



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

8062/16: Judaism

Report on the Examination

8062

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General Comments

The students had been well prepared for the examination, and examiners felt that centres had put the advanced information to good use. The paper was accessible, with students getting the full breadth of marks. The paper was comparable to previous series.

Some students were making use of writing frames, to greater and lesser degrees of success. In the best cases these frames were helpful and they were clearly focused on the target of the question giving relevant and useful points. In less successful cases the writing frames led them off to present red herrings, especially those who were asked to say whether this was a weak or a strong argument, and then give a counter-argument, which was a pity. Centres may want to revisit what writing frames they are using to make sure their students are able to effectively integrate religious content, and present reasoned consideration in relation to the essay questions of 1.5 and 2.5.

Question 1.1 got the students off to a good start. Over 92% of students achieved the mark, and were able to identify that Moses was the person that made a Covenant with God at Mount Sinai.

Question 1.2 asked students how Jews might follow the moral principle of healing the world. This generated some thoughtful responses. Common responses involved tzedakah, litter picking, chesed, recycling, volunteering and prayer. A few students were able to link healing the world to the concept of social justice and equality. As is usual for a 2 mark question, some students wrote far more than required. It was an accessible question and 77% of students picked up the 2 marks for it.

Question 1.3 asked students to explain two ways in which belief about God as Judge influences Jews today. A useful strategy with an influences question is to encourage students to think of what people believe, say and do. Most students began by explaining following mitzvot and how this was important to be considered worthy in God's eyes. Some went down the lines of explaining the mitzvot were God's rules that needed to be followed in order to get a good judgement in the afterlife. While Judaism is a religion focused on following the mitzvot in day to day life; and this is more of a specifically Christian idea than Jewish; the team allowed credit for such responses. A popular way to contrast this first way in which belief in God as Judge influences Jews today was discussing the links between judgement and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Weaker students tended to repeat ideas about rule following, or go off on tangents about the differences between Orthodox and Progressive Jews in the interpretation of the obligation to follow all the mitzvot. In terms of the spread of marks on this question, 46% of students achieved the full 4 marks, and 90% were able to pick up 2 marks or more.

Question 1.4 asked students to explain two Jewish beliefs about the Covenant with Abraham. Most students were able to correctly identify the right covenant although weaker students often veered off to the Mosaic Covenant. Of those who knew the Covenant well, they mentioned the promise of children, developed with reference to Sarah, and sometimes supported with a quote the promise about having offspring as numerous as the stars. Circumcision was often used in contrast and was well elaborated. Others discussed the Promised Land and why that was important to Jews today.

Others wanted to discuss the importance of the Jews being God's chosen people, and again this was well developed. Weaker students did tend to want to discuss the sacrifice of Isaac, which was not part of the Abrahamic Covenant and therefore didn't gain any marks.

In terms of the awarding of the fifth mark for presenting a relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Jewish teaching, this really differentiated marks. Only 18% of students picked up the fifth mark. Centres are reminded to encourage students to clearly reference i.e name the source of authority, and to be aware that a recognisable quote will not be sufficient. The marking team were able to credit recognisable quotes as development, but if there was no clear recognisable source, students didn't get the mark. Good practice would be to say, 'The Torah says...' or 'The Tenakh says...' 'It says in Genesis...'. Care must be taken to make sure they have the right reference, however. Examiners did see some references to circumcision being part of the Ten Commandments, according to some weaker students, as well as several references to the Jewish Bible.

Students tended to know about Abraham or not. 75% of students scored 2 marks or more on the question, but a further 17% scored zero, or did not attempt it.

Question 1.5 asked students to evaluate whether the most important role of the Messiah was to bring peace to the world. As expected, this question differentiated. At the higher end of responses, it was evident that students had a really good grip on the various roles the Messiah was prophesied to fulfil. We saw contrasts between Orthodox and Progressive viewpoints highlighting how Orthodox Jews believed the Messiah to be a human from the line of King David; the role of leadership; teacher of religious Law; role of political leader, role of rebuilding the Temple and uniting all Jews in Israel and so on. The importance of the Messiah being a hopeful figure, who would come at a time when the world needed him most also featured, as well as discussion of the Holocaust. The quote from Micah 4:3 was well used, as was the idea of the potential for a Messiah in each generation in the higher grade responses.

Students then went on to contrast this perspective with the Progressive view of the responsibility of all Jews to participate in healing the world, having collective responsibility, and how actions could be taken to make the world more peaceful. Higher ability students often clung to the idea of how to bring on the Messianic Age; there needed to be peace before a Messiah was able to arrive. Others took the line that the Messiah would bring peace, therefore it was the most important role of the Messiah. . Around 12% of responses achieved a level 4 score.

Many students correctly identified that Jews do not consider Jesus to be the Messiah. However, weaker students were often taken off in a different direction about the rights and wrongs of recognising Jesus as the Messiah in their opinion.

Likewise, there was some confusion over Christian and Jewish ideas about the Messiah, as some students wanted to discuss how Jews were expecting the Messiah to be a Saviour, to be a divine figure, as well as also adding incorrect ideas about claiming the Messiah will come to judge at the end of time, rather than God. This tended to limit these students' performance. With these types of

responses, it was a matter of crediting the material which was correct. Examiners also saw Christian teaching such as the Parable of the Sheep and Goats referenced as being Jewish teaching for instance as well as Christian teachings about Jesus being the Prince of Peace. Centres may wish to revisit a broad range of resources to help clearly differentiate Jewish from Christian teachings to avoid students confusing the two religions in future.

A lot of students were able to bring a great deal of AO1 knowledge to this question, but failed to gain the highest level 4, because there was a lack of evaluative skills present in what they presented. Centres might consider doing more command word recognition in questions given that such students were operating at a level 3 for this reason. 29% of students achieved a level 3 score.

A further 29% of students achieved a level 2. Such students were able to give two points of view, but their answers were not sophisticated enough to be judged as reasoned consideration.

Weaker students struggled to offer anything more above generic comments why peace was important in Judaism. There was mention of Shalom as a greeting and how the world would be better with more peace, for example. Again, work on the trigger words in the question may help support weaker students.

The very weakest students clearly didn't know anything at all about the Messiah, and 8% achieved no marks or did not attempt the question.

SPaG – The majority of students gained a 2 or more for SPaG, 86% gained 2 marks or more, and 43% gained the full 3 marks. It was good to see that centres had applied for word processing for students that needed support with handwriting. However, examiners did get a number of scripts that were difficult to read, and some which were illegible. A student's handwriting should be assessed to determine if they need to use a computer to write for extended periods.

Question 2.1, on the age at which Jewish boys usually have their Bar Mitzvah ceremony, was well answered. 93% of students achieved the mark.

Question 2.2 asked students to give two things required for meat to be kosher. This was one of the more difficult questions to mark on the paper. It was evident that some students had interpreted fish as 'meat', which the team allowed, given different dictionary definitions of 'meat'. It should be noted that fish is 'pareve' (neutral) in Judaism and therefore can be eaten with dairy and is not considered to be the same as meat. Examiners did however, to be fair to all students, credit fish having fins and scales, no crustaceans and by association, no pork or insects other than locusts. .

The majority of students discussed animals with split hooves, animals that chew the cud, not to be eaten with dairy, not a bird of prey and so on. 56% of students achieved full marks, and 98% gained a mark or more, so this was well answered.

Some of the weaker students got really confused, mentioning animals with various numbers of stomachs, saying animals that don't chew the cud, and don't have split hooves could be eaten or

simply naming animals such as cow, chicken, which didn't gain any marks. Others confused kosher slaughter with a 'painless death', or discussed dirty animals.

Question 2.3 asked students two contrasting ways a synagogue might be used by Jews. This was well attempted by most. Students knew about worship and were able to elaborate on that, and often contrasted this with the role of education or as a place of social gathering, recognising the three functions of a synagogue as a house of prayer, learning and community. 52% of students achieved full marks, and 90% achieved 2 marks or more.

Unfortunately, some had picked out the word 'contrasting' in the question but did not recognise 'ways a synagogue might be **used** by Jews'. This generated responses focused on the furniture of a synagogue as opposed to the way it was used. So many discussed the difference between where men and women sit in Orthodox and Progressive synagogues, rather than discussing the use of it. In general if they answered in this way they would probably pick up a mark for worship, but little more.

Some students mentioned rites of passage which was relevant for baby blessings and circumcision; Bar and Bat Mitzvah; marriage; but less so for funerals. Again, a number of the weaker students were thinking about Christian ceremonies. Mourning services were credited, however.

Question 2.4 asked for two ways in which Shabbat is celebrated in Jewish homes. This was also well attempted with students having something relevant to offer. The most common responses focused on the meal to start the Shabbat, with lots of references to the candles, the woman of the household lighting them as well as the role of the head of the household reciting a kiddush blessing etc. Other approaches included mentioning not working / creating and preparing the food in advance and so on.

The fifth mark for a relevant and accurate teaching on this question seemed to be picked up more readily than in 1.4 for the simple reason they all knew that keeping Shabbat holy was one of the Ten Commandments and could be found in the Torah / Tenakh / Exodus etc. 24% managed to achieve 5 marks on this question for that reason.

Weaker students confused the blessings made to God with blessing the candles, wine and bread. Also some students discussed not driving on the synagogue, which was not credited as the question was asking for how Shabbat was celebrated at home.

In general it was a well answered question with 90% of students achieving 2 marks or more.

Question 2.5 asked students to evaluate whether for Jews Yom Kippur was more important than Rosh Hashanah. This was felt to be a question where the weaker students either really struggled or ran out of time and failed to attempt it. 19% of students either achieved no marks or did not attempt the question.

Stronger students at level 4 really had an excellent grip on all the customs of each festival and were able to evaluate properly. They were able to differentiate between the two festivals and stick tightly to the target of the question. These were a pleasure to read, as they contrasted the solemnity of Yom Kippur, the importance of repentance to God, mentioned all of the customs of Yom Kippur, fasting, how the day was spent in the synagogue, the final day of judgement for the year, the book of life and so on. They then moved on to the importance of Rosh Hashanah, of reconciling and making things right with those they had wronged, customs such as Tashlich, eating pomegranate seeds, fish head, apples and honey and so on. Approximately 11% of students achieved a level 4 for this question.

Responses at level 3 mirrored those on 1.5. In that there was lots of AO1 content, but they failed to be developed enough to be considered 'well-argued'. Again, trigger word work would help these students. Approximately 27% of students achieved a level 3.

Many of the level 2 responses were at that level because they were able to write a lot, but confusion had set in. So examiners needed to pick out accurate points at this level. There was also some confusion about Rosh Hashanah because one of its names is Yom haDin – Day of Judgement. This was often interpreted in relation to the afterlife, which is incorrect. There was often a lack of understanding that the ten day period of repentance begins with Rosh Hashanah. Approximately 25% of students achieved a level 2.

What singled out level 1 was a basic lack of knowledge. Students could write about Rosh Hashanah being the Jewish new year and Yom Kippur the day of atonement but that all. Weaker students also confused the idea of the Jewish new year with secular new year celebrations. Roughly 16% achieved a level 1.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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