Beliefs at the Harbor

Read, mark, and compare ancient Mediterranean beliefs.

SS24.7.8a "Identify the central tenets of Judaism, and compare Judaism to the polytheistic religions of other Mediterranean ancient civilizations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two beliefs or teachings central to Judaism, circle one way Greek or Egyptian worship differed, and number one practice from each tradition. Use your marks to compare the traditions.

Neighbors in Alexandria

1. At a busy harbor in Alexandria, Egypt, a sailor might hear Greek and Egyptian prayers before ships left port. Some Greeks honored Poseidon, a god linked to the sea. Egyptians worshipped several gods, including Isis, associated with protection. People brought gifts to temples and asked different gods for help with different needs. A Jewish family at the same harbor practiced a different belief: there was only one God. They did not worship Poseidon or Isis, even when neighbors did.

2. For Jewish communities, belief in one God was tied to a covenant, a lasting agreement between God and the people of Israel. The Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, contained teachings and laws that guided worship and daily choices. These teachings called for justice and care for people in need. Many Jewish families also set apart the Sabbath, a weekly day of rest and worship. Whether at home or far from Jerusalem, these practices helped communities keep their identity.

3. The harbor did not divide people into those who cared about right and wrong and those who did not. Greek and Egyptian worshippers also had customs and ideas about fair behavior. The key difference here was how people understood the divine: Judaism centered on one God, while Greek and Egyptian religions honored many gods. Both Jewish and polytheistic neighbors expressed beliefs through regular practices, but their practices were not identical. Jewish Sabbath observance followed teachings connected to the Torah; gifts at a temple honored a particular god.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How are belief in one God and the covenant connected in Judaism?

2. Name two teachings in the Torah that guided Jewish choices.

3. How did Jewish belief about God differ from the Greek and Egyptian beliefs described in the passage?

4. How did Sabbath observance and bringing gifts to a temple reflect different beliefs?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum visitor sees a Torah text beside a Greek offering bowl and says, “Greeks worshipped many gods, so they had no ideas about right and wrong.” Write a four-sentence label that uses both objects, explains two Jewish tenets and the difference in beliefs about gods, and responds to the visitor’s claim.

ANSWER KEY

Beliefs at the Harbor

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two beliefs or teachings central to Judaism, circle one way Greek or Egyptian worship differed, and number one practice from each tradition. Use your marks to compare the traditions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How are belief in one God and the covenant connected in Judaism?	**The covenant was a lasting agreement between the one God and the people of Israel.**
2	Name two teachings in the Torah that guided Jewish choices.	**The Torah called for justice and care for people in need.**
3	How did Jewish belief about God differ from the Greek and Egyptian beliefs described in the passage?	**Judaism centered on one God; the Greek and Egyptian religions described honored many gods.**
4	How did Sabbath observance and bringing gifts to a temple reflect different beliefs?	**Jewish Sabbath rest and worship followed teachings connected to the Torah. Gifts brought to a Greek or Egyptian temple honored a particular god among many.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Torah text reminds visitors that Jewish people believed in one God and followed teachings about justice and care for people in need. The Greek offering bowl represents gifts brought to a temple to honor a god, one of many Greek gods. These beliefs about the divine were different, but both communities connected beliefs to their actions. The visitor's claim is unfair because Greek worshippers also had ideas about fair behavior.

Accept equivalent wording that distinguishes belief in one God from worship of many gods. For the label, look for two accurate Jewish tenets and a response that does not equate polytheism with a lack of moral ideas.