

Section 2 Matters of life and death

Topic 1.2.2 Judaism and life after death

Revised

Why Jewish people believe in life after death

Jewish people believe in life after death because:

- it is the teaching of the Tenakh, which is inspired by God; therefore Jews should believe what the Tenakh says
- it is the teaching of the Talmud, which most Jews try to follow because it is the teaching of rabbis
- it is one of the Thirteen Principles of Faith, which is part of the Jewish creed, and so should be believed
- many Jews believe in life after death because it gives their lives meaning and purpose; a life after death, in which people will be judged on how they live this life, with the good rewarded and the evil punished, makes sense of this life.

How Jewish beliefs about life after death affect the lives of Jewish people

- Most Jews believe that God will decide what happens to people after they die on the basis of how they have lived their lives. This affects the lives of Jewish people because they must try to live good Jewish lives if they are to have a good life after death.
- Living a good Jewish life means observing the Torah and halakhah, praying three times a day, fasting on Yom Kippur, keeping Shabbat and celebrating the many festivals. Therefore their beliefs about life after death will have a big effect on their lives.
- Living a good Jewish life also means following all the mitzvot such as keeping kosher, observing the dress laws, and not being involved in lending at interest or receiving interest, etc.
- Orthodox Jews believe that they should confess their sins before they die, help with funerals and keep shiva. This affects their lives because they are always aware of death.

Evaluation of Judaism and life after death

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What should Jewish people believe because they believe it is inspired by God?
- 2 Which part of the Jewish creed teaches about life after death?
- 3 How many times a day should Jewish people pray?
- 4 What should Jewish people do before they die?

Answers at end

Topic 1.2.7 Jews and abortion

Revised

Some Jewish people believe that abortion can never be allowed because they believe:

- life begins at conception and so abortion is murder
- in the sanctity of life and so only God has the right to take life.

Many Jewish people believe that abortion is wrong, but if the mother's life is at risk, then it is permissible because:

- they believe in the sanctity of life and so think abortion is wrong
- the Torah permits killing in self-defence, and abortion is self-defence if the mother's life is at risk.

Some Jewish people believe in the UK law on abortion because:

- they believe the Torah says that life does not begin until the foetus can survive on its own
- the Torah says that Jewish people must prevent avoidable suffering.

Evaluation of Judaism and abortion

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so you would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 Do Jewish people who believe life begins at conception allow abortion?
- 2 What permits killing in self-defence?
- 3 How does killing in self-defence permit abortion?
- 4 What do Jewish people who believe the Torah says that life does not begin until the foetus can survive on its own think about abortion?

Answers at end

Topic 1.2.10 Jews and euthanasia

Revised

Many Jewish people do not allow euthanasia because:

- the Torah bans suicide and so assisted suicide is wrong
- most Jewish people believe that voluntary euthanasia is just the same as assisted suicide
- murder is banned by the Ten Commandments and euthanasia is a form of murder
- the Tenakh says that death and life are in the hands of God.

Some Jewish people believe euthanasia is wrong but accept switching off life-support machines or not 'striving to keep alive'. They believe this because:

- some rabbis have said switching off life-support for the brain-dead is not euthanasia
- if someone is brain-dead, God has already taken their life
- striving to keep someone alive is preventing God from taking their soul and so is against God's wishes.

Evaluation of Judaism and euthanasia

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 Why do many Jewish people think assisted suicide is wrong?
- 2 What does the Tenakh say about life and death?
- 3 What have some rabbis said about switching off life-support for the brain-dead?
- 4 Why do some Jewish people believe striving to keep someone alive is against God's wishes?

Answers at end

Summary of Judaism and matters of life and death

- Jewish people believe in life after death because it is the teaching of the Tenakh and Talmud, and is one of the Thirteen Principles of Faith. Their beliefs about life after death affect their lives because Orthodox Jewish people will try to follow the halakhah so that they go to heaven and not hell.
- Some Jewish people believe abortion is always wrong because life is in God's hands. Some Jewish people believe abortion can be allowed in certain circumstances because preventing avoidable suffering is taught in the Torah.
- Jewish people are against euthanasia because they believe life is sacred and belongs to God. However, there are some different attitudes among Jewish people about switching off of life-support machines, withdrawing treatment, etc. because some think these are not euthanasia.

Section 3 Marriage and the family

Topic 1.3.3 Jews and sex outside marriage

Revised

Jewish people believe that sex outside of marriage is wrong because:

- sex before marriage is forbidden by the Torah, which all Jewish people should follow
- the Talmud says that sex should only take place in marriage, so Jewish people should avoid sex outside marriage
- Judaism teaches that sex is for the procreation of children who should be raised in a family where the mother and father are married
- adultery is banned by the Ten Commandments, which all Jewish people should follow
- adultery breaks the marriage contract that both husband and wife have agreed to
- adultery is likely to harm the family, which should not be harmed as it is where children learn about Judaism and how to live the Jewish life.

Some Progressive Jews accept that couples may live together before marriage, but only in a long-term relationship leading to marriage.

Evaluation of Judaism and sex outside marriage

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What does the Torah say about sex before marriage?
- 2 What does Judaism teach that sex is for?
- 3 What bans adultery?
- 4 What does adultery break?

Answers at end

Topic 1.3.5 Jews and divorce

Revised

Some Jewish people believe that divorce is wrong because:

- the Talmud teaches that divorce is an offence to God, and they follow the Talmud teachings
- children need to be brought up as good followers of Judaism for the faith to survive, and divorce may stop this
- some rabbis have taught that divorce is wrong because of the harm it can cause for the family if only one partner wants a divorce, or if there are financial problems.

Most Orthodox Jews allow divorce but only if the husband has a get from the Bet Din because:

- the Torah has various statements that permit divorce
- marriage in Judaism is a contract that can be broken in certain circumstances
- the halakhah says that only men can apply to the Bet Din for a get.

Most Reform Jews allow divorce and allow both men and women to apply for a get from the Bet Din because:

- they believe that the Torah and halakhah need interpreting to fit modern life
- they believe that men and women should have equal rights in religion and also in divorce
- they believe divorce is a lesser evil than forcing a couple to live in hatred and bitterness.

Evaluation of Judaism and divorce

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What teaches that divorce is an offence to God?
- 2 Why do children need to be brought up as good followers of Judaism?
- 3 What does the husband need to do to obtain a divorce in Orthodox Judaism?
- 4 What do Reform Jews believe need interpreting to fit modern life?

Answers at end

Topic 1.3.7 Jews and family life

Revised

Family life is important in Judaism because:

- it is a mitzvah for Jewish people to marry and have children, and obeying the mitzvot is an essential part of being Jewish
- only children of married Jewish parents are automatically Jewish, so the family is very important for the continuation of the Jewish people and religion
- without the family, children would not learn the difference between right and wrong

- the family is the place where Shabbat is observed and the festivals are celebrated
- the importance of family life is commanded in the fifth of the Ten Commandments.

Evaluation of Judaism and family life

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so you would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What tell Jewish people they should marry and have children?
- 2 Who are automatically Jewish?
- 3 What are observed and celebrated in the family?
- 4 Which commandment commands the importance of family life?

Answers at end

Topic 1.3.9 Jews and homosexuality

Revised

The Orthodox Jewish view is that being a homosexual is not a sin, but homosexual sexual activity is a sin, as is homophobia, because:

- the Torah condemns homosexual activity and the Torah is the word of God
- the Torah and Talmud declare that marriage between a man and a woman is the only lawful form of sex
- Judaism teaches that any sexual activity should have the possibility of creating children
- it is a mitzvah that Jewish adults should marry and raise a family, which homosexuals cannot do.

The Liberal or Reform groups see homosexuality as acceptable because:

- they believe that the Torah needs to be re-interpreted in the light of modern society
- scientists now believe that sexual orientation is natural, so it must be given by God
- Jewish people should treat others as they would want to be treated themselves, which must mean accepting homosexuals
- they feel that labelling homosexuality as wrong leads to homophobia.

Evaluation of Judaism and homosexuality

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What condemns homosexual activity?
- 2 What does Judaism teach any sexual activity should have?
- 3 If homosexual activity is natural, what does that mean for Judaism?
- 4 What can labelling homosexuality as wrong lead to?

Answers at end

Topic 1.3.11 Jews and contraception

Revised

Ultra-Orthodox Jews do not approve of any form of artificial contraception, unless the mother's health is at risk, because:

- they believe God's command that Jewish people should be fruitful means they should have large families
- the Torah says the male sperm is sacred and not to be killed
- many Rabbis teach that God created sex for having children.

Orthodox Jews allow women to use contraception after a couple has had two children because:

- the Torah, Talmud and the rabbis teach that the health of the mother should come first
- contraceptives for women do not kill the male seed
- it is a mitzvah to have a family and having two children obeys this.

Liberal or Reform Jews believe that couples should make their own decisions about contraception because:

- God expects people to use intelligence and technology to prevent unwanted things from happening
- they believe the Torah needs updating and contraception should be available to men and women
- it is better to use contraception than to bring unwanted children into the world.

Evaluation of Judaism and contraception

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 Who do not approve of any form of artificial contraception?
- 2 What does the Torah say about male sperm?
- 3 Which Jews allow women to use contraception after a couple has had two children?
- 4 Which Jews believe contraception should be available to both men and women?

Answers at end

Summary of Judaism and marriage and the family

- All Jews believe adultery is wrong as it breaks one of the Ten Commandments. Most Jews believe that sex before marriage is wrong because the Torah teaches this. Some Jews believe that sex before marriage can be accepted with certain conditions.
- Some Jewish people are against divorce because of the teachings of the Talmud and rabbis. Orthodox Jews allow divorce, but give special rights to men in divorce because of the Torah. Reform Jews allow divorce, but give equal divorce rights to women because they think the Torah should be brought up to date.
- Family life is important in Judaism because the family is the only way of keeping Judaism alive and the Torah says all Jews should marry and raise a family.
- Orthodox Jews believe that homosexuality is wrong because it is condemned in the Torah and stops people from having families. Most Liberal or Reform Jews accept homosexuality because it is natural and Jewish people should respect others.
- Ultra-Orthodox Jews do not allow contraception because they believe God wants them to have large families. Orthodox Jews only allow female contraception because the Torah says the male seed is sacred. Liberal or Reform Jews allow any form of contraception because they believe the Torah should be brought up to date.

Section 4 Religion and community cohesion

Topic 1.4.3 Jews and equal rights for women in religion

Revised

Most Orthodox Jews believe that men and women have different roles and so they cannot have equal rights in religion. It is the role of women to keep a kosher home and sit separately from the men in the synagogue. It is the role of men to perform the ritual prayers every day and make sure the synagogue provides all the worship and education needed. Orthodox Jewish women cannot be religious leaders or rabbis. Orthodox Jews have this attitude because:

- it is the teaching of the Torah, Talmud and rabbis
- the mitzvot only apply to men, therefore women cannot have the same rights in religion as men
- women cannot form a minyan and so cannot have equal rights with men in the synagogue
- women cannot be witnesses in a Bet Din court and so cannot have equal rights with men in the religious laws of Judaism.

In Liberal or Reform and Progressive Judaism, men and women have completely equal rights and there are women rabbis. These Jewish people have this attitude because:

- the creation story in Genesis 1 says that God created man and woman at the same time and of equal status
- they believe that the Torah needs to be interpreted for today's world, and those parts of the Torah denying equal rights to women should no longer apply
- they believe that denying equal rights to women in religion is the same as saying that God prefers men to women
- they believe that Judaism should relate to attitudes in the modern world and so should accept equal rights for women.

Evaluation of Judaism and equal rights for women in religion

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What do most Orthodox Jews believe about the role of women in religion?
- 2 Why can Orthodox women not have equal rights with men in the religious laws of Judaism?
- 3 Which groups give women equal rights in religion?
- 4 How does Genesis justify equal rights?

Answers at the end

Topic 1.4.7 Why Jews should promote racial harmony

Revised

Although most followers of Judaism are also members of the Jewish race (though not necessarily the same ethnic group), Judaism promotes racial harmony because:

- The Torah teaches racial harmony. It shows that all humans can be traced back to Adam and Eve and so they must all be brothers and sisters.
- Most rabbis teach that as God is one, so humanity is one because it was created by the one God.
- There is a lot of teaching in the Tenakh about how God cares for the oppressed and wants his people to bring justice to the world.
- The Jewish people have been given a special responsibility by God to show God's laws to the rest of humanity and part of this responsibility must be promoting racial harmony.

Evaluation of Judaism and racial harmony

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so you would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, though you could use extra reasons from Judaism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 How does the Torah teach racial harmony?
- 2 Who teach that humanity is one because it was created by the one God?
- 3 What teaches that God wants his people to bring justice to the world?
- 4 What responsibility has God given the Jewish people that involves racial harmony?

Answers at end

Summary of Judaism and religion and community cohesion

- Orthodox Jews believe that men and women are equal but have different rights in religion because it is the teaching of the Torah. Liberal or Reform Jews believe that men and women have completely equal rights in religion and accept women as rabbis because God created men and women with equal status.
- Jewish people should promote racial harmony because Judaism teaches that racism is wrong and because of the teachings of the Torah.

Answers to Now test yourself

Unit 1

Topic 1.2.2 Life after death

- 1 The Tenakh
- 2 The Thirteen Principles of Faith
- 3 Three
- 4 Confess their sins

Topic 1.2.7 Abortion

- 1 No, they think it is always wrong
- 2 The Torah
- 3 Abortion is self-defence if the mother's life is at risk
- 4 They agree with the UK law on abortion

Topic 1.2.10 Euthanasia

- 1 Because the Torah bans suicide
- 2 They are in the hands of God
- 3 It is not euthanasia
- 4 Because it prevents God from taking their soul

Topic 1.3.3 Sex outside marriage

- 1 It forbids it
- 2 The procreation of children
- 3 The Ten Commandments
- 4 The marriage contract

Topic 1.3.5 Divorce

- 1 The Talmud
- 2 So that the faith survives
- 3 Obtain a get from the Bet Din
- 4 The Torah and halakhah

Topic 1.3.7 Family life

- 1 The mitzvot
- 2 The children of married Jewish parents
- 3 Shabbat and festivals
- 4 The fifth commandment

Topic 1.3.9 Homosexuality

- 1 The Torah
- 2 The possibility of creating children
- 3 Homosexuality must be given by God
- 4 Homophobia

Topic 1.3.11 Contraception

- 1 Ultra-Orthodox Jews
- 2 It is sacred and not to be killed
- 3 Orthodox Jews
- 4 Liberal and Reform Jews

Topic 1.4.3 Equal rights for women in religion

- 1 Men and women have different roles and so they cannot have equal rights in religion
- 2 They cannot be witnesses in the Bet Din
- 3 Liberal, Reform and Progressive Jews
- 4 The creation story in Genesis 1 says that God created man and woman at the same time and of equal status

Topic 1.4.7 Racial harmony

- 1 It shows that all humans can be traced back to Adam and Eve and so they must all be brothers and sisters
- 2 Most rabbis
- 3 The Tenakh
- 4 The responsibility to show God's laws to the rest of humanity