

Explore More—Jews in the Roman Empire

Directions: Listen to your teacher talk about the migration of Jews around the Mediterranean region, some of the problems they faced, and the consequences of conflicts. Refer to the maps in your Explore Geography Picture Dictionary to locate the places your teacher mentions. Circle any words you don't understand. Underline or highlight important ideas in the text. Write notes in the margins to help you understand key points. Then answer the questions in your own words.

Conflicts and Consequences

In A.D. 63, the Roman general Pompey made Judea a Roman province. Some Roman emperors tried to make the Jews living in the Roman Empire, including Judea, worship Roman gods. Some rulers allowed Jewish places of worship to be destroyed. Over many years, the Jews in Judea became increasingly angry with their Roman rulers and many conflicts arose. The Jews first rebellion against Rome began in A.D. 66 when a group of Jews known as Zealots fought the Romans. When Jews in Jerusalem rebelled in A.D. 70, the Romans conquered the city. They destroyed the temple there and burned the city to the ground. Jews were forced to leave the city. The Roman emperor Hadrian took violent action against the Jews in Palestine when they refused to obey his command to become “more Roman.” Another rebellion began in A.D. 135. Several Jewish religious leaders were executed. In all, hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed in these conflicts. However, despite persecution and dispersion, Jews continued to follow their religious traditions, united by their belief in God.

Jews in the Mediterranean Region

One of the primary effects of the conflicts between the Jews and the Romans was the migration of Jews around the Mediterranean region. For centuries, the Jewish population was concentrated in Judea, an area along the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Then, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, Jews fled the area. Some Jews fled east into Mesopotamia. Some went north to Galilee. Over time, Jewish communities began in many places around the Mediterranean world. Jewish populations grew in Egypt and other parts of North Africa. In Europe, Jews settled in places such as Athens, Greece and in Rome and other cities in northern Italy. They also settled in Córdoba, Spain, in Marseilles, France, and in Germany. Today, Jews live in countries all over the world. ❖

Questions for further discussion:

- What would you like to know more about the migration of Jews in the Roman Empire? Frame questions that you can answer by historical study and research. Conduct this research and discuss your findings.
- Discuss the cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in events related to the spread of the Jewish population. What historical events were most significant?
- Reread the excerpt in your historical anthology written by Tacitus about the burning of Jerusalem. What is the point of view on this historical event? How does the context in which the statements were made determine Tacitus's point of view? Discuss what other points of view people might have on this event.