



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**A LEVEL
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 1
OPTION C: A STUDY OF JUDAISM**

A120UC0-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme.

Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

Rules for Marking

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content. Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner.

When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Awarding no marks to a response

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

A Level Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 20 marks <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> - <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> - <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> - <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> - <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i>
5	17-20 marks • Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	13-16 marks • Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	9-12 marks • Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied. • A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	5-8 marks • Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied. • A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-4 marks • Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought. • Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions 30 marks <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	25-30 marks • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context. • Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	19-24 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context. • Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	13-18 marks • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context. • Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	7-12 marks • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought appropriately and in context. • Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-6 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought. • Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COMPONENT 1: OPTION C – A STUDY OF JUDAISM

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. (a) **Examine the diversity of views within Judaism with regards to mitzvot (commandments).** [AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Orthodox Jews accept literally that the Torah is the direct revelation of God and consider it their duty to continue to obey the mitzvot which are contained within it. Orthodox Jews believe that obeying all of the mitzvot sets the Jews apart and demonstrates their complete obedience to God as required within the covenant agreement. Keeping all of the mitzvot is regarded as an essential religious duty: an expression of faith in God and the acceptance of the demands of the covenant. Furthermore, in order to ensure that the mitzvot remain fit for modern life, Orthodox Jews refer to halakhah, a means of regulating the mitzvot with its source in the Torah, rabbinic thought and long-standing traditions.
- The views of Reform Judaism differ in the sense that although they believe that the Torah contains many divine truths and that it remains the foundation of their faith, they consider it to be a product of human minds in the sense that God *did* reveal the Law to Moses, but that this revelation was not dictated word for word to him; rather that the revelation from God inspired others to write. It follows therefore, that it is important to re-evaluate the mitzvot in the light of each new situation in which the Jews find themselves in order to meet the demands of contemporary society.
- Hasidic Jews believe that all of the mitzvot are relevant, and their understanding of them is that they should never lose the opportunity to keep a mitzvah. This even extends to personal appearance, for example, as in obedience to Leviticus 19:27. Through rigid obedience to the mitzvah, Hasidic Jews fulfil their duty to God, and they believe that it allows the individual to achieve Jewish identity; clear direction in religious life and fulfilment, all of which are a cause for great joy. Furthermore, Hasidism places a very high value on ethical and pious behaviour as set out in the mitzvot. This is a means of allowing the individual to achieve closeness to God, but also to set an example to the world of that which is required by God regarding personal behaviour and attitudes to others.
- Examples of diversity within Judaism regarding the practice of mitzvot could include: the keeping of kashrut with expectations about a kosher home and the way in which the celebration of Shabbat takes place, including the interpretation of prohibitions regarding the carrying out of work on Shabbat.
- Candidates may also refer to diversity of practice and belief regarding the mitzvot that might be found within branches of Judaism. For example, there is diversity within Reform Judaism itself with regards to mitzvot, and examples can be given in order to illustrate this point.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'The concept of mitzvot is divisive within Judaism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Although it is true to say that not all groups within Judaism share the same views with regards to mitzvot, each denomination does hold that the mitzvot continue to have relevance in contemporary society in one way or another. This, it could be argued, suggests that the concept of mitzvot is not divisive as all groups value the importance of mitzvot as part of personal Jewish identity and as guidance to the way in which an individual should live their daily life.
- Nevertheless, divisions do exist within Judaism over the issue of divine and progressive revelation. Orthodox Jews believe in divine revelation whereby the mitzvot must be followed in a complete way. This is in contrast to Reform Jews who believe in progressive revelation where the mitzvot are open to interpretation in order that Judaism can be a faith that is relevant in modern society where, for example, new ethical, moral and spiritual values have been revealed. This difference of opinion between traditional and progressive viewpoints regarding mitzvot might well be perceived by some as being divisive.
- It could be claimed that the mitzvot are divisive if one branch of Judaism claims that their way of interpreting and following them makes that particular group more devout or religious than the others. However, whilst some Jews might well regard differences in practices as divisive, others are accepting of them and view the differences as an integral part of a religion's development with necessary adaptations being required in order that Judaism can survive in contemporary society.
- It could be claimed that Reform and Hasidic Jews have distorted the purpose of the mitzvot. However, the fact that the mitzvot remain a focus, in whichever sense, means that they have not invalidated them.
- Furthermore, it could also be argued that Jewish identity is not entirely dependent upon keeping the mitzvot in their entirety. Their observance marks one out as being a Jew and shows devotion to God, but Jewish identity comes, for example, from being born to a Jewish mother.
- Perhaps 'divisive' is quite a harsh word, and that it is best to see the concept of mitzvot as one raising meaningful discussion on a difference of views rather than one that leads to aggressive divisions between communities. In this way, mitzvot is seen to be a useful concept rather than a divisive one because it guides and instructs according to the needs of both individuals and communities.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

2. (a) **Examine the Ten Sayings (Aseret ha-D'ibrot) as a basis for religious and ethical life in Judaism.** [AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The Ten Sayings (Aseret ha-D'ibrot) are the first of the 613 commandments which Jews believe God gave to the Jewish people through Moses on Mount Sinai. They are found in Exodus chapter 20 and are repeated in Deuteronomy chapter 5.
- The Ten Sayings provide the basis for Jewish religious and ethical life as they are considered to be universally applicable in every age and in every time, covering issues that are as relevant today as they were in ancient times.
- The general nature of the Ten Sayings, and the lack of reference to either rewards or punishments means that they are more aptly characterised as ethical or moral advice than as laws. Their aim is to bring the world, through Judaism, to ethical monotheism, with the primary demand being to treat fellow human beings decently. The Ten Sayings thus serve as the foundation for all the other mitzvot of Jewish religious life and provide the template for religious practice.
- According to rabbinic tradition the Ten Sayings are not individual commandments but are categories into which each of the remaining 603 mitzvot can be placed under one of the ten classifications. Indeed, it has been suggested that the Ten Sayings serve as an outline for the Torah. In this context it is perhaps easier to think of each one as a subject heading, since many other mitzvot can be listed under them.
- Examples from the different categories should be included and discussed. For example, showing how the first four set out what is expected regarding a person's relationship with God; plus, examples from the remaining six which set out expectations regarding a person's relationship with others. Both categories are considered to hold equal status with duties to God being just as important as duties to other people.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'The Ten Sayings are the most effective guide for Jewish ethical living.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- It could be argued that the Ten Sayings should be considered to be the most effective guide for Jewish ethical living due to the fact that they were given to Moses directly by God on Mount Sinai. This therefore elevates them to the highest status as they are considered by many within Judaism to be divine laws which remain relevant and applicable up to, and including, the present day.
- However, they aren't the first principles in the Torah that set out regulations for ethical living as the Ten Sayings are based upon the Noachide Laws that provide the basis of the universal covenant God established with Noah, his descendants and the whole of humanity.
- Some might say that they should only be considered as being most effective as a guide for ethical living in the historical context in which they were set down in order to bring stability to the community of Israelites during their time of wandering in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. While the range of issues is still relevant, there are now many modern ethical issues which are not covered by their content and, as such, perhaps they are no longer the most effective guide for modern Jewish ethical living.
- Another argument could be to suggest that it would be better to consider them as ten 'categories' rather than sayings for the purpose of guidance for ethical living. They might be better understood as the foundation for all of the other 603 mitzvot that God gave to the Jews: a framework that requires further analysis and explanation.
- The Ten Sayings clearly cover all of the things that continue to affect humanity: from outward actions through to inner thoughts. And even within a non-religious context they are still to be found as the basis for the rules of every civilised society in the world today.
- However, even if they do not in themselves provide a comprehensive guide for ethical living, they do offer a brief overview of essentials which, in turn, provide a springboard for rabbinic deliberation.
- Credit can also be given for relevant comparison with other aspects of Jewish scriptures/teachings/rabbinic schools of thought which might also be considered to offer guidance for Jewish ethical living.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

Section B

3. (a) Examine the nature of the covenant between God and Abraham.

[AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The Abrahamic covenant was initiated by the word of God: it was authoritative and would establish the Abrahamic community within the protection of God. According to Genesis 17:1, Abraham, then known as Abram, was chosen by God because he was 'blameless' among those of his generation.
- The terms of the covenant were set out as follows: if Abraham would leave his home and family, then God would promise three things: Abraham would be the father of a great nation; he would have many descendants; he would be given a land to live in.
- The requirement for Abraham to leave his homeland is symbolic as it indicates that he is to move away from the idolatrous practices of his family. It also indicates that he has been chosen to be a spiritual as well as a physical leader. He and his descendants would establish a nation which would be an example to the world that God is the one and only all-powerful God, whom people should follow and worship.
- Furthermore, even though it seemed to be an impossible set of promises for God to keep as Abraham and his wife Sarah were old and did not have any children, Abraham did as asked and placed his trust in God. By accepting the terms of the covenant, the relationship between the Jewish people and God was established. And, as a result of his faith, God changed Abram's name to Abraham, meaning 'the father of many' (Genesis 17:5).
- The Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant: an agreement between two parties but when only one of the parties is required to do something. In this case the terms of the covenant will be fulfilled according to God's commitments because Abraham has demonstrated his faith and trust. Reference to the covenant ceremony as recorded in Genesis chapter 15 can be used to highlight the unconditional nature of the covenant: it is a promise made by God alone and is symbolised by God's flaming torch moving between two halves of an animal carcass. It is also to be an everlasting covenant.
- According to the Torah, God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself, all the males in his household, as well as his descendants. This, according to Genesis 17:9-11 is to be a sign of the covenant relationship between God and the 'chosen people'. Furthermore, 'Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.' (Genesis 17:14). The ceremony of brit milah continues among Jews to this day as a sign of being linked in a long chain reaching all the way back to Abraham. On a spiritual level, it is an act of consecration which signifies that the individual is under divine authority and, as a result, is subject to God's commandments.
- Reference to the significance of Abraham's faith and test of obedience when asked to sacrifice Isaac can also be credited within the terms of the covenant relationship.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'The covenant is more a privilege than a responsibility'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- It could be argued that the Jewish belief that they have been selected by God to be an example to other nations is a great privilege. The covenant is also a privilege because with it comes the promise that God will never abandon the Jewish people because they are the chosen people. Furthermore, Jews can also look forward to the future fulfilment of the covenant with the coming of the Messiah who will bring peace to the world, Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and the Jews will have their freedom as well as the Promised Land.
- However, in regarding themselves as God's chosen people, it could be said that privilege goes hand in hand with a responsibility to live in obedience to God. The Abrahamic covenant established the covenant of faith between God and the Jewish people; yet even though it was an unconditional covenant, its sign was to be the outward, physical act of circumcision: and it might be argued that circumcision is symbolic of both covenant promise (privilege), and covenant obligation (responsibility).
- Another line of argument could be to use examples of the ways in which some Jewish groups take responsibility to live according to God's requirements very seriously, even though secular society doesn't cater specifically for the traditional Jewish way of life. Keeping the requirements of the 613 mitzvot may be seen to be very restricting in the 21st century, nevertheless the desire to continue to uphold the mitzvot is illustrative of a strong desire to live according to God's laws.
- However, there is diversity within Judaism on these matters and the stance of Reform Judaism could be used to show how members of this denomination regard their responsibilities in a different way from more orthodox Jewish groups. Nevertheless, Reform Jews have not abandoned the requirements of the covenant in that they maintain the obligation to live ethical and moral lives.
- Some may argue that there is a balance between the privilege of being selected as God's chosen people and the responsibility of living a life in accordance with God's laws and setting an example to others.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

4. (a) Examine the role of the family and the Jewish home as a foundation for Jewish principles.

[AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The importance of the Jewish home within the faith is such that it is referred to as mikdash me'at, a small sanctuary.
- Following the destruction of the Temple in 586BCE and the exile of the Jews to Babylon, the Jewish home took on greater significance when it became the only place where the values and practices of the Jewish faith could be handed down to the younger generations.
- A new Jewish home undergoes consecration and dedication through the ceremony of chanukat habayit, as it is a place where its inhabitants live according to the faith, traditions, and values of the Jewish religion. During this ceremony, a mezuzah is fixed to the doorpost in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and this is significant as it denotes identity with, and commitment to, the Jewish faith.
- Family life is sanctified within the home, for example, bar and bat mitzvah occasions are times of festivity in the home, and it is in the home that children learn from the example set by their parents as each starts their journey living as a Jew. Parents have obligations to their children, and children too are expected to carry out the commandment to honour and respect their parents (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3). Thus, the Jewish home is permeated with sanctity when the family lives in accordance with God's commandments.
- Furthermore, at times of mourning following the death of a family member, the home becomes the focus for visitors who come to pay their respects during shiva.
- Like the synagogue, the home continues to carry out various traditions of the Temple. For example, at Shabbat, the candles are lit and recall the Temple menorah; and the dining table represents the altar.
- The Jewish faith is practised in the home through prayers and festivals, and reference could be made to the reciting of kiddush prior to the evening meal and at other important Jewish festivals such as Passover and Rosh Hashanah. A blessing over food is also recited before meals on other days of the week: thus the very act of eating becomes a holy event.
- Examples from the cycle of the Jewish year could be used to show the great variety of opportunities for worship at home: for example, the reading of the Haggadah and the symbolic foods at the Seder; the building of a sukkah during Sukkot; the lighting of candles leading up to Hanukkah.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'Family life is the main strength of Judaism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Evidence in support of the statement could be offered by arguing that Judaism places great emphasis upon the importance of family life. For example, the raising of a family is considered to be a sacred duty within the Jewish tradition as it is within the home that the next generation learns from the examples set by their parents. Moreover, Jewish scriptures offer clear guidance about how parents and children are to conduct themselves within the family group (Proverbs 22:6; Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3).
- Furthermore, the importance of the home itself as a place of worship is synonymous with the sanctity of family life within Judaism. Many rituals within the home have great significance and serve to remind Jewish believers of the importance of their faith and maintaining Jewish principles. For example, many key events are celebrated or enacted within the family group: a celebration in the home to mark a bar/bat mitzvah; receiving visitors in the home to mourn the death of a family member; the celebration of the Shabbat meal on Friday evening.
- However, even though family life may appear to be the main strength of Judaism, there are issues that might impinge upon its success. Living as a Jewish family in a secular society might bring about problems for young Jewish adolescents for example, who may find themselves at odds with the requirements of their faith and the desire to fit in with friends who are not of the Jewish faith.
- Another line of argument is the suggestion that it is the synagogue that is the main strength of Judaism rather than family life. This argument is based upon the fact that as an institution it provides the location for all aspects of Jewish life as well as for prayer and worship.
- It could also be argued that the celebration of festivals is one of the main strengths of Judaism with support for this contention based upon the fact that even those Jews who are usually non-observant make a special effort to be present at the synagogue at festivals such as Yom Kippur and Pesach.
- Some may suggest that the mitzvot too could be acknowledged as the main strength of Judaism, with their purpose being to give moral and ethical guidance on the way in which God requires a Jew to live. They allow each individual to cultivate a relationship with God at all levels of daily life.
- Perhaps there is no one particular thing that acts as the main strength of Judaism, but rather it is a combination of a variety of elements. However, such is the influence of the family, especially upon young children, that it cannot be denied that it has an important part to play in the creation of the next generation of Jews.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

5. (a) **Examine the origins of the synagogue as a permanent institution in Babylonian captivity.** [AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Jews have been meeting in synagogues for over 2500 years, but before this, the most important place of worship was at the Temple in Jerusalem that had been built by King Solomon. However, the Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and the Jewish people were forced to leave their homeland and were taken into exile.
- The Temple in Jerusalem had been at the very centre of Jewish religious life as Jewish law specified that certain important religious rituals such as animal sacrifices could only take place within it. With the destruction of the Temple, it seemed that the keystone of Jewish worship had been destroyed.
- There was also the danger that without the Temple as their focus, the Jews would be assimilated into Babylonian culture and eventually their faith would be lost. This fear is reflected in Psalm 137: 'By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion ... how shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?'
- However, the prophet Ezekiel described a vision of Yahweh's glory which went with the people in exile, just as the ancient ark had moved from place to place during the years in the wilderness. Also, in a passage from Deuteronomy 4:27-29, which scholars believe was written near the time of the exile, we read of the assurance that God could be worshipped anywhere: 'The Lord will scatter you among the peoples ... But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.' This led to groups of the faithful meeting together in each other's homes for worship, prayer and Torah study.
- Subsequently, in a further attempt to ensure that the faith did not die out, temporary places of worship were built. These buildings became known as synagogues, from the Greek word meaning 'to gather together'. They were never meant to replace the Temple, but to act as temporary places of worship until the Temple in Jerusalem could be rebuilt.
- The role of the ark in reminding Jews of the Jerusalem Temple might also be discussed.
- Although synagogues today differ from each other, their layout is based upon that of the original Temple, containing features that are reminders of its structure. They are always built facing Jerusalem and the contents remind Jews of the original Temple and its importance in Jewish history.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- (b) **‘The synagogue is nothing more than a place for worship and prayer.’**
Evaluate this view with reference to Judaism. [AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The word synagogue generally makes people think of a building where Jews meet for religious worship and prayer. However, the fact that within Judaism there are a number of different words for synagogue in the Hebrew language suggests that it has a variety of uses. For example, many Jews refer to the synagogue as the ben k’nesset which translates as house of meeting, and which denotes that as well as a place for worship and prayer, the synagogue plays a valuable role as that of a social centre for the local Jewish community.
- Other names for the synagogue in Hebrew are bet midrash, house of study, and shul, meaning ‘school’. This aspect of synagogue life underlines the fact that education is very important in Jewish life: ‘... You shall teach them diligently to your children ...’ (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). For many Jewish children in the UK who attend secular schools, there is no opportunity to study Hebrew as part of the curriculum. For this reason, they can attend Hebrew classes at the synagogue where they learn how to read from the Torah and can prepare by practising the portion that they will read at their Bar/Bat mitzvah. It could be argued that the synagogue therefore provides the means by which the next generation of Jews can be educated in the faith; for without the faithful, the synagogue would very soon decline as a place for worship and prayer.
- Some major synagogues also serve the community by providing the services of a bet din where decisions regarding Jewish law and judgements regarding disputes can be made. Thus, it is the synagogue that provides the means by which the Torah continues to have relevance for modern day Judaism. This all adds to the argument that the synagogue is much more than simply the place for worship and prayer.
- A further line of argument might be to look back at the origins of the synagogue during the period of Babylonian captivity when it developed as the focal point for Jews after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. It could be argued that as well as providing a place for Jews to worship and pray, it became the centre of the community allowing Jews to maintain their cultural and religious identity when in foreign lands.
- Nevertheless, the importance of the synagogue as the place for worship and prayer cannot be denied. It is the place where the Torah is housed and read; where important rites of passage are enacted and celebrated. Without this focus, it could be argued that all the other facilities that the synagogue provides would no longer be of any use. And its purpose as the place for worship and prayer can be no better illustrated than at those times of the year when even those who do not usually attend synagogue return for the festivals of Pesach and Yom Kippur.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.