Jewish History –
The Jewish Diaspora
7th Grade CORE

Guest Presenter: Rabbi Daniel Kohn

Satellite view of the Middle East
All we know about Judaism and the Jewish people from ancient times comes from two books –

a) The Hebrew Bible: the holiest part is called the Torah. These books are over 3,000 years old

b) The Talmud: written by rabbis 1,500 years ago
In ancient times, Jewish priests used to worship God by making animal sacrifices in the Temple, that was built in Jerusalem, the capital city of the ancient kingdom of Judah.
The Kotel or “Wailing Wall”

Although the Kotel is considered the holiest spot in the Jewish tradition, it is merely the Western retaining wall of the Temple Mount.

In 63 B.C.E. The Romans conquered Judea and made it a province in their huge empire
Jewish & Roman cultural values were in conflict!

• Many Gods

• Life centered around the theater, market & bath house

• Greek & Latin language

• One God

• Life centered around the synagogue & study of Torah

• Hebrew language

In 66 C.E. the Jews revolted against the Romans but lost. This was called the “Great Revolt.” In 70 CE, the Romans destroyed the Temple & expelled all Jews from living in Jerusalem.
A group of about 1,000 Jewish rebels fled Jerusalem and holed up on a hill-top fortress called Masada, in the middle of the desert. The Romans surrounded the mountain and built a ramp to the top to capture the rebels. But rather than face defeat, the Jewish rebels committed mass suicide!

Without a Temple or access to Jerusalem, Jews transformed Biblical Judaism into Rabbinic Judaism order to survive. This is the basis of modern Judaism today

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<tr>
<th>Biblical Judaism</th>
<th>After the Destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. – Rabbinic Judaism</th>
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<td>Jewish Priests were the spiritual leaders</td>
<td>Rabbis became the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people</td>
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<td>Jews offered animal sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem</td>
<td>Jews recited prayers wherever they lived</td>
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<td>Jewish life focused on the Temple in Jerusalem</td>
<td>Jews prayed, studied and focused on Jewish life in synagogues wherever they lived</td>
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Despite the defeat of the Jews in the Great Revolt, many Jews continued to plan for another, even larger rebellion. In 132 to 135, a charismatic Jewish general named Shimon Bar Kochba gathered and led these forces in another rebellion against Rome, called the Bar Kochba rebellion.

Bar Kochba’s rebellion so alarmed Rome that the emperor Hadrian sent legions from Britain and Romania. After the defeat & death of Bar Kochba, Hadrian mercilessly persecuted the Jewish population of Judea, enslaving hundreds of thousands & sending even more into exile. This was the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora.
To erase the connection between Jews and Judea, Hadrian renamed the province of Judea and called it Palestine (after the ancient Philistines who used to live nearby) and turned what used to be Jewish Jerusalem into Aelia Capitolina, a classical Roman city. Jews were forbidden to enter upon pain of death. Jews were not allowed to return to Jerusalem for 500 years!

**Question:** What is the Jewish Diaspora?

**Answer:** the dispersion or scattering of the Jewish people from Israel throughout Jewish history
The Diaspora continued for the next several hundred years, Jews continued to move throughout Europe, north Africa and even Asia (the Middle East, China & India).
For the past 2,000 years, Jews have moved all over the world. Nearly 6 million Jews live in the U.S.

In 1948, millions of Jews returned and re-established a modern country of Israel in the Middle East...but you’ll learn more about that later!
The End
Thank you for your attention and questions!