Nature of the Almighty

Jews believe in **One G-d**. This is stated in the ***Shema,*** which is in the *Torah*. Jews put the Shema into a **mezuzah** that is then put on their doors and also into ***tefillin*** that are worn by men on their forehead and arm during prayer.

G-d is the Creator— The first words of the *Torah* show G-d as creator. (same creation story as Christians). It is also written in the 13 Principles of Faith set out by Rabbi Maimonides. As creator G-d shows his power, omniscience, benevolence and that everything belongs to him.

G-d is the Law-Giver—The *Tenakh* teaches that G-d gave laws. He gave 613 commands (*mitzvot*) to Moses on Mount Sinai including the 10 Commandments. G-d's laws form the *Halakah* which is the basis of how Jews live their lives today.

G-d is the Judge—The *Halakah* is the divine law of Judaism. G-d judges people on how they follow this and ensures the good will be rewarded and the evil are punished. This protects the world from chaos and encourages people to live good lives.

Shekhinah

***Shekhinah* describes G-d's almighty presence in the world**. It is also used for any form of human contact with G-d .

The ***Torah*** says Shekinah (1) guided Moses through the wilderness, (2) was present when Moses was given the Commandments, (3) was present in the tabernacle which contained the Ark of the Covenant. Today Jews speak of experiencing the *Shekhinah* through study, worship and prayer.

Different understandings of Shekinah for Jews today—Some reform Jews describe the *Shekinah* as a light created as a link between God and the World. Other Jews see it as the different ways God is related to the world. Others think of *Shekhinah* as another word for G-d.

Importance— *shekinah* shows G-d's presence is so holy and awesome that it must be respected which is why they only use G-d's name in worship. (1) It's present in the Temple, Mount Zion and Jerusalem making those places so special. (2) It means the *mitzvot* received by Moses were directly from G-d and were G-d's words.(3) It shows that G-d is still present in the world.

Understandings of the word Shekhinah— It shows that G-d is beyond understanding and there are different ways of experiencing Him. Some see *Shekhinah* as a feminine word so therefore showing the feminine side of G-d. The concept of *Shekhinah* in *kabbalah* (Jewish mysticism) brings together different religions and so helps to break down hatred.

Messiah

Messiah means '**Anointed One'** - one chosen by God for a special job e.g.to be a king.

After the exile in Babylon and the destruction of the Temple (587BCE) the Jews looked forward to the coming of a messiah who would: (1) rebuild the temple (2) unite all the peoples of the world (3) make all people aware of G-d's presence (4) begin a Messianic Age of peace.

The Messiah would: be a descendant of King David; be inspired by G-d; rule justly and fairly; be a holy man; rebuild the Temple.

The *Nevi'im* (prophets) said that, "The days are coming...when I will raise up a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land" (Jeremiah 23).

In the **Messianic Age** (*Olam Ha Ba*) there <u>will be</u>: (1) peace among the nations (2) justice and prosperity for all (3) a rebuilding of the Temple (4) belief in G-d and the Jewish faith by all people (5) obedience to the commandments (*mitzvot*) by all people.Belief in the Messiah is one of the 13 principles of Maimonides.

Some **Orthodox** Jews say they know when the Messiah will come, other say only G-d knows, some say he will only come when everyone keeps G-d's laws. Many **Reform** Jews believe the Messiah is not a single person but everyone must work to bring about the Messianic Age.

The Covenant at Sinai

Moses led the Jews out of slavery in Egypt (the *Exodus*). While in the wilderness **G-d appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai to make a Covenant**.

The Covenant at Sinai was (1) an agreement between G-d and Jewish people (2) written on tablets of stone kept in the *Ark of the Covenant* (3) stated that if the Jews kept the 613 laws given to Moses, they would be G-d's special people.

The **Covenant is important** because: the 613 commandments (*mitzvot*) shape their way of life and set them apart from the gentiles; they have a duty to keep the (*mitzvot*) as their side of the covenant; the *Tenakh* teaches that by keeping the commandments they will help bring all people to worship G-d.

Of the 613 laws given by G-d the **10 Commandments are particularly special because they apply to all Jews**; man, woman and child.

The 10 Commandments: emphasise worshipping one God only; ban statues from the synagogue and home; avoid misuse of G-d's name (saying 'the Almighty' or '*Hashem'* meaning 'the Name', rather than say G-d's name); resting from work on the Sabbath (*Shabbat*); respect for parents and family life; good moral choices/behaviour - avoiding stealing, killing, adultery, lying and desire of other people's things.

GCSE Religious Studies Unit 2 - 2.1b Judaism - beliefs and teachings (Key sources of wisdom & authority are included on the back of the sheet)

The Covenant with Abraham

In the **Abrahamic Covenant** G-d promised Abraham: (1) a son, despite his old age, (2) many descendants, (3) the land of Canaan for him and his descendants.

In return Abraham had to (1) be faithful and **worship G-d** alone (2) **be circumcised**, along with all his male descendants.

This Covenant established the Jewish people who are Abraham's descendants and the custom of circumcising Jewish boys at 8 days old.

Any person born of a Jewish mother has a right to be Jewish and live in the Promised Land of Canaan (Israel today).

This **covenant is important for Jews today** because: by being circumcised boys enter into the Covenant of Abraham (*Brit Milah*); Liberal/Reform Jews have a *Brit Chayim* (Covenant of Life) ceremony to welcome children into the Jewish faith: it establishes the right to live in the promised land (In 1947 the UN recognised the State of Israel, which all Jews have a right to live in - though this has led to conflict with the Palestinian people who also live there).

Some Jews link the idea of all Jews living in the Promised Land to the Messianic Age.

Sanctity of Life

Jews believe **human life is sacred**. "There is no G-d but me. I put to death I bring to life" (Deuteronomy). G-d gives people life and only G-d can end a life.

Pikuach Nefesh means **'saving a life'** and is the principle that **any *mitzvot* (commandment) can be ignored to save a life**. The Torah teaches "You shall keep my statutes, which if a man do, he shall live by them" but also "Do not do anything that endangers your neighbours life."

Jews are therefore required to suspend a commandment, even on holy days such as the Sabbath, if it saves a life. For instance - to save the life of a drowning child; to clear the rubble of a wall that has collapsed onto a child; to extinguish a fire are all allowed by *Pikuach Nefesh.* In other circumstances they might otherwise be considered as working on the Sabbath.

Pikuach Nefesh is important for Jews today because (1) it helps them to decide when they should break a *mitzvot* (commandment) (2) though against abortion is not allowed it gives priority to the life of the mother if she is at risk (3) It allows liberal Jews to permit the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV (4) it allows orthodox Jews to permit organ donation from a dead person to save the life of a living person.

Moral Principles and the Mitzvot

Moses was given **613 *Mitzvot* (commandments)** on Mount Sinai. They are written in the *Torah* and **Jews must observe them as part of the covenant.**

To understand and explain the *mitzvot* Jews refer to the ***Halakah,*** Jewish laws from the written and oral *Torah*. The ***Mishneh,*** which is the written version of the oral *Torah* and the ***Talmud,*** the *rabbi's* discussions about the laws.

Though the *Mitzvot* are commandments **Jews must choose to follow them through free will**. Jews believe they will be judged on whether they have chosen to keep the *mitzvot*.

It is important for Jews to understand the *mitzvot* so that: (1) they can keep them properly (2) they can develop a relationship with G-d (3) they can have better relationships with their neighbours (4) they keep the laws that are given by G-d as a test of faith.

The *Mitzvot* are very important to **Orthodox Jews** who believe they are G-d's direct commands and show that there is a right and a wrong way to live <u>all</u> aspects of life. **Liberal Jews** do not believe the *Mitzvot* come directly from G-d and keeping them is a matter of personal choice.

Orthodox Jews believe **the** *Mitzvot* have a deeper spiritual meaning enabling people to connect with G-d and truly become 'the People of G-d'.

Beliefs about Life after Death

The *Torah* teaches there is an afterlife when the dead are reunited with their families. **The rest of the *Tenakh* says G-d will end the world, raise the dead, rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem and judge people**.

Most Jews believe in resurrection because it is one of the 13 Principles of Jewish Faith. Some believe this will happen in the Messianic Age, some say after, and some say only the righteous will be resurrected. Other rabbis believe in the immortality of the soul and a spiritual afterlife in *Olam Ha Ba*.

Different rabbis believe judgement: is based on good behaviour; is about all good people going to heaven (including gentiles); about both belief and behaviour; is not as important as focusing on living this life well.

Jewish rabbis have different beliefs about **Heaven (*Gan Eden*) and Hell (*Gehinnom*):** the righteous go to heaven, souls are purified in Gehinnom; the wicked stay in *Gehinnom*; wicked souls are destroyed and cease to exist.

Belief in life after death is important for Jews today because (1) it is the teaching of the ***Torah*** (2) it is the teaching of the ***Tenakh*** (3) it is the teaching of the ***Talmud*** (4) It is one of the **13 Principles of Faith** (5) reward or punishment **gives this life meaning and purpose**.

		SOURCES OF WISDOM AND AUTHORITY	
	Topic	**Quote/Reference**	**Source**
1	Nature of the Almighty	"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is one" (The Shema, Deuteronomy 6,4)	Torah
2	Shekhinah	"My presence will go with you and I will give you rest" (Exodus 33)	Torah
3	Messiah	"I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah"	Thirteen Principles of Faith
4	The Covenant at Sinai	The 10 Commandments... (Exodus 20)	Torah
5	The Covenant with Abraham	"This land will be an everlasting possession to you and your descendants and I will be their G-d" (Genesis)	Torah
6	Sanctity of Life	"You shall therefore keep my statutes (laws)...which if a man do he will live by them" (Leviticus 18)…"That he shall live by them and not that he shall die by them" (Talmud)	Torah and Talmud
7	Moral Principles and the Mitzvot	"This day…I have set before you life and death...choose life that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30)	Torah
8	Beliefs about Life after Death	"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life." (Daniel)	Tenakh