

What is Judaism?

Analytical Viewing Guide

High School (Grades 9-12)

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Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Period:** _____

Directions

As you watch "What is Judaism?" take analytical notes using the two-column format below. Go beyond simply recording facts—analyze, question, and make connections.

Cornell Notes Format

Part 1: Origins and Foundational Concepts

Part 2: Diaspora and Cultural Diversity

Part 3: Practices, Values, and Resilience

Critical Analysis Questions

1. Contextualizing Monotheism

How did the introduction of monotheism represent a paradigm shift in ancient Near Eastern religious thought?

What might have been the social, political, or philosophical implications of this shift?

2. Indigenous Identity and Displacement

The video describes Judaism as an "indigenous faith" tied to the Land of Israel, yet Jews lived in diaspora for 2,000 years. How does one reconcile indigenous identity with global dispersion?

What does this reveal about the nature of cultural identity—is it primarily tied to geography, practice, belief, or something else?

3. Mechanisms of Cultural Continuity

What specific mechanisms enabled Jewish communities to maintain distinct identity across vast distances and diverse cultural contexts?

List at least 5:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

Analyze: Which mechanism do you believe was most critical to cultural survival and why?

4. Diversity Within Unity

Jewish communities developed vastly different customs, languages (Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic), and cultural practices. Yet they maintained a unified Jewish identity.

How is this possible? What balance must be struck between cultural adaptation and cultural preservation?

Compare this to another diaspora population you've studied. What similarities or differences exist?

5. Orthopraxy vs. Orthodoxy

The video emphasizes that Judaism focuses on "what you do" (actions/deeds) rather than solely "what you believe" (faith/creed).

What are the potential advantages of this approach to religious/cultural identity?

How might this emphasis on practice (orthopraxy) rather than belief (orthodoxy) contribute to resilience and cultural survival?

6. Collective Memory and Ritual Practice

Jewish holidays function as vehicles for collective memory, with narratives of historical events reenacted through ritual practice (Passover Seder, Hanukkah celebrations, etc.).

How does ritual reenactment differ from simply learning about history? What purpose does this serve?

Can you identify similar practices in other cultures where ritual preserves collective memory?

7. Resilience and Historical Perspective

Analyze the quote: "Jewish holidays can be summed up as, 'They tried to kill us, they didn't succeed, let's eat.'"

a. What does this humorous summary reveal about Jewish approaches to historical trauma?

b. How might this perspective serve as a survival mechanism?

c. What are potential strengths and limitations of framing history through this lens?

8. Debate and Intellectual Discourse

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

Why might debate and questioning be valued as sacred practices rather than seen as threats to religious authority?

How might this tradition of intellectual discourse contribute to cultural dynamism and adaptation?

9. Demographic Realities

Jews represent approximately 0.2% of the global population (16 million out of 8+ billion).

a. What does this demographic reality reveal about the relationship between population size and cultural influence?

b. How might minority status affect cultural preservation strategies?

10. Personal Synthesis

What is the most significant insight you gained from this video about Judaism, cultural identity, or resilience?

What questions remain unanswered that you would like to explore further?

Vocabulary Application

For each term, provide:

1. **Definition** in your own words
2. **Contextual example** from the video
3. **Connection** to broader themes or other contexts

1. Ethno-religion

Definition:

Example

from

video:

Connection:

2. Covenant

Definition:

Example **from** **video:**

Connection:

3. Diaspora

Definition:

Example **from** **video:**

Connection:

4. Resilience

Definition:

Example

from

video:

Connection:

5. Monotheism

Definition:

Example

from

video:

Connection:

Extension Thinking

Comparative Analysis Preparation

Choose one aspect of Judaism discussed in the video (diaspora experience, holiday system, values framework, debate tradition, etc.). In the space below, begin comparing it to a similar concept in another culture or religious tradition you've studied.

Aspect

chosen:

**Similar concept in [other culture/religion]: _____

Similarities:

Differences:

What does this comparison reveal?
