

# 9

# Judaism: Beliefs and teachings

## ■ The nature of God

### ► God as one

A central belief in Judaism is that there is one God (monotheism) who is all knowing (omniscient), all powerful (omnipotent) and existing always (omnipresent).

**Reverence** deep respect and awe.  
**Shema** a prayer declaring a belief in one God. It is found in the Torah.

**Reverence** is so important that some observant Jews use Hashem (the name) or write G-D instead of God to represent their respect. The Jewish philosopher Maimonides wrote in the twelfth century that no language exists to be able to describe the uniqueness of God. A similar view is expressed by the twelfth-century Spanish rabbi Judah ha-Levi: "if I understand Him I would be Him". The belief that God is unique runs throughout Jewish belief, worship and lifestyle. Nearly 2,000 years ago Rabbi Akiba said that God's uniqueness is shown by him knowing the character of every single creature and their minds.

The central prayer of Judaism, the **Shema**, affirms the belief that there is only one God. This prayer is made up of three passages from the Torah and is the most important prayer in Judaism. It is recited daily by many Jews. The first paragraph declares a belief in the one God and in his ruling over all creation.

'Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one.'

Deuteronomy 6:4

## Task

The Shema is a part of my identity as a Jew.  
Miriam

From the pictures and text on pages 294 and 302 identify and describe four examples that support Miriam's view.

Many Jews will say the Shema during their prayers in the morning and the evening. The importance of the prayer is also displayed in many other ways.

The belief that there is only one God is shown in the design of many synagogues. Although they may be very decorative, with colourful glass windows, synagogues do not have any statues or representations of human beings. It is God alone who should be worshipped.

The belief in monotheism (one God) is central to Judaism. However, throughout the Torah, God shows many different characteristics. These characteristics show the different natures of God and are often used as names when describing God. Three of these names are creator, law-giver and judge.

## ► God as creator

### The creation story

The Torah begins by showing how God created the world:

*'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.'*

Genesis 1:1

It continues to describe how he made day and night, the earth, vegetation and animals.

*'God said, "There shall be light," and light came into existence.'*

*God saw that the light was good, and God divided between the light and the darkness.*

*God named the light "Day", and the darkness He named "Night". It was evening and it was morning, one day.'*

Genesis 1:3–5

Until on the sixth day he not only created human beings but gave them a special and individual role.

*'God said, "Let us make man with our image and likeness. Let him dominate the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock animals, and all the earth – and every land animal that walks the earth."*

*God [thus] created man with His image. In the image of God, He created him, male and female He created them.*

*God blessed them. God said to them, "Be fertile and become many. Fill the land and conquer it. Dominate the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every beast that walks the land."*

Genesis 1:26–28

Some Jews believe that every detail of the creation as told in the Torah is true, that God literally created the world in six days. Others believe the details are examples of what might have happened, but are not meant to be taken literally. For them the most important thing to understand from the creation story is that God is responsible for the creation of everything in existence. (See page 39 for more on creation.)

### Jewish beliefs about creation

For many Jews the world is too wonderful and complex to have happened by chance. So it must have had a creator.

Celebrating God as the creator is an important part of Judaism. Prayers said in Orthodox services illustrate how God created the world:

*'Blessed be He who spoke, and the world existed.'*

Each week, Jews celebrate the festival of Shabbat. This is a day not only of rest but also of celebration of creation. Just as God rested on the seventh day, so observant Jews do not work on Shabbat.

A traditional story is told about a rabbi who wanted to show how the world was created. He turned a bottle of ink on its side so it poured onto a poem. 'Look,' he said, 'the wind knocked over the ink and spilled out a poem onto the paper.' The people laughed at him. 'Such an act is impossible. Look at the poem. It has too much design for it to have been composed by accident.' 'Ah,' said the rabbi, 'then how could you look at the world and think it was designed by accident?'

## ► God as law giver

Jews believe that God revealed to the prophet Moses laws and duties that are expected of all Jews. These are recorded in the Torah. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17) that God gave to Moses are the framework of how a just society that is close to God could be established.

God judges how each Jew follows the laws. By obeying the laws, Jews are not only fulfilling what God wants but they are forming a close relationship with him.



God gave Moses the Ten Commandments

**Justice** what is fair or right. When everyone has equal rights and opportunities.

### Tasks

- 1 Explain, in your own words, three different ways that Jews show they believe there is only one God.
- 2 Amal has to answer an (a) type exam question: 'What is meant by the Torah?' The answer is worth two marks. Look at the marking grid on page vii to give a mark for his answer: 'the Jewish Bible'. How could he gain full marks?

## ► God as judge

Judaism teaches that God is a God of both **justice** and mercy and that he will judge each person. Although God's ways may not be understandable by humans they are considered to be just. God has no pleasure in judging humans wrongly, so any judgements he makes will be just. As Psalm 5:4 states:

*'You are not a God that has pleasure in wickedness.'*

The Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah celebrates the creation of the world. At this time it is believed God will judge every person. The Talmud describes how God brings out scales to weigh the deeds (mitzvot) of each person. On one side he places the good deeds and on the other the bad deeds.

As God is believed to be a God of mercy, ten days are given after Rosh Hashanah before Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). During this time, humans can try to make up for any bad deeds and ask for forgiveness. After death it is impossible to repent so this time allows humans to reflect on their deeds and make amends.

When I light the candles and bring Shabbat into my home then I feel the presence of God.

## ► The nature and significance of Shekhinah – 'the divine presence'

### Key Concepts



**Shekhinah** The place where God's presence rests and can be felt.

**Shekhinah** is sometimes used to refer to God himself but more usually to God's presence in the world. Shekhinah derives from the word 'shakan' which is used throughout the Torah to illustrate God's dwelling on the earth. There are different views regarding where the Shekhinah rested after the destruction of the Temple. Some believe the Shekhinah followed the Jews into exile. There is also the belief that the Shekhinah never fully left the Temple area and that is why Israel has special spiritual quality. These beliefs are not contradictory as the Shekhinah is not limited to just one place. In mystical Judaism it is often used to refer to the feminine characteristics of God and is referred to as 'she'.

If God is meant to be everywhere, what is special about the Shekhinah? For most Jews they would explain that the Shekhinah is not just where God is but where the presence can be felt – something that cannot be seen but can be experienced.

Leonard Nimoy, who acted the part of the Vulcan Mr Spock in *Star Trek*, wrote a book which included his interpretation of Shekhinah. He was asked to explain how the presence of Shekhinah felt.

'I think – I hope that most people at one time or another in their lives have a feeling of being in a state of grace for a moment or two, feeling that all has come together for them, that they're in a sense of harmony, a sense of inner peace, a sense of successful combining of instinct and will and the coincidence of events that makes one feel that you're in the right place at the right time and doing the right thing.'



### Task



In your exam you may be asked to explain the nature and the significance of Shekhinah.

- [a] Select three points you would include to explain what the Shekhinah is [the nature].
- [b] Select three points to explain why the Shekhinah is important [the significance].

## Messiah (Mashiach)

### Key Concepts



**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.

### ► The Messianic Age and the Messiah

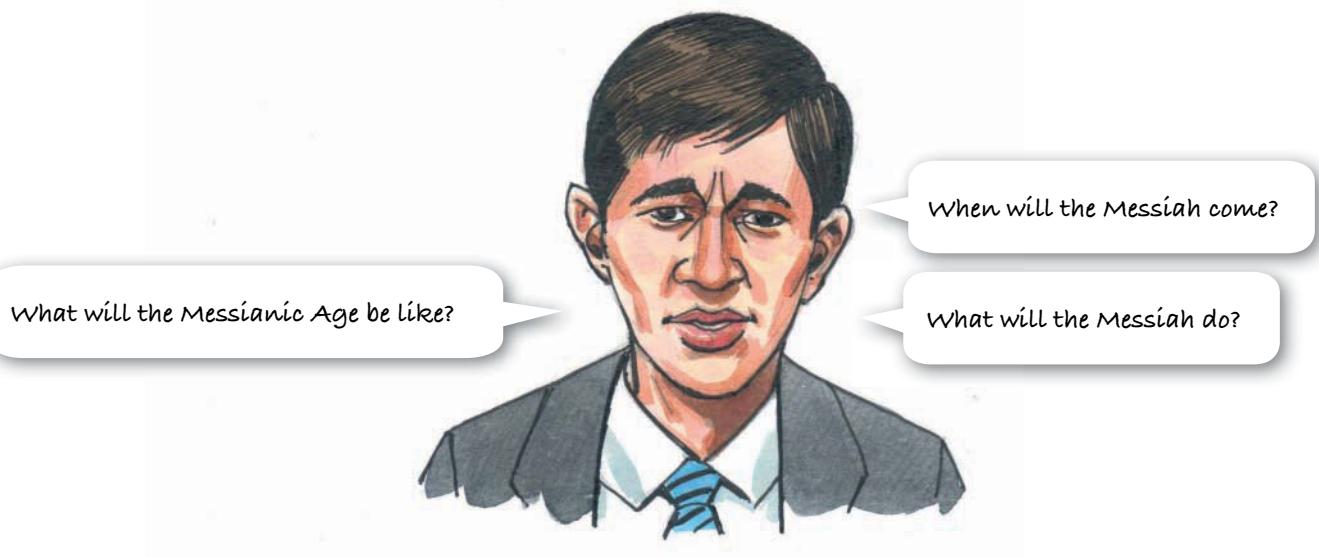
The Messianic Age is a term used for a future time of peace on earth when there will be no violence or hunger or crime. There are no direct references to the Messianic Age in the Torah but scriptures are interpreted to explain what the Messianic Age might be like. Isaiah (11:1–9) talks of it being a time in which the wolf shall live with the lamb, and in which the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw.

For many Jews the first step to this Messianic Age is the coming of the **Messiah** and the resurrection of the dead. The term ‘Messiah’ comes from the Hebrew ‘Mashiach’, which means ‘anointed’. ‘Anointed’ refers to the process of putting scented oil on the head of a king or queen during their coronation. It showed they were trusted by God to do a particular role.

For some Jews a belief in the Messiah is central to their faith. Maimonides, a Jewish philosopher from the twelfth century, said that a belief in the Messiah was one of the 13 Principles of Judaism. This view is not shared by Reform Jews who believe that it will be the good actions of humans that will bring a Messianic Age of peace.

In Judaism there are two main reasons why there are different views about the Messiah:

- ▶ There are no definite teachings about the Messiah in the Torah. This means that passages that Jews might think are relevant have to be interpreted.
- ▶ In Judaism there is a strong belief that humans should focus on the here and now. The world to come is beyond humans’ understanding.



An old Jewish story tells of a Russian Jew who was paid a ruble a month by the community council to stand at the outskirts of town so that he could be the first person to greet the Messiah upon his arrival. When a friend said to him, 'But the pay is so low', the man replied: 'True, but the job is permanent'.

## ► When might the Messiah come?

There are no references in the Torah as to when the Messiah may come. For some Jews this is because the Torah was written for people to understand and the idea of the Messianic Age is beyond understanding. Some rabbis have tried to calculate the exact arrival of the Messiah. Meir Loeb ben Yehiel, for example, said in 1868 that the Messiah would come in 1913. There have also been a number of false Messiahs, such as Shabbetai Tzvi in the seventeenth century who convinced many thousands of Jews he was the Messiah until under the threat of death he converted to Islam.

The focus for most Jews is not on a date that the Messiah may come but the particular actions that will bring about the Messiah. Although some Orthodox Jews believe that God has a specific date for the coming of the Messiah, most believe that the coming of the Messiah will depend upon when he is most needed. This could be because of the sins of the world or because the world is so good.

For Reform Jews there is little focus about the coming of the Messiah. The main focus is on Jews looking forward to a better society and working towards that goal.

## ► What will the Messiah do?

There are many different beliefs about the nature of the Messiah and what he will actually do. The traditional belief is that the Messiah will be a great political leader and judge who will bring the world to an end. Some Jews believe he will not be a supernatural being but a human who is descended from **King David** and an inspiration to others.

Many Jews believe that in every generation a person is born with the potential to be the Messiah.

In the **Tenakh**, three actions of the Messiah are referred to:

- ▶ He will bring Jews back to Israel and restore Jerusalem.
- ▶ He will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. This was the most important place of Jewish worship which was destroyed in 70 CE.
- ▶ He will bring about a time of peace when people will live together without fighting.

**King David** a successful king of the Israelites. Believed by many to have written the Psalms.

**Tenakh** the Jewish Bible. The word 'Tenakh' is made up of the first Hebrew letters of the Torah (five books of Moses), Neviim (books of the Prophets) and Ketuvim (holy writings).

## One Day

The reggae singer Matisyahu is an American Orthodox Jewish rap artist. His song 'One Day' expresses the peace that Jews hope for in the Messianic Age.

I've been praying for  
For the people to say  
That we don't wanna fight no more  
There'll be no more wars  
And our children will play  
One day (one day), One day (one day)  
One day this all will change

Treat people the same  
Stop with the violence  
Down with the hate  
One day we'll all be free  
And proud to be  
Under the same sun.



I don't really think about the Messiah as it is important to focus on what is happening in the world today.

Although I am Jewish and go to synagogue every week I don't believe in a being that is called the Messiah.

There is no mention of the Messiah in the Torah and although throughout history people have claimed to be the Jewish Messiah they have always been false. I long for a Messianic Age of peace but don't believe that will come about by someone leading us. I believe it is far more important to live the best life I can to help other people. It is those actions that would bring about peace in the world.

Sophie



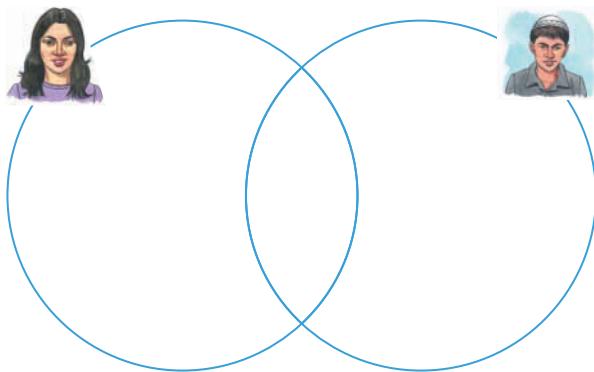
Although I believe that the Messiah will come and each day I pray he will bring about the Messianic Age, I think more about the actions I should be doing to make the world a better place. In Isaiah 9:5-6 there is a description of what the Messiah will be like. He will be a peaceful ruler and introduce a peaceful time forever. He will sit on the throne of King David, rebuild the Temple and rule justly. My rabbi tells me not to try and work out when the Messiah will come as the important thing is to live a good life.

Harry

## Tasks

- 1 In your own word explain what the term 'Messiah' means.
- 2 Create a Venn diagram.

In one ring make a note of three of Sophie's beliefs and in the other ring a note of three of Harry's beliefs. In the middle note any beliefs that they both hold.



- 3 Do you think Harry and Sophie are Orthodox or Reform Jews? Give two reasons for your decision.
- 4 'It doesn't matter if the Messiah never comes.' Explain two reasons for and against this view.



## Covenant

### Key Concepts



**Covenant** A promise or agreement between two parties. Covenants were made between God with Noah, Abraham and Moses.



God's covenants with humankind are often marked by a special sign. His covenant with Noah was marked by a rainbow.

**Midrash** collections of various Rabbinic commentaries on the Tanakh.

A **covenant** is an agreement between two people or groups of people. 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.

### ► Covenant with Abraham

Abraham is regarded as the founder of the Jewish people and is often called 'father'. He was the first person to teach that there was only one God; before then, people believed in many gods. He was originally called Abram but was given the name Abraham by God as it means 'father of many nations'.

He was a shepherd and came from Ur in Mesopotamia (in modern-day Iraq/Syria). His father made statues (or 'idols') for people to worship. In the **Midrash**, there are a number of stories about Abraham smashing his father's idols when he realises that there can be only one God of heaven and earth. The scriptures state that because of Abraham's purity, God called out to him, commanding him to leave his homeland behind for a new life. Abraham accepted this, and took his wife Sarah with him.

There are three main parts of the Abrahamic Covenant.

### The Promised Land (Genesis 12:1)

God called Abraham from Ur to a land that he would give him (Genesis 12:1). Abraham and his descendants found their new home in the land of Canaan (Genesis 12). This land is now known as Israel, named after Abraham's grandson, whose descendants are the Jewish people.

The land is often referred to as the 'Promised Land' because of God's repeated promise (Genesis 12:7, 13:15, 15:18, 17:8) to give the land to the descendants of Abraham. Jews have lived in this land continuously from the time of its original conquest by Joshua more than 3,200 years ago until the present day, though Jews were not always in political control of the land, and Jews were not always the majority of the land's population.

## The promise of descendants (Genesis 12:2)

God promised Abraham that he would make a great nation out of him. That is why God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, meaning ‘father of many nations’. This promise is shown in Genesis 17:6–8 where God promises that nations and kings will descend from Abraham:

‘I will increase your numbers very, very much, and I will make you into nations – kings will be your descendants.

I will sustain My covenant between Me and between you and your descendants after you throughout their generations, an eternal covenant; I will be a God to you and to your offspring after you.

To you and your offspring I will give the land where you are now living as a foreigner. The whole land of Canaan shall be [your] eternal heritage, and I will be a God to [your descendants].’

Genesis 17:6–8

## The promise of blessing and redemption (Genesis 12:1–3)

God promised to bless Abraham and the families of the earth through him.

God said to Abram, “Go away from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.

I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you great. You shall become a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and he who curses you, I will curse. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 12:1–3

As a part of this covenant God gave Abraham the rite of circumcision as the specific sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. Circumcision involves the removal of a boy’s foreskin on the eighth day after birth. It is performed in front of a minyan (ten Jewish males). Boys are named at the same time. All males were to be circumcised and so carry a lifelong mark in their flesh of their relationship with God.

‘You shall be circumcised through the flesh of your foreskin. This shall be the mark of the covenant between Me and you.

Throughout all generations, every male shall be circumcised when he is eight days old. [This shall include] those born in your house, as well as [slaves] bought with cash from an outsider, who is not your descendant.

[All slaves,] both houseborn and purchased with your money must be circumcised. This shall be My covenant in your flesh, an eternal covenant.

The uncircumcised male whose foreskin has not been circumcised, shall have his soul cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.’

Genesis 17:11–14

### Task

Explain how each of the words below is connected with Abraham:

**COVENANT**  
**OBEEDIENCE**  
**CIRCUMCISION**  
**ABRAM**  
**FAITH**  
**FATHER**  
**PROMISED LAND**



‘You shall be circumcised through the flesh of your foreskin. This shall be the mark of the covenant between Me and you.

Throughout all generations, every male shall be circumcised when he is eight days old. [This shall include] those born in your house, as well as [slaves] bought with cash from an outsider, who is not your descendant.

[All slaves,] both houseborn and purchased with your money must be circumcised. This shall be My covenant in your flesh, an eternal covenant.

The uncircumcised male whose foreskin has not been circumcised, shall have his soul cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.’



## Covenant with Moses

Another important covenant was the one made between God and Moses. Moses is regarded by Jews as the greatest of the prophets and some refer to him as Moshe Rabbenu (our teacher Moses). Maimonides in the 13 Principles describes Moses as the father of all prophets. Moses had a special relationship with God and is believed to be the only person who has seen God face to face. Moses was a great leader and teacher and is considered by many Jews as the first rabbi. He is the deliverer of God's words and the receiver of miracles sent by God. It is through him that God acts.

There are many parts of Moses' life that are important in Judaism. Many Jewish people were living in slavery in Egypt but Moses, who had been born an Israelite but brought up at the Egyptian court, was called by God to rescue them. When the pharaoh refused to let them leave Egypt, God sent ten plagues on the Egyptian people. The pharaoh did eventually agree to let them go, but then sent his army after them – God then parted the Red Sea for the Jews to cross but brought it crashing back down on the Egyptian army. The story of the ten plagues and crossing the Red Sea is celebrated each year at the festival of Passover (Pesach).

*“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” said Moses to God. “And how can I possibly get the Israelites out of Egypt?”*

*“Because I will be with you,” replied [God]. “Proof that I have sent you will come when you get the people out of Egypt. All of you will then become God’s servants on this mountain.”*

*Moses said to God, “So I will go to the Israelites and say, ‘Your fathers’ God sent me to you.’ They will immediately ask me what His name is. What shall I say to them?”*

*“I Will Be Who I Will Be,” replied God to Moses.*

*[God then] explained, “This is what you must say to the Israelites: ‘I Will Be sent me to you.’”*

*God then said to Moses, “You must [then] say to the Israelites, ‘YHVH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, sent me to you.’ This is My eternal name, and this is how I am to be recalled for all generations.”*

Exodus 3:11–15

### Tasks

Pages 336–37 tell you about the important festival of Pesach. Read the pages carefully and then answer the following questions:

- 1 In your own words explain how Moses and Pesach are connected.
- 2 On page 336 there is a Pesach card showing how Moses led the Jews out of slavery in Egypt. Look closely at the card as there are clues there to help your answer.
  - (a) How did the Israelites escape from Egypt?
  - (b) Why is Moses considered a great leader?
  - (c) What was God's role in the escape from Egypt?



## Key Concepts



**Mitzvot** The term has a mix of meanings. It is often used to refer to duties (such as the 613 in the Torah) and good deeds.

**Oral Torah** the whole commentary that discusses the Written Torah.

## The Oral Torah

The Oral Torah is all the traditions that have been passed down to explain and interpret the written Torah.

For Orthodox Jews the Written and the Oral Torah are God's words which are revealed to Moses which Moses then passed on to his successors. The Reform movement tend to see only the Written Torah as divinely inspired. The Oral Torah is not regarded as a source of authority, although it may be considered when, for example, decisions need to be made.

## Tasks



- Look back at the word association of Abraham on page 291. What words would you select to show the importance of Moses with the letters MOSES running through them?

M  
O  
S  
E  
S

- Give a reason why you have selected each word.

## Moses and the mitzvot

After taking the Israelites out of Egypt Moses led them through the desert near Mount Sinai. Here Moses went up the mountain and disappeared in the thick cloud. During this time Moses was learning the commandments that God wanted him to teach the Israelites – these make up the Torah. In the Torah there are 613 **mitzvot**, which explain how Jews should live their lives. Some of the mitzvot are no longer relevant now as they relate to practices in the Temple in Jerusalem, which has been destroyed. Ten of the mitzvot are the Ten Commandments. Moses is also believed to have been given the **Oral Torah** by some Jews. This is the whole commentary that discusses the Written Torah.

For example in the written Torah it states:

'Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.'

You can work during the six weekdays and do all your tasks.'

Exodus 20:8–9

But many questions might be asked about what keeping Shabbat holy actually means. Such questions are discussed through the Oral Torah:

- How should Shabbat be remembered?
- How should Shabbat be kept?
- What sort of work can and can't be done?
- Does this mean that you *have* to work six days?

The importance of Moses is shown in many ways:

- Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery to the Promised Land (Israel).

'Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit[s] of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. The Israelites therefore listened to him, doing as God has commanded Moses.'

No other prophet like Moses has arisen in Israel, who knew God face to face.'

Deuteronomy 34:9–10

- God worked many miracles through Moses, such as the sending of the plagues in Egypt.
- Moses spoke face to face with God.
- God chose Moses.
- God gave the Torah to Moses. This included the Ten Commandments.
- Moses established a covenant with God. As God's chosen people the Israelites would keep the commandments.
- Moses was given both the Written and Oral Torah.
- Without Moses, the Jews would never have become a people.
- Moses was the first rabbi.

## ► The importance of the Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are in the Torah in Exodus 20:2–14. Jews consider the Ten Commandments as special for two reasons.

Firstly, they should be kept by every Jew. It doesn't matter whether they are young or old, rich or poor, male or female, all the commandments should be obeyed.

Secondly, they are central to Jewish beliefs and practices. The Ten Commandments were written on two different tablets because they have different concerns. The first four commandments are duties concerning humans and God, their creator. The second six all deal with relationships between people. So the commandments show that Judaism isn't restricted to how people relate to God but also relates to relationships between each other. Throughout this chapter there are examples of where the Ten Commandments are reflected in Jewish practice and worship.

### The first four commandments refer to Jews' relationship with God

The festival of Pesach (see page 336) celebrates the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

- 1 I am God your Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, from the place of slavery.

The Shema (prayer) shows the importance in Judaism of there being only one God (see page 283). In synagogues there are no statues or representation of the human form that could be used for worship (see page 283).

- 2 Do not have any other gods before Me.

God is considered so holy that his name must always be respected. Some Orthodox Jews prefer to write G-d or Hashem (see page 283).

- 3 Do not take the name of God your Lord in vain. God will not allow the one who takes His name in vain to go unpunished.

Both Orthodox and Reform Jews consider the Sabbath or Shabbat as a very holy time and a time for rest. There are differences between how Shabbat is kept 'holy' but for many Jews it will involve special ceremonies in the home, attending the synagogue and doing no work.

- 4 Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.

## The next six commandments relate to people's relationships with each other

Respect for family members and particularly the old is an important practice in Judaism. A respectful parent/children relationship is shown each week through the 'blessing of the children' ceremony which is done by the mother or father on Shabbat (see page 310).

- 5 Honour your father and mother. You will then live long on the land that God your Lord is giving you.

Within marriage, sex is seen as important in Judaism. In Genesis 1:22 God commands men and women to populate the earth and make it holy. Adultery is seen as wrong and this is one of the three mitzvot that cannot be broken even in order to save a life (see page 298).

- 6 Do not commit adultery.

Honesty and trust are seen as important for any civilised society.

- 7 Do not steal.

The saving of life (Pikuach Nefesh) is an important belief in Judaism (see page 297). Jewish practice allows mitzvot to be broken in order to save a life. All life is believed to be created by God. Therefore murder is completely wrong.

- 8 Do not commit murder.

Tzedakah, or justice, is important in Judaism (see page 131). This includes being fair to others in words and deeds.

- 9 Do not testify as a false witness against your neighbour.

An important teaching in Judaism is that you should always be content with what you have. In the Talmud, envy is called an 'evil eye' while a 'good eye' is happy at other people's successes.

- 10 Do not be envious of your neighbour's wife, his slave, his maid, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that is your neighbour's.

### Tasks

- Kaz is preparing for a (d) type question, which is worth 15 marks.  
‘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.  
She has looked at the level descriptors (pages ix and x) and is now planning her answer.
  - What four arguments do you think could be included in her response?
  - How could each of these arguments show the impact of the Ten Commandments on individuals, communities or society?
  - What five religious terms or key concepts could be used in the answer?
  - What religious teachings could be referred to?
- ‘The Ten Commandments are out of date.’ Discuss, giving reasons for your answer.



**Task**

Using this page as evidence, answer the following question:  
How is human life shown as important in Jewish belief and lifestyle?

'My God, the soul you placed within me is pure. You created it, you fashioned it, you breathed it into me.'

A prayer said by many Jews in the morning

'it is we who extol the Lord, both now and forevermore. Praise the Lord.'

Psalm 115:18

'Before you I have placed life and death, the blessing and the curse. You must choose life, so that you and your descendants will survive.'

Deuteronomy 30:19

'Whoever destroys a single life is considered as if he had destroyed the whole world, and whoever saves a single life as if he had saved the whole world.'

Talmud

**Life on earth****Choose life!**

In Judaism the emphasis is on life not on death. God is the creator who has given life.

'God said, "Let us make man with our image and likeness. Let him dominate the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock animals, and all the earth – and every land animal that walks the earth."

God [thus] created man with His image. In the image of God, He created him, male and female He created them.'

Genesis 1: 26–27

Not only should humans respect their life but they should live it to the full. It is the way that they live their life that will be judged. The Torah is described as the 'tree of life' as its mitzvot can only be followed in this world. Good deeds, like a tree, take root and sprout into other good deeds.

'It is a tree of life for those who grasp it, and all who uphold it are blessed.'

Proverbs 3:18

The importance of life can be seen throughout Jewish worship and lifestyle:

- ▶ During celebrations, especially at weddings, 'L'Chaim' is said, meaning 'to life'. The word 'Chaim' is plural which some authorities say shows that life alone is impossible. It can only be when life is shared that it is truly lived.
- ▶ When someone has died, the relatives are wished 'long life'.

**Extract from My Name is Asher Lev by Chaim Potok**

On his way home from synagogue with his father, Asher sees a dead bird lying near their house.

'Is it dead, Papa?' I was six and could not bring myself to look at it.

'Yes,' I heard him say in a sad and distant way.

'Why did it die?'

'Everything that lives must die.'

'Everything?'

'Yes.'

'You too, Papa? And Mama?'

'Yes.'

'And me?'

'Yes,' he said. Then he added, 'But may it be only after you live a long and good life, my Asher.'

I could not grasp it. I forced myself to look at the bird. Everything alive would one day be as still as that bird?

'Why?' I asked

'That's the way God made His world, Asher.'

'Why?'

'So life would be precious, Asher. Something that is yours forever is never precious.'

'God said, "Let us make man with our image and likeness. Let him dominate the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock animals, and all the earth – and every land animal that walks the earth." God [thus] created man with His image. In the image of God, He created him, male and female He created them.'

Genesis 1:26–27

'For You created my veins, You covered me in my mother's womb. I shall thank You for in an awesome, wondrous way I was fashioned; Your works are wondrous, and my soul knows it very well. My essence was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, I was formed in the lowest parts of the earth.'

Psalm 139:13–15

**God is the one creator of life and therefore life is sacred.  
Only he can give and preserve life.**

'When I had not yet formed you in the womb, I knew you, and when you had not yet emerged from the womb, I had appointed you; a prophet to the nations I made you.'

Jeremiah 1:5

Saving of life should take priority over everything – even if this means breaking some of the mitzvot in the Torah. In the Talmud God says his people will 'live by' the Torah – as opposed to 'dying by' it. In Babylonian Yoma 84b descriptions are given as to how the observance of Shabbat as a rest day can be broken if someone is ill. So, the Torah is designed to promote life, and the saving of human life is more important than the observance of the law.

'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 three of the 613 mitzvot can be broken – idolatry, incest and adultery. This means, for example, that doctors are permitted to answer emergency calls on Shabbat, even though one of the Ten Commandments requires Jews to rest on Shabbat.

To preserve a life, it is permissible to remove organs from a 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).

### Task

Look at the contents list for the Religious, philosophical and ethical units (page iii). Which issues do you think might be affected by the practice of Pikuach Nefesh?

Once there was a dreadful plague which had made many people ill and weak.

The day of Yom Kippur was approaching – a most holy day in the Jewish calendar when Jews are expected to fast and take no food or water.

The rabbi knew that the congregation needed their strength if they were to survive so he took food and wine into the synagogue and ate that day so that the congregation would know they could break their fast to preserve their life.



## The 613 mitzvot



The 613 Mitzvot are represented by the knots on a Tallit

**Tallit** four-cornered garment with fringes.

**Hillel** a great rabbi and teacher who lived in the first century.

It is difficult to find a word in English that really translates 'mitzvot' as it has more than one meaning:

- Keeping the duties given by God to Moses
- Doing good deeds
- Being given an honour such as reading from the Torah.

The Talmud refers to the 613 mitzvot in the Torah. This number is represented by the number of knots on the **tallit**, which is worn by many Jews during worship.

Today it is impossible to keep all 613 mitzvot as many were connected with religious practices in the Temple, which has been destroyed. For Orthodox Jews, keeping the mitzvot is an important principle of Judaism. Although many Reform Jews also try to keep the mitzvot many consider that some are no longer compatible to twenty-first-century life. Decisions about which ones to observe are often based upon individual choices.

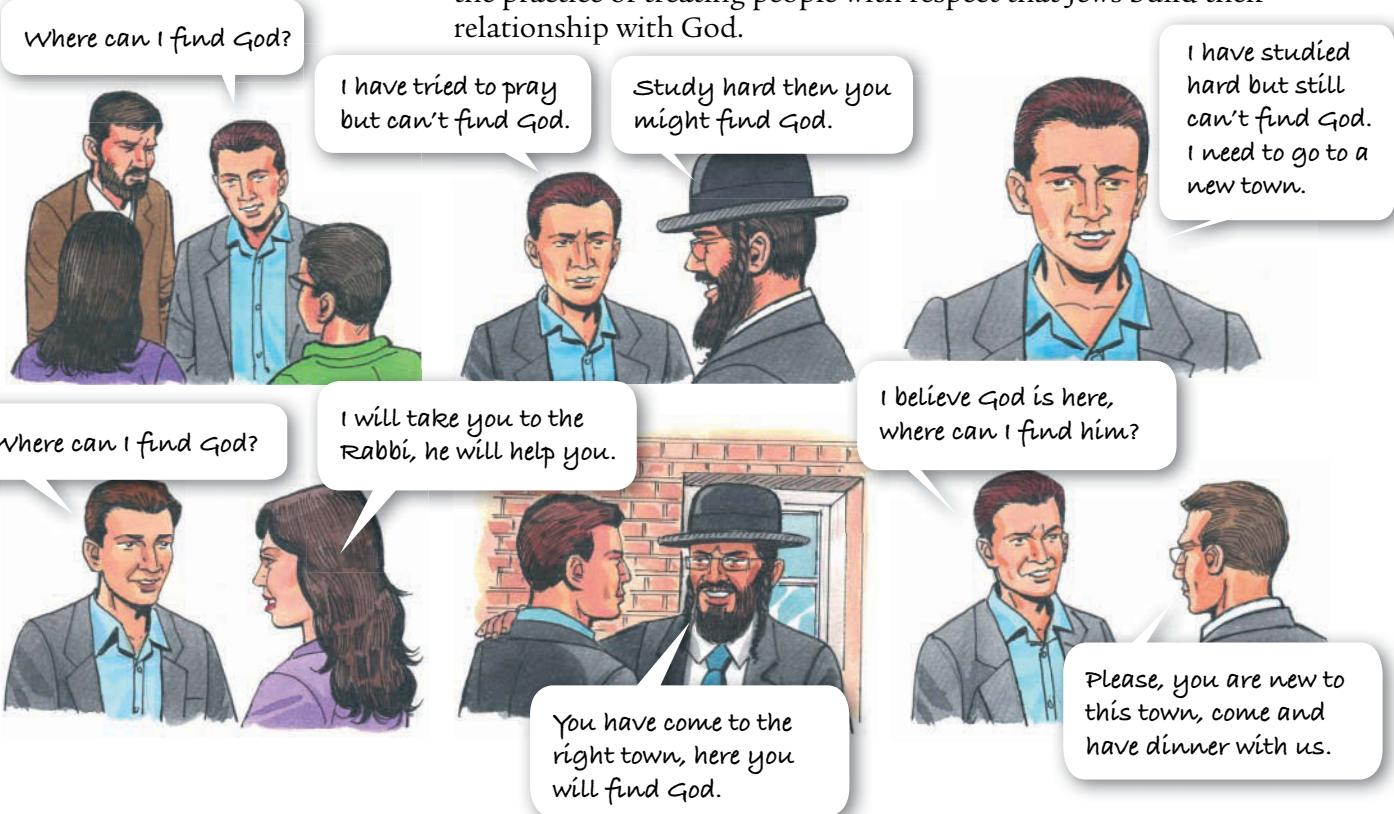
Just as with the Ten Commandments, the mitzvot either show how people should relate to God or how they should relate to other people.

Through both types of actions Jews believe they build a relationship with God. The Torah explains that the purpose of human existence is to achieve closeness to God. This is attained through observing the mitzvot as each is believed in its own unique way to build a relationship with God.

Is any one of the 613 mitzvot more important than another? A story in the Talmud story (Shabbat 31a) tells how **Hillel** was asked what was the central duty of the Torah. He replied:

*'That which is hateful unto you do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole of the Torah, The rest is commentary. Go forth and study.'*

This meant that although there are many mitzvot, it is through the practice of treating people with respect that Jews build their relationship with God.



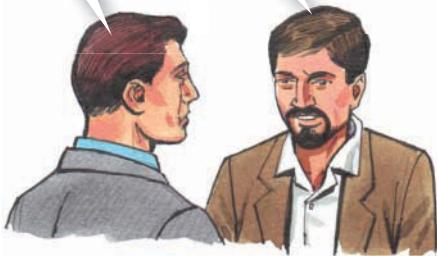
Where is God in this town?

You look tired, come and stay with us tonight.

The next morning the man sees an old lady being helped with her shopping by another; a man helping a trapped animal; and someone helping a man who has fallen.

You are no longer asking where God is.

I think I have now found God.



Although most Jews would consider the actual mitzvot in the Torah as important, how each mitzvah relates to modern-day developments may be interpreted differently. For example, one of the mitzvot states 'thou shall not kill', but this involves a number of issues:

- ▶ abortion?
- ▶ contraception?
- ▶ self defence?
- ▶ nuclear attacks?
- ▶ turning off life-support machines?
- ▶ killing animals?

## ► Mitzvah Day

Mitzvah Day was started in Britain in 2008 and has now spread across the world. It encourages people to join together to make a positive impact on their community.

Jews and non-Jews work together to try to:

- ▶ reduce poverty
- ▶ care for the environment
- ▶ care for others.

The day is rooted in the values of the 613 mitzvot that are important in Judaism and treating people with the respect that they would want for themselves. Mitzvah Day also reflects another meaning of mitzvah – that of doing a good deed for someone. The deed is done, not because it is one of the 613 mitzvot, but because it is a kind action.

There are three Jewish concepts that are particularly important on Mitzvah Day:

- ▶ **Tikkun olam** – 'healing' or 'perfecting' the world. It shows a shared responsibility for making the world better by helping others, looking after the environment and supporting human rights. One of Mitzvah Day's achievements has been to create partnership and inter-faith dialogue. Projects have included Sunshine to Seniors which provides care to the elderly and Plant a Tree on Mitzvah Day which involves planting trees in the local area.

## Task

Look through this textbook. If you had to select pictures to show tikkun olam, gemilut hasidim and tzedakah which three pictures would you select? For each you must explain your choice.



- ▶ **Gemilut hasadim** – the ‘giving of loving-kindness’ which expects nothing in return. Every year on Mitzvah Day, over 37,000 participants do just that, through many projects based on the principle of doing acts of kindness.
- ▶ **Tzedakah** – the ‘righteousness’ and ‘justice’ that is shown through social action and acts of loving-kindness; not because it feels good but because the Jewish faith educates that it is the right thing to do.

## Free will

Judaism teaches that God is the creator of all life and he alone decides when people are born and when they die:

*‘Without your consent you were born, and without your consent you live, and without your consent you die.’*

From the Sayings of the Fathers 4:29

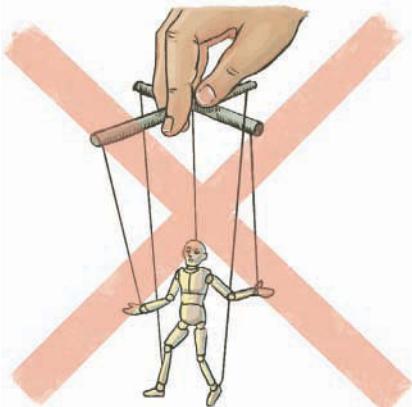
There are also many references to God continuing to watch over all creation and provide care.

*‘From his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth.’*

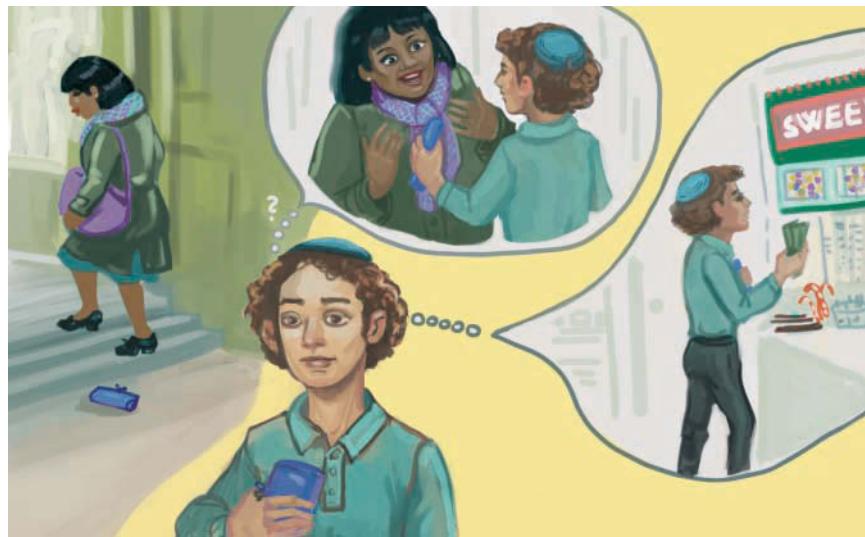
Psalms 33:14

For many centuries people have discussed how far God intervenes in human lives and events, and how far humans have free will – that is, the ability to make their own choices. Many questions are discussed, such as:

- ▶ Are the mitzvot a path that Jews should follow – a sort of guide-line?
- ▶ Are the mitzvot a path that must be followed or people will be punished?
- ▶ Do people have free will to act and behave as they want without any intervention by God?



Do humans make their own choices or are they controlled by God?



Each individual has been born with two ways to act. Firstly Yetzer ha tov (urge to do good actions) and secondly Yetzer ha ra (urge to do evil actions)

The Torah teaches that God has given Jews a choice – the choice whether to keep the mitzvot or not. As humans they were made in the ‘image of God’, and it is believed they have the mind and the soul to help with that choice.

Judaism does not teach that people are born sinful but that each individual has been born with two inclinations or natural ways to act:

- ▶ Yetzer ha tov – is the inclination or natural urge to do good actions.
- ▶ Yetzer ha ra – is the inclination or natural urge to do evil actions.

In Judaism it is believed that people are born with yetzer ha tov and yetzer ha ra as a balance but as the person does more good or bad actions so the balance changes. There is no belief in evil beings, such as the devil, as the yetzer ha ra that is within everyone creates the evil in the world – not another being.

There is a traditional story in which a Jew asks a Rabbi to drive out the negative thoughts in his mind. The Rabbi says he cannot do this but recommends another person some distance away. Eagerly the man sets out on the long journey. When he arrives at the house he sees a light on. With great relief he thinks he will be welcomed into the house and given food and a bed for the night. He bangs on the door. No response. He bangs again on the door and on the windows. Still no

response. Eventually he sits down by the house and falls asleep.

The next morning the master of the house appears and welcomes the traveller inside. Confused the traveller asks why he had not been allowed into the house the night before. ‘Well’ said the Rabbi, ‘I wanted to teach you a lesson. The lesson is you are the master of your own house and of your own actions. You can choose to resist pressure or to give in.’

## Tasks

- 1 What is the connection between free will, yetzer ha ra and yetzer ha tov?
- 2 What is the connection between free will and Yom Kippur?
- 3 What is the connection between God as Creator, free will, yetzer ha tov and yetzer ha ra?

Although humans are given free will, Judaism teaches that it is not possible to hide acts of evil from God. Nor is it believed that doing one good action will suddenly make someone a good person. Each is considered separately by God on the Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Sins against God can be atoned for through showing repentance, prayer and giving to charity. Any harm done to other human beings must be forgiven by them before God can forgive.

## The problem of evil and suffering

At times of great tragedy and disaster people of all religions often question why God could allow such events to occur.

The Talmud tells of a rabbi who was also an excellent healer. One day someone came to him and said that if God wanted the man to be well, God wouldn’t let him be ill. The rabbi replied that if God wanted people to be ill, then he wouldn’t have created the medicines to help people become well.

If God is all-powerful and all-knowing, then God must have the ability to foresee the future. If so, then why doesn’t he intervene or stop tragedies happening? However, to do so would mean that people don’t have free will to act as they want. Such questions have been asked through the centuries and particularly at times of great tragedy and suffering such as the Holocaust.

## The afterlife

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.



### Tasks

Complete the following:

- 1 The Torah is ...
- 2 The Talmud is ...
- 3 A difference between the Torah and Talmud is ...
- 4 From what you have learnt about Judaism give two explanations why Jews might believe the following:

The Talmud teaches that the Torah is like a plaster – it protects human beings from any evil.

In your answer you must refer to two of the following: the Shema; mitzvot; Moses; shekhinah.

The afterlife in Judaism is called Olam Ha-Ba (the world to come). This term is used to refer to a person's afterlife and also the Messianic Age in which some Jews believe. There are many different views about the nature of the world to come but a belief shared by all Jews is that the focus should be on this life and how it is lived in preparation for the life to come.

'This world is like a lobby before the Olam Ha-Ba. Prepare yourself in the lobby so that you may enter the banquet hall.'

Mishnah

'This word is like the eve of Shabbat, and the Olam Ha-Ba is like Shabbat. He who prepares on the eve of Shabbat will have food to eat on Shabbat.'

Talmud

For many Jews this will include studying the Torah and observing the mitzvot. This doesn't mean, however, that people earn a better afterlife. Judaism is not focused on the question of how to get a better afterlife but on how to live a good life now. As the Mishnah and Talmud state:

There are no specific teachings about the afterlife in the Torah. There are references to a physical place, called Sheol, to which one 'goes down' following this life, but the nature of this place and who goes there is unclear. This means that many Jews' beliefs about the afterlife are their own interpretations of sacred texts.

## Jewish beliefs about resurrection

Most Jewish ideas about the afterlife developed in post-biblical times. Throughout the centuries different scholars and rabbis have discussed interpretations of passages from the Torah and found different answers. For example:

- ▶ Nahmanides, a twelfth-century Sephardic rabbi, taught that Olam Ha-Ba would come after the resurrection of the dead. Those who had lived good lives would be given an additional life.
- ▶ Maimonides, however, believed that Olam Ha-Ba referred to a time even beyond the world of the resurrected. He believed that the resurrected will eventually die a second death, at which point the souls of those who had been good would enjoy a spiritual, bodiless existence in the presence of God.
- ▶ Some rabbis argue that the resurrection of the dead will occur during the Messianic Age.
- ▶ Others argue that resurrection will follow the Messianic Age.
- ▶ Some argue that only the righteous will be resurrected, while others that everyone will be resurrected and then a Day of Judgement will follow.
- ▶ Some rabbis argue, however, that there is no need of a Day of Judgement after death as judgement happens every year on the festival of Rosh Hashanah.

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. This influences Jewish attitudes to cremation, organ transplants and autopsies as they believe they must be buried complete so they can be resurrected whole.

Reform Judaism has rejected a belief in resurrection and references have been taken out of prayer books and worship. Some Reform Jews believe that the memories of people live on through their actions and good deeds. Other Reform Jews believe the soul lives on after death but there are different opinions about where.

Although it is not a central belief in Judaism, some Jews believe in reincarnation. By this they mean that in some form the soul of the person will take on a different body to live again on earth. This is a historic belief, with some rabbis in the Middle Ages discussing how this happened. Some Jews believe that if the mitzvot of the Torah have not been completed then a soul may be allowed a second chance through reincarnation.

As we have seen, 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.

## ► End of section review

### Stickability

Key concepts:

- Covenant
- Messiah
- Mitzvot
- Shekinah
- Torah

Key teachings about:

- the nature of God
- the Messiah
- covenants
- life on earth
- the afterlife

### Knowledge check

- 1 What does the term 'covenant' mean?
- 2 In your own words, explain what is meant by the Pikuach Nefesh.
- 3 Draw a Venn diagram. In the middle write three beliefs that Orthodox and Reform Jews share. In the outer rings write two beliefs on which they have different views.
- 4 Explain what Jews believe about the afterlife. Remember there are different views.

### The Big Question

'It's more important to think about what you do today than spend time thinking about the afterlife.'

### Your task

How do you think someone who is Jewish might respond to this statement?

- Write a minimum of two developed paragraphs.
- You must include two references to sacred texts and references to Pikuach Nefesh, the Messianic Age, and God as judge.

### Skills link



- 1 Explain different Jewish beliefs about resurrection.
- 2 '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. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

### Task

You need to explain in detail religious teachings about the **Messiah**. Use the guidance below to help you to write a  **developed explanation** for Judaism. Ensure that you use key terms fluently and frequently.

All/many/most Jews believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Torah quote ..... This means that/Because of this they .....

Some/other Jews such as ..... believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Torah quote ..... This means that/Because of this they .....

Finally, Jews such as ..... believe that ..... This means that/Because of this they ..... Their beliefs do/do not differ because .....

## ► Exam focus

### Judaism: Beliefs and teachings

#### (a) questions

These are always the first question in each unit. They ask you to explain what the key concept means. Your explanation can include an example. There are eight key concepts you need to know for Judaism.

Remember there are only two marks for these questions so it important you are able to give an accurate definition which is to the point.

Helen was asked:

(a) What is the Shekhinah? (2)

Her response of 'God's presence' was only awarded one mark.  
Why do you think that was?

Rewrite her answer to gain two marks.

#### Using religious language

To gain higher marks religious language must be used in your answers. This includes using the key concepts where relevant as well any particular language specific to the religions you are writing about.

Look at the answer to the question below and identify six places where you would have included some specific religious language.

(a) Why is Moses important in Judaism? (2)

Moses is important in Judaism as he led people into a desert out of slavery. Each year Jews remember how this happened through an important festival. He was told to do this and later he went onto a mountain and was told certain duties and laws that Jews should live by. He led the Jews through the desert to another country. The time when they did this is celebrated each year through a special festival.

# 10

## Judaism: Practices

### Worship

Judaism teaches that we should connect with God every day. This takes many forms:



Prayer



Worship in the synagogue



Celebrating festivals



Helping others

## Key Concepts



**Synagogue** a house of assembly; building for Jewish public prayer, study and assembly.

**Shabbat** a day of spiritual renewal and rest. Beginning at sunset on Friday and closing at nightfall on Saturday.

**Haftorah** a passage from one of the books of the Neviim (prophets) which is read after the Torah reading.

## ► Orthodox and Reform synagogue services

Prayers may be said anywhere in Judaism. For many Jews, however, it is important to join with others for communal prayers. In order for this to happen, a minyan (ten men) have to be present. This is to create a more spiritual experience than people can have on their own. It is believed that communal prayers are less selfish than individual prayers. When praying with others there is a communal responsibility, and prayers are said for the whole community.

Although each **synagogue** usually has daily prayers, the time when the community comes together is for the **Shabbat** service.

### Shabbat service in the synagogue

Although it is very important for Jews to have a private relationship with God it is also important to unite the community through worship. Important ceremonies happen at festival times but each week the Shabbat service brings the community together. Many Jews attend synagogue services on Shabbat even if they do not do so during the week. Services are held on Shabbat eve (Friday night), Shabbat morning (Saturday morning), and late Shabbat afternoon (Saturday afternoon). Fixed periods of prayer correspond with the time when sacrifices were offered in the Temple.

The Shabbat morning service is the longest of the week and can last between two to three hours. The service will include important prayers such as the Shema, Amidah and Kaddish. At each service selected portions of the Torah and **haftorah** are read. It is common for rabbis to deliver a weekly sermon which draws upon the meaning of the readings from the Torah and haftorah.

After the service a Kiddush is usually held. This is the special blessing recited over a cup of wine or Shabbat wine before Friday night dinner.

The service in a Reform synagogue is based on traditional elements, but contains more use of the language of the country in which the service is taking place and far less Hebrew. Reform Judaism has made changes to services to reflect the differences in their beliefs from those of Orthodox Judaism. Prayers and readings usually leave out beliefs about bodily resurrection, a personal Jewish Messiah, and references to angels. Reform services often play instrumental or recorded music while Orthodox synagogues will have unaccompanied singing.

## ► Prayer

For an observant Jew, prayer is not simply something that happens in the synagogue once a week but is a part of everyday life. Jews can communicate with God through prayer individually or collectively at home, in a synagogue or as they go about their daily life. For many centuries rabbis have taught that prayer is one of the best ways of communicating a love of God. It forms the bridge between humans on earth and God.

Prayer is so important that a whole area of the Talmud, called Berachot, is based on prayer.

Historically there were no special prayers but as time progressed many set prayers were established. Observant Jews will pray before performing mitzvot, upon seeing unusual things like a rainbow, when good or bad things happen, and before going to bed at night. All of these prayers are in addition to formal prayer services, which

## Tasks

- Choose three different features of a Shabbat service in a synagogue. Explain why each is important.
- Read about the importance of the Shema on page 283 and about the Amidah above and then create and complete a table like the one below.

	Shema	Amidah
What is it?		
Why is it important?		
How is the prayer shown to be important?		

- A famous Rabbi once said:

'Prayer is for the soul what food is for the body.'

Rabbi Halevi (1095–1150)

Explain in your own words what you think he meant.



are performed by some Jews three times a day every weekday and at additional times on Shabbat and other festivals.

There are different types of prayer:

- ▶ Praising God – This involves praising God for his qualities. By thinking of specific qualities of God such as justice, Jews think about the qualities they should aim for.
- ▶ Requests of God – These aren't just requests for what people want but what God thinks is best for them.
- ▶ Thanksgiving – These show gratitude for the life God has given and the blessings granted.

Examples of these prayers can be found in the prayer book (siddur), which contains many of the prayers used in daily life and festivals.

Some Jews prefer to recite their prayers in Hebrew as they argue this is a holy language and it connects all Jews worldwide. Other Jews consider it more important to understand what is being said. Orthodox services normally include many prayers in Hebrew while Reform services have a mixture of prayers in Hebrew and in the language of the country.

Although all prayers are important in Judaism, the Amidah and the Shema (see page 283) are considered two of the most important.

### ► The Amidah

The Amidah is the core of every Jewish worship service, and is therefore also referred to as HaTefillah, or 'The prayer'. Amidah literally means 'standing' and people stand throughout the prayer to show they are in God's presence. The Amidah consists of 18 blessings and can be divided into three sections, each of which reflects a type of prayer. The Amidah contains the three types of prayer: praise of God, requests of God and thanksgiving.

The Amidah is recited silently by all members of a congregation or by individuals praying alone – and then, in communal settings, repeated aloud by the prayer leader or cantor, with the congregation reciting 'Amen' to all the blessings of the Amidah.

The Amidah formally concludes with the recitation of the line:

*'May God who brings peace to the universe, bring peace to us and all of the people, Israel. Amen.'*

This is recited while taking three steps backward, bowing to both sides, and taking three steps forward again, formally retreating from God's symbolic presence.

## ► Worship in the home

The importance of the family home is greatly valued by many Jews who consider it a sanctuary. It is a place where the values and beliefs of Judaism are learnt and reinforced.

### Continuity of practice and values

The home is also a place where Jewish practices and values are taught. In his book *Faith in the Future*, the former Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks shows the importance of the home for future generations:

*'Its effects stay with us for a lifetime. It is where one generation passes on its values to the next and ensures the continuity of a civilisation.'*

In most Jewish homes there will be a pushke box in which money is collected for charity. In Judaism giving to the poor is not considered an act of charity but an act of justice or tzedakah (see page 131).

### Prayers

The home is a place of worship and prayers; they are an important part of daily life. For many Orthodox Jews on waking up in the morning they will thank God by saying the modeh ani while still in bed; 'I offer thanks before you, living and eternal king, for you have mercifully restored my soul within me. Your faithfulness is great.' The shema is a declaration of faith recited three times throughout the day at prayer but also during the day.

### Mezuzah



Touching the mezuzah case is a reminder to live by the words of the Shema

Many Jewish families will have a mezuzah on the front door post of their house and each of the door posts inside, apart from the bathroom. The mezuzah is a parchment scroll which is placed inside a case. On the scroll is written the Shema prayer (see page 78). The parchment is prepared and written by a scribe, called a sofer, in indelible black ink with a special quill pen. It must be written on parchment made from the skin of a kosher animal, such as a cow, sheep or goat.

Usually on the back of the parchment the word 'Shaddai' is written. This means 'almighty' and is one of the many names for God. The mezuzah case is affixed on the right-hand side of the door as you enter the room. It should be placed at a slight angle, with the top of the mezuzah pointing toward the inside of the room and the bottom pointing toward the outside. Often Jews will touch the case as they pass through the door and then kiss their fingers as a reminder that the family should live according to the words of the Shema. For many, the mezuzah symbolises God's protection of the house.

### Siddur

The siddur is an important part of Judaism that guides Jews through daily prayers both in the synagogue and at home. It begins with the modeh ani and contains prayers for daily services as well as those for Shabbat and other holidays. Just as the Torah is considered a gift from God, so the siddur is considered a gift to God. The siddur is considered holy and as such if it falls to the ground it will be picked up as quickly as possible and kissed.

## ► Shabbat

### Key Concept



**Shabbat** Day of spiritual renewal and rest. Beginning at sunset on Friday and closing at nightfall on Saturday.

As the Jews were being taken in crowded trucks to concentration camps.

One elderly woman had a small bundle with her and with a lot of effort slowly managed to open it. She drew out two candlesticks and two hallot. She had just prepared them for Sabbath when she was dragged from her home that morning. They were the only things she had thought worth taking with her. Soon the Sabbath candles lit up the faces of the tortured Jews and the song of Lekhah Dodi transformed the scene. Sabbath with its atmosphere of peace had descended upon them all.

Extract from *The Sabbath* by Dayan Grunfeld, 1981

**Shabbat** is the weekly festival that is celebrated from sunset on a Friday to sunset on a Saturday. The keeping of Shabbat obeys the mitzvot contained in the Torah. Shabbat involves two interrelated commandments.

*'The Sabbath to remember and to keep it holy.'*

Exodus 20:8

Remembering Shabbat means remembering the importance of it as a celebration of creation and also of the freedom of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Keeping Shabbat means showing it is holy through worship in the home and synagogue. For many Jews observing Shabbat means recognising the types of activities and work that are not allowed.

Shabbat is considered by many Jews as the most important festival. It is seen by many as a gift from God when weekday worries can be forgotten. Throughout history Shabbat has been an important festival for Jews. Even in times of persecution Jews tried to celebrate Shabbat.

There are many different opinions among Jews regarding what can and cannot be done on Shabbat. For many observant Orthodox Jews all forms of work must be avoided unless it is a matter of life and death. Also articles should not be carried between private and public places. In some areas this has led to Orthodox Jews creating a special enclosure (*eruv*) in their neighbourhoods. This allows Jewish residents or visitors to carry objects from one place to another inside the *eruv* on Shabbat.

### Eruv makes a difference in Manchester

Observant Jews are prohibited from pushing or carrying everyday items between sundown on Fridays and sundown on Saturdays unless they are in a special area known as an *eruv*. This includes pushchairs, wheelchairs, house keys or mobile phones. In some parts of Britain, like Manchester, an *eruv* is created using physical features, like walls and hedges, railway lines and roads, to completely enclose an area of land and so create one area. To be accepted, it must satisfy strict laws, including being 'completely enclosed' by existing natural boundaries or by wires from the top of posts.

## ► Shabbat in the home

Each family celebrates Shabbat in their own way, although there are some features which are common to most Shabbat celebrations.

Shabbat starts a few minutes before sunset on Friday night. There will be different timings depending upon the location and the time of the year.

	Shabbat times 15 April	Shabbat times 25 December
London	Begins Friday 7.43 p.m. ends Saturday 8.49 p.m.	Begins Friday 3.41 p.m. ends Saturday 4.51 p.m.
Leeds	Begins Friday 7.48 p.m. ends Saturday 9.02 p.m.	Begins Friday 3.29 p.m. ends Saturday 4.48 p.m.
Glasgow	Begins Friday 8.09 p.m. ends Saturday 9.24 p.m.	Begins Friday 3.37 p.m. ends Saturday 4.52 p.m.
Bournemouth	Begins Friday 7.42 p.m. ends Saturday 8.57 p.m.	Begins Friday 3.47 p.m. ends Saturday 5.05 p.m.

Examples of the variation in Shabbat times around the country at different times of year.

### Task

Look at the difference in times for Shabbat between December and April. What differences to someone's lifestyle might this make?



The woman of the family lights two candles to bring the presence of Shabbat into the home. This is a ritual that happens worldwide at the same time.

In many families the father welcomes Shabbat in the synagogue and when he returns home the family sits down to a special meal. All the preparation will have taken place before Shabbat begins.

Meals begin with a blessing over two loaves of bread, usually braided loaves (challah). These two loaves symbolise the double portion of manna, which were eaten by the Israelites in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt.

The Kiddush prayer is recited over a cup of wine at the beginning of Shabbat meals. The meal is a time of happiness and relaxation with all the family, if possible.



Candles are lit, loaves are blessed and the Kiddush prayer is said over a glass of wine at the start of the Shabbat meal

Shabbat continues as a day of rest until sunset the next day. On the Saturday morning the family usually goes to the synagogue for the Shabbat service. For Orthodox Jews it is important that they walk to synagogue as driving a car would be considered as work, which is forbidden. After the synagogue service most families relax and enjoy the day. For Orthodox families it is important that anything that could be considered work is avoided. This might include turning on electricity, cooking or driving.

### Shabbat unplugged

Having a day off from technology is becoming increasingly common for non-Jews as well as Jews. An increasing number of people now close down computers and phones for a day so they can focus on friends and family.

For the past six years, Shlain and her family have observed Technology Shabbat, a modernised version of the Jewish day of rest. They turn off every screen in sight—phones, laptops, TVs—before dinner on Friday night and do not reconnect for 24 hours.

At sunset on Saturday the importance of Shabbat is shown again as the family joins together to say ‘goodbye’ to Shabbat. This is shown through the lighting of the havdallah candle – a plaited candle. Havdallah means separation and symbolises that the distinction between Shabbat and the rest of the week is now over. A glass of wine is also passed around for the family community to take a sip from and a sweet-smelling spice box is sniffed to symbolise the hope of a sweet week ahead.

Shabbat is celebrated through many rituals in both the home and the synagogue. What is most important is people’s intention during Shabbat. Their behaviour shows that Shabbat is a special day and God is worshipped by people being kind to each other.

## The Chief Rabbi's Shabbat UK



Each year there is a special Shabbat when Jews celebrate Shabbat regardless of their level of religious observance.

The weekend's festivities usually commence on the Thursday with mass 'Challah (plaited loaves) Makes' in various locations and communal meals, and culminates in a huge Havdallah concert to welcome in the new week. Synagogues, Jewish schools and other Jewish organisations across the UK organise series of events to mark the weekend. Everybody can participate in Shabbat UK, from the most observant Jews to those who may have never experienced the beauty of a Shabbat.

### Tasks

- 1 Select three words from the word puzzle below. Explain why each is important.



- 2 Look back at page 297 where Pikuach Nefesh (saving a life) is explained. Identify which of the following statements you think are likely to be said by an Orthodox or Reform Jew or both.

Statement	Orthodox	Reform	Reform and Orthodox
It is not up to us to question the ways of God. The Shabbat laws are to be obeyed.			
By keeping the Shabbat we are showing our thanks to God.			
If we can't work then how can rabbis lead the Shabbat services?			
We have to act on our conscience and remember we live in modern times.			
The duties given to us by God do not change over time. They are eternal.			
Practising a religion is not picking the bits of a religion you want to obey and ignoring those you don't.			

- 3 Complete the following mnemonic, adding in a relevant statement about Shabbat that begins with the first letter of each line. Three examples have been completed for you.

Sunset on Friday starts Shabbat

H

All the family together at home

B

B

A

Time for rest, family and reflection



A Jewish man prepared for worship

The kippah has become a source of identity for Jews so I wear mine with pride.

As I believe the whole of my life is worship to God I wear a kippah all the time as a symbol of my respect.

I only wear a kippah in the synagogue as I don't always feel safe to wear it in the streets where I live.

## ► Items worn for worship

Many Jews consider it a duty to wear special clothing for worship. There are many views regarding when such items are worn and by whom.

### Kippah (plural kippot)

The exact meaning of the kippah is unknown but for most Jews it is a symbol of identity and a sign of respect to God. Throughout Jewish history the attitude toward head covering has varied.

Drawings from the third century depict Jews without hats but in the Middle Ages many Jews wore hats during prayer and study. Today there is much debate regarding why the kippah is worn and whether it is a duty to wear the kippah all the time or just at worship.

The shape and size of the kippah also differs depending upon the community.

### Tallit

The tallit is a four-cornered garment which has fringes (tzizit) attached. The tzizit relates to the duty in Numbers 15:37–41 to wear fringes in the corners of clothes. Originally clothes were worn with fringes at each corner but later the practice was introduced of wearing a garment which had fringes to represent the 613 mitzvot.

There are two types of tallit:

- The tallit gadol (large) is a large garment made of wool or silk. It is worn across the back and draped over the arms. It is often called a prayer shawl as it is only worn during prayers and worship. After death the tallit is sometimes wrapped around the body like a shroud.
- The tallit katan (small). Many observant Jewish males wear a tallit katan under their everyday clothes throughout the day. It has a central hole that goes over the head and covers the front and back of the body with the tzizit hanging down from the corners.

### Tefillin

Tefillin are worn by Orthodox Jewish males at morning prayer each day, apart from on Shabbat and festivals. The tefillin is made up of two leather boxes. The tefillah shel rosh is bound to the head with a strap. In each of its four compartments there is a small handwritten scroll containing the first two paragraphs of the Shema. The tefillah shel rosh is a reminder that the wearer must serve God with his mind by developing good thoughts. The second box is called the tefillah shel yad. It is bound with a strap to the upper arm and leans slightly towards the heart. It has one compartment which contains a single scroll of the same passages from the Shema. It is a reminder that the wearer must serve God with his heart through acts of compassion.

When the tefillin is in place then a special prayer is said:

*'Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments as to wear tefillin.'*

Usually tefillin are only worn by males on weekday mornings during morning prayers.

There are, however, an increasing number of women who want to wear tefillin and tallit for worship. This has resulted in many different views being expressed.



## Tasks

- 1 What is the difference between a tallit katan and a tallit gadol?
- 2 'A kippah is just a hat.' How might someone who is Jewish respond to this?
- 3 For his homework Henry has to write an answer to the following statement:  
'Jewish women shouldn't wear tallit and tefillin.'

His teacher has told him he must include arguments for and against and references to sacred texts.

- [a] Look at the arguments above and decide which are for and which are against the argument.
- [b] Henry needs to develop each of his arguments so he is only going to select four that he thinks are the strongest. Which four would you select? Give reasons for your answer.



## The synagogue

### Key Concept



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

### ► Worship, social and community functions in Britain

The **synagogue** is the central focus of Jewish life. In Hebrew it is called Beth ha Knesset which means 'house of assembly'.

Most synagogues have three main functions:

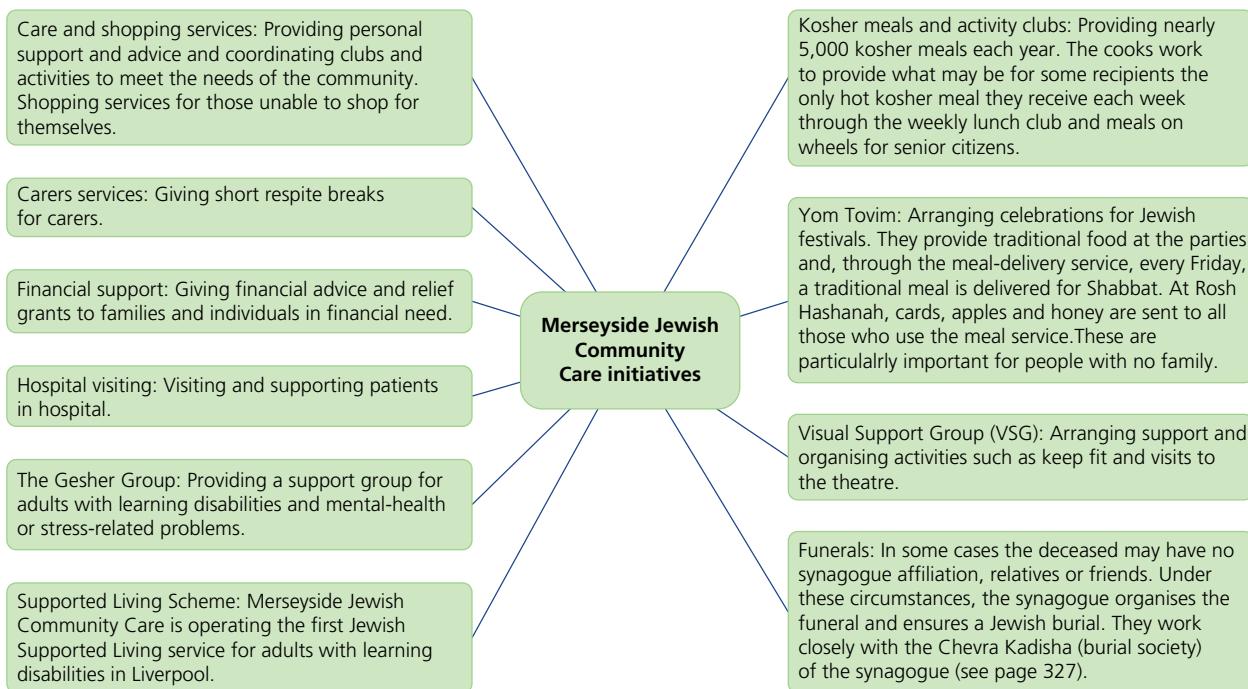
- ▶ As a *beit tefilah*, a house of prayer. It is the place where Jews come together for community prayer services. Although Jews can pray anywhere there are certain prayers that can only be said in the presence of a *minyan* (ten adult men, although some traditions include women).
- ▶ It is for this reason that many observant Jews will go to the synagogue each evening.
- ▶ As a *beit midrash*, a house of study. Indeed many Ashkenazi Jews refer to their synagogue as 'shul' from the Yiddish word for school. For the observant Jew, the study of sacred texts is a life-long task. Thus, a synagogue normally has a well-stocked library of sacred Jewish texts for members of the community to study. It is also the place where children receive their basic religious education.
- ▶ As a social hall for religious and non-religious activities. The synagogue often functions as a sort of town hall where matters of importance to the community can be discussed. Each synagogue normally has a programme of social events, which will include opportunities to learn more about religious and cultural issues. An important role of the synagogue is its function as a social welfare agency, collecting and dispensing money and other items for the aid of the poor and needy within the community. Many are connected with Jewish Care agencies.

### Tasks



- 1 What is a synagogue?
- 2 Explain, with examples, two challenges for synagogues in Britain.
- 3 Draw a table like the one below. Under each heading list the relevant activities that take place in the synagogue.

A place of worship	A place of study	A place for social and community events



Although the synagogue is important for worship, learning and community activities there are many challenges synagogues face in modern Britain.

There has been a decline in the number of practising Jews and many synagogues have very small memberships. This is a situation also relevant to many churches but the issue with synagogues is more difficult because Orthodox Jewish law prohibits travelling on Shabbat, so synagogues need to be situated within the Jewish neighbourhood and accessible on foot. Many Jewish communities need to make decisions regarding the upkeep and role of the synagogue.

### **WANTED: A RABBI**

Synagogue has been without a Rabbi for two years!

There are few people who are willing to take on the role of and be trained as a rabbi; sometimes small communities can only afford to pay a rabbi a low wage; areas where there are small Jewish communities find it difficult to attract a rabbi; some rabbis disapprove of some of the customs that the community have adopted such as driving to synagogues.

### **SECURITY ALERT AT LOCAL SYNAGOGUE**

The Community Security Trust provide security and vigilance at times of worship and when the building is empty; synagogues are often vandalised sometimes with anti-Semitic graffiti. In some countries there have been terrorist attacks on synagogues.

### **DECREASING NUMBER OF WORSHIPPERS**

Many synagogues were built in the 1900s and are often larger than needed today. There are changing patterns of residence as Jews move out of areas to other locations and there is an increase in the number of elderly Jews who are unable to attend places of worship.

### **CARDIFF SYNAGOGUE TURNED INTO OFFICES**

Some synagogues have been converted into houses and even a spa. Other uses have included becoming a museum.

## ► Features of a synagogue

There are many different designs of synagogues. Often they reflect the architecture of the country they are in.

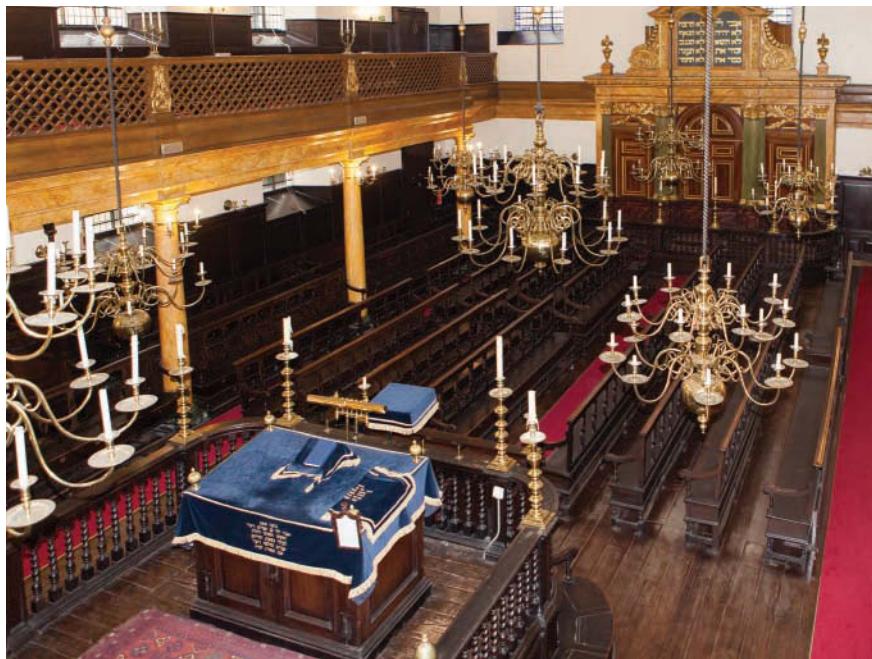


A synagogue in China



The Jubilee Synagogue in Prague

Older synagogues are often large so that they can hold a large number of worshippers. Today when synagogues are built they are often smaller and easily accessible for older and disabled people.



A Sephardi synagogue

All of the synagogue is considered a place of sanctuary and holiness. Although there are many differences in design, one common feature of all synagogues is a lack of statues or representations of living beings.

*'Do not represent [such] gods by any carved statue or picture of anything in the heaven above, on the earth below, or in the water below the land. Do not bow down to [such gods] or worship them. I am God your Lord, a God who demands exclusive worship. Where my enemies are concerned, I keep in mind the sin of the fathers for [their] descendants, to the third and fourth [generation].'*

In the next two pages each main area will be explained. There are references to the specific differences between Reform and Orthodox communities. The tasks on page 320 will require you to be able to identify and explain those differences.

### Aron Hakodesh

The aron hakodesh or ark is the most important place in a synagogue as it is here the Torah scrolls are kept. It is permissible to sell the seats or the reading desk and apply the proceeds to the purchase of an ark, because they have a lesser holiness, but it is forbidden to sell an ark even in order to build a synagogue. In the Sephardic tradition the ark is called herkal or sanctuary.

During certain prayers the doors and curtain of the ark may be opened or closed. Many have a curtain either outside the doors of the ark (Ashkenazi custom) or inside the doors of the ark (Sephardi custom).

There are several customs connected with the ark. It is opened for certain prayers and during the Ten Days of Penitence between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Opening the ark emphasises the importance of the prayer. In Britain there are many different designs of arks, with some being made from glass and concrete.



An open ark



The Torah scroll being read with a yad (often referred to as a Torah pointer)

### The Torah scrolls

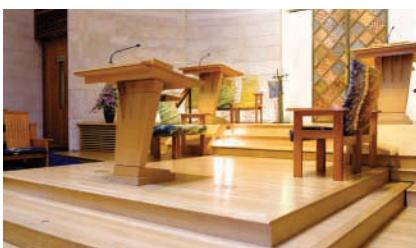
The Torah scrolls are the most sacred part of any synagogue. They are made from animal skins and are handwritten. Each scroll is one continuous Torah written in columns. Each end is stitched to a pole, called the 'tree of life'. Each scroll is wrapped in silk or velvet when not used and often decorated with silver. The scrolls are carried carefully to the bimah during a service where the weekly portion of text is read.



The ner tamid

## The ner tamid

In front of and slightly above the aron hakodesh, is the ner tamid, often called the eternal lamp. This is kept continually burning and should never be extinguished. This lamp symbolises the menorah (seven-branched lamp) which was kept burning in the Temple. Many Jews consider it as a symbol of God's eternal presence. The ner tamid used to be an oil lamp but now most are fuelled by gas, electric lightbulbs or solar power.



The bimah

## The bimah

The bimah is a central platform in the synagogue on which stands the desk from which the Torah scrolls are read. In Orthodox synagogues the bimah is usually in the middle so the rabbi faces the congregation. In Reform synagogues everyone sits together and the bimah is at the front, combined with the ark, rather than in the middle.

## Women's seating



Women sitting in a Reform synagogue



Women sitting in an Orthodox synagogue

### Tasks

- 1 What is the difference between Sefer Torah and the Torah?
- 2 Create a leaflet for Year 6 pupils that explains the structure of either a Reform or an Orthodox Synagogue. You will need to include three pictures showing either Reform or Orthodox features.
- 3 Answer the following question with between 30–35 words.  
Why don't synagogues have statues or pictures in them?  
In your answer you need to include the following: Shema, idolatry, monotheism.  
Page 283 will help you.



The seating for women is one of the main differences between Orthodox and Reform synagogues. In Orthodox synagogues there is a separate area where women are seated. This might be an upper-floor balcony or an area separated by a wall or curtain. The Talmud argues that men and women can concentrate more on their worship if they are separated. There are different practices among Orthodox synagogues. Some argue that, although men and women should be separated, they should each be close to the ark. For some synagogues it is important to have an opaque curtain separating the women's gallery so that the male worshippers cannot see the women's gallery.

In Reform synagogues there is no partition between males and females and they may sit together throughout the worship.

worshipping at home and worshipping in the synagogue cannot be separated. The way I celebrate Shabbat shows the link between home and synagogue.

## Rituals

### ► Birth ceremonies

The birth of a baby is considered a happy occasion in Judaism. As in some other religions, Jewish baby rites differ for male and female babies.

### ► Naming of babies

It is traditional for the child to receive his or her name at the first public gathering after their birth. Girl babies are named at the first public reading of the Torah at the synagogue after their birth. Traditionally, fathers are given the honour of reciting the blessing before and after a section of the Torah. The child receives her Hebrew name at the same time. After the service, both mother and father are honoured at a congregational **hiddush**.

Originally, Judaism had no special home celebration to welcome female babies into the covenant. For some Reform Jews it is considered important to have a special service at home (**brit bat**). These ceremonies are created by the families and often include singing, blessings and thanksgiving to God as creator.

Boys are usually named at a special ceremony called **brit milah**.

**B**rit milah is the Hebrew term used to describe the religious circumcision of boys at eight days old or of males converting to Judaism. It can be carried out in a hospital, home or synagogue, and is carried out by a mohel (male) or in some Reform communities a mohelet (female). Circumcision involves the removal of the foreskin on the 8th day after birth. It is performed in front of a minyan. The baby is placed on a cushion on an empty chair that is known as Elijah's chair. This represents an ancient belief that the spirit of Elijah (a prophet) visits every circumcision. The child is then placed on the lap of the sandek. A sandek is someone chosen by the parents as a great honour. After the circumcision, the father recites a blessing.

**R**elationship with God is shown through the circumcision. It represents the covenant made with Abraham (see page 290). Brit milah, literally translated, means 'the covenant of circumcision'. As a part of this covenant God gave Abraham the rite of circumcision as the specific sign of the Abrahamic covenant.

During the Brit a prayer is said which shows the importance of the ceremony in a child's relationship with God:

*'That as this child has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into the Torah, the marriage canopy and into good deeds.'*

**I**dentity is reinforced through the ceremony. During the Brit the boy is given his Hebrew name. This is the one that will be used in the synagogue and on formal occasions. The ceremony does not make the child a Jew, but it is a symbol that the baby has entered into the covenant. The importance of this is shown by the

fact that adult males who are wishing to convert to Judaism must have a circumcision in Orthodox Judaism.

While the Reform movement does not require that converts to Judaism become circumcised, it is increasingly recognised and practiced as an important aspect of becoming a full member of the Jewish people.

 Today brit milah is a traditional ritual which is celebrated by most Jewish families. Traditionally, only men attend the ceremony. Liberal and Reform communities encourage all to be present regardless of gender, but this is an individual's choice. Within the Reform movement the circumcision can be carried out by a mohelet (a female circumciser).

Within and outside the Jewish community there are some people who object to the brit milah ceremony as they believe the child is unable to give consent and therefore it goes against human rights. In Britain an organisation has been formed (Milah UK) to explain the reasons and practices of Jewish circumcision. The organisation represents all members of the Jewish community. They argue that parents make many decisions about their children, such as if they should have vaccinations or have their ears pierced.

### Tasks

- 1 What is the Abrahamic covenant?
- 2 In your own words explain three important features of Brit Milah.
- 3 Explain the connection between identity and Brit Milah.



## ► Bar mitzvah

### What is a bar mitzvah?

At the age of 13 a boy becomes bar mitzvah – he enters into Jewish adulthood. From this time on he will be able to form part of the minyan (the minimum group of ten needed for certain prayers). According to Jewish law, at the age of 13 a boy is considered responsible to fulfil the mitzvot in the Torah. The term 'bar mitzvah' means 'son of the mitzvah'. At this age it is believed that a young male can enter into a covenant relationship with God.

In the years before his bar mitzvah ceremony a boy learns Hebrew so he can read a portion from the Torah in the synagogue. A rabbi teaches him about religious duties and the importance of prayer.

### How is a bar mitzvah celebrated?

The bar mitzvah ceremony varies between communities. Traditionally the Jewish custom has been to mark this important event with a synagogue ceremony on the Shabbat after the 13th birthday. This includes the boy being called up to the bimah to recite a blessing on the Torah and reading a part of the Torah



A boy putting on Tefillin after his Bar Mitzvah

in Hebrew. Friends and relatives watch in the synagogue. After the boy has read his passage from the Torah his father recites a statement in which he thanks God.

Although young boys are trained to keep all the mitzvot even before their bar mitzvah, tefillin are the exception. A boy does not put on tefillin until he approaches the age of 13.

### Bat mitzvah and bat chayil

Traditionally girls did not have such large ceremonies as bar mitzvahs because they do not have the same religious duties to fulfil. Orthodox Jewish girls have a ceremony called a bat chayil (daughter of worth) when they are 12. Usually this includes a special service in the synagogue followed by the girl giving a presentation of some of the things she has learnt in her study of Judaism.

Reform Jewish girls become bat mitzvah at the age of 12 and can also form part of a minyan (the minimum group of ten needed for certain prayers). There are different customs among Reform synagogues but often there is a ceremony at her synagogue during the Shabbat morning service. She may lead prayers and read from the Torah scroll. The bat mitzvah demonstrates that she is taking on these additional privileges and responsibilities.

## ► Bar and bat mitzvahs today

For most Jews bar mitzvahs remain an important celebration and occasion. For some families these include parties after the ceremony in the synagogue for family and friends to enjoy. What remains most important is the beginning of a deeper relationship with Judaism and an increased involvement in the Jewish community. Many boys and girls show this responsibility by focusing on charity events as a way of celebration.

Jonah Jayson, Toby Onona, James Levy, Joseph Henley, Jonah Lazarus and Elijah Djanogly wanted to help other people as part of their bar mitzvah celebrations. They decided to complete a sponsored challenge of climbing Mount Snowdon. As a part of the climb they walked 18 kilometres and experienced temperatures of  $-6^{\circ}\text{C}$  (wind chill factor) with wind speeds of 45 mph. Jonah Jayson said 'This may feel tough for us climbing Mount Snowdon but just think how tough it is for the lonely, elderly people and the homeless teenagers who are the same age as us. It makes me very grateful for what I have.'

Although most boys and girls have their bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies at 13 there are some people who were unable to celebrate their special event. The ceremony is considered such an important event that it is never too late to celebrate.

When I was 13 I was in the Auschwitz concentration camp. There was no one I could talk to about my bar mitzvah. I survived alone in the world, and I am excited by my bar mitzvah because I couldn't celebrate in real time, and I didn't have parents anymore to consider a celebration.



Holocaust survivors celebrating becoming bar mitzvah



People can become Bar or Bat Mitzvah at any time of their life

I grew up thinking my mother was Christian. It wasn't until I was 21 that I found out she was Jewish.

When I was 13 my synagogue didn't have any bat mitzvah celebrations. Although I am 80 now I wanted a special ceremony to show my relationship with God.

## Tasks

- 1 In your own words explain what you think being a 'son of the mitzvah' means.
- 2 There are many different considerations families make regarding celebrations. Read the letter below from a father to a rabbi about his son's bar mitzvah.

Dear Rabbi

My son is having his bar mitzvah ceremony at the Reform synagogue. We want to invite a relative who is an Orthodox Jew. Will they be able to attend?

Sam

In the rabbi's response below he mentions some things to consider but doesn't give any details. For each of the areas explain what the father might need to consider. Pages 322–24 will help you.

Dear Sam

Yes, definitely invite them! But you must keep in mind some of the differences between Reform and Orthodox practices.

You need to think about:

- ▶ Seating in the synagogue
- ▶ Food at the Bar Mitzvah Celebration.

The best way forward is to explain to your relative what will be happening and then let them decide.

Rabbi

## ► 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.

*'A man shall therefore leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and they shall become one flesh.'*

Genesis 2:24

Marriage is considered as God-given, which can be seen by the word kiddushin (holy or sanctified) which is used for the betrothal ceremony and the first part of the ceremony. The second part of the ceremony is called nisuin which finalises the marriage. There are many different features in each wedding ceremony.

**K**etubah – 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. Traditionally these were written in Aramaic but they are written in many languages today. The ketubah remains the property of the wife throughout the marriage.

**I**ntentions – Entering into marriage both partners must have the right intentions. It is considered a meeting of soul mates and a spiritual experience in which respect and faithfulness to each other are expected.

**D**own the aisle – Although a wedding can happen in a synagogue, home or other suitable place, the bride will usually walk down the aisle and join the groom and bridesmaids under the chuppah where the rabbi conducts the main parts of the ceremony.

**D**eclaration in front of witnesses as a ring is placed on the bride's finger. The groom will declare 'Behold you are consecrated to me by means of this ring according to the rituals of Moses and Israel'. He also reads out the promises made in the ketubah. In the Sephardic community this is read to the groom before the ceremony begins.

**U**nder the chuppah – The main part of the ceremony takes place under the chuppah. This is a shelter with four sides open and symbolises the Jewish home. Across the chuppah there will often be a blessing written in Hebrew. 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.

**S**tamping 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.

**H**appiness in Judaism is considered an important value, especially in the context of the service of God. Marriage is seen as a blessing and a joyous occasion. It is referred to as a simcha, meaning a joyous celebration.

**I**ndex finger. The ring is after placed on the bride's index or forefinger on her right hand. It's believed that that is the finger connected to the heart. The round ring is a symbol of eternity.

**N**isuin is the second part of the ceremony in which seven further blessings are said to finalise the marriage. These blessings praise God for creating the human race and bringing happiness to the couple.

*'When two souls destined to be together find each other, their streams of light flow together, and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being.'*

Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Hasidic movement, 1700–1760

*'Any man who has no wife lives without joy, without blessing, and without goodness.'*

Talmud, Tractate Yevamoth, 62a

*'Be thou consecrated unto me with this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel.'*

In twenty-first-century Britain there are many different types of marriage services for Jews but most will try to include the main features.



A Jewish wedding ceremony in the UK

Differences might occur because Jews are Orthodox or Reform or Ashkenazi or Sephardic. There are also differences if it is a same-sex wedding, as allowed in some synagogues.



Sephardic weddings will often include a henna ceremony



A same-sex wedding of Reform Jews

### Tasks

- 1 What is a chuppah?
- 2 Explain, in your own words, the importance of a ketubah.
- 3 Explain why you think weddings are called simchas (joyous occasions). Refer to sacred texts in your answer.



## ► Mourning rituals

There is a pattern of rituals that takes place when someone has died in the Jewish community. How far the pattern is followed depends on the individual and the branch of Judaism they practise.

### At death

If possible, a person's last moments should be spent reciting the Shema.

### Chevra Kadisha

The burial society (Chevra Kadisha) attached to the synagogue prepare the body for burial. This includes washing the body and putting the body in plain white gowns. Great care is taken by these volunteers as it is believed the body is the earthly container for the soul and so should be treated with dignity.

### After death

The funeral is arranged by the onan (main mourner). The onan will take charge of the burial. They are exempt from all mitzvot apart from preparing for the burial. A dead person should not be left alone and someone will stay with the body until the burial. This is an act of respect for the body created in God's image as the earthly vessel for the soul.



A Jewish grave

### Burial

For most Jews the body will be buried rather than cremated and this should be done as quickly as possible.

The funeral is simple, and psalms are often read. The funeral should be kept as plain as possible and the coffin should be an unpolished box with no brass handles to show that rich and poor are alike in death. Once the grave is filled the mourners pray, and the kaddish is recited with a memorial prayer as the service concludes. Sephardic Jews will often walk around the coffin seven times and recite prayers for the angel of mercy to accompany the coffin.

After the burial the main mourner is no longer an onan but continues to follow a pattern of mourning.

### Shiva

There are set rituals after the funeral, which represents the fact that life cannot immediately carry on as before after a loved one has died. The first week is known as shiva (meaning seven). During this time most mourners will stay in their homes and be visited by relatives and members of the synagogue. Male mourners will recite kaddish which is a prayer declaring God's greatness and a prayer for the coming age of peace.

## Tasks

- 1** Explain the meaning of each of the following:
  - onan
  - kaddish
- 2** Read the teachings about the afterlife on pages 71–80.  
In the poem by Rabbi Allen S. Maller, what does he say is the most important way to remember someone who has died?
- 3** How does the poem reflect the teachings of Judaism about the importance of life?



Some mourners sit on low stools during the shiva, except on Shabbat when no mourning should take place. Mirrors are often covered and music is not played in the house.

A candle is kept burning day and night to represent the person's soul:

*'A person's soul is the candle of the Lord.'*

Proverbs 20:27

Once the shiva ends there are many other rituals to remember the dead.

For the first four weeks of mourning (the shloshim) parties and the cutting of hair are avoided and throughout the year after the death kaddish prayers are said.

## Tombstone and consecration

Before the end of the first year after the death the tombstone is erected. This ceremony is called the unveiling and the kaddish is recited. It is seen important to visit the grave and to leave stones not flowers as a mark of respect. Some believe this custom originated because Abraham used a pebble to mark the spot where his wife Sarah was buried.

A yahrzeit ceremony is held each year to mark the death. Prayers are said and a candle burns for 24 hours to symbolise the departed soul.

*'When All That's Left Is Love'* by Rabbi Allen S. Maller

When I die  
If you need to weep  
Cry for someone  
Walking the street beside you.  
You can love me most by letting  
Hands touch hands, and souls touch souls.  
You can love me most by  
Sharing your Simchas [joys] and  
Multiplying your Mitzvot [good deeds]  
You can love me most by  
Letting me live in your eyes  
And not on your mind.  
And when you say Kaddish for me  
Remember what our  
Torah teaches,  
Love doesn't die, people do.  
So when all that's left of me is love  
Give me away.

## Daily life

### Tasks

Answer the questions below. If you need help then reread pages 293.

- 1 What is the Torah?
- 2 What is the Oral Torah?
- 3 What is the Tenakh?
- 4 What is the connection between the Torah and the 613 mitzvot?
- 5 What are the differences in attitudes to the Torah and the Oral Torah between Reform and Orthodox Jews?

For many Jews their religion is a way of life and reflects the teachings of the Torah. In Chapter 9 we learnt about the giving of the Torah and the importance of it for Jews today.

For centuries Jews have copied the Torah onto parchment scrolls, studied it and meditated on it. It influences the way they worship, their home and their values. The teachings of the Torah are central to all. Although most Jews would not have a Sefer Torah at home they would often have a Chumash. This is a copy of the Torah that shows the passage that should be read each day.

The Tenakh is made up of the Torah, Neviim and Ketuvim. Although the Neviim and Ketuvim are not seen as having the same authority as the Torah they are still very important for Jewish daily life.

- ▶ Neviim (books of the prophets) – The Neviim are written as a history with a main purpose to teach about the history of the religion. They show the covenant relationship, which is shown in the Shema.
- ▶ Ketuvim (holy writings) – The purpose is to record how the Jews behaved towards God and how that has affected their own history. It includes the Psalms, which is a collection of praises to God.

Jews read and reflect upon the meaning of these stories for their own lives. Some of them are also used in personal and communal worship, such as Psalm 121 or 130 which is often said before praying for someone who is ill. Extracts from the Neviim are read in the synagogue at the end of the Torah readings.

The Talmud is a combination of the Mishnah and Gemara.

- ▶ Mishnah – For hundreds of years the leaders of Judaism handed down the Oral Torah by word of mouth. By about 200 CE Jews were moving around the Roman Empire, often because of persecution. People feared that as Jews became dispersed they would forget the oral traditions. Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi wrote down the oral traditions so that Jews did not grow apart but had a central text to follow for their daily life. The Mishnah also contains the Halakhah (teachings on issues of Law) and the Haggadah (guidance on teaching).
- ▶ Gemara – This is the commentary on the Mishnah, giving further details on many issues of law and worship.



The Yeshiva in Gateshead

Extracts from the Talmud are used in public and private worship and also in the siddur. When extracts from the Torah are unclear then explanations will be given from the Talmud.

Today there are many colleges throughout the world where Jews continue to study the Torah and Talmud. These are called yeshiva. Historically, they were attended only by males. Today, all non-Orthodox and a few Orthodox yeshivas are open to females.

## ► Dietary laws and keeping kosher in Britain

### Key Concept



**Kosher** Means 'fit' or 'proper'. Foods that are permitted to be eaten according to Leviticus Chapter 11. It is also used to refer to the purity of ritual objects such as Torah scrolls.

**Kosher** means something that is fitting or proper according to Jewish law. Although it can be used to describe certain actions it is more often used to describe foods that can and cannot be eaten by observant Jews. The opposite of kosher is treifah, which is used to describe actions and food that are forbidden.

The laws concerning kosher food date back to the Torah. There are many references about not only what can and cannot be eaten but also the way foods should be prepared. According to Genesis 1:29 the first humans were vegetarians. It was only after the flood that God allowed Noah and his family to eat meat.

Leviticus 11:1–23 refers to many issues of keeping kosher that influence the lifestyle of many Jews today. In this passage God gives to Moses instructions regarding what the Israelites can and cannot eat. Forbidden are:

- ▶ many types of birds
- ▶ shellfish
- ▶ fish without fins and scales
- ▶ animals that don't chew the cud or have hooves completely parted.

Animals that are allowed to be eaten are only considered kosher if they are killed in a certain way. Causing pain to any living creature is strictly forbidden in Jewish law and so a method is used called shechitah, which is supposed to cause less pain to animals. The animal's throat is cut with a razor-sharp knife, causing immediate loss of consciousness and death. The slaughter of animals for meat is carried out by a person called a shochet. The role of a shochet is very important and a shochet must live a good ethical life. They must be Jewish as they are killing the animal as a form of dedication to God. The Torah commands Jews not to eat the blood of animals and birds so meat is then laid out to let the blood drain away before rinsing.

Keeping a kosher diet doesn't just mean selecting the right animals to be eaten and preparing them in a fit way. There are certain combinations that are forbidden. Exodus 23:19 states:

*'Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God. Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.'*

For Jews who keep kosher homes this means that meat and dairy products must be kept separately as they should not be eaten in the same meal. Although meat and milk dishes should be kept separately there are foods that can be eaten in any meal. These are called parev and include vegetables, eggs and plants.

There are many different decisions that families have to make regarding how far to keep kosher. Both religious and practical considerations can impact upon their practice.



Sara

Here's the menu – don't look so worried.



Tanya

But how will I know what to eat. I know there are many things you can't eat and I don't want to offend you.

This is a kosher restaurant. Did you see the certificate on the shop window that shows that it has been inspected and all the preparations of the food are fit and proper.

Well yes. But it's more than that. This is a 'meaty' restaurant so there will be no dishes here with milk and all the meat will have been killed according to certain rules.

Exactly. At home we have a set of plates for our meaty dishes and a set for our milky dishes. They are all kept in separate areas of the kitchen.

It is. To buy kosher food can be really expensive. Especially where there are no Jewish shops. I know some people who have had to give up keeping kosher because they can't afford it.

What do you mean? Do you think they would be struck down by thunder and lightning! Well, each individual has to make their choice and then live by it. I consider it a blessing to keep a kosher lifestyle. It helps my relationship with God. He gave us the duties we should follow.

That's what some of my Jewish friends say as they are eating their bacon sandwich! It has to be an individual choice as our relationship with God is individual. For me I keep kosher and hope I always will. It binds us together as a family. I also think that God made those rules for all time and I shouldn't change them just because it is difficult.

It's natural to me now. It's just like people who have gluten free diets know what they can and can't eat. I look at the food labels and there will be signs that tell me if it is kosher or treifah. Also technology helps. My friend has a device, which lets them know what they can eat. It's really useful when she is travelling.

What do you mean 'fit and proper'? Do you mean they are clean?

Is that why I don't see cheeseburger on the menu?

But that must be really expensive.

What happens to them?

But those rules come from ages ago. They can't be relevant to today.

But how do you know what to eat? Here it's easy as all the menu is kosher but what about if you are somewhere else?

All this talk of food is making me hungry – let's order.

## Tasks

- 1 What does 'kosher' mean?
- 2 Kieran has been asked to consider the following statement: 'Keeping kosher is not important anymore.' From Sara and Tanya's discussion, identify six different points he could make in his answer.



## Festivals

In the Jewish calendar there are many festivals. Although they may be celebrated differently by Jewish communities they all share two features.

- They remember a great event in Jewish history.
- They provide an opportunity to stop thinking about day-to-day life and build a relationship with God. Festivals are often called ‘moed’ in Hebrew. Moed means ‘date’. So, for many Jews, a festival is a time to have ‘a date with God’.

I often go to Sephardic celebration festivals. There will be different foods and music which remind me how Judaism is a global religion.

Since my husband died I go to a hotel in Bournemouth to celebrate Pesach. Although I don't know other people it reminds me we are one Jewish community.

There are many different ways Jews celebrate festivals in Britain. This may depend upon:

- how observant they are
- whether they are Ashkenazi or Sephardic
- family traditions
- personal circumstances
- impact of religious beliefs.

My daughter is vegetarian so we don't have a lamb's bone on our sedar plate.

This year the London Marathon was run on the second day of Pesach. My two daughters were due to run. One decided not to run but observe Pesach. The other decided to run and raise money for charity. They were tough decisions.

### ► Rosh hashanah (new year)

Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and ten days later Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) are known as the Days of Awe. For many Jews the two days are connected in a process of judgement and atonement.

Many Jews believe that on Rosh Hashanah God judges all people for their deeds for the past year and that on this day these decisions are written down by God. On Yom Kippur that book is then sealed.

### Origins and meaning

Traditionally Rosh Hashanah is the celebration of the day when God created the world and marks the New Year. Rosh means the ‘head’ or beginning. In Jewish tradition the head reflects not just the start of the year but its future direction. It is also called the Day of Remembering when Jews think about God and the creation of the world. Sometimes it is called the Day of Judgement as it prepares people to think about their deeds over the last year.

Rosh Hashanah is a happy and serious festival. It is a happy time when the new year is celebrated with many family celebrations. It is also a serious time when Jews consider their actions over the past year and how they could have done better.



Front and inside of a Rosh Hashanah card

## Celebration

The eve of Rosh Hashanah is the last day of the old year and special services are held at the synagogue. The shofar will not be blown. Special fruits such as pomegranates are bought. The evening prayers address God as a king sitting in judgement over the world. As people leave the synagogue they will wish each other: 'May you be written down for a good year'.

At home, kiddush is made and slices of apple dipped in honey are eaten. The challah (plaited bread loaf) eaten is a different shape from that eaten at Shabbat. At Rosh Hashanah the challah is round as a reminder of the cycle of the year. At the morning service the shofar is blown 100 times with notes sounding like crying. This is meant to represent the crying of the soul asking to be reunited with God.

Later after the service many Jews will recite a special prayer at a running stream or river. This is called tashlikh ('casting away'), when crumbs from pockets are thrown, with the hope that sins are cast away (into the water) and that God will overlook them and allow New Year.

## ► Ten days of returning

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the 'ten days of returning'. During this time Jews consider their deeds over the past year. They try to make amends and plan ways to do better in the next year. Judaism teaches that God does not forgive a wrong done to another person unless that person has already been asked for forgiveness.

## ► Yom kippur (Day of Atonement)

### Origins and meaning

This is the holiest day of the year when many people will attend the synagogue. It is the end of the ten days of repentance and is a day of forgiveness.

It is a day of self-denial in five areas; food, wearing of perfumes, drink, sex and wearing of leather shoes.

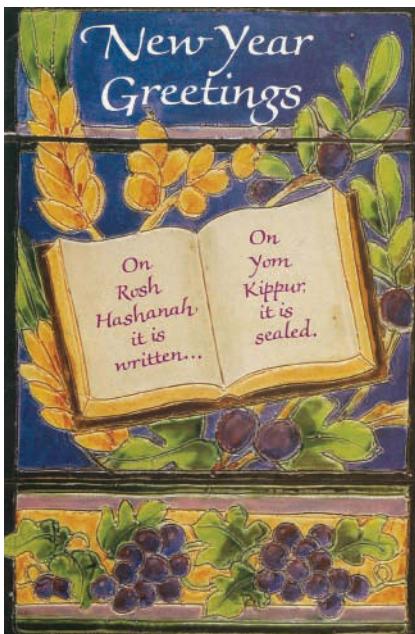
### Celebration

The day before Yom Kippur is a time of preparation. Some Jews traditionally take chickens to the poor or give money to charities to help the poor. Some Jews will visit the mikveh (pool of natural water) for a spiritual cleaning. Yom Kippur begins in the home. An early dinner is eaten to allow arrival at the synagogue before sundown. After the meal, the table is often covered with Jewish books to show Yom Kippur is celebrated not by eating but by fasting and prayer.

Yom Kippur is a 25-hour fast during which many Jews take no food or water. Because of the importance of life in Judaism (see Pikuach Nefesh, page 297) people who are ill and too young do not have to fast. Although it is a very solemn day, many Jews look forward to the day as it gives them a chance to atone for their wrongdoings.

There are five prayer services throughout Yom Kippur. At the heart of each is the confessional prayer made to God.

Before the service in the synagogue begins the Kol Nidrei (All vows) is sung. The story of Jonah is told in the afternoon service of Yom Kippur. The story is particularly relevant as it teaches of God's



A festive card for Yom Kippur

**Cantor** leader of reading and singing in the services of some synagogues.

## Tasks

- 1 Explain in your own words the connection between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
- 2 Look at the greeting card for Rosh Hashanah on page 332. Identify and explain the meaning of the symbols on the card.
- 3 Why do you think Yom Kippur is such an important day in the Jewish year?



willingness to forgive those who fully repent. Rabbis and **cantors** will often be dressed in kittels (white robes) and the Torah scrolls will be dressed in white as white symbolises forgiveness. During the prayers Jews will confess their sins and ask for forgiveness. Throughout the service the doors of the ark are open to symbolise that the gates of heaven are open. Confessions can only be made to God not to a person. They are always said quietly so no one can hear them.

An important part of Yom Kippur is the Yizkor (memorial service) when family and friends who have died are remembered and charity is given in their honour. There are five prayers during the day, ending with the Neilah (the closing of the gates). The service is ended by reciting the Shema.

After nightfall a single blast of the shofar announces the fast is over. Back at home, families make havdallah (see Shabbat, page 310) and break their fasts. It is a custom that during the evening children will start building their sukkah (booth or hut) ready for the festival of Sukkot.

## Sukkot

### Origins

Sukkot begins on Tishri 15, the fifth day after Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). It is an important festival and is counted as one of the mitzvot that Jews should keep. It is a harvest festival to thank God.

It commemorates the 40-year period during which the children of Israel were in the desert, living in temporary shelters:

*'During [these] seven days you must live in thatched huts. Everyone included in Israel must live in such thatched huts.'*

Leviticus 23:42

### Meaning

Sukkot celebrates the Israelites' journey through the desert on their way to the Promised Land. The sukkah represents the temporary shelter that many Jews used in the desert. As a makeshift booth it represents humans vulnerability before God.

There are many different interpretations of the meaning of the four species. One version says they represent parts of the body.

In Leviticus reference is also made to two special objects associated with Sukkot:

- the lulav (palm, myrtle and willow placed in a woven palm holder)
- the etrog (a citrus fruit).

Palm, myrtle, willow and etrog have come to be known as the four species:

- the lulav represents the spine – your actions (long and straight)
- the myrtle represents the eye – how you see life (small and oval)
- the willow represents the mouth – your speech (long and oval)
- the etrog represents the heart – your emotions.

*'On the first day, you must take for yourself a fruit of the citron tree, an unopened palm frond, myrtle branches, and willows [that grow near] the brook. You shall rejoice before God for seven days.'*

Leviticus 23:40



For an etrog to be considered kosher it must have a hard piece of the skin at the end of the fruit

All of these parts have the potential to sin, but should join together to perform the mitzvot (commandments).

The second version says the four species represent different types of Jews:

- ▶ The etrog represents Jews who have knowledge of the Torah and perform mitzvot (it has a pleasing taste and smell).
  - ▶ The palm represents Jews who have knowledge of the Torah but lack in mitzvot (it produces tasty fruit but has no smell).
  - ▶ The myrtle represents Jews who perform mitzvot but have little knowledge of the Torah (it has a strong smell but no taste).
  - ▶ The willow represents Jews who have no knowledge of the Torah and do not perform mitzvot (it has no taste or smell).

Bringing the four species together is a reminder that all kinds of Jews are important and should all be united.

# Celebration

Sukkot lasts for seven days and no work is permitted on the first and second day of the holiday.

During the festival, Jewish families build a sukkah, a temporary shelter such as those lived in by their ancestors during the 40 years in the desert. The roof of a sukkah is called a sekhakh and must be made of something that has grown in the ground (for example bamboo). The sukkah must have three walls and the roof must be sparse enough that the rain can get through and that stars can be seen through it.



A Sukkah is a temporary shelter built by Jewish families during Sukkot to remember those their ancestors lived in whilst in the desert.

and etrog are waved in six directions, front (towards Jerusalem), right, back, left, up and down. This indicates that God's power is everywhere.

Many synagogues have a sukkah.

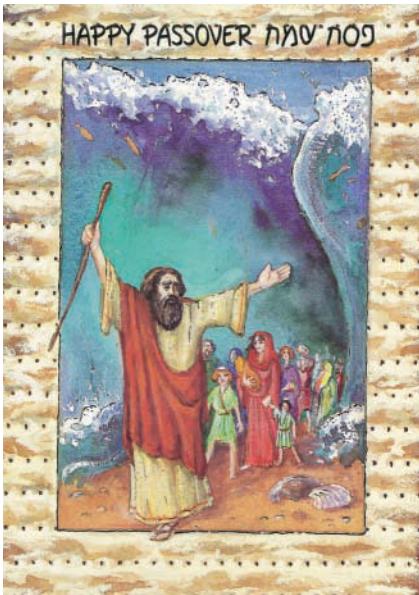
## Task

In the previous chapter we learnt about the importance of Moses.

Test yourself with these questions:

- 1 Why is Moses important in Judaism?
  - 2 How did he lead the Israelites out of Egypt?





A festive card for Pesach



Leavened goods are banned during Passover so Jews eat Matzah, which is unleavened flatbread

## Pesach

### Origins and meaning

Pesach celebrates the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt, led by Moses. Jewish tradition teaches that the festival is known as Pesach (Passover) as God passed over the houses of the Israelites during the tenth and final plague – death of the Egyptian firstborn.

God commanded that the Israelites should celebrate this festival each year as a mark of freedom.

*'This day must be one that you will remember. You must keep it as a festival to God for all generations. It is a law for all time that you must celebrate it.'*

Exodus 12:14

The festival is often called the Festival of Freedom. Each year prayers are said for those who aren't free.

### Preparation and celebrations

Many Jews remove all chametz (grain products that are swollen or capable of swelling) from their house and during the festival no chametz are eaten. As **leavened** goods, such as bread cooked with wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt, and items made from yeast, such as beer, are banned during the holiday, the weeks leading up to Pesach are spent cleaning to get rid of even the tiniest forbidden crumb. There are different reasons given for this custom. Some Jews believe that chametz is a source of pride as it swells when it has water on it. For other Jews they believe having no chametz is important as when the Israelites left Egypt they didn't have the time to let the bread rise. The house is searched for chametz and any found is eaten or burnt before Pesach begins. Crockery that has been used for chametz will often be replaced by different crockery.

Pesach is welcomed into the house with the lighting of candles. Families often go to the synagogue and on their return there is a special meal. The seder meal is a central part of the festival and is eaten on the first and second nights of the festival. All the readings and instructions for the seder are in a book called the Haggadah (a book containing the service used at Pesach).

The meal begins with questions from the youngest child, asking about the Pesach rituals. The origins and symbolism are then explained.

On the table there are many symbolic foods served on a special dish. These include:

- ▶ a lamb bone – a symbol of sacrifice. On the first Passover, God ordered Jews to kill a lamb and mark their front doorposts with blood
- ▶ a roasted egg – a symbol of the new life Jews had after their escape of Egypt and of new life in general
- ▶ a green vegetable to dip in salt water – a sign of spring dipped in salt water to remember the tears when the Jews were in captivity
- ▶ bitter herbs made from horseradish – reflecting the bitterness of slavery
- ▶ a paste made of chopped apples, walnuts and wine called Charoset – representing the mortar the Jewish slaves had to use when building.

One of the main foods eaten over Pesach is unleavened bread called matzah. It is said that when the pharaoh finally freed the slaves, the Israelites were made to leave so quickly that they did not have time to let their bread rise, and took flat bread instead.

At the start of the dinner, three matzot are laid on top of each other, the middle matzah is broken and the largest piece is hidden. The children then hunt to find the bread, and the winner receives a prize.

The meal is accompanied by four small glasses of wine symbolising joy, happiness and the freedom of the Israelites. One glass is left by an open door to welcome the prophet Elijah, who Jewish people believe will return at the end of Passover to announce the coming of the Messiah.

### Tasks

- 1 Explain why Passover is called the Festival of Freedom.
- 2 Each year the seder meal remembers people who aren't free. Which people would you select this year and why?



## ► End of section review

### Knowledge check

- 1 What does the term 'Shabbat' mean?
- 2 Write a short paragraph (roughly three sentences) to explain what is meant by 'brit milah.'
- 3 In your own words, explain what is meant by 'keeping kosher'.

### Stickability

Key concepts:

- Kosher
- Shabbat
- Synagogue

Key teachings about:

- worship
- the synagogue
- rituals
- daily life
- festivals

### The Big Question

'Festivals in Judaism are just a time for friends and relatives to celebrate together.'

#### Your task

- How do you think someone who is Jewish might respond to this statement?
- Write a minimum of two developed paragraphs.
- You must include references to two Jewish festivals.

### Skills Link



- 1 What are 'mitzvot'?

- 2 Describe how Jewish women might worship differently to men.

### Task



You need to explain in detail religious teachings about the **Synagogue**. Use the guidance below to help you to write a **developed explanation** for Judaism. Ensure that you use key terms fluently and frequently.

All/many/most Jews believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Torah quote .....

This means that/Because of this they .....

Some/other Jews such as ..... believe that ..... This comes from the teaching/Torah quote .....

This means that/Because of this they .....

Finally, Jews such as ..... believe that ..... This means that/Because of this they .....

Their beliefs do/do not differ because .....

## ► Exam focus

### Judaism: Practices

#### [c] questions

These questions expect you to ‘explain’ a key practice, belief or issue in the religions you have studied. There is a maximum of eight marks for this type of question. To gain full marks you should be able to show detailed knowledge which shows the impact on individuals and communities. You need to use appropriate religious terms and relevant sources of wisdom or sacred texts. Look at the question below:

(c) Explain why Shabbat is important in Judaism. (8)

The question is asking you to explain the importance of Shabbat. It is important that you don’t just give a description of what Shabbat is. 8 marks are available, so it is important that your answer is detailed, using religious language/texts and referring to different beliefs or practices within Judaism and the impact that Shabbat might have on the individual or community.

Draft an answer that focuses on the importance of Shabbat. Remember to show there are different beliefs and practices amongst Orthodox and Reform Jews.

#### [d] questions

These are very important questions as they are worth 15 marks. The questions requires you to:

- read and understand a statement
- discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

You are expected to apply your knowledge and understanding from the whole of your study to the question.

Take for example the following question:

**‘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.)**

The evidence could come from any relevant part of your study. For example, you might refer to your study about the home and argue that many festivals are celebrated in the home.

Look at the following four areas. For each consider how this might be used as evidence in your answer:

- Shabbat service
- Minyans
- worship in the home
- synagogue as a place of worship, learning and social events.

# Glossary

- Abortion** when a pregnancy is ended so that it does not result in the birth of a child.
- Absolute poverty** an acute state of deprivation, whereby a person cannot access the most basic of their human needs.
- Adha** sacrifice.
- Adultery** voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not their spouse.
- Afterlife** life after death; the belief that existence continues after physical death.
- Agape** selfless, unconditional love; the highest of the four types of love in the Bible.
- Agnostic** unsure if there is a God.
- Akhirah** the Islamic term for the afterlife. There are many references to it, and warnings about it, in the Qur'an.
- Allah** the Arabic word meaning God. Muslims believe that they worship the same God that spoke through Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus).
- Al-Qadr** 'destiny'; nothing takes place purely by chance. God knows and wills all future events.
- Anti-Semitic** hostile or prejudiced towards Jews.
- Apartheid** a system of segregating people by races, which was used in South Africa.
- Ashura** literally means 'tenth'. It falls on the tenth day of the month of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar.
- Atheist** believing there is no God.
- Atonement** the belief that Jesus' death on the cross healed the rift between humans and God.
- Authority** the idea that something or someone is in charge of what is right or wrong. We look to an authority to guide our own understanding and decision-making.
- Bal tashchit** referred to in the Torah. Literally, it means 'do not destroy'.
- Barzakh** a place of waiting after death until the Day of Judgement.
- Beatitudes** the blessings listed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.
- Beget** to bring a child into existence, or to create offspring.
- Bigamy** entering into a marriage with someone while still being legally married to another person.
- Blasphemy** showing a lack of respect to God or other holy things.
- Cantor** leader of reading and singing in the services of some synagogues.
- Censorship** the practice of suppressing and limiting access to materials considered obscene, offensive or a threat to security. People may also be restricted in their speech by censorship laws.
- Charismatic Christians** Christians who emphasise the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and miracles.
- Cohabitation** to live together in a sexual relationship, without being married, or in a civil partnership.
- Commitment** a sense of dedication and obligation to someone or something.
- Congregational** all together, praying as a whole community. This emphasises the ummah.
- Conscience** an inner voice which keeps a person on the right track; a sense of right and wrong; an instinct (some think given by God) to help us to make the right choices.
- Contraception** methods used to prevent a woman from becoming pregnant during or following sexual intercourse.
- Conversion** changing one's religion or beliefs.
- Covenant** a promise or agreement between two parties. Covenants were made between God with Noah, Abraham and Moses.
- Creation** the idea that the universe was planned and brought into being by a divine power (for example God).
- Creationism** the belief that all life was made by God.
- Creator** one who brings something into existence, in this case the world.
- Creed** a set statement of faith that all religious believers follow.
- Devout** having deep religious feeling or commitment.
- Dignity** being worthy of honour or respect.
- Discrimination** acts of treating groups of people, or individuals differently, based on prejudice.
- Divine** perfect or God-like.
- Divorce** to legally end a marriage.
- Du'a prayers** personal prayers which may be said at any time of the day.
- Ecumenical** representing or promoting unity within the different Christian Churches.
- Empowerment** authority or power given to someone to do something.
- Ensoulment** the moment when the human soul is said to enter the baby's body (usually thought to happen in the womb, at an early point in the pregnancy).
- Environmental sustainability** ensuring that the demands placed on natural resources can be met without reducing capacity to allow all people and other species of animals, as well as plant life, to live well, now and in the future.
- Euthanasia** from Greek, eu 'good' + thanatos 'death'. Sometimes referred to as 'mercy killing'. The act of killing or permitting the death of a person who is suffering from a serious illness.
- Evangelise** to try to convert someone to a different religion (usually Christianity).
- Evangelism** preaching of the gospel to others with the intention of converting others to the Christian faith.
- Evil** that which is considered extremely immoral, wicked and wrong.
- Evolution** by natural selection the idea that the species that flourish are those which are best suited to their environment.
- Exoneration** means that a conviction for a crime is reversed, either because the prisoner is innocent or there was an error with the trial that led to conviction.
- Extremism** believing in and supporting ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable.
- Fate** a power or force that determines the future. The idea that the outcome is predetermined or unchangeable – inevitable and irresistible.
- Fidelity** two people being sexually faithful to each other.
- Fitrah** the natural instinct all humans have, from birth, to know and worship God.
- Forgiveness** to grant pardon for a wrongdoing; to give up resentment and the desire seek revenge against a wrongdoer.
- Free will** a person's ability to make free choices in life.

**Gemilut hasadim** making ‘acts of loving kindness’. It emphasises the need to be charitable, caring for others and for the world.

**Gender equality** people of all genders enjoying the same rights and opportunities in all aspects of their lives.

**Global citizenship** the idea that we should see ourselves as part of a world community. We should view the whole world as our home, not just the town where we live or our country of birth. We have a responsibility to care for the Amazonian rainforests and for global climate change as much as for pollution in our own local communities.

**Good** that which is considered morally right, beneficial and to our advantage.

**Hadith** an account describing the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad; to ‘tell’ or ‘narrate’.

**Hafiz** someone who has been able to memorise the whole Qur'an in Arabic.

**Haftorah** a passage from one of the books of the Neviim (prophets) which is read after the Torah reading.

**Halah (permitted)** actions or things which are permitted within Islam, such as eating permitted foods.

**Hanifs** people who lived in Arabia before the Prophet Muhammad and who believed in one God.

**Haram (forbidden)** any actions or things which are forbidden within Islam, such as eating forbidden foods.

**Hillel** a great rabbi and teacher who lived in the first century.

**Hospice** a place where people with terminal illnesses can go to die with dignity. A hospice focuses on relieving the symptoms and pain of a terminal illness. Unlike a hospital, a hospice does not try to treat an illness or cure a patient. Hospices also offer a type of pastoral care, for both the patient and their family, not available in a standard hospital.

**Human rights** the basic entitlements of all human beings, afforded to them simply because they are human.

**Humane** showing kindness and compassion.

**Ibadah** acts of worship; any permissible action performed with the intention to obey God.

**Id** the Muslim word for festival. It means ‘an event that returns every year’.

**Imam** a leader, but Sunnis and Shi'a differ in the way they understand the term. In Sunni Islam an imam is the leader in a local mosque, where he has been chosen by the local Muslim community to lead worship. In Shi'a Islam there were only twelve Imams. They are seen as holy figures who were all divinely appointed members of Muhammad's descendants.

**Incarnation** the way in which God becomes ‘flesh’ or human in the form of Jesus.

**Insha' Allah** ‘if God allows it’. It comes from joining the Arabic words ‘Allah’ and ‘his will’. It is a very common phrase: for example, ‘I will get to school on time, Insha' Allah!'

**Intelligent design** the idea that certain features of life are best explained by an intelligent cause, rather than an undirected process, such as natural selection.

**Islam** submission or peace.

**Islamophobic** hostile or prejudiced towards Muslims.

**Jihad** striving to do what is right, for God. The greater jihad is the struggle that each person has, as an individual, to follow God's will in their life. The lesser jihad is the fight to defend Islam (holy war).

**Justice** fairness; where everyone is treated equally by the law.

**Ka'ba** known as the House of God, the black covered, cube-shaped building at the centre of Islam's holiest mosque in Makkah.

**Kalimah** the statement: ‘There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his prophet’.

**Karma** the ‘energy’ stored in your soul reflecting good and bad deeds.

**Kashrut** Jewish dietary laws.

**Kiddush** a prayer sanctifying Shabbat and many holy days, usually said over wine.

**King David** a successful King of the Israelites. Believed by many to have written the Psalms.

**Kosher (‘fit’ or ‘proper’)** Foods that are permitted to be eaten according to Leviticus Chapter 11. It is also used to refer to the purity of ritual objects such as Torah scrolls.

**Lay person** a person who is not a member of the clergy.

**Leavened** made light by aerating, as with yeast or baking powder.

**Liberal** free thinking, challenging traditional views.

**Literal** understanding something exactly as it is written.

**Lutheranism** a Protestant denomination that follows the religious doctrines of Martin Luther (1483–1586).

**Mahdi** the long-awaited saviour who will come to rescue the world.

**Marginalised** put in a place of little importance.

**Martyr** a person who is put to death for not renouncing their religion.

**Medical ethics** the process of deciding what is good and acceptable in medicine.

**Messiah (Mashiach)** the one who will be anointed as king to rule in the world to come.

**Midrash** collections of various Rabbinic commentaries on the Tenakh.

**Mishnah** the Oral Torah.

**Mission** calling of a religious organisation, especially a Christian one, to go out into the world and spread its faith.

**Mitzvah** although usually translated as duty or commandment, it can also refer to kind deeds.

**Mitzvot** the term has a mix of meanings. It is often used to refer to duties (such as the 613 in the Torah) and good deeds.

**Monotheism** belief in one true God.

**Morality** principles and standards determining which actions are right or wrong.

**Mosque (‘masjid’ in Arabic)**, a ‘place of prostration’ for Muslims; it is a communal place of worship for a Muslim community.

**Muezzin** the person who calls Muslims to the mosque to pray.

**Nativity** the accounts of Jesus' birth in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew.

**Nicene Creed** a statement of Christian faith from 325 CE.

**Niyyah** the honest intention to worship God.

**Olam Ha-Ba** the afterlife. It means ‘the world to come’.

**Omnibenevolent** the state of being all-loving and infinitely good – a characteristic often attributed to God.

**Omnipotent** the all-powerful, almighty and unlimited nature of God.

**Oppressed** governed or treated with cruelty or injustice.

**Oral Torah** the whole commentary that discusses the Written Torah.

**Original sin** the first sin ever committed – when Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. The action that brought sin and evil into the world.

- Palliative care** care that focuses on relieving pain and suffering.
- Parable** a short, often simple story which contains a deeper meaning.
- Parole officer** a person who supports a prisoner on their release from prison and their return to the community.
- Patriarchal** a family or society controlled by men.
- Persecution** persistently cruel treatment, often due to religion or belief.
- Personal conviction** when someone strongly believes in someone or something.
- Pluralism** the existence of different groups and beliefs within society.
- Pluralist** a society where a number of religions and beliefs are followed alongside each other.
- Polytheism** belief in many gods.
- Predestination** the belief that all events have been willed by God. The idea that God has already chosen who will receive salvation and enter heaven.
- Prejudice** pre-judging; judging people to be inferior or superior without cause.
- Procreation** reproduction.
- Promiscuity** having a number of casual sexual relationships.
- Prophecy ('risalah' in Arabic)** the term used of the messengers of Allah, beginning with Adam and ending with the Prophet Muhammad.
- Punishment** a penalty given to someone for a crime or wrong they have done.
- Pushke box** money boxes displayed in Jewish homes to encourage charitable giving.
- Qibla** the direction to face during prayer (towards Makkah).
- Quaker** also known as the Society of Friends; a Christian denomination whose central belief is that every human being contains a reflection of the image of God.
- Quality of life** the extent to which life is meaningful and pleasurable.
- Qur'an** means 'reading' or 'recitation'. The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad as a 'living sound' and it must be spoken to reveal its beauty and truth.
- Rasal** a prophet. 'Risalah' means bringing prophecy from God.
- Reconciliation** accepting an apology, forgiving and moving forward together in harmony.
- Reformation** when Henry VIII split with the Catholic Church and established the Church of England. He destroyed many of the monasteries in Britain.
- Reformer** someone who lobbies or pressurises for change.
- Relative poverty** a standard of poverty measured in relation to the standards of a society in which a person lives, e.g. living on less than x% of average UK income.
- Responsibility** humans have a responsibility to care for the planet.
- Restorative justice** a system of justice that enables criminals to make amends for their behaviour by meeting with their victim and apologising.
- Resurrection** the belief that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, conquering death.
- Revelation** a message sent by God and 'revealed' or 'shown' to the human mind.
- Reverence** deep respect and awe.
- Rite** a ritual or series of ritual practices which often have symbolic meaning.
- Roles** position, status or function of a person in society, as well as the characteristics and social behaviour expected of them.
- Sacraments** an outward sign of an invisible and inward blessing by God: for example, Baptism, or the Eucharist.
- Sadaqah** the generous giving or charity driven by compassion for others.
- Salah** bowing or worship. There are over 700 verses in the Qur'an that refer to it.
- Sanctity of life** the belief that life is precious, or sacred. For many religious believers, only human life holds this special status.
- Sanhedrin** a council or assembly of men appointed in every city in the Land of Israel.
- Secular** a society that is not subject to or bound by religious rule.
- Shabbat** day of spiritual renewal and rest. Beginning at sunset on Friday and closing at nightfall on Saturday.
- Shari'ah (straight life)** A way of life; Muslims believe Allah has set out a clear path for how Muslims should live. Shari'ah law is the set of moral and religious rules that put the principles set out by the Qur'an and the Hadith into practice.
- Shari'ah law** Muslim law based upon the Qur'an.
- Shaytan** Satan or the devil.
- Shekinah** the place where God's presence rests and can be felt.
- Shema** a prayer declaring a belief in one God. It is found in the Torah.
- Shi'a** 'from the House of Ali'. (Ali was a close relative to Muhammad.)
- Shirk** associating other beings or things with God.
- Sin** deliberate immoral action; breaking a religious or moral law.
- Situation ethics** judging the rightness or wrongness of an act on a case-by-case basis.
- Social justice** promoting a fair society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity. Ensuring that everyone has equal access to provisions, equal opportunities and rights.
- Soul** the spiritual aspect of a being; that which connects someone to God. The soul is often regarded as non-physical and as living on after physical death, in an afterlife.
- Speaking in tongues** most often found in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches where the belief is that someone is filled with the Holy Spirit during worship and is able to talk in an unknown language.
- Submission to the will of God** Islam means 'submission'; following the Five Pillars and the rules of Shari'ah law are a sign of being a true Muslim.
- Suffering** pain or distress caused by injury, illness or loss. Suffering can be physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual.
- Sunnah** the record of Muhammad's way of life.
- Sunni** 'one who follows the Sunnah'. (The Sunnah is the book which describes the way the Prophet Muhammad lived.)
- Synagogue** house of assembly; building for Jewish public prayer, study and assembly.
- Tallit** four-cornered garment with fringes.
- Talmud** commentary on the Mishnah, which includes teachings and stories. The term usually refers to the Babylonian Talmud, although there is also a Jerusalem Talmud which is older.
- Taqwa** having an awareness of God in every aspect of life.
- Tawhid** 'oneness' in reference to God; the basic Muslim belief in the oneness of Allah.

**Tenakh** the Jewish Bible. The word ‘Tenakh’ is made up of the first Hebrew letters of the Torah (five books of Moses), Neviim (books of the Prophets) and Ketuvim (holy writings).

**Tikkun olam** means ‘repair the world’. Jewish people believe it is important to work to make the world a better place for everyone.

**Torah** the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Regarded as the holiest books of the Tenakh.

**Trinity** the three persons of God – God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Ummah** means ‘community’ and refers to the worldwide community of Muslims who share a common religious identity.

**Utilitarianism** the belief that a good act is one that brings the greatest good for the greatest number. Also known as the principle of the greatest happiness.

**Zakah** One of the pillars of Islam – the compulsory payment of money or possessions to help the poor and needy. It is considered an act of worship (ibadah). Each year a Muslim will give about 2.5 per cent of savings to support the needs of others. Each mosque will have a collecting box and a committee to decide how the money should be spent. Through this system the whole ummah is made more equal.

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