



Dear members,

At Westminster Synagogue we offer an excellent opportunity for Post-Bnei Mitzvah students (and their friends who may wish to join them) to pursue a two year GCSE course in Religious Studies: Judaism and Christianity and to achieve a full GCSE in Year 10/Grade 9.

We have been running the course for many years, and it has won rave reviews from the participants. We are very lucky that we have Janet Berenson teaching the course for us. Janet is a hugely experienced and engaging educator who also serves as a Senior Examiner for one of the examination boards, and through her teaching, our students have regularly gained very high grades, mainly A\* previously and more recently 8 and 9.

The sessions themselves are lively and dynamic with all sorts of animated study and discussion of the various topics in Judaism and Christianity beliefs, practices and Ethics. They also offer the opportunity to make new friends and strengthen connections with old friends, who may also be taking the course, as well as with the community. Sessions will continue on a Wednesday afternoon from 5.15 -6.45pm alternating at the synagogue or online via Zoom, which is even better for all participants, as most of them have said. It is likely that next year's sessions will continue at that time, but Janet is happy to shift to 5.30 – 7pm if the earlier timing may be an issue.

The course that we follow is the specification of the AQA exam board, which can be inspected in detail on the website: [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk) or directly to the following [link](#). We study Specification A, and the current code for the course is 8062NA, which includes Paper 1- Judaism and Christianity Beliefs and Practices and Paper 2 Themes in Religious Studies. Janet can provide a letter to the school to request and confirm whether students will be able to sit their exams at their school.

All GCSE subjects are currently linear rather than modular. This means that students study the full course and sit the examinations in May/June at the end of the second year of study. Please note that it is not compulsory to take the exam at the end of the course, and we have had students who have joined the GCSE only to develop their knowledge and to be a part of the group. This would be absolutely fine.

Any students who take the Jewish Studies GCSE course and also work as a help teacher at Or Shabbat will receive a pay rise! We want to reward our teachers at Or Shabbat for improving their Jewish knowledge. We would like to invite you to sign up to join our class. The class costs 600 per year, and will go ahead if we have our minimum of 5 participants.

Our first session will be on Wednesday September 16<sup>th</sup> in preparation for Rosh Hashanah at the synagogue and a detailed term calendar with topics to be covered will be available in September. Please let me know if your child would be interested in the course, so that we can make preparations for the new term. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with either of us if you have any questions.

Warmest wishes,

Yael Roberts  
*Director of Community and Education*  
[yael@westminstersynagogue.org](mailto:yael@westminstersynagogue.org)

Janet Berenson  
*GCSE Teacher*  
[janbp@hotmail.com](mailto:janbp@hotmail.com)