Understanding Jewish Traditions with Ellie

Learning objective: To develop an understanding of key beliefs, practices, and the significance of the Shabbat in Judaism.

Read the passage carefully, then answer the questions below. Use evidence from the text to support your answers.

Ellie the elephant, who loves history, recently visited a local community centre to learn about Judaism. She discovered that Judaism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. Jewish people follow the Torah, which contains the foundational teachings and laws of their faith. A central part of Jewish life is the Shabbat, a day of rest that begins at sunset on Friday and ends at nightfall on Saturday. During this time, families gather to share a special meal, often beginning with the Kiddush, a prayer recited over wine or grape juice. Ellie learned that the synagogue is the heart of the Jewish community, serving as a place for worship, study, and social gatherings. She was particularly interested in the concept of 'mitzvot', which are commandments or good deeds that guide followers to act with kindness and justice. By observing these traditions, Jewish people show their dedication to their faith and their responsibility to care for the world around them. Ellie felt inspired by how these ancient traditions continue to bring families together in the modern world.

Word bank: Synagogue · Shabbat · Torah · Mitzvot · Kiddush

1. When does the period of Shabbat begin and end? (2 marks)

2. What is the primary purpose of a synagogue according to the text? (2 marks)

3. Why do you think 'mitzvot' are considered important for the Jewish community? (3 marks)

4. Based on the passage, what might be the benefit of families gathering for a special meal during Shabbat? (3 marks)

5. Ellie believes that traditions are important for bringing people together. To what extent do you agree that shared traditions help a community? Justify your answer. (4 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene showing a family table set for a Shabbat meal, including items mentioned in the text, such as a cup for the Kiddush prayer.

Extension challenge: Research the importance of the Havdalah ceremony and write a short paragraph explaining how it marks the end of the Shabbat.