

Name _____

Benjamin of Tudela's Description of Constantinople

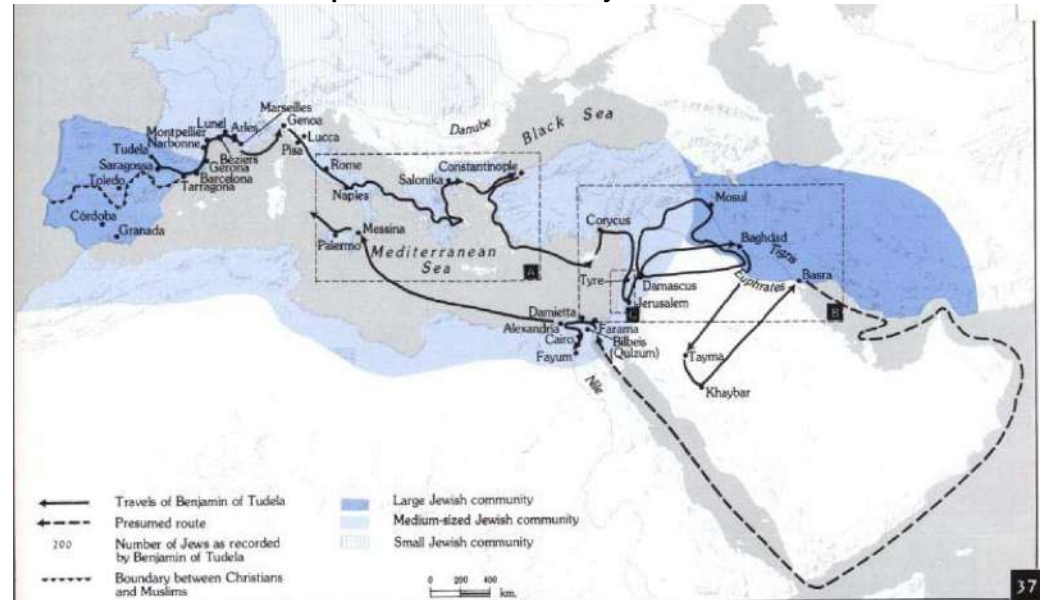
Benjamin of Tudela was a Jewish traveler from the Kingdom of Castille, in modern-day Spain in the 12th century. He traveled throughout Europe, the Middle East and North Africa visiting Jewish communities and writing about his travels. His book, *The Tales of Benjamin* provide historians with descriptions of the Mediterranean world during the post-classical era.

Benjamin of Tudela's Description of Constantinople

... The circumference of the city of Constantinople is eighteen miles; one-half of the city being bounded by the continent, the other by the sea, two arms of which meet here; the one a branch or outlet of the Russian [Black Sea], the other of the Spanish sea [Mediterranean Sea]. Great stir and bustle prevails [dominates] at Constantinople in consequence of the conflux [meeting] of many merchants, who resort thither [come there], both by land and by sea, from all parts of the world for purposes of trade, including merchants from Babylon and from Mesopotamia, from Media and Persia, from Egypt and Palestine, as well as from Russia, Hungary, Patzinakia, Budia, Lombardy and Spain. In this respect the city is equalled only by Bagdad, the metropolis of the Mahometans [Muslims]. . .

— Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, Manuel Komroff, ed., *Contemporaries of Marco Polo*, Boni & Liveright from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Exam.

Map of the Travels of Benjamin Tudela



[Benjamin of Tudela route - ru.svg](http://ru.svg), created by Bogdan is in the public domain.

4. Who was Benjamin of Tudela?

5. When did Benjamin of Tudela write his description of Constantinople?

6. Based on Benjamin of Tudela’s account, identify three locations merchants came to Constantinople from.
7. According to Benjamin of Tudela’s account, why did “*Great stir and bustle*” prevail [dominate] in Constantinople?
8. Explain the extent to which Benjamin of Tudela’s account is a reliable source of evidence about Constantinople in the 1100s.

Questions to consider when describing a source’s reliability.
Does the source include evidence about the given topic? (Constantinople in the 1100s)
Is the source primary or secondary?
Is the author biased?
What are the limitations of the source to give evidence about the topic?

Your response to task #8

9. Identify and explain a cause and effect relationship between what is depicted in the map of Constantinople entitled “Trade about AD 1000” and Benjamin of Tudela’s description of Constantinople.

10. SYNTHESIZE: How did the location of Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire affect its development?
