

## Support for centres with AO2: some suggestions for teaching

***NB the nature of this information is for developing AO2. What follows are NOT definitive answers – lines of argument are suggested in order to demonstrate the skills of AO2, but the Eduqas strongly advises further development and for teachers and candidates to apply their own ideas and evaluation in response to the materials already provided.***

For the skills of AO2 it is important to remember that what is being assessed are skills of evaluation and not simply knowledge and understanding of content. The six bullets for each Theme are listed beneath the AO1 content. They are NOT questions in themselves but rather indications of the areas of debate that may arise in a typical AO2 question statement. In addition, as AO1 material is studied the whole purpose of AO2 is to approach an understanding of the AO1 material in a critical and evaluative way that is very much a rigorous and academic discipline.

One of the most common features of a Principal Examiner's report is the regular comment that candidates just **present lists of views** in support of and/or challenging an argument often in response to a question expecting an evaluation. So, for instance, a typical mark scheme may list bullets of points to consider but to repeat them does not demonstrate AO2. How the points are **USED** and **DEVELOPED** by the teacher and candidate to form critical analysis and evaluation is crucial and transforms any suggested material into academic debate that mirrors the AO2 Band descriptors.

There is nothing wrong with preparing your considerations and reflections of a topic in response to the 'Issues for evaluation and analysis' section of the Specification; however, what is important is **making sure that there is some form of personal analysis or commentary throughout the answer** that can then be **used to form a reasonable conclusion**.

Evaluation and analysis skills present themselves as a constant dialogue between the voice of the evidence or the views that you are selecting, and that of your own voice, with the end result of you having the final word that states clearly your position [conclusion(s)].

## Judaism

### Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Judaism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The first bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the Mishnah as the most important element of the Talmud.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Mishnah is regarded as a work of great authority due to the fact that it stands as the first authoritative compilation of the Oral Torah. It stands as the central literary document of the entire Talmudic period, serving as the foundation for both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds.
2. It is regarded by many as the means by which the laws of the written Torah could be interpreted to cover every situation that the Jews would find themselves in beyond their time in the wilderness.
3. Some might claim that the Mishnah was much more important historically than it is in the present day.
4. Despite its authoritative provenance it doesn't, for example, give definitive rulings on problems, and as such, additions to the body of religious law were inevitable.
5. This has led some to assert that the Gemara also has a valuable and important position within the Talmud.
6. The purpose of the Mishnah is also not entirely clear.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Is the claim that the Mishnah represents an unbroken chain of tradition sufficient to argue that it is the most important element of the Talmud?
2. Has the Mishnah retained its importance in present-day Judaism?
3. How important is the Gemara in relation to the Mishnah within Judaism?
4. Does the fact that the Mishnah doesn't offer definitive rulings count against its status?
5. How decisive a role has the Mishnah played in the religious life of the Jewish people?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. It is the most important element of the Talmud, due in part to its status as the first authoritative document of the Talmudic period.
2. It cannot be judged in isolation as it is interrelated with the Gemara.
3. It cannot be denied that the Mishnah has played a decisive role in the religious life of the Jewish people.

## Judaism

### Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Judaism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The second bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the relative importance of the Gemara.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It could be argued that once the Mishnah was written down, it was no longer able to meet the demands of changing times and circumstances. Neither did it give definitive rulings on specific problems.
2. It was the Gemara that provided a record for these further additions to the body of Jewish religious law, and thus a key element in bringing about a clearer understanding of how to live according to the mitzvot.
3. The Gemara has a wider range of content than the Mishnah, and significantly, it makes connections between the biblical text and the practices and legal opinions of its time for nearly every law discussed, whereas the Mishnah rarely does so. Examples can be offered as evidence of this.
4. Great emphasis is placed upon learning the Gemara at yeshiva.
5. However, the relationship between the Mishnah and Gemara should not be forgotten as the Gemara relies upon the Mishnah for its existence.
6. Study of the Gemara is highly academic, and not something that non-scholastic Jews would undertake.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Could the Mishnah alone have met the demands of changing times and circumstances within Judaism?
2. Does the Gemara bring about a clearer understanding of how to live according to the mitzvot?
3. To what extent does the Gemara rely upon the Mishnah?
4. Does the highly academic nature of the Gemara reduce its significance within mainstream Judaism?
5. How significant has its impact been on the way in which decisions regarding contemporary issues have been made?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. There are clearly aspects of the Gemara that can be used as evidence of its importance.
2. It cannot be ignored that it depends entirely upon the Mishnah for its existence
3. Many would say that the Mishnah is the text of greatest importance, however the two texts are interrelated and thus the Gemara cannot be judged on its own merit.

## Judaism

### Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Judaism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The third bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the importance of Halakhah versus the importance of Aggadah for Judaism.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It should be acknowledged that there is a strong and vital relationship between the two: Halakhah deals with the law and Aggadah with the meaning of the law.
2. A further example of the importance that is attached to both Halakhah and Aggadah in the same measure can be found in an interpretation of Genesis 27:28.
3. Some might claim that it is Midrash Halakhah that should be held in a position of greater importance due to the role it has played throughout the history of Judaism. E.g. the inclusion of prohibitions which were added in an attempt to ensure that the mitzvot were not broken unknowingly.
4. There is diversity within Judaism regarding the notion that Halakhah is the revealed will of God.
5. It is important to weigh up the perceived strengths and weaknesses of Aggadah in order to judge its importance in relation to Halakhah.
6. One of the strengths of aggadic midrashim is their ability to supplement biblical texts in order to make them easier to understand.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Is there an indissoluble link between Halakhah and Aggadah?
2. Can Halakhah claim greater importance due to its role in maintaining the relevance of the 613 mitzvot?
3. Does the Reform view of Halakhah dilute its importance in any way?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Aggadah?
5. What opinion does rabbinic tradition hold on this matter?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. The strong link between Halakhah and Aggadah makes it difficult to argue for the importance of one over the other.
2. Halakhah holds greater importance.
3. Even rabbinic tradition illustrates the struggle to decide which was the most important.

## Judaism

### Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Judaism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fourth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider whether or not midrash is an imprecise science.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The four methods of midrashic interpretation may be different in approach, but all are accepted as a means of encountering the will of God through the Torah.
2. By virtue of the fact that midrash is a method of *interpretation*, it is therefore open to a variety of opinions, and thus may not be as precise as it could be.
3. It could be argued that Halakhah rather than Aggadah shows evidence of greater precision in its interpretation of that which is considered to be the word of God.
4. Some aggadic midrashim contain fantastic legends centred upon rabbis or biblical figures where there is no precise link to such an account in the Tanakh.
5. Aggadic stories are not meant to be taken at face value, and perhaps the point of them is not to provide a precise interpretation but rather to illustrate a moral or ethical point.
6. Perhaps the issue is not about precision, but whether or not Midrash has been successful in its purpose, that of seeking answers to contemporary problems, and crafting new stories that make connections between the Jewish way of life and the eternal Torah.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Does precision mean that different approaches are not considered to be an acceptable means of encountering the will of God?
2. Can the midrashic method be regarded as a precise means of scriptural interpretation?
3. Is Halakhah more precise than Aggadah?
4. What purpose does Aggadah serve?
5. Does Midrash serve its purpose regardless of its imprecision or otherwise?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Midrash presents a method that has been accepted, and which holds an important position within Judaism.
2. The perceived imprecision of Aggadah belies the fact that it serves a different purpose.
3. Jews in general do not look for perfect, definitive answers to their questions about scripture.

## Judaism

### Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Judaism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fifth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the relative importance of Rashi and Maimonides for understanding Hebrew scriptures.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It is their legacies that need to be taken account of when evaluating the relative importance of Rashi and Maimonides for understanding Hebrew scriptures.
2. Rashi's influence can be highlighted by the fact that it has been claimed that no Jew who studies Torah or Talmud does so without his influence.
3. Rashi has not been without his critics who cite his lack of scientific method as preventing him from achieving the highest rank in the domain of exegesis.
4. Maimonides too holds a position of great authority especially within Orthodox Judaism due to the quantity, quality, scope and originality of his writing.
5. However, Maimonides was not without his critics, and a number of Jewish scholars were troubled by some of his views they believed were out of line with traditional scholarship.
6. It is difficult to compare them when they existed almost a century apart.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Is the fact that Rashi's commentaries are based upon peshat the reason for his continuing influence in Biblical studies?
2. Which examples of their teachings/written works could best be used to illustrate their importance for understanding Hebrew scriptures?
3. What criticisms have been made regarding Rashi?
4. Does Maimonides' philosophical approach to midrash take anything away from his importance?
5. Is it possible to compare the approaches of Rashi and Maimonides in an objective way?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Even though they had different approaches, they both aimed to make the Talmud coherent and approachable.
2. Perhaps it is not possible to assess the relative importance of Rashi and Maimonides in an objective manner.
3. It may be the best solution to acknowledge that they are both important in their own way.

**The sixth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the extent to which Maimonides is the most complete Jewish scholar.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The authority in which he is held within Orthodox Judaism suggests that this might be the case. Examples from his major works and their significance within Judaism can be cited as evidence of this.
2. However, he was not without his critics, and a number of Jewish scholars were troubled by some of his views they believed were out of line with traditional scholarship.
3. He re-interpreted rabbinic and biblical teachings so that they conformed to the truths of reason, and argued that nothing in the Jewish sacred writings should require people to take anything on faith.
4. His philosophical approach made him stand out as different from the sages of his time, as well as after his death, even though he had not been the first Jewish philosopher.
5. Some might consider Rashi to be the most complete Jewish scholar: his commentaries on the Bible and Talmud are still the foundation of Jewish education to this day.
6. Such is Maimonides' influence that current-day scholars, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, have described him as one of the most outstanding giants of Jewish thought.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Are the works of Maimonides indicative of a complete Jewish scholar?
2. Is Maimonides' approach so different that it has taken him outside the traditional parameters of Jewish scholarship?
3. Do the criticisms of him within Judaism count against the possibility of him being considered to be the most complete Jewish scholar?
4. Are there other Jewish scholars who are equally worthy of the accolade?
5. Is it possible to come to a common agreement as to what characterizes a typical Jewish scholar?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. His impact and influence upon Orthodox Judaism as well as further afield suggests that he should be considered to be the complete Jewish scholar.
2. It is difficult to decide whether or not he is representative of the most complete Jewish scholar without a definitive list of characteristics to which we can compare his achievements.
3. It should not be forgotten that there are other notable Jewish scholars who continue to have an impact upon Jewish beliefs and practices.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The first bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the validity and strength of the links between Zionism and Judaism.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Zionism and Judaism differ in their motives: political Zionists saw Zion as a solution to anti-Semitism whereas Judaism is centred on a personal relationship with God rather than on the establishment of a political state.
2. Historically, Zionism has been a movement dominated by secularist Jews.
3. The Mizrachi party's response to the anti-religious stance and its influence in preserving the Jewish character of the State of Israel could be seen as evidence of a discernible link between Zionism and Judaism.
4. There exists a difference of opinion about the return to Israel within Judaism itself.
5. Haredim in Israel are totally opposed to secular Zionism and can see no link whatsoever between a State which is not based upon the teachings of the Torah, and Judaism.
6. Even the term 'Zionism' is ambiguous.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Do the differing motives of Zionism and Judaism suggest that there are no links between them at all?
2. Are all Jews in agreement about the future hope of the in-gathering of Jewish exiles in the Holy Land?
3. Has religious Zionism had any impact upon political Zionism?
4. What has the term 'Zionism' come to denote?
5. Should we expect there to be a link between Zionism and Judaism?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. There are too many differences between Zionism and Judaism to be able to argue for any real, strong, and valid links between the two.
2. Any conclusion depends upon one's understanding of the term Zionism which is ambiguous even within Judaism.
3. There is diversity within Judaism itself about the requirements which need to be satisfied before the return to Israel (or otherwise) can take place.



### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The second bullet point is to critically analyse and consider whether or not Zionism is specifically a Jewish movement.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It could be argued that Zionism has its roots in the Jewish faith and as such is a valid part of Judaism.
2. Being Jewish means having a Jewish identity, which, for some does not necessarily mean being a Zionist.
3. Orthodox Jews might argue that it is the work of the Messiah to take all Jews to Israel, and not the work of Zionists.
4. Some Jewish groups view Zionism as a secular movement, thus arguing that you can be a member of the Jewish faith without being a Zionist.
5. Reform Jews dropped the expectation of a return to Israel at the Pittsburgh Platform, so they would argue that one can belong to the Jewish faith without the expectation of being a Zionist.
6. Some may claim that Zionism weakens Judaism as it is secular and political in nature, and has little to do with the faith.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Are there any common links between Zionism and Judaism?
2. Could it be claimed that Zionism has strengthened the Jewish faith in Israel?
3. Is the definition of what makes a person Jewish of any significance in relation to this issue?
4. Are all Jewish denominations in support of Zionism?
5. Is there a need for there to be a link between political and religious Zionism?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. There is such a difference between the political and religious recognition of the State of Israel that Zionism could never be said to be described as a specific Jewish movement.
2. It could also be argued that there is no need for such a link anyway as Israel as a secular state is vindicated on this basis alone without Judaism.
3. Zionism weakens Judaism due to its secular nature.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The third bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the success of Judaism in meeting the challenges posed by science.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Jewish faith does not provide a unified theory about the act of creation, and there is much speculation about the nature of the act to be found even within rabbinic literature.
2. Science doesn't actually pose any challenge to Judaism at all. In order to illustrate this particular viewpoint reference can be made to evolutionary theory which opened up a discussion within the Jewish community regarding the relationship between principles of faith and scientific findings.
3. Maimonides did not believe that science posed a problem to the Jewish faith and he accepted that there was a valid relationship between the two.
4. The standard contemporary view within Judaism is that science and religion serve different purposes, meaning that there is no conflict between the two.
5. Some assert that it is possible that God used scientific laws to create material reality.
6. The position held by the majority of Conservative and Reform Jews also provides confirmation that science does not pose a major challenge to Jewish beliefs about the creation of the universe, for example.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Does science pose a challenge to the Jewish belief that God created the universe and everything in it?
2. How have some Jews responded to Darwin's theory of evolution?
3. What was Maimonides' stance regarding science?
4. How can the position held by Conservative and Reform Jews provide confirmation that science does not pose a major challenge to Judaism?
5. Is it acceptable to suggest that there is a positive relationship between science and religious belief for some Jews?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Science doesn't actually pose any challenge to Judaism at all, thus negating the issue under question.
2. The fact that there is evidence of much speculation even within the Jewish faith about the nature of the act of creation might suggest that Judaism does not hold a strong position that could be used successfully as a response to the challenges posed by science.
3. The very fact that Jewish beliefs about the creation of the universe still retain their relevance in contemporary society suggests that Judaism has been successful in meeting the challenges posed by science.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fourth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider whether or not Judaism is compatible with science.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. There is a commonly held belief that they are bound to be incompatible because science is objective and Judaism is subjective due to its basis upon faith.
2. Ultra-Orthodox Jews do not accept that Judaism and science can ever be compatible because they reject the theory of evolution based upon their acceptance of the Bible as embodying eternal truths.
3. The apparent contradiction between the Torah and science regarding the age of the universe can be used to open up a debate about whether or not there is common ground between science and Judaism.
4. The Bible is not meant to provide an accurate scientific description of the origins of the world; rather it serves a spiritual purpose in explaining why the world came into being, and what the role of humankind within it is.
5. Reference can be made to Maimonides' acceptance of scientific discovery and his argument that Torah must be grounded in reason.
6. Just as scientists are open to change and are willing to discard theories when a new one emerges, so too can we see a similar process in relation to the Torah amongst Reform Jews.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Does the debate about the age of the universe suggest that Judaism is totally incompatible with science?
2. Do all Jewish groups deny the validity of scientific findings?
3. How is it possible to reconcile the teachings of the Torah with the findings of modern science?
4. Is it acceptable to suggest that there is a positive relationship between science and religious belief for some Jews?
5. Is it acceptable that if science proves a point, then the finding should be accepted and scripture interpreted accordingly?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Science and religion serve different purposes.
2. The Torah contains eternal truths.
3. There is evidence to suggest a measure of compatibility between Judaism and science.

## Theme : Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

### The fifth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the effectiveness of Jewish responses to pluralism.

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It could be argued that pluralism appears initially to present an outlook that is in contradiction to the traditional standpoint of the Jewish faith based upon God's exclusive covenant with the Jewish people.
2. Others would point out that the Torah actually begins with God creating a covenant first with Adam, and then with Noah, and that these covenants had been universal in nature.
3. Reform Jews have been totally accepting of the validity of other faiths, and as a result of this, significant changes have come about regarding the way in which they have come to view their relationship with God, as well as their place and role in the world.
4. The fact that Reform Jews accept that the Torah is simply one record amongst others has led them to accept the sacred writings of other faiths; a stance which has in no way diluted the importance of the Torah.
5. The assessment of the effectiveness of Jewish responses to pluralism should include an analysis of the ways in which Jews interact with other faith communities.
6. Some groups within Judaism regard interfaith dialogue as irrelevant based upon halakhic prohibitions that have come about due to the concern that Jews might be enticed by the faith and values of other religions.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What evidence is there to support the view that pluralism is in contradiction to the traditional standpoint of the Jewish faith?
2. Does the universalistic aspect of the Jewish covenant relationship necessarily mean that there should be acceptance of other religious faiths?
3. To what extent has accepting the validity of other faiths brought about changes to the way in which Reform Jews view their own relationship with God as well as their role in the world?
4. Is it acceptable to say that the Jewish faith has been successful in working in partnership with other world faiths?
5. Why do some Jewish groups place prohibitions upon interfaith dialogue?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. God's exclusive covenant with the Jewish people renders the concept of pluralism irrelevant.
2. Reform Judaism appears to have been the most effective in its response to pluralism.
3. Attitudes are changing even within Orthodox Judaism, suggesting that there is a spiritual value to pluralism which transcends religious differences.

**Theme : Significant social and historical developments in religious thought**

Judaism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The sixth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the effectiveness of the Pittsburgh Platform in relation to the plight of the poor.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Pittsburgh Platform sets out its intent in relation to the plight of the poor; however it has brought nothing new to the Jewish faith which has always championed that particular cause.
2. Traditional Jewish teachings and references within the scriptures have always contained guidance in relation to the plight of the poor.
3. The Pittsburgh Platform brought a new emphasis to teachings and action in relation to the plight of the poor.
4. As a consequence of the Pittsburgh Platform, Reform Jews have made it their mission to work, amongst other things, to improve the plight of the poor.
5. Interfaith dialogue has allowed Reform Jews to make greater progress in the field of social justice as they have become involved in collaborative action with the Christian faith for example.
6. It is difficult to measure the effect which the Pittsburgh Platform has had in relation to the plight of the poor.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Can it be argued that Judaism has always been concerned with addressing the plight of the poor?
2. What does Jewish scripture have to say about the plight of the poor?
3. Has the Pittsburgh Platform brought about anything new to the way in which Jews address the plight of the poor?
4. How has Reform Judaism responded to the Pittsburgh Platform's stance on social justice and the plight of the poor?
5. Is it possible to measure the effectiveness of the Pittsburgh Platform in relation to the plight of the poor?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Jews of all denominations show concern for the plight of the poor.
2. The Pittsburgh Platform was effective in setting out a clear definition which addressed the issue.
3. As a consequence of the Pittsburgh Platform, Reform Jews made a commitment to social justice which is characteristic of their denomination.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The first bullet point is to critically analyse and consider family life as the main strength of Judaism.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Jewish family life is sanctified by God based upon the ideals of the covenant.
2. Jewish scriptures offer clear guidance about how parents and children are to conduct themselves within the family group.
3. The home itself as a place of worship is synonymous with the sanctity of family life. Many objects within the family home have great significance and serve to remind Jewish believers of the importance of their faith and maintaining Jewish principles.
4. Another area for consideration is the suggestion that it is the synagogue that is the main strength of Judaism rather than family life. As an institution it provides the location for all aspects of Jewish life as well as for prayer and worship.
5. There is also the issue of the importance of attendance at the synagogue within some Jewish groups by the father of the house and males who are old enough to take part in public worship.
6. Another issue is the importance of the Jewish scriptures including their study and use in public worship as the main influence in maintaining Jewish principles.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Why should the family be considered to be the main strength of Judaism?
2. What evidence is there to suggest that the home itself is to be regarded as a place of worship within Judaism?
3. Why might the synagogue be considered to be the main strength of Judaism rather than family life?
4. What other aspects of the Jewish faith could be acknowledged as a strength of Judaism?
5. Should we view Judaism as a holistic religion where the role of the family is not just seen as being in the home, but also integral to public worship?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Such is the influence of the family, especially upon young children, that we cannot deny it has an important part to play in the creation of the next generation of Jews.
2. The celebration of festivals is one of the main strengths of Judaism.
3. It could be argued that there is no one particular thing that acts as the main strength of Judaism, but rather that it is a combination of a variety of elements.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The second bullet point is to critically analyse and consider whether or not women can be equal to men in Judaism.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Practices within certain Jewish groups can be used as evidence to suggest that equality is not possible for women.
2. Practices within the Reform movement may be presented as evidence that equality already exists.
3. The development of the Jewish feminist movement suggests that many women within Judaism are taking action to bring about equality.
4. There is an increase in women attending yeshivot; this is in contrast to the traditional view that prohibits women from Talmud and Torah study.
5. Another line of argument may suggest that in Orthodox Judaism, for example, women are not regarded as unequal, but that they hold a different, but equally important role within the family.
6. Treating men and women differently is natural and not an example of lack of respect as Orthodox Jews believe that a woman is being honoured by being treated in this way.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What evidence could be used to suggest that women are regarded as subordinate to men within Judaism?
2. Can it be argued successfully that gender inequality has been eradicated totally in some Jewish denominations?
3. To what extent is the move towards equality still in its evolutionary phase?
4. What evidence is there to suggest that equality actually exists even within Orthodox Judaism?
5. Should we be comparing the religious roles of men and women in Judaism with the expectations of the roles of men and women in secular society?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Some perceive that the status of women in many Jewish groups points firmly to a subordinate role to men.
2. We should view men and women in Judaism not as unequal, but that they hold different roles, both of which are equally important.
3. It could be argued that it depends upon whether or not the practices of some Jewish groups are regarded as being out of line with the expectations of the roles of men and women in secular society – should we be comparing them?

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The third bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the possibility of assimilation into a secular society for Jews in Britain.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. In practical terms, many of the specific demands of the Jewish faith when strictly adhered to, make assimilation impractical.
2. Jewish education and Jewish faith schools are the epitomes of separateness of the sacred from the secular state.
3. There may be conflict in matters of law between the sacred and secular, e.g. female rights in divorce; the Jewish religious requirement to bury a body as soon as possible after death.
4. Kashrut is another aspect of Jewish tradition that could potentially isolate and separate Jews from secular society.
5. Diversity within and across Judaic traditions is to be considered, as not all Jews have been unsuccessful as far as assimilation is concerned.
6. For some Jewish groups the need to assimilate is not an issue. In fact, even though living according to the laws of kashrut, for example, entails great effort and brings with it the expense of non-assimilation; it is worth it as the laws are a reminder of the distinctiveness of the Jews.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What aspects of Judaism make assimilation impractical or even impossible?
2. How do some Jewish laws have the potential to bring about conflict with the secular laws of British society?
3. How are some Jewish groups more successful than others in assimilating?
4. Why is the need to assimilate not an issue at all for some Jews?
5. How does British society embrace Jewish religious identity?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. 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.
2. It is evident that many Jews are able to maintain their religious devotional lifestyle without it having any detrimental effect upon their ability to function fully in mainstream society.
3. Assimilation is not an issue for all Jews.



### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fourth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the extent to which assimilation equates to a loss of identity.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It could be argued that what constitutes Jewish identity is in itself difficult to define. Examples of the debate surrounding this issue could be used as evidence.
2. According to halakhah, it is enough that a person has been born of a Jewish mother to be identified as a Jew. This does not always result in the child growing up to follow the faith; it could therefore be argued that assimilation would be possible without any loss of Jewish identity under these circumstances.
3. The diversity of Jewish groups within British society needs consideration as some have assimilated successfully due to their willingness to re-evaluate the mitzvot in line with modern society.
4. Some Jewish groups such as the Hasidim have not felt the need to assimilate into British society at all; living in close-knit communities which offer strong support.
5. Evidence of a decline in Jewish communities in some parts of Britain can be used to support the suggestion that it is not always easy for Jews to retain their religious identity.
6. In a multi-cultural society such as Britain there is no need to sacrifice religious identity in order to assimilate.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What evidence is there to suggest that for some Jews assimilation would be regarded as a total loss of identity?
2. Is there a means by which it is possible for Jews to maintain their Jewish identity as well as achieving assimilation?
3. How much of an effect does the lack of clarity regarding what makes a person Jewish have upon this issue?
4. Is there a middle way which falls somewhere between the extremes of Hasidism on the one hand, and the liberalism of Reform Judaism on the other?
5. Should the need to assimilate be an issue in multi-cultural Britain?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Some Jewish groups have achieved assimilation whilst still retaining their own particular form of Jewish identity.
2. It is impossible to live faithfully according to the mitzvot and achieve assimilation into secular society.
3. The lack of clarity regarding what constitutes Jewish identity hampers discussion about this issue.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fifth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the success of Holocaust theologies in addressing the challenges raised by the Holocaust.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The existence of the 'Problem of Evil and Suffering' debate recognizes the need to attempt to explain the Holocaust.
2. Key to the debate is an exploration of the implications of the Holocaust for the covenant relationship.
3. Traditional Holocaust theodicies can be considered to have failed due to the unbelievable extent of suffering involved.
4. Theodicies of notable Holocaust theologians have not been without criticism, e.g. Rubenstein has been criticized for failing to produce a viable theodicy for those who have remained loyal to the faith of Israel post-Holocaust.
5. The responses of theologians such as Wiesel, Maybaum and Berkovitz can be considered by analysing the extent to which each has produced a successful response or otherwise in addressing the challenges raised by the Holocaust.
6. Fackenheim's proposal of the Holocaust as a new revelation experience of God by way of a 614<sup>th</sup> commandment has been regarded as a success although never as a justification of God, and so the issue of God's nature is still questioned and therefore seen as a failing and an inadequate explanation.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Why is there a need to explain the Holocaust?
2. How can there still be a covenant relationship between God and the Jewish people when so many Jews were murdered during the Holocaust?
3. Has the traditional Jewish understanding of suffering been successful in addressing the challenges raised by the Holocaust?
4. Have the Holocaust theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century been successful in addressing the challenges raised by the Holocaust?
5. Does Holocaust theology throw up more questions than answers?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. To consider the success or failure of such an event is an artificial exercise.
2. Some may argue that it's morally wrong to look for any justification for the Holocaust.
3. Some might argue that a response to such a dreadful occurrence such as the Holocaust is imperative and dignified, no matter how weak.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Judaism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The sixth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider whether or not any Holocaust theology is legitimate.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Some might argue that suffering is an expected outcome following disobedience to God, thus rendering any theological questioning of the Holocaust as illegitimate.
2. The enormity and uniqueness of the Holocaust brought with it a different set of challenges which deserve consideration, and the classical biblical explanation that God sent this punishment because of the sins of the people is impossible to accept in the light of the death of six million innocent Jews.
3. Berkovitz argued that Jews have a right to reason, and even wrestle with God rather than to accept the horror of the Holocaust without question.
4. Questioning God's motives is a legitimate practice which is found in the Torah: e.g. when Abraham wrestled with God over the fate of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; and when Job struggled with God over the misfortunes that had befallen him.
5. Wiesel's response carries it with it the strength of him actually having experienced the Holocaust first-hand which gave him an insight which is more developed than those of other Holocaust theologians who did not.
6. If Holocaust theology provides hope for the future then its legitimacy is enhanced.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Is the traditional concept of suffering as a result of disobedience to God adequate as an explanation for the Holocaust?
2. Why has the Holocaust brought with it a different set of challenges for Jews?
3. Is it ever legitimate to question God?
4. Are the theodicies of some Holocaust theologians more legitimate than those of others?
5. To what extent is Holocaust theology of value?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Any theological questioning of the Holocaust is illegitimate.
2. The uniqueness of the Holocaust cannot be ignored, and consideration of the theological issues relating to it renders it legitimate.
3. Notwithstanding the many criticisms that have been levelled at the Holocaust theologians for their seeming failure to reach agreement, this does not necessarily mean that their responses lack legitimacy.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Judaism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The first bullet point is to critically analyse and consider whether Hasidism contributed to the survival of Judaism.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Hasidic movement revived Judaism at a time when Jews in Eastern Europe were suffering from social and religious oppression.
2. It is important to consider the significance of the Baal Shem Tov, who, it has been argued, revitalized Judaism and led to its continued survival by enabling the less educated to be able to worship in a simple manner with no need for scholarly Torah study.
3. Historically, its reforms were universally accepted by the Jewish community.
4. It cannot be ignored however that Hasidism is not without its critics, and it could be claimed that it has merely enabled a specific form of Judaism to survive which is not truly representative of the more mainstream Orthodoxy.
5. Perhaps it is the Mitnagdim who should be given some credit for enabling Judaism to survive based upon their determination to preserve tradition.
6. There are other groups within Judaism which have also had an important part to play in the survival of the Jewish faith: Reform Judaism is a case in point.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent has Hasidism been significant regarding the survival of Judaism?
2. Is Hasidism truly representative of traditional Jewish Orthodoxy?
3. Did the opposition of the Mitnagdim to Hasidism play any part in the survival of Judaism?
4. How might the Reform movement be said to have contributed to the survival of Judaism?
5. What other things could be said to have contributed to the survival of Judaism?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. The survival of Judaism has not come about due to one isolated event or as the result of one particular group within it.
2. Hasidism made a significant contribution to the survival of Judaism at a time when its decline seemed inevitable in Europe.
3. Without Hasidism, the Reform movement would never have been given a chance to what it did in reinterpreting the terms of the covenant to fit a more modern lifestyle.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Judaism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

### The second bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the extent to which Hasidism divides Judaism.

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Hasidism certainly differed from mainstream Judaism, but its emergence needs to be understood against the historical background of the time.
2. Evidence of some of its practices can be used to argue that it did indeed bring about a major division in Judaism.
3. The emergence of the Hasidic movement had a positive impact despite the split from traditional Judaism in that it rejuvenated the Jews of Eastern Europe and could be said to have saved the faith from dying out at that point in history.
4. It is not the only group within Judaism that can be accused of bringing about division within the faith, as Reform Judaism is a case in point.
5. In contemporary society, Hasidism has since come to represent the truest form of Judaism, and is responsible for preserving the traditional teachings and values of the faith.
6. Its emergence should not be seen as divisive, but as part of the process by which Judaism finds the most appropriate way of existing in an ever-changing world.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. How does Hasidism differ from mainstream Judaism?
2. Has Hasidism ever posed a significant threat to Jewish unity?
3. Can it be claimed that Hasidism had a positive effect upon Judaism?
4. What are some of the reasons for the diversity which is to be found within Judaism?
5. Can diversity within Judaism ever be justified?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. It was never the aim of Hasidism to bring about a deliberate divide within the Jewish faith.
2. Reactionary forces which bring about division are not necessarily to be viewed as negative occurrences.
3. The need for the Jewish faith to change in the light of historic circumstances is all part of a natural evolutionary process, and Hasidism is no different.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Judaism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The third bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the possibility of a personal mystical union with God in Judaism.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The existence of a mystic tradition within Judaism known as Kabbalah is indicative of a belief that it is possible to experience the divine nature and presence of God.
2. This line of argument would outline the approach of Kabbalah that through meditation, visual, artistic and even by magical means, some have claimed to have achieved a 'mystic union' with the divine.
3. The Zohar is instrumental in leading and instructing the devotee towards such union through a focus on the experience of God and trying to penetrate God's essence.
4. Judaism is grounded in an experience of God, for example, kavod and shekinah.
5. However, traditional Judaism sees its focus on Torah and Talmud study as very different from Kabbalah and not involving any such experience with God.
6. The essential nature of God in Judaism is that God is transcendent, 'other', Holy and 'set apart' from humanity and beyond the realms of experience.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Does the Kabbalah tradition offer the means by which to achieve personal mystical union with God in Judaism?
2. What evidence from the Kabbalah tradition can be used to support the claim that mystical union is possible?
3. Is it fair to argue that Judaism is already grounded in an experience of God, for example, kavod in the Biblical narrative and shekinah in rabbinic literature?
4. How might the views of traditional Judaism and Kabbalah differ regarding this matter?
5. Are the claims about the ability to achieve personal mystical union with God in Kabbalah valid?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. It is possible to achieve a personal mystical union with God in Judaism through the mystic tradition of Kabbalah.
2. The focus in traditional Judaism is different from that of Kabbalah and does not involve any such mystic union with God, but more a sense of experiencing the 'otherness' of the divine.
3. The practices of Kabbalah are too far removed from traditional Judaism in the opinions of many, and claims for 'mystic union' with the divine are a distortion of the original teachings of Kabbalah.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Judaism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

### The fourth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the value of aids to worship in Kabbalah.

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Due to its esoteric nature, it might be argued that aids to worship within Kabbalah are vital in order to act as a focus for worship.
2. Examples such as meditation, and use of the Hebrew alphabet could be used to show how aids to worship are used as the means by which to focus upon divine matters.
3. Not all aids to worship in Kabbalah are considered to be of value, e.g. the use of magic.
4. There are stories within the mystic tradition itself that contain warnings about the use of certain aids to worship.
5. Use of aids to worship are not confined to Kabbalah and aids such as tefillin are in regular use within more traditional Jewish groups; however, some might suggest that within Kabbalah the tefillin have a greater significance as aids to worship.
6. Perhaps one's opinion on this matter is dependent upon whether or not one considers Kabbalah to be a credible tradition within Judaism or not.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What evidence is there to suggest that aids to worship are of value in Kabbalah?
2. Are there other ways in which a Jewish person can come to experience the divine nature and presence of God?
3. To what extent is there common ground between the aids to worship which are used in Kabbalah compared with those used in mainstream Judaism?
4. Are all aids to worship considered to be equally valid within Kabbalah?
5. Is Kabbalah truly representative of traditional Jewish thought?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Aids to worship are of value due to the esoteric nature of Kabbalah.
2. Use of aids to worship are accepted and are regularly used within other Jewish denominations.
3. It all depends upon whether or not one considers Kabbalah to be a credible tradition within Judaism or not.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Judaism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fifth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the effectiveness of Jewish ethical teachings as a guide for living for Jews today.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Jewish ethical teachings can be effective as a guide for living for contemporary Judaism as long as they remain true to halakhic principles.
2. Scriptural sources from the Torah have been used when considering the concept of heredity, for example, leading to the acceptance of pre-implantation genetic screening.
3. The principle of pikuach nefesh can be used to provide ethical justification for medical experimentation and treatments which have the potential to bring about successful medical outcomes.
4. The principle of Tikkun Olam is also instrumental in justifying the search for new medical technologies.
5. Not all Jewish ethicists are in agreement: a case in point being the differences of opinion between Bleich and Tendler. Such diversity of opinion might lead some to question the effectiveness of Jewish ethical teachings as a guide.
6. It is not unusual to be confronted with differences of opinion, as that is what characterises the rabbinic tradition.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. How far is it possible to retain the spirit of Jewish law when making ethical decisions about technological advances in the world of medicine?
2. What evidence could be used to illustrate the argument that Jewish ethical teachings are effective in decision-making in contemporary society?
3. Do you consider that the halakhic tradition can provide sound guidance even where differences of opinion are evident within Judaism?
4. What reasons are given amongst those who aren't convinced that Jewish ethical teachings is able to provide a reliable guide for living for Jews today?
5. How can the effectiveness, or otherwise, of Jewish ethical teaching be measured?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Halakhic tradition provides a sound basis through which sound ethical guidelines can be formulated.
2. Advances in medical science have brought about issues and situations which would never have been thought possible at the time of the giving of the law to the Jewish people.
3. The very fact that Jewish ethical teaching is being applied in so many new, contemporary situations indicates its effectiveness in the modern world.



## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Judaism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The sixth bullet point is to critically analyse and consider the extent to which pikuach nefesh is compatible with embryo research.**

The following six lines points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It might first appear that pikuach nefesh is totally compatible with embryo research, based as it is upon the principle that life is a gift from God, and that it is prohibited to do anything which might shorten or take away a life.
2. The *extent* of pikuach nefesh is an issue when discussing its compatibility with embryo research, and discussions about allowing the creation of embryos specifically as a source of stem cells are on-going.
3. Objections have been raised which are based upon the status of spare embryos: whether or not it is right to destroy them.
4. Objections also surround the issue of whether or not a very early embryo may be sacrificed for stem cells.
5. Most Jewish ethicists approve of therapeutic cloning, and consider it to be compatible with embryo research as it has the potential to find new and effective treatments for debilitating diseases.
6. The possibility of cloning humans has been seen by many in the Jewish tradition as a step too far and could result in suffering which would go against the principle of pikuach nefesh entirely.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What evidence is there to indicate that there is a degree of compatibility between pikuach nefesh and embryo research?
2. To what extent does pikuach nefesh cover all aspects of current embryo research?
3. What is the nature of the objections that have been raised in connection with this issue?
4. How far is it acceptable to prohibit certain treatments entirely in order to protect biblical law?
5. What issues exist for Jews concerning the possibility of cloning humans?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

1. Embryo research is one of the ways in which the principle of pikuach nefesh can be put into practice.
2. Not all aspects of embryo research are without question in relation to pikuach nefesh.
3. As new genetic techniques emerge, it is conceivable that the debate will continue.