

## **“The most important Jewish beliefs about judgement and the afterlife are relevant for Jews today.” Assess this claim.**

### **One side**

Ideas about heaven and hell, the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul have not really been a focus for serious consideration within Judaism and there are a variety of views.

This means that there is no accepted agreement amongst different groups within Judaism, and thus a wide range of opinions amongst present-day Jews about what actually happens after death.

Jews generally believe that it is far more important to focus on what is happening during life rather than being concerned about what might happen in the after-life. Most Jews are content to leave the details of the after-life to God.

There is very little to be found in the Torah relating to what Jews actually believe happens after a person dies.

In general, ancient Israelites believed in a physical resurrection, but did not agree as to whether the resurrected body would be like the former body or different in some way.

Jewish belief ranges from the Sadducees, who deny the resurrection, to the Pharisees, who insist upon it, to Philo of Alexandria's Platonic belief in the disembodied immortality of the soul.

## Another, alternative perspective

The concept of judgement and the afterlife can be found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In Isaiah 26 and Ezekiel 37 resurrection is part of the hope for the whole nation; it will happen to all God's people at the same time.

Daniel 12 can be interpreted in terms of a spiritual resurrection. The book of Daniel predicts a Day of Judgement when there will be a resurrection of the dead, and God will judge each soul and determine where each will spend eternity.

Hosea 6 may be the earliest statement of a belief in bodily resurrection.

The Torah presents Jews with the notion of a God who punishes the bad and rewards the good according to the way in which each has responded to the commandments given to Moses. This has implications in this life for a belief in the afterlife.

Some of those who believed in the afterlife also link this to the coming of the Messiah, who would defeat God's enemies and establish God's rule.

Perhaps the concept of judgement is of more relevance for Jews today rather than what happens in the afterlife, as many believe that God will reward the good and punish sinners *in this life* as well as the next. This is evident during the festival of Yom Kippur when the people stand before God and confess their sins before God makes a final judgement on each individual's fate for the coming year.