

What is Judaism?

Assessment Options

High School (Grades 9-12)

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Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Instructions

Select ONE of the following assessment options to demonstrate your understanding of Judaism as discussed in the video and explored in class activities. Each option requires sophisticated analysis, use of evidence, and critical thinking.

Option A: Analytical Research Essay (3-4 pages, double-spaced)

Select ONE prompt:

Prompt 1: Diaspora and Cultural Continuity

Question: How did Jewish communities maintain cultural and religious identity across 2,000 years of geographic dispersion and diverse cultural contexts? What specific mechanisms enabled this remarkable cultural continuity?

Requirements:

- Develop a clear thesis arguing for specific factors that enabled cultural survival
- Use evidence from the video, class materials, and at least TWO additional scholarly sources
- Analyze multiple factors (textual tradition, ritual practice, community structures, etc.)
- Consider both challenges and adaptive strategies
- Address complexity and avoid oversimplification

Prompt 2: Comparative Diaspora Analysis

Question: Compare the Jewish diaspora experience to another diaspora population (Armenian, African, Chinese, Palestinian, Irish, or Greek). What factors explain similarities and differences in how these communities maintained identity while adapting to new environments?

Requirements:

- Develop comparative thesis identifying key similarities and differences
- Use specific historical examples from both diaspora experiences
- Analyze factors such as: forced vs. voluntary migration, religious cohesion, institutional structures, relationship to homeland, reception in host societies
- Use at least THREE scholarly sources (at least one on each diaspora)
- Synthesize insights about the nature of diaspora identity

Prompt 3: Orthopraxy and Cultural Survival

Question: Judaism emphasizes orthopraxy (correct practice/action) over orthodoxy (correct belief). Analyze how this philosophical stance may have contributed to Jewish resilience and cultural survival through history.

Requirements:

- Develop clear argument about the relationship between orthopraxy and resilience
- Explain the distinction between orthopraxy and orthodoxy
- Provide specific examples of how practices maintained identity
- Consider both advantages and potential limitations of this approach
- Compare to at least ONE other religious tradition's approach
- Use video, class materials, and at least TWO additional sources

Prompt 4: Monotheism's Historical Impact

Question: Evaluate the historical significance of Judaism's monotheistic innovation in the ancient world. How did this concept transform religious thought and influence subsequent traditions?

Requirements:

- Contextualize monotheism within ancient Near Eastern religious landscape
- Analyze the radical nature of this concept at the time
- Trace influence on Christianity and Islam (Abrahamic traditions)
- Consider philosophical and theological implications
- Use historical evidence and scholarly analysis
- Minimum TWO scholarly sources plus video and class materials

Prompt 5: Indigenous Identity and Displacement

Question: Examine the relationship between Jewish indigenous identity in the Land of Israel and 2,000 years of diaspora existence. How does this complex relationship between homeland and exile shape Jewish identity?

Requirements:

- Analyze what "indigenous" means in this context
- Examine how physical displacement coexisted with cultural maintenance
- Consider role of Jerusalem and Land of Israel in Jewish practice and identity
- Address complexity of return and modern implications
- Use specific historical examples
- Minimum TWO scholarly sources

Essay Format Requirements (All Prompts):

Introduction:

- Hook that engages reader
- Context and background
- Clear thesis statement

Body Paragraphs:

- Topic sentences that advance argument
- Specific evidence with proper citations
- Analysis (don't just present facts—interpret them)
- Transitions between ideas

Conclusion:

- Restate thesis (not word-for-word)
- Synthesize main points

- Broader implications or significance

Citations:

- Use MLA, APA, or Chicago style (be consistent)
- In-text citations for all sources
- Works Cited / References page
- Minimum: Video + class materials + 2 scholarly sources

Technical:

- 3-4 pages, double-spaced
- 12-point Times New Roman or similar font
- 1-inch margins
- Header with name, date, class
- Page numbers

Option B: Multimedia Documentary Project (5-7 minutes)

Create an analytical documentary exploring one aspect of Jewish history, culture, or identity.

Possible Topics:

- Journey of a specific Jewish community through history (Sephardi, Mizrahi, Ethiopian, etc.)
- Comparative study: Jewish diaspora vs. another diaspora
- Role of textual tradition in maintaining cultural continuity
- Jewish intellectual tradition and contributions to philosophy/science/arts
- Holocaust and its impact on Jewish identity and demographics
- Modern Jewish diversity and identity debates
- Calendar, ritual, and collective memory
- Jewish values in contemporary social justice movements

Documentary Requirements:

Research Component:

- Use minimum FOUR credible sources (academic articles, books, documentaries, interviews)
- Properly cite all sources in end credits and written bibliography

Content Requirements:

- Clear thesis or central question
- Historical accuracy
- Analytical depth (go beyond simple description)
- Multiple perspectives or dimensions
- Connection to themes from video and class

Technical Requirements:

- 5-7 minutes in length
- Original narration with script
- Combination of visual elements:
 - * Historical photographs or documents
 - * Maps or diagrams
 - * Graphics or text overlays
 - * Video clips (properly sourced)
 - * Interviews (if possible)
 - Background music (properly sourced, not overwhelming)
 - Clear audio quality
 - Professional presentation

Deliverables:

1. Documentary video file
2. Complete script with timestamps
3. Annotated bibliography (minimum 4 sources)
4. Reflection paragraph (150-200 words) on what you learned

Assessment Criteria:

- Historical accuracy and depth (30%)
- Analysis and critical thinking (30%)
- Research quality and source use (20%)
- Technical quality and creativity (15%)
- Organization and clarity (5%)

Option C: Comparative Analysis Matrix with Scholarly Commentary

Create a comprehensive comparison of THREE Jewish communities across diaspora, supported by scholarly analysis.

Communities to Choose From:

Select THREE different communities:

- Ashkenazi Jews (Central/Eastern Europe)
- Sephardi Jews (Spain, North Africa, Ottoman Empire)
- Mizrahi Jews (Middle East, Persia)
- Yemenite Jews
- Ethiopian Jews (Beta Israel)
- Indian Jews (Cochin, Bene Israel, Baghdadi)
- Moroccan Jews
- Iraqi Jews
- Persian/Iranian Jews
- Central Asian Jews (Bukharan)
- Italian Jews

Research Requirements:

For each community, research and document:

Historical Development:

- Geographic region and time period
- How community developed (migration, indigenous presence, etc.)
- Major historical events affecting community
- Relationship with surrounding societies

Cultural Adaptations:

- Language developments (Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, etc.)
- Culinary traditions and influences
- Musical and artistic traditions

- Dress and material culture
- Architectural styles (synagogues)

Jewish Elements Preserved:

- Torah and textual study traditions
- Holiday observances and unique customs
- Liturgical traditions and Hebrew usage
- Jewish law interpretation (Halakha)
- Community institutions and leadership

Modern Status:

- Current population and geographic distribution
- Immigration patterns (to Israel, United States, elsewhere)
- Contemporary challenges and adaptations
- Cultural preservation efforts

Deliverables:

1. Comprehensive Comparison Matrix (chart/table format)

- Organized by categories above
- Specific details for each community
- Visual elements (photos, maps) embedded

2. Analytical Essay (4-5 pages)

Address these questions:

- How did environmental and cultural contexts shape each community differently?
- What mechanisms enabled maintenance of Jewish identity despite geographic separation?
- What balance did each community strike between adaptation and preservation?
- What does this diversity reveal about the nature of Jewish (and cultural) identity?
- How do these historical developments affect contemporary Jewish diversity?

Essay should include:

- Clear thesis
- Analysis of similarities and differences
- Specific examples from your research
- Synthesis of insights about cultural adaptation and identity
- Minimum FOUR scholarly sources (beyond video)

- Proper citations

3. Annotated Bibliography

- Minimum 4 scholarly sources
- For each source: full citation + 100-150 word annotation explaining source's relevance and reliability

Assessment Criteria:

- Depth and accuracy of research (30%)
- Comparative analysis and critical thinking (30%)
- Quality of sources (15%)
- Organization and presentation (15%)
- Writing quality and citations (10%)

Option D: Primary Source Analysis Portfolio

Analyze 4-5 primary sources related to Jewish history or thought, demonstrating historical thinking and analytical skills.

Source Selection:

Choose 4-5 primary sources from different categories and time periods:

Biblical/Ancient Sources:

- Torah excerpts (Genesis 12-17: Abraham; Exodus 19-20: Sinai; Deuteronomy 6: Shema)
- Prophetic writings (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel)
- Psalms or wisdom literature

Talmudic/Medieval Sources:

- Talmud passages (debates on law or practice)
- Rashi's commentaries
- Maimonides (Mishneh Torah or Guide for the Perplexed excerpts)
- Medieval Jewish philosophy or poetry

Early Modern Sources:

- Responsa literature (rabbinical decisions)
- Letters from diaspora communities
- Documents from Spanish expulsion (1492)
- Descriptions of Jewish communities by travelers

Modern Sources:

- Enlightenment/Haskalah writings
- Zionist documents (Herzl, Weizmann)
- Holocaust testimonies or documents
- Israeli Declaration of Independence (1948)
- Contemporary Jewish thought

For Each Source, Complete:

1. Source Identification and Contextualization (1 page)

- Author/creator (if known)
- Date and location
- Historical context (what was happening at this time?)
- Genre/type of document
- Intended audience
- Purpose of document

2. Close Reading Analysis (1-2 pages)

- Key passages or ideas (quote and analyze)
- What does source reveal about:
 - * Jewish beliefs or practices at the time?
 - * Relationship between Jews and surrounding society?
 - * Jewish identity or self-understanding?
 - * Historical challenges or opportunities?
 - What questions does source raise?
 - What biases or perspectives might author have?

3. Corroboration and Connections (1 page)

- How does this source relate to video content?
- How does it compare to other sources in your portfolio?
- Does it confirm, challenge, or complicate your understanding?

- How does it connect to themes from class?

Deliverables:

1. Source Analysis Pages (4-5 sources × 3-4 pages each = 12-20 pages total)

- Include image or text of each primary source
- Complete three sections above for each source

2. Synthesis Essay (3-4 pages)

Address:

- What do these sources collectively reveal about Jewish history, identity, or thought?
- How do sources from different time periods show continuity and change?
- What insights do primary sources provide that secondary sources (video, textbook) cannot?
- How do you evaluate reliability and perspective when working with historical documents?

3. Annotated Source List

- Complete bibliographic information for each primary source
- Where you accessed it (archive, database, book)
- How you determined its authenticity and reliability

Assessment Criteria:

- Quality of source analysis (35%)
- Historical thinking skills (25%)
- Synthesis and connections (20%)
- Research and source selection (10%)
- Writing quality and organization (10%)

Option E: Thesis-Driven Research Project (Advanced)

For students seeking an advanced challenge:

Design your own research project exploring a specific aspect of Jewish history, culture, identity, or thought.

Requirements:

1. Research Proposal (due 1 week after assignment)

- Research question or thesis
- Significance of topic
- Methodology and sources you'll use
- Timeline for completion
- Must be approved by teacher

2. Research Phase

- Minimum SIX scholarly sources
- May include primary sources
- Take detailed notes with citations

3. Final Product (choose format):

- Traditional research paper (8-10 pages)
- Documentary film (10-12 minutes)
- Museum-style exhibition (physical or digital)
- Podcast series (3 episodes, 10-15 minutes each)
- Scholarly presentation with visual aids (15-20 minutes)

4. Annotated Bibliography

- All sources used
- Annotations explaining relevance and reliability

5. Reflection (2 pages)

- What you learned through research process
- Challenges encountered and how you addressed them
- How your understanding evolved
- Questions that emerged for future exploration

Assessment Criteria:

- Quality and depth of research (35%)
- Analytical sophistication (25%)
- Organization and presentation (20%)
- Source quality and use (10%)

- Originality and engagement (10%)

Grading Rubric - Analytical Essays (Options A, C, D)

Excellent (90-100)

Thesis and Argument (25%):

- Sophisticated, nuanced thesis demonstrating deep understanding
- Complex, multi-faceted argument
- Original insights beyond basic content
- Engages with complexity and multiple perspectives

Evidence and Analysis (35%):

- Extensive, specific evidence from diverse sources
- Sophisticated analysis interpreting evidence
- Meaningful connections across ideas, time periods, contexts
- Avoids oversimplification; addresses nuance
- Strong integration of video, class work, and additional research

Organization and Structure (20%):

- Logical, purposeful organization enhancing argument
- Clear, analytical topic sentences
- Smooth transitions connecting ideas
- Introduction establishes context and thesis
- Conclusion synthesizes and extends implications

Source Use and Citations (10%):

- Meets or exceeds source requirements
- Uses scholarly, credible sources
- Proper citation format throughout
- Integrates sources smoothly into writing

Writing Quality (10%):

- Sophisticated vocabulary and sentence variety
- Clear, engaging writing style

- Minimal errors in grammar, mechanics, spelling
- Academic tone appropriate to assignment

Proficient (80-89)

Thesis and Argument:

- Clear thesis showing solid understanding
- Coherent argument with adequate support
- Some engagement with complexity
- Generally sound reasoning

Evidence and Analysis:

- Specific evidence from multiple sources
- Competent analysis with interpretation
- Makes appropriate connections
- Addresses complexity adequately
- Uses video and additional sources

Organization and Structure:

- Clear organization with logical flow
- Topic sentences present
- Adequate transitions
- Introduction and conclusion present
- Structure supports argument

Source Use and Citations:

- Meets source requirements
- Uses credible sources
- Generally correct citation format
- Mostly smooth integration

Writing Quality:

- Appropriate academic vocabulary
- Clear writing
- Minor errors not impeding understanding
- Generally appropriate tone

Developing (70-79)

Thesis and Argument:

- Basic thesis present but may be simplistic
- Argument underdeveloped or inconsistent
- Limited engagement with complexity
- Some logical gaps

Evidence and Analysis:

- Some specific evidence but may be limited
- More description than analysis
- Basic connections made
- May oversimplify
- Limited source use beyond video

Organization and Structure:

- Basic organization present
- Some organizational issues
- Weak topic sentences or transitions
- Introduction/conclusion basic or underdeveloped

Source Use and Citations:

- May not fully meet requirements
- Some sources less credible
- Citation errors or inconsistencies
- Integration sometimes awkward

Writing Quality:

- Basic vocabulary
- Some errors interfering with clarity
- Tone may be inconsistent
- Some unclear passages

Beginning (Below 70)

Thesis and Argument:

- Unclear or missing thesis
- Weak or missing argument
- No engagement with complexity
- Significant logical problems

Evidence and Analysis:

- Limited or missing evidence
- Summary rather than analysis
- Few or no connections
- Oversimplifies significantly
- Insufficient sources

Organization and Structure:

- Unclear organization
- Difficult to follow
- Missing structural elements
- Little logical flow

Source Use and Citations:

- Does not meet requirements
- Poor source quality
- Missing or incorrect citations
- Sources not integrated

Writing Quality:

- Limited vocabulary
- Frequent errors impeding understanding
- Inappropriate tone
- Unclear communication

Timeline and Checkpoints

Week 1:

- Select assessment option
- Begin research and planning

Week 2:

- Submit preliminary thesis/outline/proposal
- Teacher feedback

Week 3:

- Continue research and drafting/creation
- Optional: Peer review session

Week 4:

- Final revisions
- Submit completed assessment

Academic Integrity Statement

I understand that this assessment must represent my original work. I will:

- Properly cite all sources
- Not plagiarize (copy others' words or ideas without attribution)
- Not use AI tools to write substantial portions of my work
- Ask my teacher if I have questions about proper citation or academic integrity

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____