



## TWO TRIAL INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS

### SESSIONS GUIDANCE, SELF CHECKING AND LEARNING TASKS

*These learning tasks are intended to be short and to the point, showing that you have grasped the basic practices, history, messages and reasons introduced and outlined in the sessions of the units.*

You are free to use whatever resources you wish, but please remember that the aim is to enable you to explore your own developing knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Judaism. We hope that these questions will help you gain a sense of how much you have learned and developed over the sessions of each unit. This is **not** intended to be an “academic examination”, and we hope that you will find the process of responding through the learning tasks helps to clarify as well as being enjoyable.

#### **Note on orthodox sources:**

Much of the material available in books and on the internet is from orthodox or very orthodox sources (Aish, Chabad etc) . It is not too difficult to tell. Using G-d instead of God is a good indication – this is not usually done within Progressive or some orthodox Judaism, since ‘God’ is not God’s name, and English is not the ‘Holy language’. We certainly do not consider it necessary for you to write ‘God’ with a dash, and although Progressive Judaism is based on ‘Educated Choice’, if you choose to do so, we may ask you to explain your reasons for that choice. The same arguments apply for the word ‘HaShem’ (the name) as a way of avoiding saying ‘God’. Again any book or website using HaShem (or hashem) will probably be very orthodox. Similarly, any broad statements such as ‘Jews keep kosher’ or ‘Jews don’t drive on the Sabbath’ tends to indicate a right wing and limited view of the Jewish community. Such books and sites may tend to treat all festivals and commemorations as equally important (which they are not), and all sources quoted (which of course will not include non-orthodox ones) as equally valid (which clearly they also are not). If you use such sources, always bear in mind their perspective and filter what they say. ‘All Jews...’ really means ‘Fully observant Jews in the orthodox tradition...’ Bear in mind that although they spend lots of words and money on promoting their position, fully observant orthodox Jews are a small proportion of the Jewish community worldwide – probably only 10%. The World Union for Progressive Judaism (to which Progressive, Liberal, Reform and Reconstructionist Jewish communities belong) is the largest synagogue movement in the world.

#### **Note on degendering God:**

A key principle of Progressive Judaism is equality – each person is created equal in the ‘image of God’. We take care to make sure this is reflected in our language – so we don’t say ‘all men’, or ‘all mankind’ when we mean ‘all people’ or ‘all humanity’. Similarly, we reject any imagery of God as a Michaelangelo type ‘old man with a long beard on a cloud’ and indeed, with the introduction of our new generation of prayer books, and specifically in our region ‘The World Union Edition of Mishkan T’filah’, we have taken great care to avoid masculine terms such as ‘Lord’, ‘King’ and ‘Master’, as well as the pronouns ‘He’, ‘His’, ‘Him’ to talk about God. To write about God whilst avoiding masculine language takes some effort – certainly initially – and we would appreciate you trying to do this in your work (and in your thinking).

### Note on Hebrew:

The Introduction to Judaism course does not teach Hebrew. There are many Jews around the world who do not read much or any Hebrew. That being said, Hebrew is undoubtedly the ancient and central language of the Torah and of our prayers. At least an ability to recognise the letters and vowels will greatly assist you in becoming familiar and confident with Judaism. Many key words and phrases are in Hebrew. In this course, we introduce and use them, but utilize English characters (for example '**Mitzvah**' which is a commandment. Sometimes we emphasise the 'three root letters' from the Hebrew, so for example **MITZVah** – the root letters being **M, TZ and V** sounds). As you can see, some letter sounds (such as **TZ**) are not found in English and have to be made by combining letters. The most common of these is '**CH**' as in the festival of **Chanukah** – the 'CH' is pronounced as in the Scottish word '**loch**' or the German composer **Bach**. This is not very satisfactory – after all, in the word 'church', and every other English use of 'ch', it is NOT pronounced as in loch, or as in Hebrew! Therefore there are other attempts to show the sound – some use the combination 'kh', but in this course we will often use H or h (an underlined h) to indicate the guttural sound at the end of 'loch'.

**UNIT: INTRODUCTORY SESSION: 1**

**Learning Goal:** To gain an understanding of the structure of the Jewish annual cycle, and of the synagogue.

**Session notes:** Although Rosh Hashanah is said to be the birthday of the world, its primary message is more about the opportunity for a fresh start (after true repentance).

At this stage don't worry about all the different Hebrew names and titles. The English term is often just as common. We'll return to it.

**Self-checking questions** – Complete the sentences (answers on last page):

<b>1</b>	Judaism is a combination of a..... and a.....
<b>2</b>	Sometimes Abraham ..... with God
<b>3</b>	Judaism understands humans as having .....
<b>4</b>	Humans have both ..... and ..... inclinations
<b>5</b>	..... is a manifestation of the Divine
<b>6</b>	The first day of the Hebrew month is called .....
<b>7</b>	Surprisingly, the most important Jewish holiday is .....
<b>8</b>	On Shabbat, there are things Jews ..... and things they .....
<b>9</b>	The terms in Hebrew which describe the three functions of the synagogue are Bet ....., Bet ..... and Bet .....
<b>10</b>	Festivals play a ..... role in keeping ..... alive.

**Learning tasks for submission.** Choose from **either** left or right columns

- a) Create an annotated plan of a synagogue.
- b) Create a plan of the Jewish year.

- a) Present a grid or table of the Jewish Year. Include the festivals for each month. One column should note whether the festival is primarily concerned with creation, redemption or revelation. Two are concerned with relatively recent historical events. Note what they are in the theme column.
- b) Explain Judaism's luni-solar calendar underneath the grid.

<b><u>UNIT:</u> INTRODUCTORY <u>SESSION:</u> 2</b>	
<b>Learning Goal:</b> To introduce and understand the key significance of the three ‘pillars’ of Judaism: God, Torah and Israel.	
<b>Session notes:</b> ‘Israel’ has a variety of meanings – most commonly ‘The Jewish People’	
<b>Self-checking questions</b> (answers on last page):	
<b>1</b>	Judaism begins with ..... that <b>there is a power in the universe</b>
<b>2</b>	The <b>revolutionary concept accorded to Abraham</b> was that .....
<b>3</b>	Judaism believes that God ..... the universe
<b>4</b>	When we see God’s name יהוה we read it as .....
<b>5</b>	The central Statement of Faith in Judaism is called the .....
<b>6</b>	..... means ‘teaching’
<b>7</b>	Torah is the development of human understanding of the ..... ..
<b>8</b>	Israel – in Hebrew ‘ <i>Yisra’El</i> ’ - means .....
<b>9</b>	All Israel (Jewish people) are ..... one to another
<b>10</b>	Progressive Jews believe revelation continues in ..... Revelation
<b><u>Learning tasks for submission.</u></b> Choose from <b>either</b> left or right columns	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Draw a web showing central beliefs of Judaism, including as much detail as you can.</li> <li>b) Complete the sentence ‘Progressive Revelation’ means .....</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Choose 4 thinkers from this list: Mordecai Kaplan, Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Baruch Spinoza, Harold Kushner, Judah haLevi, Saadya Gaon. Write a short paragraph for each on their attitude to God.</li> <li>b) To what creed or doctrine or dogma must Jews adhere (if any)?</li> </ul>

**Session 1 Answers.** 1) way of life and culture, 2) challenges/argues with, 3) free will, 4) good and evil, 5) compassion, 6) Rosh Chodesh/New Moon, 7) Shabbat, 8) should do, don't do/avoid, 9) HaKneset, HaT'fillah, HaMidrash, 10) key/central, Judaism/the religion

**Session 2 Answers.** 1) an assumption/faith, 2) there is only One God, 3) created, 4) Adonai, 5) Sh'ma, 6) Torah, 7) Divine will, 8) one who struggles with God, 9) responsible, 10) Progressive.