

RELIGIOUS
STUDIES A
REVISION
NOTES

FOR EDEXCEL GCSE (9-1)
SIMPLE, CLEAR & MEMORABLE

PAPER 2
JUDAISM

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CONTENTS

1 BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS	
1.1 The nature of the Almighty	5
1.2 The nature and importance of the Shekhinah	6
1.3 The nature and purpose of the Messiah	7
1.4 The Covenant at Sinai	8
1.5 The covenant with Abraham and his descendants.....	9
1.6 Sanctity of life	10
1.7 Moral principles and the Mitzvot	11
1.8 Jewish beliefs about life after death	12
2 PRACTICES.....	
2.1 The nature and purpose of Jewish public acts of worship	13
2.2 The Tenakh and Talmud.....	14
2.3 The nature and purpose of prayer in the home and of private prayer	15
2.4 The nature and importance of the Shema and the Amidah.....	16
2.5 The importance of ritual for Jews today	17
2.6 The nature, features, history and purpose of celebrating Shabbat.....	19
2.7 Jewish festivals	20
2.8 Features of the synagogue	21

Using this book

USING THIS BOOK

1 THIS IS A SPECIFICATION CHAPTER

1.1 This is a specification subchapter

This is a source of wisdom and authority

1 BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS

1.1 The nature of the Almighty

- **One:**
 - impossible to divide into parts
 - makes Judaism monotheistic
 - | **“The Lord our God, the Lord is one” – Deuteronomy 4 (in Shema)**

- **Creator:**
 - created all of universe
 - shows His omnipotence
 - | **“the Lord formed man of dust from the ground” – Genesis 2**

- **Law-Giver:**
 - gave Torah (containing 613 Mitzvot) to Moses
 - shows His father-like nature
 - | **“the Lord is our lawgiver” – Isaiah 33**

- **Judge:**
 - based on how well the Mitzvot are obeyed
 - part of the Covenant at Sinai
 - | **“the Lord is our judge” – Isaiah 33**

Section 1

1.2 The nature and importance of the Shekhinah

- The **Shekhinah** is the divine presence of God in the world.

- In the Tenakh:

“My Presence will go [with you], and I will give you rest”

– *Exodus 33 (guiding Moses)*

“the glory of the Lord filled the House” – *2 Chronicles 7 (Temple)*

“the entire Mount Sinai smoked because the Lord had descended upon it in fire” – *Exodus 19 (giving the Commandments)*

“I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted and the rain of his robe filled the Temple” – *Isaiah 6 (choosing the Tabernacle)*

- Divergent understandings of the Shekhinah:

- can only be present in a minyan

“Whenever ten are gathered for prayer, there the Shekhinah rests”

– *Talmud Sanhedrin 39*

- can be present whenever two or more are praying together

“when two sit together and words of Torah pass between them, the Shekhinah is in their midst” – *Perkei Avot 3*

- is a light created to be a link between God and the world
- is an expression for God’s relation to the world
- is another name for God

- Importance of the Shekhinah:

- the **Temple and Mount Sinai are important places** due to His presence
- **presence of Shekhinah at Sinai shows that God gave the Mitzvot**
- **gives hope** for coming across the Shekhinah

1.3 The nature and purpose of the Messiah

- The Messiah will:
 - **enforce Jewish law** in the land
“A king will reign and prosper and he will administer justice and righteousness in the land” – Jeremiah 23
 - **bring peace** between nations
“the people of Judah will be safe, and the people of Israel will live in peace” – Jeremiah 23
 - **retrieve the Promised Land**
“and they shall dwell on their land” – Jeremiah 23
 - **be a descendant of King David**
“I, the Lord, promise that there will always be a descendant of David to be king of Israel” – Jeremiah 23
 - **rebuild the Temple** and re-establish worship within
“there will always be priests from the tribe of Levi to serve me” – Jeremiah 33
- Nature of the Messianic Age:
 - the **‘anointed one’ will become King** of Israel at the end of time
 - only **described in the Nevi’im** (prophets)
 - an **ancient idea to reassure Jews** forced into exile
- Importance of the Messiah / Messianic Age:
 - **reassures Jews that there will be peace** one day
 - **reassures Jews that the Promised Land** is to come
 - **motivates Jews to do Tikkun Olam** (acts to prepare for the Messiah):
 - prayer
 - charity work
 - strengthening communities
- Orthodox understandings of the Messiah:
 - referred to as Olam Ha-Ba, it will be a time of **complete peace**
 - **everyone will recognise the Jewish God** as the one and only
 - all **Jews living in exile will be returned** to Israel
- Divergent understandings of the Messiah and the Messianic Age:
 - **Orthodox:** Messiah will come to Earth, He will rule over the world
 - **Reform:** Messianic Age can be brought by doing Tikkun Olam, as one community

Section 1

1.4 The Covenant at Sinai

- God made a covenant with all the Jewish people:
 - gave the **Decalogue** (Ten Commandments)
 - **identified Jews as God's chosen people**
 - **an eternal covenant**
 - said that those who **followed the Decalogue would be rewarded**
 - said that those who **disobeyed the Decalogue would be punished**
- Moses in the Covenant:
 - a prophet chosen by God
 - given the Talmud, or Oral Law
 - the 'representative' of all the Jews in agreeing to the Covenant

"You shall not recognise the gods of others in My presence"

"You shall not make yourself a carved image"

"You shall not take the name of Hashem, your God, in vain"

"Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it"

"Honour your father and mother"

"You shall not kill"

"You shall not commit adultery"

"You shall not steal"

"You shall not bear false witness against your fellow"

"You shall not covet your fellow's house [...] nor anything that belongs to your fellow"

– Exodus 20

- Divergent understandings of importance of Decalogue today:
 - the **Law is still the most important part of the Tenakh**
 - **Decalogue is still completely followed** today
 - **some laws are outdated**, e.g. animal sacrifices
 - **read three times a year** (Deuteronomy, Exodus, and during Shavuot)

1.5 The covenant with Abraham and his descendants

- Nature and history of the Abrahamic Covenant:
 - God told Abraham to leave his home and family in return of land and descendants
 - Abraham sealed the covenant by circumcising himself and the males in his family
 - God tested Abraham ten times, the final being to sacrifice his son
 - Abraham had a son named Isaac despite his wife being too old to conceive
 - Isaac's son fathered 12 sons who established the 12 tribes of Israel
- Abraham in the Covenant:
 - Abraham is the **founder of monotheistic religions**
 - Abraham, Isaac (son) and Jacob (grandson) are the **Patriarchs of Judaism**
 - **"I will ratify My covenant [...] as an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and to your offspring after you" – Genesis 17**
- Importance of Promised Land today:
 - **land of Israel remains central to Judaism** (e.g. prayers facing Jerusalem)
 - **prayers for a return to Israel** are included in Sabbath and festivals
 - **living outside Israel may be viewed as a form of exile** by some Jews

Section 1

1.6 Sanctity of life

- **Pikuach Nefesh** is the Jewish belief about the primacy of life, that the preservation of human life overrides virtually every other Jewish law.
- Why human life is holy for Jews:
 - **life is given by God** | **“So God created man in His image” – Genesis 1**
 - since everyone is a descendant of a single person, **killing one means killing all**
- Pikuach Nefesh:
 - when a person’s life is in danger, **almost any Mitzvah can be broken**, except:
 - murder
 - idolatry
 - incest
 - adultery
 - Jews believe they should **live by the Torah, not die because of it**
 - Jews **may do work on Shabbat to save a life**, e.g.:
 - rescuing a drowning child
 - breaking a door to let a trapped child escape
 - moving rubble from a collapsed wall to save a child
 - extinguish a fire to save a life

“If one is seized by a ravenous hunger, he may be given to eat even unclean things until his eyes are enlightened” – Talmud Yoma 83

**“One may extinguish and isolate [the fire] in the case of a conflagration”
– Talmud Yoma 84**

- Divergent understandings of Pikuach Nefesh today:
 - **abortions** to save a mother’s life is mandatory as she is more important than her unborn child
 - **euthanasia**, suicide and assisted suicide are forbidden
 - it may be permissible to **end artificially prolonged life**
 - **doctors can answer emergency calls** on Shabbat
 - organ donation should **not endanger the life of the donor**

1.7 Moral principles and the Mitzvot

- Nature and importance of the Mitzvot:
 - **given to Moses by God** as part of a Covenant
 - **Halakhah** is a guide to a good Jewish life
 - **Orthodox Jews** believe it is the **literal Word of God**
 - **Reform Jews** believe it is only **divinely inspired**
 - **Maimonides compiled the Mishneh Torah**, a compilation of all the Mitzvot, called the Sefer Mada

- Importance of relationship between keeping the Mitzvot and free will:
 - some believe God **predetermines fate**
 - some believe God **is omniscient of fate**, but doesn't determine it
 - it is **a duty to obey the Mitzvot** because God will reward obedience and punish disobedience

"I present before you today a blessing and a curse" – Deuteronomy 11

- Mitzvot between humans and the Almighty:
 - observing the Mitzvot **shows gratitude to God**
 - thereby living a good Jewish life **strengthens one's relationship with God**
 - **praying before meals involves the Almighty** in human life

- Mitzvot between humans:
 - performing a **Mitzvah** (good deed) includes:
 - visiting the sick
 - comforting mourners
 - feeding the hungry
 - helping the poor

- Divergent understandings of the importance of the Mitzvot today:
 - **many laws are no longer practised**, e.g. animal sacrifices
 - **modern issues not mentioned in Mitzvot**, so Jews turn to Rabbis and the Talmud
 - **some modern decisions are controversial** in respect of the Mitzvot

Section 1

1.8 Jewish beliefs about life after death

Orthodox Jews	Reform Jews
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Messiah will come to lead a Messianic Age- God will judge how well the Mosaic Covenant was kept- righteous will resurrect and live in Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- reject belief of Messiah- Olam Ha-Ba (the world to come)- generally less agreement on what happens after death

- Jewish teachings about life after death:

“Thus the dust returns to the ground, as it was, and the spirit returns to the God Who gave it” – Ecclesiastes 12

- the **body rots** away
- the **soul goes to God**, i.e. in Gan Eden

- Nature of resurrection and judgement:

“Many of those who sleep in the dusty earth shall awaken: these for everlasting life and these for shame, for everlasting abhorrence” – Daniel 12

- God will judge each soul following resurrection, and they will go to either:
 - **Gan Eden**: for the righteous, with God
 - **Gehinnom**: purification of the soul before moving to Gan Eden
 - Jews generally believe there is no ‘hell’

- Importance of belief in life after death today:

- one of the **Thirteen Principles of Faith**
- **judgement as an incentive** to live a good life
- **teaching of the Talmud**, which all Jews follow

2 PRACTICES

2.1 The nature and purpose of Jewish public acts of worship

“My vows to Hashem I will pay [...] in the courtyards of the House of Hashem”
 – *Psalm 116*

- Nature of Jewish public worship:
 - the **synagogue** is the Jewish place of worship
 - the **Kaddish** is said in the presence of a minyan (ten men)
 - prayer is usually done **towards Jerusalem** (the Promised Land)
 - the **Siddur** is a book of daily prayers Jews follow

- Purpose of Jewish public worship:
 - public worship **unites families and friends**
 - **some prayers can only be said with others**, e.g. the Kaddish
 - the **outcome of worship can influence a Jew’s life**, e.g. Torah study

- Nature of synagogue services:
 - there is a **Torah reading**
 - the **Rabbi gives a sermon**, which relates to daily life
 - **Shabbat services take place on Friday evening and Saturday morning**, and feature longer Torah readings

- Purpose of synagogue services:
 - **unite local community**
 - **reminder of global Jewish community**
 - **opportunity to visit the House of God**
 - **sermon may well affect a Jew’s life**

Section 2

2.2 The Tenakh and Talmud

- Nature and purpose of Tenakh:
 - **composed of** the Torah (*Law*), **Nevi'im** (*prophets*) and **Ketuvim** (*writings*):
 - Torah: *contains Jewish Laws for all Jews to follow*
 - Nevi'im: *contains the teachings of the Prophets*
 - Ketuvim: *contains the writings of Judaism*
 - **most sacred object** in Judaism
 - the Torah is **stored in the Ark** in the synagogue
 - **Orthodox Jews** believe the Torah is the **literal Word of God**
 - **Reform Jews** believe it is the **divinely inspired Word of God**
- Nature and purpose of the Talmud:
 - is the **oral teaching** given to Moses by God
 - passed down by oral tradition and **written 1000 years later**
 - **composed of** the **Mishnah** (core text) and the **Gemara** (Rabbinical analysis)
 - a **source of Jewish legal teaching and decision**

“If [man] has acquired words of the Torah, he has attained afterlife” – Perkei Avot 2

- Jewish food laws:
 - **food laws** include:
 - separation of meat and dairy (as it is unethical to cook an animal in its milk)
 - animals must have split hooves
 - animals must eat plants
 - animals should not be injured upon sacrifice
 - sea creatures must have fins and scales
 - **kashrut**: the term given to Jewish food laws
 - **kosher**: food that is ‘fit to eat’ under kashrut
 - **treifah**: food that is ‘torn’ and unclean to eat

“Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat” – Deuteronomy 14

- Divergent implications of kashrut today:
 - some Reform/Liberal Jews do not observe all kashrut
 - most Jews refrain from eating pork
 - some laws are followed for health reasons not religious reasons
 - some laws create challenges, e.g. separation of milk and dairy during preparation

2.3 The nature and purpose of prayer in the home and of private prayer

- Nature and purpose of prayer in the home:
 - most Jews **cannot attend the synagogue daily**
 - prayers are said **before and after meals**
 - prayer **unites the family**, especially during Shabbat

- Nature and purpose of private prayer:
 - Jews are **encouraged to pray three times a day**
 - private prayer **can be of praise, request or thanks**

- Nature and purpose of prayer three times a day:
 - **Orthodox Jews pray at least three times** a day
 - **Reform Jews pray whenever** they want
 - the prayers said are typically:
 - morning: *Modeh Ani (giving thanks for gift of life) / Shema / Amidah*
 - noon: *Psalm 145 (praise) / Amidah / Aleinu*
 - evening: *Shema / Amidah / Aleinu*

“Evening, morning and noon, I supplicate and moan” – Psalm 55

- Importance of having different types of prayers:
 - **different moods**
 - **different situations**
 - **some prayers must be private**, others must be said in public

Section 2

2.4 The nature and importance of the Shema and the Amidah

“Hear O Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One” – *The Shema*

- The **Shema** is the Jewish declaration of faith:
 - **most important prayer** in Judaism
 - **recited twice a day** in morning and evening services
 - **found twice in the Tenakh** (Deuteronomy and Numbers)
 - **contained in the Mezuzah**
- A **mezuzah** is a container attached to doorposts in Jewish homes containing the Shema.
- It is a reminder of *God’s presence* and of the *monotheistic nature of Judaism*.
- The **Amidah** is a prayer consisting of blessings recited while worshippers stand:
 - also known as the **HaTefillah**, or ‘standing prayer’
 - contains a **varying number of blessings**
 - **worshippers rock from side to side** to mimic a candle’s flame trying to rise to God
- Uses of the Shema:
 - **in the morning and evening** as a *reminder of God*
 - in the **mezuzah**, which contains the Shema, as a *reminder of God’s presence*
- Uses of the Amidah:
 - said **three times a day** to *keep God in daily life*
 - said **during synagogue services** to *receive God’s blessings*
- Importance of the Shema:
 - declares Judaism as a **monotheistic religion**
 - **contains many important beliefs** about God
- Importance of the Amidah:
 - **core part** of every Jewish service
 - features praise, request and thanks, which are all **central to a relationship** with God

2.5 The importance of ritual for Jews today

- Birth ceremonies:
 - life begins as a baby emerges halfway from the mother's womb
 - newborn babies are pure and free from sin
 - a mother undergoes Temple rituals for purification after giving birth
 - she cannot touch anything sacred for:
 - boys: 7 + 33 days
 - girls: 14 + 66 days (must relax further as she has created another creator)
 - there is a mikvah (ritual bath) after 7/14 days and after bleeding has stopped

“[the mother] may not touch anything sacred and she may not enter the Sanctuary” – Leviticus 12
 - a Hebrew name is given to the child:
 - boys: given during Brit Milah
 - girls: given in synagogue
 - boys are circumcised (Brit Milah):
 - universally observed mitzvot
 - according to Abrahamic Covenant
 - performed by a mohel (religiously trained person)

“Abraham circumcised his son Isaac [...] as God had commanded him” – Genesis 21
- Bar Mitzvah (boys):
 - at age of 13
 - can lead a synagogue service afterwards
 - learns to read Hebrew from Torah
- Bat Mitzvah (girls):
 - at age of 12 (or in Reform synagogues, 13 like the boys)
 - learns to cook challah (plaited bread for Shabbat)
 - learns to perform important preparations in the home
 - in Reform/Liberal synagogues, a girl may also read from the Torah
- Marriage:
 - a **Kiddushin** is a ritual engagement
 - a **Nisuin** is a full marriage
 - bride and groom **do not see each other for a week** before the wedding (Orthodox)
 - a **Ketubah** (marriage contract) is signed by the couple
 - marriage takes place under a **chupa (special canopy)**

Section 2

- Mourning ceremonies:
 - **Orthodox Jews** may **tear their clothes** as Jacob did in Genesis
 - **Reform Jews** may **wear a torn black ribbon**

- parts of Jewish mourning ceremonies:
 - **funeral:**
 - burial rather than cremation
 - candles are lit
 - body is supervised at all times before burial
 - body is wrapped in a linen shroud (men also wrapped in tallit)
 - entirely at cemetery (home is considered a place for life not death)
 - hands washed outside to signify leaving death behind
 - **avelut** (period of mourning) consists of shiva, sheloshim and yud-bet chodesh
 - **shiva**: first 7 days after burial – no work is done, all stay at home to pray
 - **sheloshim**: first 30 days after burial – normal life but no parties
 - **yud-bet chodesh**: year following loss of parent (extended sheloshim)
 - **yahrzeit**: annual anniversary of death – yahrzeit candle is lit

2.6 The nature, features, history and purpose of celebrating Shabbat

“on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed” – Exodus 31

- Nature and purpose of Shabbat:
 - **in the home:**
 - house cleaned and tidied
 - candles lit
 - Friday evening meal
 - hymns sung
 - Havdalah blessing over wine and lighting of candle marks end of Shabbat
 - overflowing Kiddish cup symbolises overflowing joy
 - **in the synagogue:** (lasts approximately 2 hours)
 - Amidah – facing Jerusalem
 - Shema
 - Torah reading
 - Rabbi’s sermon
 - Aleinu
 - Kaddish
 - Adon Olam hymn (‘Master of the World’)
- Importance of Shabbat:
 - a **form of observing the mitzvot** and showing gratitude to God
 - **core part** of Jewish practices
 - opportunity for **family to connect and enjoy** their time
 - **poses challenges** for modern Jews which strengthens their faith

Section 2

2.7 Jewish festivals

- History of Jewish festivals:
 - Rosh Hashanah has historically marked the start of the new year
 - Pesach is based on the Passover, when the Angel of Death passed over Egypt
 - the date of Yom Kippur (10th day of the 7th month) is based on Leviticus 16:29

“In the seventh month, on the first of the month, there shall be a day of rest for you”
– *Leviticus 23*

- Rosh Hashanah:
 - means ‘Head of the Year’, or New Year
 - celebrated over two days (one day in Reform communities)
 - taught in Mishnah that God judged each person on this day
 - a time to reflect on behaviour and make peace
 - synagogue service ends with wishes of a good year to come
 - the shofar is blown as a final call for repentance
- Yom Kippur:
 - means ‘Day of Atonement’
 - holiest day of the year
 - Jews seek forgiveness from one another then from God
 - many fast for 25 hours
 - evening synagogue service allows Jews to cancel promises they cannot keep
 - white clothing is worn to symbolise purity
- Pesach:
 - means ‘Passover’ and is based on the passing of the Angel of Death over Egypt
 - all chametz (leaven) is removed from the house
 - lasts 8 days and features the Seder Meal
 - the Seder is symbolic and follows an order set out in the Haggadah
- Shavuot:
 - celebrates giving of Law on Mount Sinai and the wheat harvest
 - Jews traditionally took wheat to the Temple
 - marks 49 days from Pesach
 - lasts 1 day in Israel and 2 days in Diaspora
 - synagogue is decorated with greenery
- Sukkot:
 - happens 4 days after Yom Kippur
 - marks the end of summer and the start of the autumn fruit harvest
 - also called the Feast of Booths, as a reminder of their dwelling places during the wilderness years
 - lasts 8 days and is a period of holiday and hospitality
 - less significant in Orthodox Judaism

2.8 Features of the synagogue

“A multitude of people is a king’s glory” – Proverbs 14

- Orthodox Jews:
 - **facing Jerusalem:** shows desire to reach Promised Land
 - **layout:** three sides of seating facing bimah and ark on fourth side
 - **other details:**
 - men and women sit separately to avoid distraction
 - women cover heads for modesty
 - no music

- Reform/Liberal Jews:
 - **facing Jerusalem:** synagogue may not face Jerusalem but worshippers do
 - **layout:** ark and bimah may be at the front and all seating facing one direction
 - **other details:**
 - men and women may sit together
 - women may wear a kippah or tallit
 - musical instruments may be used

- Uses of the synagogue:
 - synagogue services
 - Hebrew classes
 - Torah study
 - adult education classes
 - youth clubs
 - charity events

- Objects of devotion:
 - **yad:** reading stick for the Torah so as not to touch the sacred scroll
 - **Torah Scroll:** stored in the Ark to keep it safe
 - **menorah:** six-branched candle stick as commnded in Exodus 25
 - **ner tamid:** ‘eternal light’ above the Ark as a reminder of God’s eternal nature

“they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for lighting, to kindle the lamps continually.” – Exodus 20

RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

PAPER 2 – JUDAISM

1 BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS

2 PRACTICES
