



A-LEVEL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7062/2E – Study of religion and dialogues: Judaism
Report on the Examination

7062
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General comments

There were some outstanding scripts for this component. Few, if any, appeared to have difficulty completing the paper in the time available, although it was obvious that the handwriting deteriorated in the final question attempted on a number of scripts. There were some scripts where handwriting was a major issue, but on the whole answers were legible. As is always the case under examination conditions, attention to the exact wording of the question varied considerably so answers were more or less relevant accordingly. This was particularly true, on some scripts, for AO2 questions, where some students lost sight of the issue they were supposed to be evaluating. Many students used technical terms accurately and effectively, but there were some errors which led to considerable confusion in the answers. The new-style dialogue questions appeared to cause no particular problems for most. The way these questions were approached varied considerably and some of those strategies were much more successful than others as will be evident from the comments below.

Section A: Study of Judaism

Question 1

Part 01.1

There were some excellent answers to this question which drew on the specific content prescribed for study for this topic: the significance of anthropomorphic and gender based language used in relation to God, specifically God as King and Father and the terms used in Genesis 3:8. Many also referred to Buber's concept of God as the 'Eternal Thou' in unpacking the personal relationship between God and humanity. Some, however, had only a general concept of 'personal' and tended to focus instead on other aspects of the concept of God.

Part 01.2

There were some excellent answers that considered if the claim that there is 'little' agreement matched the evidence or whether it would be more accurate to claim that there is no agreement or general agreement. However, other answers were mostly summaries of a range of different beliefs and, while such answers were often well-informed, they did not always address the issue. Some simply completed their summary with a statement such as 'this shows there is little agreement', others did not actually state a point of view. The maximum reward possible for an answer which simply explains reasons / presents evidence to support one point of view is Level 2. An answer which does not state a point of view can achieve a maximum of Level 1, which gives credit for awareness of relevant information but recognises that the response has demonstrated no AO2 skills. Some answers focused more on possible reasons why there are different views, or on possible reasons why belief in life after death is not important, but that was not the issue.

Question 2

Part 02.1

There were excellent answers which clearly focused on reasons why there are different views, particularly different views about the authority of the Torah and the Talmud and supported the ideas with evidence and examples. There were also many answers that described different views, but paid little, or no, attention to the reasons for them, and that limited the marks that could be awarded. Some of the explanations of those different views were very detailed, and the answers

would have taken a good while to write, but unless the answer focused on the question asked it could not be highly rewarded.

Part 02.2

There were some outstanding answers to this question and many were clearly very well informed about Jewish perspectives on the two issues, although some had relatively little to say about attitudes to transgender people. There was detailed discussion of the significance of 'to'evah' or 'abomination' in Leviticus 18:22 in some answers, and reference to a number of scholars or Rabbis. Some weaker answers tended to summarise arguments for the view stated, followed by arguments against, without any critical analysis, comment or evaluation, beyond choosing to 'agree' or 'disagree' at the end of the response. Such answers could only be awarded a maximum of Level 3.

Dialogues

There were many excellent answers to these questions. Some wrote separate AO1 and AO2 sections. This was a perfectly valid approach but it resulted in quite a lot of repetition, because some of the information was then needed as evidence for the AO2 section. Also, the AO1 material, when presented separately, tended to be rather general and broader than required and was not always focused enough to be useful for AO2. Some took a 'write all you know approach', and did not select what was relevant to the issue. The better answers tended to combine AO1 and AO2. There were some signs of planning, which was often very effective. A minority of students did these questions first. This was another perfectly valid approach and seemed to have no impact on their ability to complete the whole paper. On the whole, weaker answers tended to have the same weaknesses as answers to the structured questions in Section A such as a failure to develop and support the AO1 content and a failure to critically analyse and evaluate the arguments presented. A few responses seemed to interpret 'dialogue' as 'agreement' but still rightly considered the debate between Judaism and philosophy or Judaism and ethics as required.

Section B: The dialogue between philosophy and Judaism

Question 3.1

This was the less popular question in this section, but there were some very good answers which focused on such experiences as Moses' encounter with God and accounts of prophetic inspiration recorded in scripture. There were varying levels of understanding about how philosophical views could challenge these accounts. Some compared the experiences with definitions of mystical or religious experiences offered by scholars, but this, generally, only considered if they could, or could not, be correctly described as 'mystical' or 'religious'; it did not consider if they were genuine or had authority. Some did consider the problem of verification so the ways in which philosophy challenges the claim that these were religious experiences was discussed and evaluated, with particular reference to the problems of subjectivity, interpretation and alternative natural experiences. Some useful discussions of Swinburne's principles of credulity and testimony were also included.

Question 4.1

There were some excellent answers, but others were unnecessarily complicated. The most straightforward pitched Hume's arguments, and occasionally Wiles' arguments, against reported

miracles in the Tenakh such as the parting of the red sea, and analysed and evaluated those arguments before considering if ‘miracles’ could be said to happen in other senses of the word. Some spent a long time explaining different meanings of ‘miracle’ often using Christian examples rather than examples from the Jewish tradition, but then did not apply that information in discussion.

Section C: The dialogue between ethics and Judaism

Question 5.1

This was the most popular question in this section and was generally well-answered. However, many responses started with a general overview of natural moral law which was not fully focused on the attitude to animals. Some also assumed without debate that the principle of protecting innocent life automatically applied to animals, which is not the case in Aquinas’ thinking, and complicated the discussion that followed. Knowledge and understanding of Jewish attitudes to animals was generally good, but in some answers there was little attention to specific issues such as using animal organs for transplants that would have allowed close comparison and contrast with the views of natural moral law. The best answers linked the idea of dominion with natural moral law and compared and contrasted that with Jewish ideas about stewardship, this was sometimes illustrated with reference to intensive farming and the slaughter of animals for food. Attitudes to blood sports were compared and there were some perceptive discussions of the limits within Judaism to the ways in which animals may be used in the service of humanity.

Question 6.1

Only a minority of students tackled this question. They were generally well-informed about Bentham’s method of moral decision-making and showed how decisions would be made about freedom of religious expression based on the consequences in the concrete situation in which the decision was required. How far Judaism would uphold freedom of religious expression regardless of the consequences was then considered. Some recognised that the context for this discussion in the specification is multicultural society, so discussed the freedom Judaism might be willing to give to other faiths. Some considered how commitment to Judaism necessarily limited such freedom, but this approach rarely considered any dialogue between the two perspectives.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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