



This is a revision focused activity that follows on from the AO1 task, and puts together the earlier skills learnt. It is about creating an end product, applying the skills required by AO2. A number of lines of argument are given, though it is not necessary to develop all of them. The order may also need changing. A variety of quotations are provided, but again not all are required. You will need to do your own intermediate conclusions and develop a main conclusion. The completed essay should take 35 minutes.

ESSAY TITLE:

Evaluating the possibility of assimilation into a secular society for Jews in Britain.

Not possible to assimilate but maintain 'separateness'

- Often seen as restrictive due to rules and regulations - in attempting to live according to religious guidelines in a secular society, Jews are in danger of isolating themselves
- Encourages isolation from others
- Loss of statement of identity and separateness
- Demands of religious practice not in line with modern working life and problems reconciling the rituals and requirements of certain Jewish rites of passage with the law of the land.
- Education in state schools lacks kosher food facilities, provides non-Jewish daily acts of collective worship.
- Jewish school - cultural needs of the child can be catered for fully and moral and ethical instruction will be in accordance with Jewish belief.
- Materialistic values of the secular world not in line with Jewish values.
- Food - many Orthodox Jews wish to follow the laws of kashrut in their entirety, food has to be produced, prepared and eaten in a certain way as set down in the Torah and rabbinic tradition.
- Impossible for Orthodox Jews to eat in non-Jewish restaurants or in the homes of non-Jewish people, thus limiting social contact with those outside their own particular cultural group.
- Religious dress also is a barrier to assimilation - Hasidic men always have a beard and side curls in obedience to Leviticus 19:27. Hasidic women also stand out as different as they wear modest



clothing which does not reveal their neckline, arms or legs and also wear a wig once married to cover their hair.

- Hasidic Jews have not tried to assimilate, and live in closed communities as it is impossible to live their particular way of life in mainstream society.

In support of assimilation

- Assimilation does not mean abandoning faith and practice and Shabbat helps to maintain identity
- Britain is multi-faith society as respects the religious practices of its faiths and welcomes/embraces differences
- Focus on family it could be argued is important to British culture
- Many other faiths assimilate
- Education - Most Jews living in Britain have fared very well within the British education system - the British education system has changed and is relevant and beneficial to understand their secular and religious communities.
- Jewish faith schools, however, can generate their own problems since they can increase the sense of alienation felt by the Jewish child by continually making them aware that they are culturally different from the wider society in which they live.
- Reform Jews have always believed in assimilation for the survival of Judaism. They believe that Jews are able to maintain their religious devotional lifestyle without it having any detrimental effect upon their ability to function fully in mainstream society.
- Total assimilation isn't required anyway due to the fact that British society embraces Jewish religious identity along with a wide variety of religions, creeds and cultures.



Quotations

The prophet Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles in Babylon, telling them, 'Seek the peace in the city in which you find yourself, for it is in its peace that you will find peace.' This is still true today. (Sacks)

'When a Jew dies, Jewish law and tradition require that the funeral and burial of the deceased take place as soon after death as possible – ideally within twenty-four hours, but certainly within forty-eight hours. The funeral and burial are held so soon after death to emphasise the Jewish belief that the soul – wherein is the spark of life – immediately returns to God who gave it.' (Dosick)

'Without compromising their missions or neglecting their core audience, organisations that serve the Jewish community should, where appropriate, find ways of ensuring that their benefits spread as widely as possible.' (The Jewish Leadership Council)

'We hold that all such Mosaic and rabbinical laws as regulate diet ... Their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.' (Pittsburgh Platform of 1885)

'They require discrimination recognising that the body and food are given by God who calls for holiness in his people.' (Hoffman)

'You shall not round off the side-growth on your head, or destroy the side-growth of your beard.' (Leviticus 19:27)

'[Jewish education] is meant to cushion the effect of the gentile environment, enhance social contact with fellow Jews, limit the prospect of inter-marriage, and provide a degree of Jewish education.' (Unterman)

'There is so much that communities can do to reverse the trend and attract people back. Younger people cannot afford to live in the big cities, and, as such, cities like Sheffield are seeing a growth in certainly the Jewish community. And Cardiff, being a capital city is a wonderful place to live, and we must fly the flag. Kosher food is sometimes used as a reason for not coming here, but everyone can order online anyway, so there is no problem there. We must do the right thing and make our synagogues welcoming and not stuffy. We must have a positive attitude, and if we take action to change things we will succeed.' (Stone)



'A lot of the religious younger people have moved away to have more religious amenities ... People who want the religious education – the schools and universities – the social scene and restaurants have moved away ... if you want to bring up your family with a lot of Jewish schools around, with Jewish delicatessens, you can't always do it in Cardiff.' (Soffa)

'Many Orthodox Jews keep the laws of kashrut in their entirety; however, this can pose particular problems for Jewish communities and individuals who live in Britain today. Keeping kashrut certainly has the potential to isolate and separate Jews from the wider secular society.' (Gwynne-Kinsey)

'Religious dress also marks a person out as different, which can also act as a barrier to assimilation. One particular group within Judaism, Hasidic Jews, are immediately recognisable by their appearance and style of dress. Hasidic men always have a beard and side curls in obedience to Leviticus 19:27.' (Gwynne-Kinsey)

'Reform Jews have always been of the opinion that it is important to be assimilated into the wider society in which one lives, and they have shown that it is possible.' (Gwynne-Kinsey)