



# **Examiners' Report**

## **June 2024**

**GCSE Religious Studies A 1RA0 2F**

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## Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies

Religious Studies A – Faith and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Paper 2: Area of Study – Judaism

This paper contributes to 25% of the overall award. The paper includes two questions, each covers a section of the specification, candidates are expected to answer both questions, there is no element of choice on the paper. The details of the assessment content is provided in the specification. Centres are expected to use the Edexcel specification rather than other published resources when planning and teaching the course content. The questions set to assess candidates are based on the specification only.

This paper allows an in-depth study of Judaism as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world, including its beliefs and teachings. It is reassuring to see the understanding of Judaism and Jewish practices increasing each year as candidates write confidently using specialist terms such as Tenakh, Pikuach Nefesh and Shekinah.

This paper assesses both AO1 and AO2. AO1 focuses on (a) (b) and (c) items and then AO2 focuses on the (d) items.

The candidates are being assessed on AO1: Demonstrate understanding of religion and belief and AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.

AO1 constitutes 50% of the overall mark for the paper. AO2 is also 50% of the overall mark for the paper.

The standard of candidate responses was similar to last year. Candidates' knowledge and understanding of the specification content was generally demonstrated well and candidates were beginning to evaluate and appraise arguments on the (d) questions with skill. Where candidates were not as successful, it was when answering questions on the Tenakh because some responses were confused about what the Tenakh contains or candidates generally confused Judaism with Christianity.

Candidates must be prepared for the whole breadth and depth of the specification in order to achieve higher grades. It is best to check that materials used in school cover the specification.

GENERIC INFORMATION:

(a) items are point marked – 'Outline' requires three outlined points. Candidates are advised to write in three clear sentences so that there is no confusion about the outlines.

(c) questions require two developed reasons and a reference to a source of wisdom.

Sources of wisdom and authority:

The source must support the reason/teaching/belief/way given.

Sources are checked using a search engine – type it in follow by the word Torah or Tenakh (or according to who the answer attributes it to)

If the source is attributed to the wrong person/source/ numerical reference it cannot be credited e.g. a quote in the Talmud attributed to the Torah cannot be credited.

Numerical references on their own are not credited: the candidate must use it correctly eg not just write Genesis 1:27. The source of wisdom can be given as a recognisable paraphrase.

For the fifth mark, one of the reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must add to the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development it does not gain a second mark for being the source.

(c) items require two developed reasons and a reference to a source of wisdom.

Crossing-out

If the crossed-out answer was correct and the replacement is incorrect, marks are not awarded. The candidate has chosen to give the wrong answer.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) is assessed in Q01(d)

## Question 1 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.8 Jewish beliefs about life after death: divergent **Jewish understandings of the nature** and significance **of life after death**, including reference to different forms of Orthodox and Reform Judaism; Jewish teachings about life after death, including interpretations of Ecclesiastes 12; the nature of resurrection and judgement; why belief in life after death may be important for Jews today. *(bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question was 'Outline three beliefs about the afterlife in Judaism'

This question was successfully answered by most candidates. The question did not specify divergent beliefs, therefore more general answers were accepted.

Teachers should refer to the specification for possible questions.

The candidate writes three sentences outlining three beliefs about the afterlife in Judaism.

1 (a) Outline **three** beliefs about the afterlife in Judaism.

(3)

one belief is that Jews will go to Gan Eden if they follow the mitzvot  
Another belief is that Jews will go to Gehinnom if they live a sinful life (don't follow the mitzvot)  
A third belief is that Gehinnom is temporary ~~death~~ and used for reflecting on your soul's life



The candidate writes three sentences outlining three beliefs about the afterlife in Judaism and says correctly that:

- 'Jews will go to Gan Eden' (1)
- 'Jews will go to Gehinnom' (1)
- 'Gehinnom is temporary' (1)

Total: 3 marks



Teachers should refer to the specification for possible questions

Candidates should make sure they have three distinct sentences

Examiners award one mark for each point identified and written in a sentence.

Lists gain a maximum of 1 mark and all components must be correct.

Candidates need to provide an outline and therefore should write in full sentences.

1 (a) Outline **three** beliefs about the afterlife in Judaism.

Purgatory

Judgement

Resurrection



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate states three things in the form of a list. As purgatory is not a Jewish belief, the list is not complete and the candidate is awarded no marks.

Total: 0 marks

## Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.1: The nature of the Almighty: **how the characteristics of the Almighty are shown in the Torah**, and why they are important in Jewish life today, including One, Creator, **Law Giver** and Judge, including reference to Genesis 2. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was:

Explain **two** ways the Almighty is shown as the Law-Giver in the Torah.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two points are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom a quotes or examples. The development must be of the point given and to the question asked.

This question was answered successfully by most candidates. The question did not specify the mitzvot, therefore more general answers were accepted.

(b) Explain **two** ways the Almighty is shown as the Law-Giver in the Torah.

(4)

Firstly, a way the Almighty is shown as law-giver in the Torah, is when God gave the 613 mitzvot to Moses. This is significant as these are the rules that should be followed by all Jews and what they should live their everyday lives based on.

Secondly, a way the Almighty is shown as the Law-Giver in the Torah is when God made the covenant with Abraham. God told Abraham to circumcise his son in order to receive a promised land, descendants etc, which is a very significant event.



The candidate is given marks for two developed reasons.

- The first thing explained is 'God gives the 613 mitzvot to Moses' (1)
- developed by 'these are the rules Jews should follow' (1)
- The second thing explained is 'God makes a covenant with Abraham' (1)
- developed by 'God told Abraham to circumcise his son in order to receive the promised land' (1)

Total: 4 marks

Responses that included examples of the laws given by the Almighty were also credited, for example the kashrut laws and direct instructions from the Almighty as seen in this example.

Few candidates gave examples of laws that were not Torah but were in the Tenakh and these were not credited.

(b) Explain **two** ways the Almighty is shown as the Law-Giver in the Torah.

(4)

One way is at the covenant at ~~at~~ Sinai when Moses ~~is~~ is given the first 10 mitzvot by the Almighty.

Another way is in the book of Genesis when the Almighty creates Adam and Eve and tells them that they are not allowed to eat from the tree of knowledge.



The candidate gives one developed way:

- it occurs at 'the covenant at Sinai' (1)
- developed by 'Moses is given the first 10 mitzvot' (1)

The candidate then gives one simple way:

- God 'tells them not to eat from the tree of knowledge' (1)

Total: 3 marks

## Question 1 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.6 – Sanctity of life: **why human life is holy for Jewish people; how life is shown as special**. The nature and importance of Pikuach Nefesh (primacy of life): life takes precedence over everything, with reference to Talmud Yoma 83-84; divergent understandings of how and why the principle of Pikuach Nefesh is applied by Jews today. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was: Explain two reasons why life is seen as holy in Judaism.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain **two**' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons were required, and both needed to be developed for 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom a quotes or examples. The development must relate to the reason given and to the question asked.

GENERIC INFORMATION – Sources of wisdom and authority

The source must support the reason/teaching/belief/way given

Sources are checked using a search engine – type it in follow by the word Torah or Tenakh (or according to who the answer attributes it to)

If the source is attributed to the wrong person/source/ numerical reference it cannot be credited e.g. a quote in the Talmud attributed to the Torah cannot be credited.

Numerical references on their own are not credited the candidate must use it correctly e.g. not just write Genesis 1:27. The source of wisdom can be given as a recognisable paraphrase.

For the fifth mark, one of the reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must add to the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development it does not gain a second mark for being the source.

(c) items require two developed reasons and a reference to a source of wisdom.

This question was answered well by many candidates. Where candidates were not successful they had described information explaining the different ways Jews live a holy life.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom

The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.

If readers are unsure they might use a search engine for clarification. Enter the gist of the paraphrase and 'Torah' or 'Jewish teaching'.

If the candidate states that it is in Genesis 1:27 and then states another verse from Genesis – then this can be awarded. We are not holding candidate to 'verses' but it must be the correct book.

If the candidate gives the paraphrase and then puts (Genesis 1:27) in brackets the paraphrase can have the mark and the bracketed reference is ignored

If a candidate quotes Abraham and it was Moses or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

(c) Explain **two** reasons why life is seen as holy in Judaism.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)

One reason life is holy is because it is a creation of God. Therefore, it is perfect and only he decides what happens to a person. In Deuteronomy, God said "Only I can put to death and bring to life."

Another reason is because humans are created in the image and likeness of God. In Genesis 1, it says God made humans in "his image and likeness" so they are special and unique ~~the~~ in <sup>his</sup> creation. That is why they have free-will, self-knowledge and consciousness.



The candidate is awarded marks for two developed reasons, and a reference to a source of wisdom, which supports the reason given.

The first reason:

- life is holy is 'it is a creation of God' (1)
- developed by 'it is perfect and God decides what happens to a person' (1)
- The reference to Deuteronomy supports this reason further (1)

The second reason:

- 'humans are created in the image and likeness of God' (1)
- developed by 'they are special and unique' (1)

The source of wisdom used here, 'God made humans in his image and likeness', is a repeat of the reason and so whilst it is not needed, it is not credited.

Total: 5 marks

## Question 1 (d)

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items.

The candidates are being assessed on AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.

AO2 constitutes 50% of the overall mark for the paper.

The question is '**Evaluate**' this statement **considering the arguments for and against** and reach a **justified conclusion** – there must some consideration of the validity of the arguments used / appraisal to gain the higher grades. Many candidates produced excellent answers giving reasons for and against but failed to evaluate the credibility of the argument. Evidence suggests the use of formulas and writing frames restrict the flow of the arguments and therefore the candidate's progression to the higher levels.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.4 – **The covenant with Abraham and his descendants: the nature and history of the Abrahamic covenant; the role of Abraham in the covenant, including Genesis 17; why the Promised Land covenanted to Abraham and his descendants is important for Jews today.** (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked:

'The Covenant with Abraham is the most important covenant for Jews.'

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

This question was well answered by many candidates. Some candidates confused the features of the Covenant with Abraham and the Covenant at Sinai and this prevented them from achieving beyond Level 2. Candidates who were able to evaluate the statement by comparing the importance of the Covenant with Abraham and the Covenant at Sinai, answered the question successfully.

Candidates should take all opportunities, throughout their answer, to assess and analyse the validity of the evidence supporting the statement.

\*(d) "The Covenant with Abraham is the most important covenant for Jews."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

(15)

On one hand, some Jews will agree as Abraham is highly regarded to as the "father" of the Jewish religion, and also Christianity and Islam. Hence, Abraham's covenant will have been pivotal to the ~~existence~~ existence of Judaism today, as all Jews are descendants of Abraham as God told him to "look up in the sky and count the stars" which reflects the number of his descendants. However, others may contradict the statement and argue that the Mosaic covenant is more important. At Mount Sinai, Moses received the Ten Commandments, which is arguably the foundation of Jewish identity today as many Jews would still refer to such. Hence, this argument is most robust as modern law is currently still based around basic principles of the Decalogue such as "thou shall not kill" and "thou shall not steal", which are both punishable offenses in the modern court. Also, all Jewish souls were present at the giving of the Torah, hence emphasizing the importance that every Jew should abide to this covenant.

Some Jews may continue to agree as Abraham's covenant is still viewed down as a symbol on male babies. On the 8<sup>th</sup> day of a boy's life, they are circumcised

by a Mohel, through the process of Brit Milah, which is a universal symbol for the covenant with Abraham. In Jewish scripture, it says that "by which our sons enter the covenant with Abraham our father," which reinforces how Brit Milah allows the child to enter ~~to~~ the covenant with Abraham. However, some may say that this argument is flawed as the Mosaic covenant grants Jews with eternal blessing from God. As the conditional covenant states, if we are to abide to the Decalogue, God would grant them eternal blessing, which is ultimately what makes Jews the "chosen people". In the contrary, this argument is weak as the Abrahamic covenant promised a land "flowing with milk and honey" and courtesy of ~~Abraham~~ Abraham's resilience, we were granted such land as part of his descendants. Also, the Abrahamic covenant ensured that Jews today are upheld as they are today, as without it, their identity may be distorted.

To conclude, I believe that the Abrahamic covenant is the most ~~upheld~~ important covenant for Jews as ultimately, without it, the Mosaic covenant wouldn't seem to exist as Abraham was a major factor towards the initiation of Judaism. Thanks to his determination of going as far as sacrificing his only son, Jews are all united as descendants of Abraham and thus God.



This response shows a sustained and coherent analysis of the statement. The candidate analyses the benefits of both the Covenant with Abraham and the Covenant at Sinai to discuss different points of view and their relevance to Jews today.

This leads to reasoned judgements throughout and a justified conclusion.

SPaG was awarded 3 marks, in this example, because:

- The candidate spells and punctuates with consistent accuracy.
- The candidate uses rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall.
- The candidate uses a wide range of specialist terms appropriately.

Level 4

Question: 12 marks

SPaG: 3 marks

Total: 15 marks

## Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: [Practices](#)

Bullet point 2.1: The nature and purpose of Jewish public acts of worship: the nature, features and purpose of Jewish public worship, including interpretations of Psalm 116:12 – 19; **the nature, features and importance of synagogue services for the Jewish community and the individual.** (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was

Outline **three** reasons why synagogue services are important.

Some candidates did not address the question about why services are important and instead focused on the features of the synagogue as a building. These responses could not be awarded any marks.

Encourage candidates to write three full sentences, preferably on three separate lines.

2 (a) Outline **three** reasons why synagogue services are important.

(3)

To perform public worship as a community in faith.

To dedicate yourself fully to Almighty at a certain space and time for festivals or Shabbat, building that relationship.

To pray the Amidah for a minyan is needed to pray this prayer and is one of the most important.



In this example the candidate outlines three correct reasons and is awarded all marks.

Total: 3 marks

## Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.7: Jewish festivals: the nature, history, purpose and significance of Jewish festivals; the origins and **meaning of specific festivals**, including Rosh Hashanah, **Yom Kippur**, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot, including interpretations of Leviticus 23 (Rosh Hashanah); divergent understandings of why festivals are important to different forms of Orthodox and Reform Judaism today. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was:

Explain **two** reasons why Yom Kippur is an important day for Jews.

Candidates who answered the question by describing why Yom Kippur is important, developed with key actions of Yom Kippur, were awarded appropriately. Where candidates were not successful, they described features about Yom Kippur and could not be credited.

Two developed reasons are needed to gain full marks. This candidate gives two developed reasons.

Ensure candidates know the reasons why Jews celebrate festivals. A small number of candidates answered that Yom Kippur is important because Jews fast for 25 hours. However, this is a practice that Jews maintain because Yom Kippur is important, not the reason why.

(b) Explain **two** reasons why Yom Kippur is an important day for Jews.

(4)

One reason why Yom Kippur is important for Jews is because it is the holiest day of the entire Jewish calendar. This is because you confess with God and build your relationship with him.

Another reason why Yom Kippur is important is because Jews see it as a 'day of awe' which is a part of the year to look back on your past life decisions to reconcile with God.



The candidate describes Yom Kippur correctly as important because:

- 'it is the holiest day' (1)
- developed by 'you confess and build your relationship with him' (1)
- 'it is a day of awe' (1)
- developed by 'you look back and reconcile with God' (1)

Total: 4 marks

## Question 2 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.5: The importance of ritual for Jews today: the nature, **features** and purpose of birth rituals (including Brit Milah), Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, and **marriage rituals**, including interpretations of Genesis 21:1 – 8 and Leviticus 12; the nature, purpose and importance of the mourning rituals of funeral, shiva, avelut and yahrzeit for Jews today; divergent understandings of the importance of each ritual for different forms of Orthodox and Reform Judaism today. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was:

Explain **two** features of a marriage ceremony in Judaism.

Candidates answered this question successfully. Many candidates could reference a source of wisdom. Some candidates did not achieve high marks because they included secular features of marriage ceremonies or features that occur prior to, or post, the marriage ceremony.

The question asked for features therefore the marks were given for each feature given. If there was only one feature described then only 2 marks could be awarded, plus one for the source of wisdom, if given.

(c) Explain **two** features of a marriage ceremony in Judaism.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)

One feature is that a rabbi recites the ketubah, which contains 7 blessings important to a happy marriage and family, including ~~having~~ blessings for having children. This is done in fulfillment of the nizvah in Genesis to "be fruitful and multiply", as the rabbi reminds the couple to do so in the ketub-h.

Another feature is that the couple smash glass. This is symbolic of the destruction of the Temple, and is done in remembrance of the event, in order to express respect for the event, honouring the history of Judaism.



The candidate provides two developed features with reference to a source of wisdom.

The first feature of the marriage ceremony is:

- 'reciting the ketubah' (1)
- developed by 'blessings for a happy marriage and children' (1)
- with reference to Genesis 'be fruitful and multiply' (1)

The second feature is:

- 'smash a glass' (1)
- developed by 'symbolic of the destruction of the Temple' (1)

Total: 5 marks

## Question 2 (d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.2: The Tenakh and the Talmud: **the nature, features, purpose and significance of the Tenakh (the written law) and Talmud (the oral law) for Jews in daily life today**, with reference to Perkei Avot 2; the nature and purpose of Jewish laws: food laws, kashrut, including kosher, and treifah and the separation of dairy and meat, including reference to Deuteronomy 14:3 – 10; the divergent implications of the Jewish food laws for Jews today. *(bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was:

'The Tenakh contains all the teachings a Jew needs to live a good life.'

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

This question was a challenge to some candidates who were confused about the components of the Tenakh. Therefore, the opposing arguments were often inaccurate because they included the Torah or the mitzvot, which are part of the Tenakh. Where Candidates understood the features and importance of the Tenakh, compared with the relevance of the Talmud, they were awarded appropriately.

There are no marks for SPAG on this question.

(d) "The Tenakh contains all the teachings a Jew needs to live a good life."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Jewish teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

(12)

One reason why a Jew may agree with this statement whereby it complies to the ideology the Tenakh contains all a Jew needs to carry out a good life is due to the fact it contains Torah. This is significant as in orthodox belief the Torah is depicted to be the literal word of God. Therefore through the Tenakh holding the literal instructions from God in the form of the torah Torah it makes it one of the only needs for Jews. This is due to the fact amongst the Torah contains explicit laws among Jewish life whereby if followed, eternal life with God can be found in the afterlife. Conversely another Jew may argue that in order to lead a good life one needs to have access to the Talmud. They may ~~argue~~ <sup>argue</sup> ~~this~~ <sup>this</sup> due to the fact that the Talmud is the oral Torah also given <sup>inspired</sup> directly by God at Sinai. This is significant as through oral Torah Jews ~~are able~~ are able to adequately explore the teachings of God and sufficiently adapt the 613 mitzvot regarding their relevance in the current period of modernity, making them crucial to live a good life today. Out of these differing arguments, I personally ~~believe~~ believe that my second argument regarding the talmud holds jurisdiction as this allows for a Jew to adapt the direct teachings of

God and implement them among modern during life, allowing Jews to fulfill ~~God~~ God's original teachings more precisely. ~~AA~~

Another reason why a Jew may agree with this statement is due to the fact the Tenakh also contains writings of the prophets. This is significant as through learning of these substantial events among Jewish history it can allow followers of the religion to adequately explain the display of good Jewish lives and potentially lead to them leading a better life for ~~themselves~~ themselves in compliance to God. However divergently another person of Jewish faith may disagree and instead state that the Talmud again is needed to live a sufficient Jewish life. This could once again be argued as the Talmud contains discourses of several rabbis among the large span of Jewish history. Therefore through the Talmud Jews can come to personal awareness of faith and explain opposing ideal theologies presented by other ~~rabbis~~ rabbis. ~~Out of these arguments~~ Out of these arguments I personally believe my first argument is more significant as the stories of prophets can alleviate the understanding of Jewish teachings and ~~express~~ help express further faith.

In conclusion I personally disagree with this statement as I believe the Talmud is necessary to live a good life through its adaptations to fit modern perceptions.



The candidate meets all the level descriptors in Level 2 fully.

The candidate uses the religious information to provide chains of reasoning, which is Level 3

They attempt to make a reasoned judgement although this is superficial.

Using the best-fit approach, the answer touches both bullet points on Level 3 and therefore reaches the lower end of the level.

The candidate gains Level 4 because the response shows a sustained and coherent analysis of the statement that the Tenakh contains all the teachings a Jew needs to live a good life. The candidate analyses the significance of the Tenakh in comparison to the Talmud, using logical chains of reasoning underpinned by thorough understanding of religion and belief. This leads to reasoned judgements throughout and a justified conclusion.

Level 4

Total: 12 marks

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Answer (a) items in outlines, i.e., full sentences
- Provide three sentences for (a) items, each on a separate line
- (b) items should have only two developed reasons
- (c) items are like (b) items but should also use a source as a fifth mark
- (d) items should appraise the reasons given for and against the statement

## **Grade boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

