware that Judaism is one of a diverse range of religious and nonreligulous traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today that includes Christianity; Buddhism; Hinduism; Islam; Sikhism; Humanism and Atheism, but that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christian. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Learners must know, understand and express common and divergent views and the basis for beliefs, teachings and practices. References to relevant sources of wisdom and authority are expected, including scripture and/or sacred texts.

How to use this guide

If you want more information on any area, then the BBC website is a good start which can help you find out more: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/
Basic Information about Judaism

- There are about 17 million Jews in the world
- It is one of the oldest religions at about 3,500 years old
- Most Jews, about 6.5 million, live in America
- Many Jews, about 6 million, live in Israel
- In this country, the UK, about 300,000 Jews live
- The main holy book is called the Torah
- The main founders of the religion are Abraham and Moses
- There are different types of Jewish people, such as Ultra-Orthodox, Hasidic, Orthodox, Reform, Liberal, Progressives.
- Jewish people believe in one God and think they are God’s chosen people
- Jewish people have been persecuted and treated badly many times through history, and experienced much anti-Semitism (racism) in the past
- Trying to find a homeland after the awful terrors of the Holocaust, the Jewish state of Israel was founded in 1948
- There are 613 rules in the Torah which they try to follow as best they can, whichever country they live in

Maimonides’ 13 principles of faith

1. God exists, is perfect and created everything in existence
2. Belief in God’s unity
3. God does not have a physical body and so is not affected by the same needs as humans
4. God is eternal
5. Only God should be worshipped
6. God communicates with people through prophets
7. Moses is the most important prophet
8. The Torah was given to Moses by God
9. The Torah is God’s law and cannot be changed
10. God is all knowing and knows everything that is going to happen
11. God will reward good and punish evil
12. The belief that the Messiah will come
13. The dead will be resurrected
Beliefs and Teachings

The Shema and beliefs in God

- this is the basic prayer of Judaism and is said every morning and evening
- is states the basic belief of Jews which is that there is one God (monotheism)
- they believe God is the creator and designer of the universe
- God is supposed to be omnipresent (everywhere), omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscient (all knowing)
- when speaking about God, they often use the word Hashem which means ‘the name’, because when speaking of the One we should not use His name unnecessarily
- God is holy – which means special, sacred and to be respected
- God’s rules are to be followed and obeyed

The Shema: Hear, O Israel: Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is the One and Only. You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources. And these matters that I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children and you shall speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise. Bind them as a sign upon your arm and let them be ornaments between your eyes. And write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

The creation of the world

- God made the world in 7 days, as it says the book of Genesis, which is in the first part of the Torah
- after making all the plants and animals, God made Adam and Eve and gave the earth to them to look after
- God created the world out of nothing, so He has a plan for everything
- everything in the world keeps on going and everything keeps working because God continually does this
- some Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews think the Torah is to be believed word for word and God actually made the world in 6 days, resting on the last day
- some Jews believe that the story is just an idea and a way of saying that God made the world and everything in it, but that the Torah needs to be interpreted and is more like a story

Covenant

- A promise or agreement between two parties. Covenants were made between God with Abraham and Moses. As part of the agreement, conditions are made
so each of the groups benefit. It is similar to a contract when a promise is made.

- In Judaism the relationship with God is seen as a covenant. In the Torah, God makes relationships with individuals or groups through a covenant. Often the making of the covenant is marked by a special sign.
- Each covenant marks a special time in God's relationship with the Jewish people.

**Abraham and Moses**

- Abraham started Judaism when he made the covenant (the promise) to God to worship Him.
- God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son to God, although he stopped Abraham from doing this at the last minute.
- Abraham was told that all of his people would be looked after so long as they worshipped God.
- The Jewish people had to believe in one God and also circumcise all baby boys when they were born.
- God would protect His people and give them a promised land (which is Israel).
- Moses was an Israelite although he grew up in the Egyptian royal palace – all the other Jews were kept as slaves.
- Moses eventually made the King of Egypt let the Israelites go free, but only after bringing the 10 plagues to Egypt.
- Moses led his people into the desert for 40 years before they found the country of Israel where they settled.
- God gave all the rules (the mitzvot) to Moses.

**The Ten Commandments (Decalogue)**

- They were given to Moses by God and should be followed by all Jewish people.
- Moses climbed up a mountain called Mount Sinai and after being up there 40 days, came back down with 2 stone tablets with the commandments written on them.
- There are another set of rules Moses learned, and in total there are 613 commandments he was told.
- Some of the rules in the Decalogue shows that God is to be respected.
- Some of the rules in the Decalogue shows God cares about the Jewish people.
- Some of the rules in the Decalogue shows that God wants justice and fairness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 Commandments</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. I am the one God</td>
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<td>2. Do not worship false idols</td>
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<td>3. Do not swear</td>
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<td>4. Keep Sabbath day (Shabbat) special and holy</td>
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<td>5. Respect your parents</td>
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<td>6. Do not murder</td>
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<td>7. Do not commit adultery</td>
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<td>8. Do not steal</td>
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<td>9. Do not lie</td>
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<td>10. Do not be jealous</td>
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The Torah

- this is the first 5 books given by God to Moses and it is the most important part of the Tenakh
- the Torah is written onto large scrolls and kept in the ark of the synagogue
- they are very special and must have special scribes to write them and must be buried when they are finished with
- the Torah has all the 613 commandments (mitzvot) in it

The Tenakh

- this is all the books and writings of different Jewish prophets (teachers about God) that are put together
- T is for Torah: the first 5 books of Moses
- N is for Nevi'im: the books of the prophets
- K is for Kevuvim: other holy writings
- together the T and N and K make the Tenakh
- most of it is written in Hebrew, the old Jewish language

Jewish beliefs about the Messiah

- The term ‘Messiah’ comes from the Hebrew ‘Mashiach’, which means ‘anointed’. ‘Anointed’ refers to the process of putting oil on the head of a king or queen during their coronation. For some Jews a belief in the Messiah is central to their faith.
- During the Messianic age there will be peace on earth and even animals will not kill each other
- Some Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to come and pray for his arrival
- Reformed Jews believe we should work to bring the Messianic age about by our actions
- This is linked to Tikkun Olam - “repairing this world” through justice and righteousness; through “deed, not creed”

The Mezuzah contains the Shema – the biblical passage declaring G-d’s unity and devotion to Him. It is handwritten in the original Hebrew by an expert scribe, known as a sofer. Only then, is a “kosher” Mezuzah placed in a cover or case made of glass, wood, metal or any other material and fixed to the doorpost.
**Items worn for worship.**

**Kippah** (plural kippot) a skullcap. Jewish males cover their heads as a sign of respect to God. Some wear it all the time, others only when at prayer.

**Tallit** – a rectangular shawl with fringes (tzitzit) symbolising the 613 mitzvot.

Traditionally worn by men at morning services although in non-Orthodox synagogues many women wear it. **Tefillin** - Leather boxes containing the Shema. Usually worn by makes during morning prayer.

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**Mitzvot (many rules) and Mitzvah (one rule)**

There are many different mitzvot in the Torah, 613 to be precise. They cover a huge range of things, examples of which you can see throughout all the topics we have covered. A mitzvah could be about clothing worn, a festival, about food or its preparation, about prayers or about how to set up your home or the synagogue, amongst other things.

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**Pikuach Nefesh** is the term used to describe the setting aside of certain mitzvot in order to save a life. To support life, all but 3 of the 613 mitzvot can be broken.

idolatry, incest and adultery. This means, for example, that doctors permitted to answer emergency on Shabbat, even though one of Ten Commandments requires to rest on Shabbat. To preserve a life is permissible to remove organs dead body (otherwise, Jews are forbidden to disturb a body except to wash it, clothe it decently and bury it). To preserve a life one may travel on Shabbat or even break the fast on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement).

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**The afterlife-Olam Ha-Ba**

- The nature of the afterlife is not frequently considered in Judaism. There are two main reasons for this:
  - What is important is living a good life now in preparation for the world to come whatever that world might be.
  - The ways of God are not for humans to understand so there is no point trying to do so.
- Many Orthodox Jews believe in some form of resurrection. This is stated in daily prayers and at funerals. However, there are also some prayers which refer to the soul being at rest under the wings of the Shekhinah (divine presence of God). Some Orthodox Jews believe in a resurrection that includes the body as well as the soul being raised.
it is difficult to explain what Jews believe about the afterlife. There are so many different views.

what all Jews share is a belief that doing good actions in this life is more important than spending time thinking about what might happen after death.

Practices

differences between ultra-Orthodox Jews, Orthodox Jews and Reform Jews

• Ultra-Orthodox Jews are very strict in how they read the Torah. They often take parts of it word for word and try not to break the rules at all
• they often look different as they have long forelocks of hair, have all their clothes in black and wear large hats
• examples: they would wear a tallit under their clothes all day long, may have big families and often live in communities separate from non-Jews
• Orthodox Jews believe they should live their lives as close to the rules laid down in the Torah as possible
• Orthodox keep many rules of Torah very strictly such as not working on Shabbat and only allowing men and women to have certain roles in the synagogue
• Reform Jews think that the Jewish religion should move with the times
• Reform Judaism started of about 150 years ago and tries in understand the Torah alongside modern day life

types of Jewish people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashkenazi</th>
<th>these are Western Jews and lived for many years in Eastern Europe a long time ago. Ashkenaz is the Hebrew name for Germany. They can be anything from ultra-Orthodox to Reform.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sephardic</td>
<td>there are Oriental Jews who lived for many years in North Africa and Spain a long time ago. Seferad is the Hebrew name for Spain. They can be anything from ultra-Orthodox to Reform.</td>
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<td>Hasidic</td>
<td>they believe that serving God is a joy and practice their religion with enthusiasm. Believing in God is supposed to be simple and everyone, rich and poor alike, should serve him and learn about</td>
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him. They do not have rabbis but instead used the word rebbe, and think a rebbe is just as good as anyone else, no better. They often dress in black and look like ultra-Orthodox Jews.

Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews make up most part of all the Jews in the world.

The Synagogue

House of assembly; building for Jewish public prayer, study and assembly.

- they are the centre of the community as they are used for festivals, weddings and religious study
- they are used every Saturday for worship during Shabbat
- they are also used for youth groups or for visiting lecturers or speakers
- they hold the Torah scrolls in the ark at the front
- they have the ner tamid (light that is always on) which is always on and a symbol of the 7 wick candle (the menorah) in the old Temple which always kept at least 1 light burning
- synagogues serve the community by aiding worship, social events and education
- there are prayers at the synagogue 3 times each day, at morning afternoon and evening, and during Shabbat or festivals, the Torah is also read out
- the shema is said in the morning and evening services and also when at home at night

<table>
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<tr>
<th>differences between Orthodox and Reform synagogues</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Orthodox</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>men and women sit separately</td>
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<tr>
<td>always a male rabbi</td>
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<tr>
<td>services are normally in Hebrew</td>
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<tr>
<td>must have a minyan – this is a 10 man prayer group</td>
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<tr>
<td>women do not touch the Torah, read it or lead any prayers</td>
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The reasons they have to do all these different things at the synagogue is often because there are mitzvot which tell them they have to do this. As well as being in the Torah, it may also be because it remembers an important part of Jewish history.

Shabbat
this is every Saturday and remembers the 7th day god made the world and then rested, so Jews will do no work on this day
Orthodox Jews think it starts at sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday
Orthodox Jews will not even switch lights on and off or drive a car or even to write, as these are work
the mother welcomes Shabbat into the home with 2 candles and the family will eat a meal with special challot bread which remembers God’s gift to the Jewish people of food when they were hungry in the desert
it ends with the family lighting the havdalah candle and giving thanks to God for His creation of the world and everything He has given us, and the smelling of sweet spices such as cinnamon

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
- **Rosh Hashanah** is the Jewish New Year and is celebrated for over 2 days, and is followed by Yom Kippur after 10 days
- it is a time to think about what you have done right and wrong over the past year
- the festival starts in the evening and God is talked about as if there in the synagogue as He is in judgement of everyone there
- apples dipped in honey are eaten as people wish to each other that God has written a good new year ahead for them
- people may put a fish’s head on the table at home to hope for good deeds to multiply as much as fish in sea
  - in the morning of the second day, 100 notes of the shofar horn are blown
  - there is a ceremony in the afternoon when people ask God to remove their sins and go to a riverbank so they can symbolise casting their sins into the depths of the sea

Yom Kippur
- this is the Day of Atonement and is when Jews ask for forgiveness
- white clothes may be worn to show how people’s sins are to be cleaned
- people often give to charity some money or some food
- adults normally fast for the day (don’t eat food) and take the day as a chance to reflect on what they have done
- this is the holiest day of the year and even secular Jews will attend synagogue
during prayers in the synagogue, people quietly ask God for forgiveness

**coming of age and rites of passage**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>brit milah</th>
<th>the circumcision of baby boys when they are 7 days old. The man cutting the foreskin is called the mohel and has been specially trained. It is a symbol of the baby boy being welcomed into the religion. It remembers God’s covenant with Abraham.</th>
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<tr>
<td>bar mitzvah</td>
<td>when a boy is 13 he becomes a ‘son of the commandment’. this is when</td>
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</table>
he becomes a man. It is celebrated by his family. He reads part of the Torah. He wears the tallit and tefillin.

| bat mitzvah  | when a girl is 12 she becomes a ‘daughter of the commandment’. This is when she becomes an adult and it is celebrated by her family. This only happens in reform synagogues. |
| bat chayil   | in Orthodox synagogues girls cannot have bat mitzvahs, so this is instead and means ‘daughter of excellence’ when they are 12 years old. They study the rules of festivals, Shabbat and how to keep a good Jewish home. |

**Sukkot**

- Sukkot is the festival of tabernacles, meaning booths
- people build tents and huts and celebrate various parts of this over a week, remembering with the huts when the Israelites (the Jews) left Egypt and roamed the desert as nomads for 40 years
  - the booths can be very large, enough for many people, and people are often invited into a family’s sukkah (plural is sukkot)
  - leaves and greenery will be placed around the hut in the roof and is a reminder of the type of leafy roofs which their ancestors would have had
- this festival follows Yom Kippur

**Pesach – the festival of Passover**

- this remembers the time the Jewish people were saved by Moses from Egypt
- in the synagogue there we be worship and reading which remember this story
- homes will have all yeast foods thrown out and will be cleaned in preparation
- at home there is the Passover plate which has food like matzo crackers to remember how there was no time for the bread to rise, and bitter herbs like horseradish to remember the bitterness of slavery, salt water to remember the tears of the slaves
- the final plague was when the angle of death killed all the first born boys in Egypt, but passed over the Jewish houses as they put lamb’s blood over their doorways
- it reminds Jewish people that they are God’s chosen people, and that he saved them

**Kosher food**
• the ‘kashrut’ laws tell what a Jew is allowed and not allowed to eat, and if it is good then it is ‘kosher’
• ‘parev’ foods are fruit and vegetables and mean if a food is neither good or bad and can go with any other food
• some foods are ‘trefah’, meaning forbidden, such as shellfish, birds of prey, and animals with single hooves
• animals must be killed by a swift cut across the throat with a razor sharp knife, this is called ‘shechitah’ and all blood must be removed from meat
• in the Torah it says ‘You shall not cook a kid (a baby goat) in the milk of its mother’. For this reason, meat and dairy must be kept separate and Jewish kitchens do this with 2 sets of everything so they are never mixed

Rituals of death and mourning
• the chevra kaddisha is the group of volunteers in the community who help prepare bodies for burial when someone dies
• if possible, a person’s last words will be a recitation of the shema
• the 7 days after someone is dead are known as shiva and people must wear black during this time, must not shave, bathe, have sex, wear perfume or wear leather shoes
• they sit on low chairs and don’t do things of pleasure of comfort
• visitors come to see the mourners during shiva, but no food is served as nothing is to be taken from the mourning family
• during the intense mourning of shiva, a yahrzeit candle is burnt and is also burnt a year after the death
• Orthodox Jews think only burial is allowed as Genesis in the Torah says we came from the soil and shall return; Reform Jews allow cremation
• the chevra kaddisha will have someone stay with the body until it is buried, which is normally as quickly as possible
• a prayer called kaddish will be said many times over the week of shiva, this prayer being about God’s greatness and the hope for peace

Marriage
• Marriage is seen as an important religious and spiritual ceremony in Judaism. It allows procreation, fulfilling the duty to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ and the bonding referred to in the Torah.
• Ketubah This is the marriage contract made between bride and groom. It is a legal document in which traditionally the husband promises to support his wife.
• The main part of the ceremony takes place under
the chuppah. This is a shelter with four sides open and symbolises the Jewish home.

- Two blessings are said in the kiddushin one for the wine and the second for the commitment that the bride and groom are making to each other.
- Stamping of glass. At the end of the ceremony a glass is stamped on by the groom. Many reasons are given for this custom such as a reminder that marriage is fragile (like glass) or a reminder of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

EXAM PRACTICE

Beliefs and Teachings
(a) What is the meaning of 'Shekinah'? [2]
(b) Explain different Jewish beliefs about resurrection. [5]
(c) Explain why Moses is important in Judaism. [8]
(d) “Keeping the Ten Commandments is the most important part of Judaism.”
   Discuss the statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. [15]
   (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

Practices
(a) What are ‘mitzvot’? [2]
(b) Describe how Jewish women might worship differently to men. [5]
(c) Explain why Shabbat is important in Judaism. [8]
(d) "You have to go to the synagogue to be a Jew."
   Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. [15]
   (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)
Covenant an agreement between two parties/the agreement between the Almighty and the Jewish people
Synagogue House of assembly; building for Jewish public prayer, study and assembly.
Shabbat Day of spiritual renewal and rest. Beginning at sunset on Friday and closing at nightfall on Saturday.
Decalogue the Ten Commandments
halakhah the code of conduct for living the Jewish way of life
hashem the Name (part of the Jewish belief that the Almighty’s Name is holy and should not be pronounced unnecessarily)
Mishnah the oral law as written by Rabbi Judah the Prince in about 200 CE
omnipresent the belief that the Almighty is everywhere
shekinah the divine presence
Shema the major Jewish prayer affirming belief in the one Almighty (used by Jewish people in the mezuzah etc. to remind themselves of the Almighty’s unity)
Talmud collection of writings on Jewish law and morals
Tenakh the Jewish Bible
Torah the five books of Moses which contain the Almighty’s law
Israel the worldwide Jewish community, the land of Israel, the modern state of Israel
Magen David the star of David
mitzvot the commandments a Jew must follow
Rabbi an ordained Jewish teacher/spiritual leader of a Jewish community
Bar Mitzvah initiation ceremony for boys
Brit Milah covenant of cutting/circumcision ceremony
Hanukkah the festival of dedication
minyan the quorum of 10 adult Jewish men required for a service
mohel one who conducts circumcision
Pesach the festival of Passover
Purim the festival commemorating Esther saving the Jews from extermination
Rosh Hashanah the Jewish New Year
siddur the daily prayer book
Simchat Torah the festival of Rejoicing the Law
Sukkot the festival of Booths or Tabernacles
Yom Kippur the Day of Atonement
chevra kaddisha the people who prepare a body for burial
kashrut laws relating to keeping a kosher home
Kosher Means ‘fit’ or ‘proper’. Foods that are permitted to be eaten according to Leviticus 11. It is also used to refer to the purity of ritual objects such as Torah scrolls.
kippah headcovering worn during daily prayers
kosher foods which a Jewish person is allowed to eat
mezuzah a small scroll of the shema placed on Jewish doorposts
mikveh ritual bath for spiritual cleansing
parev neutral foods, for example vegetables
shechitah the Jewish method of animal slaughter
shiva seven days when bereaved people sit at home
tallit prayer shawl (four-cornered garment with fringes)
tefillin the two leather boxes, containing Torah passages, worn by Jewish males for morning prayers
yahrzeit anniversary of a death
Messiah The anointed one who Jews believe will bring in a new era or age for humankind. This will include rebuilding the Temple and bringing in an age of universal peace.
Tikkun Olam - repairing this world” through justice and righteousness; through “deed, not creed

KEY VOCABULARY