GCSE Religious Studies
Judaism Workbook

Name:
The Nature of G-d: Creation

On the first day, God said, "Let there be light"

Then, God divided the light from the darkness. He called the light Day, and the darkness Night.

God made the space and separated the water under it from the water above it.

God named the space above "sky", the dry ground "land," and the water "seas".

God created the land grow plants and trees that produce seed, according to their different kinds.

God created 2 special lights - the sun and moon, He also created the stars to shine on the earth.

God created different types of birds to fly across the sky and fish to fill the sea.

God created animals and all living creatures, then he created man in his own image. He saw everything he had made and was satisfied.
G-d is:

1. **One**: There is only one G-d in Judaism. This is stated in the schema: “The Lord is one”.
   a. “Hear O Israel, the Lord is out G-d, the Lord is One.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)
   b. G-d is indivisible and complete
   c. G-d is pre-existent and eternal

2. **Creator**: In Genesis 1 it says that G-d created the world in seven stages. (“And G-d said, “Let there be light,” and there was light”). Genesis also tells us about the creation of humanity, (“So G-d created mankind in his own image”) and how G-d gave humans dominion (control) over the earth. (“They may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky”).
   a. G-d made the world ex-nihilo (from nothing)
   b. G-d reveals himself through his works of creation
   c. The world exists because G-d willed it to exists
   d. The world continues to exist because of G-d’s will

3. **Law-Giver** and **Judge**: In Exodus 20, G-d gives the Jewish people the 10 Commandments, starting with, “You shall have no other G-ds before me.” In Exodus 34, G-d is said to be, “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love”, but G-d is also a vengeful warrior.
   a. Living in a certain way is serving G-d
   b. The first rule was given to Adam and Eve – to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
   c. The laws that G-d gives are an ethical code of practice. If everyone followed them it would make the world an ideal place
   d. G-d gave laws to Noah:
      i. Idolatry is forbidden
      ii. Blasphemy is forbidden
      iii. No murder
      iv. No theft
v. No sexual misconduct
vi. No cruelty to animals
vii. Justice for all

e. G-d gave three sets of rules (called Covenants) to Noah, Abraham and Moses. There are 614 mitzvot (duties/commandments) in total, covering all aspects of life

f. The Tenakh is the written law of Judaism. G-d punishes those who fail to follow his laws, e.g. Adam and Eve. G-d continues to judge each individual.

4. Present: G-d is omnipresent (everywhere). This divine presence is called the Shechinah. When Moses received the covenant, he was "not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord" (Exodus 34). The Shechinah is also used to describe G-d’s more feminine attributes and characteristics.

Tasks:

1. Explain the idea that G-d is creator.

2. Explain the idea that G-d is a law-giver.

3. Explain the idea that G-d is a judge.

4. Explain the idea that G-d is present.
DIVINE PRESENCE (SKECHINAH)

G-d is involved in the world. Humans cannot see G-d but people have said that they feel the presence of G-d. Maimonides described this as a light created to act as a connection between G-d and the world. This idea developed into a physical presence, like being surrounded by clouds or fire. ‘Shechinah’ is not a word found in the Tenakh, but the scriptures do refer to the ‘Glory of G-d’ surrounding people of ‘dwelling’ in certain places.

Ezekiel 43:2 “The earth shone with His glory.” Many Jews believe the world’s design reveals the presence of G-d in the world.

Exodus 13:20 “The Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day to guide them and in a pillar of fire by night.”

Exodus 40: 33-34 describes when Moses finished building the the Tabernacle, the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and G-d’s presence filled it.

TASKS:

1. Describe the Genesis creation story

2. Explain why Jews believe ‘G-d is One’.

3. Explain how belief that G-d created the world might influence Jews on how they live their lives.
4. “Jews should spend all their time trying to understand G-d”. What is your opinion of this statement? Try to give arguments for and against it.

5. How important are the rules or mitzvot today?

6. Are any of the mitzvot more important than others, in your opinion?

7. Describe the Shechinah.

8. Describe how the Jews believe that the presence of G-d was shown in the world.

9. Why do you think of things like fire, cloud and bright lights are often used to describe G-d’s presence?

Exam Questions

1. What is meant by Shechinah? (1 mark)
2. Give two beliefs about G-d (2 marks)

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3. Explain two ways in which believing in the Shechinah might influence Jews today. (4 marks)

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4. Explain two Jewish teachings about the nature of G-d. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

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5. “The mitzvot are no longer important.” (12 marks)

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
- refer to a Jewish teaching
- give developed arguments to support this statement
- give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion
Relationship With G-d and the Covenants

The Chosen People:

a. “For you are a holy people to the Lord your G-d. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be His treasured possession.” (Deuteronomy 14:2)

b. Being ‘chosen’ is a responsibility to serve G-d through observance of the mitzvot.

c. The status of being chosen will never change

“I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be G-d to you and your descendants after you.” (Genesis 17:7)

Covenants

1. An agreement between G-d and humankind. They are a permanent link between past, present and future and can never be dissolved

2. There are three covenants. Each consists of a promise made by G-d to his people, a promise made by humankind to G-d and a physical sign to seal each deal.

3. Abraham’s Covenant: G-d promises to look after the descendants of Abraham, give them the Promised Land and to help them. Humans would only worship one G-d and would circumcise all Jewish males.

4. Moses’ Covenant: G-d promises to free the Jews from slavery, make them a nation of holy priests and make them His chosen people. Humankind would obey the rules of G-d and the sign was/is the Sabbath Day and keeping it special.

Covenant With Abraham

- Abraham was called Abram until G-d gave him the name ‘Abraham’, meaning ‘father of many’
- He worshipped one G-d (unlike the people of the time who worshipped many G-ds)
- Before the Torah was written the Covenant was important because it was their connection with G-d
Abraham’s faith was tested ten times. The tenth time was his greatest test: G-d commanded him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Abraham was saved from the sacrifice at the last moment and G-d knew Isaac had faith strong enough to continue his father’s work.

Abraham’s Connection With Jews Today

1. Abraham is the Father of the Jewish nation (the founding father)
2. The covenant he made binds the Jewish people to G-d
3. The circumcision of all males unites the children of Israel
4. This is the beginning of the idea of the Promised Land. A nation needs a homeland: Jews believe their homeland is G-d-given land. This is why Jews are encouraged to return and settle with their families in Israel and it has even been suggested that it is the only place they will be safe.

The Covenant With Moses

- Moses was an Israelite, raised by an Egyptian princess
- Moses killed a guard for attacking a slave and fled Egypt
- G-d spoke to Moses, telling him to demand that the Pharoah let the Israelites go free
- After ten plagues, the Israelites were freed and Moses led them into the wilderness
- Moses was given the Ten Commandments and the Torah by G-d, and though he himself was not allowed to go to the Promised Lane, when he died he was within sight of it
- Moses received the 613 mitzvot on Mount Sinai, along with an explanation of the laws and how they were to be interpreted
- Moses spent the rest of his life writing the Torah
- G-d dictated the Torah to Moses

As part of the covenant, the people promised to follow the mitzvot and in return they would be the chosen people of G-d, receiving G-d’s blessings. The sixth Commandment “to keep the Sabbath Day holy” was the physical sign of this covenant.

Moses also led the people to the Promised Land so completing the promise G-d made to Abraham in the earlier Covenant.

It was with G-d’s help that all this happened, as promised by G-d.
Tasks:

1. What led to the covenant with Abraham?

2. How difficult were the things that G-d asked Abraham to do?

3. Explain why Abraham is important to Jews today.

4. What was the covenant between G-d and Moses?

5. How might Moses’ covenant affect the lives of Jewish people today?

6. “Abraham is a role model for all.” Explore this statement, giving explained arguments to agree and disagree, including Jewish arguments.

7. “Abraham’s covenant was more important than the one given to Moses.” Do you agree with this statement? Explain your reasons.
8. Why do you think Moses saw the Promised Land, but never entered it?

9. How is ‘to keep the Sabbath Day holy’ a ‘physical’ sign?

10. Why do you think Jews are referring to when they mention the ‘great Law-Giver’? Why do you think this is?

Exam Questions

1. What is meant by Covenant? (1 mark)

2. Give two beliefs about G-d’s relationship with the Jews. (2 marks)

3. Explain two ways in which believing in the Covenants might influence Jews today. (4 marks)
4. Explain two Jewish teachings about the relationship between G-d and his people. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

5. “The Covenant with Moses is the most important Covenant.” (12 marks)
   Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
   - refer to a Jewish teaching
   - give developed arguments to support this statement
   - give developed arguments to support a different point of view
   - reach a justified conclusion
Obedience to the Ten Commandments – the 613 Mitzvot

The mitzvot are the rules of G-d. They are found in the Torah (the first part of the Tenakh). They govern every aspect of daily life for a Jewish person. They cover rituals to do with worship and ethical laws to do with morality. As part of the covenants, Jews agree to follow these laws.

The mitzvot were given to Moses, who taught them to the Israelites in the desert. To keep these laws is to keep the covenants. Some of the laws are judgements, and the reason for keeping them is obvious, e.g. “thou shalt not kill.” These are known as mishpatim. Other laws are statutes, they are there as a test of faith because it could be argued that there is no real reason for them other than because G-d told them they had to be followed. For example, Jews must not wear a garment made of wool and linen fabrics together. Only G-d himself knows the reasons for these. The laws bind the Jewish nation to G-d and the well-being of the nation is dependent upon the keeping of these laws.

The Promised Land

This is the land promised to the descendants of Abraham by G-d. In the Tenakh it is a theme throughout and the promise is made again to Isaac (Abraham’s son) and Jacob (Abraham’s grandson). These are known as the Patriarchs of Judaism. The idea is that this promise is made to all Jews.

The Promised Land has had many names. In ancient times it was known as Canaan, later as Palestine and today it is Israel. In fact, if the boundaries of the Tenakh describe were mapped out, the Promised Land would include far greater territory than what Israel has today. Moses was shown the Promised Land by G-d from the top of Mount Nebo; he saw it with his own eyes. For Jews this land is the only place where a Jewish Temple could be built. Jews want a time in the future where all Jews return
and the Temple will be rebuilt, which they say will happen in the Messianic Age. Today Israel encourages Jews to return ‘home’.

Tasks:

1. How might Moses’ story influence people thinking today about the Promised Land?
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2. What are the other names for the Promised Land?
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3. Who are the ‘Patriarchs of Judaism’?
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4. Do you think there is a link between the Promised Land and Heaven? Explain your answer.
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5. “The Promised Land is just a dream.” Explore the statement, showing you have thought about more than one point of view.
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The Ten Commandments (Decalogue)

The Ten Commandments (Decalogue) are found in the Torah. They have been called ‘forever’ commandments because they are relevant for all time. They are a condensed version of the 613 mitzvot and are believed to have been written on stone by G-d himself. The Decalogue is crucial to Jewish life today. The chosen people of G-d have the responsibility to serve G-d and live in accordance with His laws. Today, the Ten Commandments are the sources of authority for Jewish life. The 613 mitzvot (which are religious laws and include the Ten Commandments), encompass all aspects of daily life and, if followed, build a better person and a harmonious society. The command to keep the Sabbath Day holy is strictly carried out each week by many Jewish families. It is a day to focus on G-d and family, reminding of their part in the covenant.

The Torah or the Five Books of Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy – are the direct words of G-d in Judaism. It is the first part of three which make up the Tenakh (Jewish scriptures).

The Torah is often a term used for the whole of the Jewish scriptures and the oral law. Its importance is immense and it was Moses who brought it to G-d’s chosen people.

The 613 Mitzvot (the religious laws of Judaism)

The Talmud tells us that there are 613 mitzvot: 365 commands to ‘not do’ and 248 commands ‘to do’. However, it does not list them. Maimonides was a great Jewish philosopher who lived in the 12th Century CE. He listed the 613 mitzvot in his Mishneh Torah, which is considered his greatest work, and one of, is not the greatest Jewish legal text in history. Some laws require the Temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed in 70CE, so it is not now possible to carry these laws out.

Examples of the mitvot:
To learn the Torah and to teach it
To love the stranger
Not to break a vow
Not for a man to wear women's clothing
Not to wrong anyone in speech
Not to curse your father or mother
Not to crave something that belongs to someone else
Not to tattoo the skin
Not to punish anyone who has committed an offence under duress
Those in war shall not fear their enemies
Not to lend with interest
Not to eat milk with meat in the same meal

Tasks:

1. Name the Ten Commandments.

2. Some Jews believe that there is no need for other laws, as the rules stated in the Ten Commandments cover every aspect of life. Do you agree? Explain your answer.
3. Which specific commandment is required to be fulfilled by each Jew each week, as a sign of the Covenant?

4. Name the Five Books of Moses

5. Where can Jewish people find a list of the 613 mitzvot?

6. State a mitzvah you agree with the most and explain why.

7. State a mitzvah you disagree with the most and explain why.

Mitzvot between humans and G-d

The mitzvot are a way of communicating with G-d as they are a way that G-d reaches out to his people. Keeping them is mankind’s way of reaching out to G-d. However some of the mitzvot are not entirely clear, for example, “do not work on the Sabbath.” What exactly counts as work? Jews believe that G-d not only gave Moses the mitzvot, but also the interpretation of these laws (the Halakah). This can be translated as ‘the path that
one walks’. If Jews follow the laws relating to G-d then they will walk in the way that G-d wants them to. The Halakah continues to be added to by leading rabbis so is applicable for Jewish life in an ever-changing world; like an ongoing process that keeps Judaism up to date.

There are six constant mitzvot: to know there is a G-d, to not believe in false G-ds, that G-d is One, to love G-d, to fear G-d and to not be misled by your heart and eyes. Everything Jews do should fulfil these mitzvot. Jews are encouraged to not just believe in G-d but to know G-d, by study (know in mind) and by love (know in heart). G-d is always with them; they can trust Him. He provides and leads humankind in the right way and, although that path might be tough, Jews have to keep on it. There are mitzvot relating to G-d, such as beliefs, prayer, worship, ritual and the temple. However if those related to one’s actions towards a fellow human are done well then they are related to G-d too, as this is what G-d wants. All mitzvot bring Jewish people ‘closer’ to G-d and that is what underpins the whole of Judaism.

**Mitzvot between human and human**

These mitzvot relate to Jewish people’s actions toward their family and neighbours. If they were followed, then the world would be a far better place for humankind. They are ethics: a code of behaviour. The laws are not just laws. For example, from the laws on punishing a criminal, Jews learn to act justly and seek the truth. From the laws on borrowing and lending money they learn to be compassionate. From the laws on agriculture and food they learn what is best for nature and health. Also, if Jews act in a responsible, caring way towards each other, then G-d is pleased and His goodness flows through people and therefore G-d and humankind grow close to each other. Thus, the central aim of serving G-d is fulfilled. Some observers might look at Judaism and say that it is too bound up by following rules. For a Jew, however, the rules have a far deeper and more important meaning. Following the law is seen as walking in the path of G-d, fulfilling their part of the Covenant and bringing G-d’s holiness into the world ready for the time when all humans will know G-d.
Tasks

1. What are the mitzvot? Give some examples.

2. When might it be difficult to follow the mitzvot? Give an example.

3. What is the importance of the mitzvot between man and G-d?

4. What is the importance of the mitzvot between man and man?

5. Why are the mitzvot important for a Jewish person in their daily lives?

The relationships between free will and the 613 mitzvot

If humans do not have free will—the ability to choose—then actions are morally and religiously insignificant. We know this is not true, otherwise stealing and murder wouldn’t be unacceptable. The Jews were given the Torah and commanded to follow its rules, with the promise of reward and revenge. For Judaism to make sense, then, humans must have free will, otherwise there was little point in giving the Jewish people a Torah.

The Torah gives Jews 613 commandments and tells them to do good and not to do evil. Therefore, it is within a human’s power to do either good or evil and they have the free will to choose. The Torah says that, with G-d’s help, we all have the ability to do good.
How do Jews know humans have free will?

G-d said to Moses that in spite of clearly saying that those not following the Commandments would be cursed, G-d was aware that there was no guarantee that mankind would stick to them.

**Deuteronomy 11:26-28** states: “You can therefore see that I am placing before you both a blessing and a curse. The blessing is obeying the Commandments of your G-d, which I am prescribing to you today. The curse is if you do not obey the Commandments of your G-d, and you go astray from the path that I am prescribing for your today.”

**Genesis 3:22** says that man knows good from evil. The Commandments are the mitzvot. Orthodox Jews believe you should follow them as they are written – there is no room for exercising free will other than using it to follow the mitzvot.

The Reform Jewish movement has a set of principles based in the mitzvot. They also believe that if Judaism is going to be progressive and inclusive, certain things need to be accepted/supported, such as the equality of women, the diversity of structures today, mixed race families, homosexual couples and women rabbis, which are not currently in traditional forms of Judaism. The mitzvot are therefore understood differently. There is an element of free will to make decisions about such things for the benefit of society. Laws always have to be interpreted and people will always have different opinions but the decisions should be made for the benefit of humankind.

**Exam Questions**

1. What is meant by mitzvot? (1 mark)

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2. Give two examples of mitzvot. (2 marks)

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3. Explain two ways in which believing in the mitzvot might influence Jews today. (4 marks)

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4. Explain two Jewish teachings about the mitzvot between G-d and man and the mitzvot between man and man. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

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5. “Jewish people have free will.” (12 marks)
   
   Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
   - refer to a Jewish teaching
   - give developed arguments to support this statement
   - give developed arguments to support a different point of view
   - reach a justified conclusion

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23
Healing the World

Tikkun Olam

Tikkun Olam is the Hebrew word meaning to repair or heal the world. Mankind has a responsibility to heal or restore and change the world. This idea is found in many Jewish teachings:

- Keeping Shabbat – the idea of a day of rest has an effect on the other six days. This idea is that it is a day when Jews can renew their efforts to bring about a better world.

- The Mishnah is the first rabbinic writing of the oral law: that is, laws which were passed orally before finally being written down by the rabbis. In it can be found the phrase ‘tikkun olam’, which relates to the idea of doing something, not because holy texts say so, but because it helps create social harmony and a better community.

- Jews believe that the more people who practice tikkun olam, the more the world is repaired and they become nearer to what is known as the Messianic Age (a time in the future when there will be peace and togetherness on earth, with no crime or poverty or war.

- The phrase is found in Jewish prayer. Joshua (the leader of the Israelites after Moses died) wrote the Aleinu prayer, which Jews say three times a day. The prayer praises G-d for allowing them to serve G-d; they hope that the whole world will one day believe in the One G-d. Scholars debate the actual meaning with some saying it tells humans to heal the world, physically helping others and so the goodness of G-d can shine through. Others say it is to separate what is holy from the created world, so is a much more spiritual and contemplative act. The idea is also found in other prayers as well, even if not using the actual phrase ‘tikkun olam’. For example, both Conservative and Reform Jews pray for the harmony of nations, the uniting of people, where there is no hatred, where the sick are healed and the damage done by humans to other humans stops.

- Ethical mitzvot directly provide ‘healing of the world’. To be a Jew is to duly encourage people to work individually and as a collective towards a better world for everyone. Ethical mitzvot are about right thought and actions towards each other and if people can do this, then the world is healed.
Tasks:

1. What is tikkun olam?

2. Explain why Jews believe that healing the world is a key principle of the religion.

3. Give examples of the ways in which Jews might live by this principle.

4. In the modern world, tikkun olam is the most important principle any Jews can follow. Explore arguments for and against this statement. Try to use examples when you explain your arguments.
Jews believe they have a role or duty in creating a world of social harmony and peace. This will make life better for all and move forwards towards a Messianic Age. Individually, Jews can set up their lives as an example and many believe they do this every day. For example, by following the mitzvot, giving personally to charity and working for good causes. On a larger scale, there are many influential Jews in business, finance, politics and the media. These people can spread the idea of repairing the world or have it as an underlying principle of the work they do.

Isiah 42:6 (above) says that Jews will be a light to the nations. Many Jews believe that by carrying out the mitzvot, their communities would be examples for others. Others would aspire to live in the same way. Orthodox Jews believe that following mitzvot can change the world so it is as G-d wants it, which heals it. So even though ‘tikkun olam’ is not a phrase use in the Torah, if a Jew adheres to the mitzvot then the world can still be healed. Reform Jews believe practically healing the world is integral to being a Jew. Both believe that however the healing is achieved, it is something that must be done.

Many Jewish people work in politics and business. For example, Rabbi Lord Sacks was given the Queen’s honours for his work to bring together those of different faiths and his service to the community. From these positions, they are able to use their jobs to ‘heal the world’.

Tzedakah

This means ‘doing righteous acts’ and Jews are obliged to give as much as they can for the welfare of humanity. Many tithe their money (give 10% of their earnings), tzedakah boxes are found in synagogues and it is a Jewish custom to give something every day (except Shabbat).

Tasks:

Mitzvah Day encourages Jews to volunteer their time for community projects; social action to bring about change at a community level. Look up www.tikkunolamisrael.org and see the social action programmes in which Arabs and Jews work for coexistence.
Look up the world of World Jewish Relief (www.worldjewishrelief.org). Write about this organisation, showing how its work contributed to the ‘healing the world’ principle.

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“It has been told to you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you; only to do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with your G-d.” (Micah 6:8)

“Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 34:14)

“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.” (Proverbs 25:21)

The Jewish G-d is a G-d of justice, who will judge people with justice and fairness. Rabbi Sacks explains tzedakah as both justice and charity. The Hebrew word tzedakah bonds together the ideas of charity and justice. Jews believe that G-d has gifted their wealth to them as a loan, and a responsibility of that loan is to use some of it to help those less fortunate or in need. In this way, helping the poorest is an act of charity, which also brings justice. Rabbi Sacks said, ‘tzedakah is one word that has the power to change the world.’ Amos 5:24 says, “Let justice roll like water and righteousness as a permanent torrent.” The idea of working for a just world connects to the last topic on tikkun olam in that it contributes to repairing the world.

If we look at the world today, there are many areas where social justice is required. Civil rights for people of different races, sexualities and disabilities, economic justice (for example, a living wage for all solving the problem of world poverty), religious freedoms, women’s rights, the rights of people to live in a safe world, (for example, a change in American gun laws or prevention of Iran becoming a nuclear armed country), these are all areas which Jews can support.
Tzedek is a Jewish charity whose vision is of the Jewish community involved in the reduction of abject poverty. It works to relieve poverty in developing countries, especially in Africa and India, supporting sustainable development and also on educating the Jewish people about their responsibility to tackle such poverty. In 2015, many people tried to leave poverty behind by literally leaving their own families and countries for better lives in Europe. An influx of millions fleeing from war and poverty put a huge pressure on European countries and their infrastructure and services. However, the simple fact is that if the cause of the movement of people was resolved, then that movement would not happen. Tzedek tries to work with communities both in their homeland and on the move to resolve problems of poverty, sending volunteers to work to improve lives and create social justice.

Tasks

1. What is justice?

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2. Explain, using two examples, how the Jewish belief in justice leads Jews to work for social justice.

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3. Explain how tzedekah leads to the righting of injustice.

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4. Resolving injustice would solve all the world’s problems. What is your opinion of this statement? Explain your reasoning.

Loving Kindness

“The world is built on chesed” (Psalms 89:3)

‘Chesed’ is the Hebrew word for loving kindness. This Jewish virtue also contributes to tikkun olam. It is also central to the Commandments, which focus on people’s relationships with each other. According to the Jews, G-d’s first act of creating the world was a clear act of chesed. G-d also sustains people through difficulties in their lives with His loving kindness. ‘Chesed’ appears in the Torah over 245 times, two-thirds of these detailing G-d’s loving kindness. When Jesus used the famous Christian teaching ‘love your neighbour’, he was simply quoting the Torah (Leviticus 19).

33 "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. 34 The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt." (Leviticus 19: 33-34)

The Pirkei Avot (the teachings of the Jewish fathers) state that the world stands on three things: The Torah, the service of G-d and acts of loving kindness. There are always going to be problems in the world for which we may not have the solutions, however, acts of loving kindness can make any situations better. In the Tenakh, the Prophet Micah actually
says that it is not just the doing of loving acts that is important but it is the loving of doing those acts which makes them chesed. It is also seen as even better than tzedekah because, according to the Talmud, it can be done for rich and poor, the living and the dead and can be done with money and actions. The Laws of the Torah, healing the world and social justice and loving kindness are designed to create a society where no one takes from another or harms another or takes advantage of others’ misfortune. At the same time, everyone gives to each other, helps one another and protects one another. So the focus is on personal service, personal attitudes and efforts from the heart. There are no restrictions to what can be done. This includes all aspects of life, Jew’s relationships with each other, the environment, with animals and with non-Jews as well.

Tasks

1. What is ‘chesed’?

2. Explain, using two examples, how the Jewish belief in chesed affects Jewish life today.

3. What does the world stand on, according to the Pirkei Avot?
The Messiah

The Hebrew term ‘Moshiach’, meaning ‘anointed one’ is used in the Torah, but to refer to kings or high priests rather than the Messiah himself. However, there are many references to the Messiah in the writings of the prophets.

For Jewish people, the Messiah will:

- Be born from human parents, do is definitely not G-d
- He will be descended from King David
- He will restore the throne of David

The scriptures tell of the prophet Elijah announcing the coming of the Messiah, who will ride into Jerusalem on a donkey; graves will open and the dead will rise. In Jewish history, as the kings failed to live up to creating a world of peace and following G-d, the hope grew that one day someone would bring in G-d’s reign of peace.

But the Jewish nation began to despair as they were exiled and Israel was occupied. This allowed the idea of a Messiah to become an even more prominent belief to cling to and look actively for.
Maimonides in the Mishneh Torah has the idea of Messiah as one of thirteen fundamental Jewish beliefs. The belief in the Messiah forms a part of the Amidah prayer said three times daily. This human figure would be sent by G-d to bring in a new era of peace – the Messianic Age. There have been many claims to be the Messiah. Christians (who were former Jews) believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

Some Jewish scholars believe that G-d has set aside a specific date, so it will happen when he decides. Others say that it will not happen until the conduct of society needs it to happen. This could be when humanity deserves it the most because our behaviour is good and our beliefs are strong. Alternatively, it could happen when humans need it the most because it is at its most terrible.

**Statements about the Messiah:**

1. Once he is King, leaders of other nations will look to him for guidance
2. The whole world will worship the One G-d of Israel
3. The spirit of the Lord will be upon him and he will have a fear of G-d
4. Death will be swallowed up forever
5. There will be no more hunger or illness, and death will cease
6. All of the dead will rise again
7. The Jewish people will experience eternal joy and gladness
8. He will be a messenger of peace
9. Nations will recognise the wrongs they did to Israel
10. The peoples of the world will turn to the Jews for spiritual guidance
11. Weapons of war will be destroyed
12. The people of Israel will have direct access to the Torah through their minds and Torah study will become the study of the wisdom of
The Role of the Messiah

Ezekiel tells us that before the time of the Messiah there will be war and suffering.

1. He will bring political and spiritual peace in the land of Israel where Jerusalem will be restored
2. He will establish a government in Israel that will be the centre of all government, both for Jews and non-Jews
3. He will rebuild the Temple and establish worship as it should be
4. He will bring back the religious court system, so that Jewish Law will be the law of the land

What will the Messianic Age be like?

- A bit like what people think the afterlife will be
- People will live together peacefully
- Hatred and intolerance will stop
- Animals will no longer prey on each other
- Crops will be in abundance
- All Jews will return home to Israel and the whole world will recognise the Jewish G-d as the true G-d
- There will be no murder, robbery or any sin at all
- People will have an understanding of religious truths, so religion will not divide us any more

Orthodox Jews believe in the idea of a real-life Messiah, a real person who has the qualities described in the Holy Scriptures and promised by the prophets. They believe that every time Shabbat is celebrated, they get a glimpse of what life could be like – G-d’s laws at the centre of what they do, time to worship G-d and where family and friends are central to life.
Reform Jews believe that the Messiah is a symbolic idea. Symbolic of a time when all people work together to bring the Messianic Age to earth. The world will be the place of social justice and kindness – a world repaired. The Messianic Age is not to be waited for because Reform Jews believe that it is up to us to make it happen.

Tasks:

1. What is meant by the term ‘Messiah’?

2. When will the Messiah come?

3. What will the Messiah be like?

4. Explain two Jewish teachings about the Messiah.

5. “The Messiah will be a humble man, nothing more.” Do you agree? Why / why not?

6. Explain how different the world will be when the Messiah comes.
7. How might belief in a Messiah influence Reform Jews in their lives today?

8. Why is it important for the Orthodox Jews to believe in a literal Messiah?

9. “Jews should fight for social justice to bring the Messianic Age more quickly.”
   Explore this idea, showing you have considered more than one point of view. Be sure to include Orthodox and Reform viewpoints
Belief in Life after Death, Judgement and Resurrection

Judaism does not place a great emphasis on the idea of an afterlife. Many Jews would say, “We know nothing about death and we cannot explain rationally what happens after death.” However Orthodox Jews might believe in righteous souls going to heaven, or resurrection at the coming of the Messiah, or some form of cleansing of the soul, or even reincarnation for souls that need to carry out unfinished business. At the same time, souls can be tormented or cleansed not by Satan, but by demons of their own creation. The world to come is also open to non-Jews who have observed the seven laws of Noah.

It is difficult to pin down a single unifying belief about the afterlife in Judaism!

What do the Torah and Tenakh sat about the afterlife?

The Torah itself says nothing about the afterlife or imagery to describe it. It concerns itself with the idea of regards and punishments now from G-d. However, there are also passages that indicate that the righteous will be reunited with their loved ones after death and the not-so righteous will not. The Torah seems in favour of focusing more on the life in the present, olam ha-ze. If Jews like properly now, what happens next will take care of itself. Now is the time Jews repair the world. However, sections of the Talmud and Maimonides do discuss the idea of an afterlife more. The physical man in G-d’s creation came from ‘dust’ so the body is subject to decay and will return to dust. The soul comes from the essence of G-d and so lives on. Jews often call death the departure of the soul.
Resurrection

The resurrection of the dead is a key belief in traditional Judaism, though the Torah does not explicitly discuss it. Masorti Jews do believe in a bodily resurrection, but that our understanding is so limited that we cannot know what the afterlife will be like.

Reform Jews also believe in an afterlife but that this life is more important. What Jews do now, the efforts they put in to repair the world, are far more important than gaining the perfection of an afterlife. Resurrection will happen when the Messianic Age begins and the Messiah will bring peace, the righteous dead will rise and the evil people will not be resurrected.

Reincarnation

Some Jews believe reincarnation is happening all the time, that souls are reborn to continue tikkun olam. This transmigration of souls (gilgul in Hebrew) is an example of divine compassion allowing a soul to fulfil the mitzvot.

The world to come

Olam ha-ba means ‘the world to come’ and is mentioned in the Jewish scriptures and by the rabbis. It is like a perfect version of this world. It will physically exist at the end of days after the Messiah has come and G-d has judged the living and the dead. The righteous dead will rise to olam ha-ba, but a description of it is not given. However, it is also used to describe a spiritual realm where souls go at death. Olam ha-ba is said to be like the perfect Shabbat, but it must be prepared for by good deeds and knowing the Torah. However, the emphasis must be on the here and now; strive to live well and value our time here.

Generally olam ha-ba is seen in two ways:

1. It is not life after death but life after the Messiah, when the righteous dead will be resurrected to a second life. Therefore there is the idea of who will be resurrected. Individuals and nations will stand to be judged
2. It is the place where souls go either at death or in the future

As well as olam ha-ba, there is reference to Gan Eden and Gehenna which some describe like heaven and hell.
Gan Eden

There is no clear answer as to what Gan Eden is and how it fits in terms of the afterlife. Some say it is the place good people go after they die, but whether this is straightaway or in the future, or whether it is the souls that go there or the resurrected dead is unclear. According to Jewish tradition, the Messianic Age is a time when G-d will create peace and all nations will sit together and eat in Gan Eden. What it does not mention is the dead! Some teachings in the Talmud describe Gan Eden as an earthly paradise based upon Genesis 2: 10-14.

Only the righteous go directly to Gan Eden.

Gehenna

Those not going to Gan Eden go to Gehenna, a place people associate with hell. This is not correct, though. Gehenna is a place of cleansing for the soul, with the suggestion that no one is there beyond twelve months (at which point they move to olam ha-ba). It is not eternal torment in fires for most, rather a place where the soul sees the things they have done wrong, the harm they have caused and experienced remorse over these things. For the very wicked, some Jews believe that the soul ceases to exist after the twelve months, whilst others believe it continues in a state of remorse.

The term ‘Gehenna’ appears later in Jewish history. Some Jews claim it was created by G-d on the second day of creation. The rabbis believed anyone who did not like by the Torah would spend some time in Gehenna. It was used to encourage people to do good, not scare them. It is described in terms of fire, but not eternal fire.

Overall, the process of what Judaism believes about the afterlife is hard to describe. Even set ideas are difficult to explain. The afterlife is unknown and incomprehensible. This reinforced the idea that Jews need to concentrate on this life now, doing things out of a love for doing them, not for a good afterlife. The rest will take care of itself in the future... whatever, wherever and whenever that happens.
Tasks

1. Explain the meaning of ‘olam ha-ba’.

2. Explain the meaning of ‘olam ha-ze’.

3. Explain the teachings about Gan Eden.

4. Explain the teachings about Gehenna.

5. Explain why it is difficult to describe the afterlife for Jews.

6. How might a belief in the afterlife affect a Jew in their daily life?

7. “The afterlife is not as important as life now.” Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer
The Sanctity of Human Life

- Life was created by G-d and man was made in His own image
- Several of each species were created but man was created ‘alone’
- As life comes from G-d, it is a sacred/holy gift and should be preserved
- Each life has a purpose and is valuable
- G-d takes life, just as He created it

The sanctity of life is not an easy issue. The statements seem like common sense, but when you start to apply them to life issues today it may create some ‘grey areas’ and differences of opinion.

The Jewish Attitude to Sanctity of Life

From as early as the creation story in Genesis, it is clear that every part of creation was special. However, the Talmud suggests that as a man was made ‘alone’ and in His image, G-d ‘breathed’ life into humanity and gave him free will (unlike all other creations which are subject to nature, controlled by G-d and instinct). Humans do not own their bodies, they simply have them for use until G-d decides he wants to end that use. Humans are given a soul and were created to carry out tikkun olam and to seek out of a close relationships with G-d. The former Chief Rabbi of Orthodox Jews in the UK, Rabbi Sacks, stated that ‘in whatever body or whatever disabled mind, there is a soul cast in the image of G-d.’

Life is sacred and must be preserved. Even Shabbat rules can be broken to save a life, for example, and ill person should be driven to hospital on Shabbat, even though driving is an activity not normally allowed on Shabbat.

Each Jewish person, it is believed, has a purpose. To live as G-d wants though the Torah and mitzvot. They are aiming to repair the world by their actions, changing the evil of this world to create peace and harmony and worship of G-d. Humans have a duty to make sure their lives are purposeful and that they make the most of the gift of life.
No human has the right to take a life, unless in self-defence, or as a punishment (capital punishment is still part of the law in many countries), or in the case of war. The 6th Commandment says, “Do not murder.” This seems very clear, but when it comes to issues like abortion and euthanasia it can become more complicated. In these situations, taking a life might prevent suffering. When there are rules, they might seem obvious, when they are thought about, they become more complex and less clear.

Pikuach Nefesh – the concept of ‘saving a life’

Pikuach Nefesh is the principle that the preservation of human life takes precedence over all else, because life is sacred.

Leviticus 18:5 says, “Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord.”

The Talmud emphasises the word ‘live’ in this statement. The idea is that people will ‘live by’ the law – it will help them to survive and will protect their lives. The Talmud emphasises this and making the point that they will not ‘die’ by the law. Hence the idea of saving a life is seen as more important than keeping the law.

Shabbat gives us a really good way to understand the principle of Pikuach Nefesh. The laws about Shabbat state that no work may be done. However, if a person’s life is in danger, the laws of Shabbat should be broken in order to save that life. It actually becomes a requirement to break the law in cases where life is at risk. Life is the most important factor.
But what is it was not certain that life was at risk? The rabbis decided that in order to be safe, a person should act as if the life was indeed at risk. By acting this way, it saves the time which would be taken to think about the situation, and so makes the saving of life more likely, as well as reducing the chances of judging a situation wrongly, hence leading to someone’s death.

Pikuach Nefesh is also extended beyond saving life to preventing life-shortening issues, so for example, preventing the loss of a limb, or blindness. Pikuach Nefesh demands a person do everything in their power to save the life of another, so includes organ donation – as long as the donation does not put the giver at risk.

It has also been said that autopsy can be a form of pikuach nefesh, if what is learnt from this action later helps to save the lives of others, so for example reveals new medical knowledge on an illness/condition.

**How is pikuach nefesh seen in action today?**

On certain festivals like Yom Kippur, Jews must fast. However, a sick person is obliged to break the fast. It is the right thing to do to observe fasting, but when fasting puts a person’s life at risk then it is seen as sinful.

Hatzola provides 24/7 emergency medical service, working closely with NHS services. Volunteers provide this service, which is based around being a first responder and ambulance provision. It also runs First Aid courses, gives first aid advice and gives patient support. All their work is totally funded through donations.

In terms of health issues, for example, organ donation, pikuach nefesh can be seen in action. Jewish law states that a body should be buried whole. However, if, when the person is dead, their organs can be used for a specific named person (rather than organs being stored) to save their life then this should be done under the pikuach nefesh principle. Also, to give away a kidney for this use would also be acceptable from a living donor.
Health workers can work on Shabbat and use pagers and telephones to save lives. Abortion is seen as acceptable if the life of the mother was in danger (even though to take a life is against the Commandments). The mother’s life is actual life and so is more important than that of the foetus, which is only the promise of or potential life. Pikuach nefesh again is the overriding idea here.

In terms of the environment, (www.greenfaith.org), pikuach nefesh is the principle used to protect us. One of the projects they have been involved in has been an interfaith one to change chemical policy in the USA. It has been the case that too many chemicals are used on the land to fertilise crops which can get into and poison water supplies. Law change now means companies have to be more responsible, which helps to protect the lives of all.

Tasks:

1. What is the ‘sanctity of life’?

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2. What do Jews believe about the sanctity of life?

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3. What is the general Jewish attitude about the sanctity of life?

4. What is pikuach nefesh?

5. Explain why pikuach nefesh can be considered a basic principle of Judaism.

6. Give some examples of pikuach nefesh in action.

7. Keeping the idea of pikuach nefesh in mind, how might a Jewish person respond to the statement – “The mitzvot bring Jews closer to G-d, therefore they should be the ultimate guide for their actions.” Write a balanced answer, using examples to explain your points.
Exam-style questions

1. What is meant by ‘pikuach nefesh’? (1 mark)

2. What is the name of the Jewish homeland? (1 mark)

3. What is the Jewish statement of belief called? (1 mark)

4. On which mountain did Moses receive the Ten Commandments? (1 mark)

5. Name the son of Abraham. (1 mark)

6. What is the word used for laws that are judgements? (1 mark)

7. How many mitzvot are there? (1 mark)

8. What is a Covenant? (1 mark)
9. Give two Jewish beliefs about the Messiah. (2 marks)

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10. Name two key moral principles of Judaism. (2 marks)

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11. Give two reasons why the Torah is important. (2 marks)

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12. Name two of the Ten Commandments. (2 marks)

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13. Give two ways in which Jews can show Tzedekah. (2 marks)

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14. Give two Jewish beliefs about the afterlife. (2 marks)

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15. Name two Jewish beliefs about justice and charity. (2 marks)

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16. Explain two ways in which belief in pikuach nefesh influences Jews today. (4 marks)

17. Explain two ways in which believing in the sanctity of life influences Jews today. (4 marks)

18. Explain two ways in which belief about the mitzvot might influence Jews today. (4 marks)

19. Explain two ways in which belief in the Shechinah influences Jews today. (4 marks)

20. Explain two ways in which believing in the afterlife influences Jews today. (4 marks)

21. Explain two ways in which beliefs about social justice influence Jews today. (4 marks)
22. Explain two Jewish teachings about the nature of G-d. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

23. Explain two Jewish teachings about the mitzvot. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

24. Explain two Jewish teachings about free will. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

25. Explain two Jewish teachings about tikkun olam. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

26. Explain two Jewish teachings about justice and charity. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)
27. Explain two Jewish teachings about the Messiah. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

28. Explain two Jewish teachings about the resurrection. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)

29. Explain two Jewish teachings about the sanctity of life. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. (5 marks)
30. “Sanctity of life is more important than keeping the Law.”

Evaluate this statement. You should:

a. Refer to Jewish teaching
b. Give developed arguments to support this statement
c. Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
d. Reach a justified conclusion
31. "All Jews should live in Israel."

Evaluate this statement. You should:

a. Refer to Jewish teaching
b. Give developed arguments to support this statement
c. Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
d. Reach a justified conclusion
32. “Every Jew should be a Reform Jew.”

Evaluate this statement. You should:

a. Refer to Jewish teaching
b. Give developed arguments to support this statement
c. Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
d. Reach a justified conclusion
33. “If Jews all lived by Tikkun Olam, there would be no need to such tight observance of Jewish Law.”

Evaluate this statement. You should:

a. Refer to Jewish teaching
b. Give developed arguments to support this statement
c. Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
d. Reach a justified conclusion
34. “Belief in the afterlife is the most important part of Judaism.”

Evaluate this statement. You should:

a. Refer to Jewish teaching
b. Give developed arguments to support this statement
c. Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
d. Reach a justified conclusion
35. “The Messiah is a real person.”

Evaluate this statement. You should:

a. Refer to Jewish teaching
b. Give developed arguments to support this statement
c. Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
d. Reach a justified conclusion