A Journey into Jewish Traditions with Ellie

Learning objective: To understand key beliefs, practices, and symbols within Judaism, and to reflect on the importance of community and tradition.

Read the passage about Jewish traditions carefully. Then, answer the five questions below, ensuring you use evidence from the text to support your answers.

Ellie the elephant has been learning about Judaism, one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. Jewish people believe in one God and follow teachings found in the Torah, which is the most sacred text in Judaism. It is often kept in a special cabinet called an Ark within a synagogue, the place where Jewish people gather to pray and study.

One of the most important weekly traditions is Shabbat, the day of rest. It begins at sunset on Friday and lasts until nightfall on Saturday. During this time, families often share a special meal, light candles, and reflect on the week. Ellie was fascinated to learn about the concept of a 'Mitzvah'. A Mitzvah is a commandment from God, but it is also understood as a good deed or an act of kindness towards others. Whether it is donating to charity or helping a neighbour, performing Mitzvot is central to Jewish life. Jewish people also celebrate various festivals throughout the year, such as Hanukkah, where a nine-branched candelabra called a Menorah is used to remember historical miracles. Through these traditions, Jewish communities maintain their identity and shared values across the world.

Word bank: Synagogue · Torah · Shabbat · Mitzvah · Menorah · Kippah

1. Where is the Torah kept when it is not being read in the synagogue? (1 mark)

2. During which specific timeframe does the weekly celebration of Shabbat take place? (1 mark)

3. Why might a Jewish person choose to perform a Mitzvah? (2 marks)

4. What does the use of the Menorah suggest about the importance of history in Jewish culture? (2 marks)

5. Do you think having a dedicated 'day of rest' like Shabbat is beneficial for families today? Explain your reasoning. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of a Menorah with nine candles lit, surrounded by symbols of kindness such as a heart or a helping hand to represent the concept of a Mitzvah.

Extension challenge: Research the festival of Hanukkah. Write a short paragraph explaining the history behind it and why it is significant to Jewish families.