

**JEWISH LITERACY**  
**Rabbi Michael Lotker**  
**Most of Jewish History in 90 Minutes**

**Jewish History not a serious subject until last 150 years or so.**

1. Meanings of Memory & History in Judaism
  - a. Religious
    - i. Purpose of Creation
    - ii. Failures of Humanity
      1. Adam & Eve - Generation of Noah - Tower of Babel
    - iii. Selection of Abraham
      1. Brit
      2. Family basis
      3. New Strategy for Tikkun Olam
    - iv. Decent into Egypt
    - v. Going Forth From Egypt – Redemption 1200 BCE
      1. Revelation at Sinai
    - vi. Jewish Nation in Promised Land – 1000 BCE
      1. Kings Saul > David > Solomon
      2. Nation divided
    - vii. Sins & Prophets
    - viii. Northern Kingdom destroyed by Assyria – 722 BCE
    - ix. Babylonians as tools of God > Exile in 586 BCE
    - x. Rebuilding of 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple in 520 BCE
    - xi. Romans Destroy 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple 70 CE
    - xii. Messiah comes - ???
    - xiii. Bottom Line: History has direction
2. Historiography (history according to scholars) – the Biblical Period
  - i. Some people in Egypt (Merneptah stela)
  - ii. Evidence for conquest of Israel about 1200 BCE
  - iii. Some evidence for David
    1. Much better evidence for later Kings
  - iv. Destruction of 1<sup>st</sup> Temple and rebuilding under Cyrus
  - v. Under Persian rule until Chanukah
  - vi. Rise of Hellenism
    1. Septuagint – translation of Bible to Greek - - 200BCE
    2. Battle for assimilation – Antiochus – Chanukah 165 BCE
    3. Hasmoneans rule briefly and are conquered by Rome
  - vii. Roman period
    1. Herod restores Temple
  - viii. Different Sects
    1. Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, Essenes
    2. Christians
  - ix. Not a lot really known about Temple Judaism
  - x. Revolts against Rome, 66-70 & Bar Kochba in 135 CE

3. Rabbinic Period
  - a. Review of revolts
    - i. 70 CE
    - ii. Bar Kochba
  - b. Mishna
  - c. Talmud
  
4. The Roman Empire Becomes Christian
  - a. Constantine 313
  - b. Emergence of Christianity
  - c. The Split
    - i. Ashkenazim
    - ii. Sephardim
  
5. Muhammad and Islam
  - a. Muhammad born 570
  - b. Pilgrimage to Mecca 622
  - c. Death 632
  - d. Conquest of Jerusalem (and Palestine) by Arabs 638
  - e. Dome of Rock built 691
  
6. Up to 1000, center of Judaism in Babylon
  - a. 1099, Jerusalem conquered by Crusaders
  - b. 1187 Muslims recapture Jerusalem
  
7. Spain: Jewish Golden Age under Muslim Rule (10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries)
  - a. Jews “protected” as *dhimmi*s
  - b. Influence: Muslims invent
    - i. Theology
    - ii. Grammar
    - iii. Idea of God’s omnipotence and omniscience
  - c. Reconquista by Church
  - d. 1263 Nahmanides’ dispute in Barcelona
  - e. 1290s to 1390s: anti-Jewish riots
    - i. Zohar and kabbalah is a response
    - ii. Anti-Jewish laws
    - iii. Forced conversions result in mass conversions of Jews
  - f. Inquisition & conversos (Marannos)
  - g. Expulsion from Spain in 1492
    - i. From Portugal in 1495
    - ii. Jews go to N. Africa, Ottoman Empire, Amsterdam, and Europe, New World
  
8. Meanwhile in Europe....
  - a. Jews living under special rights or “charters”
  - b. Fulfilling special roles as traders for feudal lords
    - i. Only group capable of crossing throughout Europe
    - ii. Only group able to trade at Christian and Muslim ports

- c. Gradually get pushed out of roles into lending roles as a trader/middle class develops
- d. Suffering under Crusades
  - i. 12,000 Jews killed in early months.
  - ii. In 1099, when Crusaders captured Jerusalem, they gathered all the city's Jews into a synagogue and burned them alive.
  - iii. Theology of martyrdom develops (*kiddush HaShem*)
  - iv. Church torn between:
    - 1. Protection of Jews as testaments to the validity of the Old Testament
    - 2. But keep them downtrodden as evidence of divine punishment
- e. Ghettos began in Venice in 1555 and ended in 1870 (when the Pope lost civil authority)
- f. Shabbetai Tzvi (1626-1676): widely believed to be the Messiah.
- g. Chasidic Judaism
  - i. Founder: Israel Ba'al Shem Tov (1700-1760)
  - ii. Currently about 20 such groups, one of which is Chabad (Lubavitchers)

## 9. Emancipation and Enlightenment

- a. Jews' status changes from nationality to religion
  - i. Welcomed as citizens of France and elsewhere
  - ii. But question of loyalty remains
    - 1. Napoleon convenes Sanhedrin 1806
  - iii. Jewish peoplehood viewed with suspicion
    - 1. Voltaire quote: "(Jews are) the most abominable people in the world ... they are a totally ignorant nation who, for many years, have combined contemptible miserliness and the most revolting superstition with a violent hatred of all those nations that have tolerated them."
- b. Reform Judaism as a response
- c. Jews begin to come to America
- d. Continuing small community in Israel (under Ottoman rule since 1516)

## 10. Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

- a. Russian pogroms
- b. Mass emigration to America

### **MORE INFO?**

- see [www.JewishHistory.org](http://www.JewishHistory.org) for lots of details
- Also see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_Jewish\\_history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Jewish_history) for a detailed time line of Jewish History
- Also see <http://www.odveda.com/en/k> for an amazing interactive chart

**NEXT CLASS: JUDAISM & CHRISTIANITY: Read Lotker 30-44, 125-134**