

## Unit U2.9 Why is the Torah so important to Jewish people? [God/Torah]

The principal aim of religious education is to explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by religion and belief, reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living.

**Learning outcomes** (intended to enable pupils to achieve end of key stage outcomes):

Teachers will enable pupils to achieve these outcomes, as appropriate to their age and stage, so that they can:

### Make sense of belief:

- Identify and explain Jewish beliefs about God
- Give examples of some texts that say what God is like and explain how Jewish people interpret them

### Understand the impact:

- Make clear connections between Jewish beliefs about the Torah and how they use and treat it
- Make clear connections between Jewish commandments and how Jews live (e.g. in relation to kosher laws)
- Give evidence and examples to show how Jewish people put their beliefs into practice in different ways (e.g. some differences between Orthodox and Progressive Jewish practice)

### Make connections:

- Make connections between Jewish beliefs studied and explain how and why they are important to Jewish people today
- Consider and weigh up the value of e.g. tradition, ritual, community, study and worship in the lives of Jews today, and articulate responses on how far they are valuable to people who are not Jewish.

### Ideas and some content for learning:

Teachers can select content from these examples, and add more of their own to enable pupils to achieve the outcomes.

Note that this unit builds on two previous units on Judaism (1.7, L2.10) and some thematic study (e.g. 1.8, L2.11, L2.12), so start by finding out what pupils already know.

- Find out about some contemporary Jews, both local and global. Use this to reflect upon the diversity of the Jewish community. Find out about local Jewish communities ([www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/england\\_geographic.htm#glouce](http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/england_geographic.htm#glouce) [www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Community/birmingham.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/Community/birmingham.htm))
- Recap prior learning about Jewish beliefs about God in 'the Shema', including belief in one God and the command to love God with all their heart, soul and might. Recall where it is found (Deuteronomy 6:4–9), how it links to beliefs about God and its use in the *mezuzah*. Learn about Orthodox use of the Shema in the *tefillin*. (Note: some Jews do not write the name of God out fully, instead they put 'G-d' as a mark of respect, and so that God's name cannot be erased or destroyed.) Find out more about the titles used to refer to God in Judaism and how these reveal Jewish ideas about the nature of God (e.g. Almighty, King, Father, Lord, King of Kings). Use some texts that describe these names (e.g. the Shema, Ein Keloheinu and Avinu Malkeinu – two Jewish prayers found in a *siddur*, a daily prayer book).
- Find out about how a *Sefer Torah* (handwritten scroll) is produced, covered and treated and the reasons for this; how it is used each week in the synagogue and for the annual cycle of readings.
- Talk about the Jewish holy book – the Written Torah or TeNaKh: this name refers to Torah (Law), Nevi'im (the Prophets), Ketuvim (the Writings). (Note the overlap with the Christian Old Testament.) Look at some examples of texts and stories from these different parts of the Tenakh. Find out about the place of the Torah at the heart of Jewish belief and practice and the importance of regular Torah study for many Jews.
- Build on prior learning: e.g. Recall the Creation story and how it is used at Rosh Hashanah; how Shabbat is inspired by God resting on day 7. Note how much of the Torah (the first five books of the Tenakh) is devoted to the story of Exodus and Passover, and the laws that were then given – and are still followed by the Jewish community today: the Torah contains 613 commandments (*mitzvot*), including the Ten Commandments. One group of these *mitzvot* deals with which foods may or may not be eaten. Find out about kosher food laws and how they affect the everyday lives of Jewish people. Note that not all Jews keep all these laws.
- Explore the fact that there is diversity within Judaism, which explains why Jews do not all keep the kosher laws in the same way. Find out some features of Orthodox and Progressive Judaism in relation to kosher, and Shabbat observance.
- Explore two synagogues: one Orthodox (e.g. [www.cheltenhamssynagogue.org.uk](http://www.cheltenhamssynagogue.org.uk); [www.birminghamsynagogue.com](http://www.birminghamsynagogue.com)) and one Progressive (e.g. [www.bpsjudaism.com](http://www.bpsjudaism.com)). Compare them and find out similarities and differences: objects found in them: e.g. ark, *Ner Tamid*, *bimah*; layout, services ([bit.ly/2m3QWwg](http://bit.ly/2m3QWwg) for a comparison). Find out about the place of the synagogue in the life of the Jewish community.
- Reflect on the value of ritual and tradition in Jewish communities, comparing its value in schools, families and other communities.