

What is Judaism?

Jewish Values and Ethical Frameworks

High School (Grades 9-12)

Jewish Values and Ethical Frameworks: Analysis and Application

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Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Part 1: Identifying and Categorizing Jewish Values

The video "What is Judaism?" emphasizes that Judaism focuses on "what you do" rather than solely "what you believe." Review Jewish values mentioned in the video and categorize them:

Values List from Video:

- Education and intellectual discourse
- Open debate and questioning
- Making the world better (Tikkun Olam)
- Respect for parents
- Care for animals
- Compassion for strangers
- Mindfulness in daily life
- Gratitude
- Accountability (to self, divine, community)

- Justice

Categorization Exercise:

Place each value into one or more categories (values may fit multiple categories):

Reflection: What does this categorization reveal about the scope and focus of Jewish ethical teaching?

Part 2: Orthopraxy vs. Orthodoxy - Philosophical Analysis

Defining Terms:

Orthodoxy: Emphasis on correct belief, doctrine, or faith

Orthopraxy: Emphasis on correct practice, action, or conduct

Analysis:

1. The video states: "Judaism isn't only about what you believe in, it is about how you act. What you do."

What are three potential advantages of emphasizing orthopraxy (action) over orthodoxy (belief)?

Advantage 1:

Advantage 2:

Advantage 3:

2. What might be some limitations or challenges of this approach?

3. Compare Judaism's emphasis on orthopraxy to another religious or philosophical system you've studied.

System

chosen:

How does it approach the belief vs. action question?

What does this comparison reveal about different approaches to ethics and spirituality?

Part 3: Tikkun Olam - Repairing the World

"**Tikkun Olam**" translates to "repairing/perfecting the world" and represents the Jewish concept of social responsibility and action to improve society.

Philosophical Analysis:

1. This concept places responsibility for improving the world on human action rather than solely divine intervention. What are the philosophical implications of this human-centered approach?

2. Research and identify THREE contemporary social justice movements or organizations that explicitly cite Tikkun Olam as inspiration or framework:

Organization **1:**

Focus/mission:

Organization **2:**

Focus/mission:

Organization **3:**

Focus/mission:

3. How does the concept of Tikkun Olam relate to other ethical frameworks you've studied?

Compare to at least TWO of the following:

- Utilitarian ethics (greatest good for greatest number)
- Kantian ethics (categorical imperative, duty)
- Virtue ethics (character development)
- Social contract theory
- Care ethics

Framework

1:

Similarities:

Differences:

Framework

2:

Similarities:

Differences:

Part 4: Debate and Intellectual Discourse as Sacred Practice

The video describes the Talmud as "basically a collection of Jews arguing over the meaning of the Torah" and notes Judaism "encourages open and thoughtful debate, literally about everything."

Critical Analysis:

1. Why might religious debate and questioning be valued rather than discouraged? What functions might this serve?

Intellectual function:

Religious function:

Social function:

Cultural preservation function:

2. Compare this approach to debate/questioning in:

a. Another religious tradition:

Tradition:

Approach to questioning authority/texts:

Similarities/differences with Judaism:

b. Academic/scientific inquiry:

Similarities between Talmudic debate and scientific method:

How might this tradition have contributed to Jewish achievement in intellectual fields?

Part 5: Gratitude and Mindfulness Practices

Judaism emphasizes mindfulness and gratitude, including the *Modeh Ani* prayer expressing gratitude upon waking each morning.

Philosophical and Psychological Analysis:

1. From a psychological perspective, what benefits might daily gratitude practice provide?

Cognitive benefits:

Emotional benefits:

Social benefits:

2. How does institutionalizing gratitude (making it a daily ritual) differ from spontaneous appreciation?

Potential advantages of ritualized gratitude:

Potential disadvantages or limitations:

3. Design your own mindfulness or gratitude practice based on Jewish principles but adapted to your life:

Practice description:

Frequency:

Purpose/goal:

How does this practice reflect Jewish values?

Part 6: Comparative Ethics - Universal and Particular

Jewish values contain both **particular** elements (specific to Jewish tradition and identity) and **universal** elements (applicable across cultures and traditions).

Analysis Exercise:

For each value below, analyze whether it is primarily universal, particular, or both:

Synthesis Question:

How does Judaism balance particularism (maintaining distinctive identity) with universalism (values applicable to all humanity)?

Why might this balance be important for diaspora communities?

Part 7: Applied Ethics Case Studies

For each scenario, apply Jewish values to analyze the ethical dimensions and determine an appropriate response:

Case Study 1: Environmental Responsibility

Scenario: A corporation is considering a new manufacturing process that will increase profits by 30% but will also increase carbon emissions and environmental pollution. The process is legal but environmentally harmful.

Relevant Jewish values:

Ethical analysis:

Recommended action:

Case Study 2: Social Justice and Immigration

Scenario: Your community is debating whether to become a sanctuary city for undocumented immigrants. Some argue it's a legal issue, others say it's a humanitarian issue.

Relevant Jewish values:

Ethical analysis (consider multiple perspectives):

How might Jewish historical experience as strangers/immigrants inform this issue?

Case Study 3: Education and Opportunity

Scenario: Your school is cutting funding for arts and music programs to increase standardized test prep. The administration argues test scores will improve college admissions rates.

Relevant Jewish values:

Ethical analysis:

Recommended action:

Part 8: Personal Ethical Framework

Reflection and Application:

**1. Which Jewish value or ethical principle from this lesson most resonates with you personally?
Why?**

Value _____ **chosen:**

Why it resonates:

2. How could you incorporate this value into your daily life in a concrete way?

Specific practice:

How you'll implement it:

How you'll measure success:

3. Identify one contemporary ethical issue that interests you. How might Jewish values provide insight or guidance on this issue?

Issue:

Relevant Jewish values:

Analysis:

Conclusion:

Part 9: Synthesis Essay Preparation

Thesis Development: Craft a thesis statement responding to this prompt:

"Analyze how Jewish values emphasize action over belief, and evaluate the philosophical and practical implications of this approach to ethics and identity."

Essay Planning:

Your thesis statement:

Three main supporting arguments:

Argument 1:

Supporting

evidence:

Argument 2:

Supporting

evidence:

Argument 3:

Supporting

evidence:

Potential counterarguments or complications to address:

Conclusion/broader implications:
