



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Level

In Religious Studies (9RS0)

Paper 4E Judaism

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Introduction

The overall understanding of this paper has shown consistent progress each year, and most centres have enhanced the preparation of their candidates to meet the requirements of this specification. Candidates who performed well demonstrated engagement with the concepts and were able to develop their responses effectively. Some candidates, while displaying knowledge, did not fully express this to demonstrate understanding. The majority of candidates attempted all questions.

There were examples of good practice in creating high quality work in the introductions and conclusions. Some developed effective skills in working on evaluative skills for AO2, often seen in Q4 but also in Q3(b).

Some candidates showed evidence of wider reading within the topics, with some particularly well written responses to the 20 and 30 mark questions.

Candidates who stuck rigidly to writing frames found it more difficult to answer the questions clearly.

Q01 Explore the status of one covenant in Judaism. (8)

Most candidates answered well, focusing on the Covenant with Moses. Many began by defining "covenant" as a contract or binding agreement, then discussed Moses' historical role and the Exodus leading to ethical monotheism. Those who addressed its relevance for modern Jews—including Reform Judaism, the authority of the Torah, Shabbat, and the Promised Land—achieved higher-level responses.

Q02 Assess distinctive religious observances within Reform Judaism. (12)

Most candidates answered this question well, earning full AO1 marks, though some focused too much on the history of the Reform movement instead of its distinctive religious practices. AO2 responses often included strong analysis and detailed context, such as references to the Columbus Platform and developments in Reform Judaism in the Twenty First Century. There were some very good responses about gender, and how issues in modern society are dealt with within Judaism as a whole, and then specifically Reform Judaism.

Q03a Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about the central teaching of the Torah. (10)

The majority of candidates answered 3a well, clearly understanding the requirements of clarification rather than just identification. There were a significant number of candidates who were awarded all 10 marks.

Many candidates concentrated on the doctrine that human beings are created in the image of God and that this is a central teaching of the Torah, and how this has significant moral implications for Jews. It is the basis for doing God's will and becomes practical in the doctrine of '*imitatio dei*'. Some candidates went on to write about various interpretations of this doctrine within Rabbinical schools. Others linked the central teaching within Judaism of righteous living, and how this is linked to imitating God.

Q03b Analyse the significance of the Torah's Ten Commandments for Jewish practices and values. (20)

There were many excellent and, indeed, outstanding answers to this question. Candidates responded in several different ways; some wrote about individual commandments and looked in depth at their significance for Jewish practices and values in the past and compared them with modern times. Other candidates compared the Ten Commandments to the Noahide laws and discussed the debate about where Jewish obligation lies within the obligations of humanity as a whole. Some picked out the commandments about practices, such as Shabbat, and looked at the significance of Shabbat within different Jewish religious movements.

Weaker candidates went through the commandments one by one and wrote about how each is significant today.

Q04 Evaluate Jewish responses to the challenge of secularisation. (30)

There were many good and clear responses to this question, and they were interesting to read. The highest marks were achieved by candidates who wrote about Jewish integration into the wider society since the Haskalah in the 18th and 19th centuries, how religion is perceived to be being replaced by science, how society in the western world is moving away from organised religion, many wrote about Jewish responses to the Holocaust. Candidates created links with their philosophy studies by looking at the rise of atheism and antitheism. There were some great discussions about what Jewish identity is, and candidates brought in knowledge from other areas of their studies.

Weaker candidates wrote extensively about Jewish enlightenment, about the life and works of Moses Mendelssohn, and did not link this to secularisation but to the birth of Reform Judaism.