



GREECE THROUGH THE AGES / 1

From the glories of ancient Athens to the vitality of the modern nation, Greece has seen more than its fair share of action. This timeline will help you trace the steps as Greece created one of the greatest cultures and empires the world has seen, endured two thousand years under the rule of others, and then suffered through a terrible 20th century of wars, civil strife, and dictatorship.

We'll also highlight some key moments in the rejuvenation of modern Greece which, despite recent economic challenges, is both one of the world's most beautiful countries and a dynamic part of European culture. Along the way, you'll be introduced to Greece's Jewish communities, from the Romaniote who created a unique fusion of Jewish life with Greek culture and language, to the great Sephardi city of Salonika, where even the stevedores were Jewish and the ports closed on Shabbat.

■ General timeline ■ Jewish timeline

CREATING A COLOSSUS

- BCE** --- **3000** Settlements & villages established as Indo-European tribes settle in area
Minoan culture on island of Crete is considered first advanced European civilization
- **1500** Mycenaeans establish mainland Greece's first great culture
Greek mythology develops, including gods such as include Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite
- **1184** A Trojan Horse: Greeks overrun Troy (in modern-day Turkey)
- **1100** Greece's "Dark Ages": Dorians invade from north, raze many settlements, enslave locals
- **800** The polis: Numerous city-states have developed including Athens and Sparta
Politically independent, they are culturally linked. Greek alphabet developed
Homer writes epic poems Iliad & the Odyssey, key influences on Greek education & language
- **775** The first Olympic Games. Sole event: the men's (almost) 200m sprint
The Pythia, priestess-oracle of Delphi, the most powerful woman of the ancient world
Aristocratic, inherited rule replaced by "nouveau riche" trader-tyrants in many city-states
Colonization: 1500 Greek city-states established in Mediterranean, Black Sea, elsewhere
- **508** Athens establishes first democracy. All citizens can vote and speak at legislative assemblies
- **490** Battle of Marathon: Persian invasion of Greece failing & start of Greek military superiority

THE POWER AND THE GLORY OF ANCIENT GREECE

- **480** Athens, "the cradle of western civilization," flourishes economically, politically, culturally



timeline

GREECE THROUGH THE AGES / 2

■ General timeline ■ Jewish timeline

Architectural wonders include the Acropolis and Parthenon, a temple to Athena Theater, philosophers Socrates & Plato, physician Hippocrates part of this Golden Age

431 Trade-rich, imperial Athens battles with military power Sparta

401 Athens crippled by decades-long war with Sparta & bubonic plague

First evidence of Jewish presence

336 A new power from the north takes charge: Macedonia under Alexander the Great He builds the largest empire the world has ever seen

Conquers the Persian Empire, Egypt, and most areas between Greece and India

Alexander captures Jerusalem

Some evidence of Jewish communities on Greece's Aegean coast

Alexander dies at age 32. His empire splits between his generals and weakens

The Greek city-states decline but Hellenism, Greek culture outside Greece, flourishes

250 Many Hellenized Jews around world. Egyptian Jews translate Bible into Greek (Septuagint)

167 In Land of Israel, Maccabees revolt against Greeks. Hellenized Jews leave Israel for Greece

The Romaniote Jews establish themselves in Ioannina, Athens, & elsewhere

Speak Judeo-Greek & follow unique customs including reciting Jewish prayers in Greek

Today, the Romaniote are Europe's oldest Jewish community

OLDER BROTHER RULED BY YOUNGER: GREECE UNDER THE ROMANS

86 Rome completes defeat of Greek city-states, Greece now a Roman province

Greeks will not be independent for next 2,000 years

However, Roman rulers heavily influenced by Greek culture

The Pax Romana: 300 years of peace in Greece begins under Romans

CE 50 St. Paul brings Christianity to Greece

Jewish (Romaniote) communities in Thessaloniki, Athens, Veria, Ioannina, & elsewhere

324 Greece part of Rome's Eastern (Byzantine) Empire. Christian empire with Hellenistic culture

394 Christianity state religion. Worship of Greek and Roman gods prohibited, temples destroyed



timeline

GREECE THROUGH THE AGES / 3

■ General timeline ■ Jewish timeline

- **594** Classical Greek cultural influence dimming. Philosophy banned, Christian theology ascendant
Jews pressed to accept Christianity but protected by law as Chosen People
Jews of Thebes (pop. 2,000) dominate silk industry. In Crete, Jews export agricultural goods
Over time, Jewish population drops with heavy assimilation into Greek life
Continuing Jewish religious & communal life heavily influenced by Greek-Jewish fusion
- **1054** The Great Schism: Separate Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches formed
The Greek Orthodox Church dominates the Eastern Orthodox & most Greek speakers
- **1159** Jewish population small & scattered: Just 500 Romaniote Jews living in Thessaloniki
- **1202** Byzantine Empire weakens. Venice & others control many Greek territories and trade
- **1376** Ashkenazi Jews from Hungary & elsewhere begin settling in Thessaloniki
- THE AGE OF THE OTTOMANS**
- **1453** Ottoman Turks capture Constantinople. Greece part of the Ottoman Empire
Thessaloniki becomes a major seaport & city with multi-ethnic population
- **1493** Sephardi influx to Thessaloniki (which they call Salonika) begins
Ottomans welcome Jews from Spain, Portugal, North Africa, Italy, & elsewhere
30 separate congregations in Salonika, most named after native countries & communities
Jewish pop. includes many Marranos, forced converts to Christianity, expelled from Spain
- **1553** 20,000 Jews in Salonika, making it one of the world's largest Jewish communities
Most speak Ladino (Judeo-Spanish). They create rich Sephardi culture in city
Salonika Jews also play a key role in growth of international trade
Jewish ties to Ottomans (Muslims, Turks) make them suspect to Greek-speaking Christians
- **1600** Salonika is nicknamed "ir v'em beYisrael," the mother-city of Israel
30,000 Jews form majority (68%) in city. Smaller communities in Athens & around Greece
- **1665** A Jewish tumult. In Salonika & around world, many Jews claim Shabbetai Zevi is the messiah
- **1666** Threatened with death from Ottoman rulers, Shabbetai converts to Islam
Most in Salonika abandon Shabbetai, downplaying former allegiance to him
They reorganize community. Greater unity & central control, powerful rabbinical courts
- **1683** But some Shabbetai supporters convert to Islam while practicing Judaism secretly



timeline

GREECE THROUGH THE AGES / 4

■ General timeline ■ Jewish timeline

- **1669** Ottoman rule declining. Parthenon damaged as Ottomans & Venetians battle
- **1770** Ottoman Turks suppress several Greek Christian rebellions
- **1814** Greek nationalist demands for independence from Ottomans Turks grow
- I N D E P E N D E N C E ...**
- **1821** Greek War of Independence begins. Massacres, heavy casualties on both sides
Ottomans respond to atrocities in Greece by attacking Greek communities in Turkey
Greeks massacre thousands of Jews as community associated with Ottoman rule
Athens & other Greek Jewish communities diminished or destroyed
- **1829** Greeks win independence with British, Russian, French support
- **1831** Kingdom of Greece includes Athens & south. Most of north, incl. Salonika, under Ottomans
Many Greek Jews move north to Ottoman-controlled Salonika
In "independent" Greece, considerable political instability & Great Power influence
Britain, France, & Russia install a Bavarian, King Otto, onto throne
- **1834** **Jewish community in Athens gradually revives & grows through migrants**
- **1862** Greeks rebel against Otto but British install a new foreign sovereign, the Danish King George
Modernization: A period of relative stability with some economic & technological progress
- **1873** **Jews in Salonika, Athens, & elsewhere affected by growing western & liberal influence**
- **1890** Mass migration: One-sixth of Greeks migrate in next 15 years, mainly to US & Egypt
- **1896** The first modern Olympic Game hosted in Athens. The new nation coming of age?
- ... A N D I N S E C U R I T Y**
- **1897** Greeks lose war with Ottomans. Only western powers prevent Turks from taking Athens
- **1910** Humiliating defeat leads to rise of the "Greek political messiah," Prime Minister Venizelos
- **1912** He leads country into Balkan Wars against Ottomans. Greeks double territory & population
Greeks gain southern Macedonia from Ottomans including Thessaloniki (Salonika)
90,000 Jews in Salonika. A center of Jewish commerce & Sephardi, Ladino-speaking culture
Jews half city's pop. & influential in all walks of life. City, incl. the docks, closes for Shabbat.



timeline

GREECE THROUGH THE AGES / 5

■ General timeline ■ Jewish timeline

- **1916** Seeking further territory, Greeks join Allies in WWI fighting Germany and Ottoman Turks
- **1919** Greeks attack Turkey but are defeated by 1923. Greek communities in Turkey massacred
- **1923** War leads to poverty & political chaos in Greece. 400,000 Turks forced out of Greece
1.5 m. Greeks leave Turkey. Tension between Greek refugees and Jews in Salonika
Jewish population & influence in Salonica drops. City's day of rest is now Sunday
- **1935** Right-wing dictator Metaxas imprisons opponents (but does not persecute Jews)
Jewish communities in 31 cities. Zionism and Aliyah are growing
Salonika remains key Jewish center with a wide range of secular & religious culture
- FROM WORLD WAR TO CIVIL WAR...**
- **1940** Greeks declare neutrality in WWII. Fascist Italy invades Greece but beaten back.
- **1941** Nazis & allies invade. They defeat Greeks & Allied armies, divide country into 3 zones
400,000 Greeks will die during brutal occupation including 100,000 from starvation
About 76,000 Jews in Greece. 57,000 Salonika Jews are trapped in German Zone
6,000 Jews in Thrace under Bulgarians, 13,000 in Athens & elsewhere under Italians
Germans begin arrests, execution of Jewish leadership, plunder of community resources
- **1942** Fierce resistance from Greek partisans, including opposing royalist & Communist groups
- **1943** *Salonika Jews forced into ghettos. Over 40,000 deported to Auschwitz, nearly all dying*
Some Salonika Jews survive through protection by Greek citizens or by joining partisans
4,100 Jews in Bulgarian zone deported to Treblinka and murdered
Jews in Italian zone generally protected. Italians refuse to allow deportations
- **1944** *But after Italy surrenders, Germans take over zone & 5,000 Jews sent to Auschwitz*
60-70,000 Greek Jews die in Holocaust, about 85% of population
Post-war Jewish population 10,000.
Germans withdraw but Greek communists and royalists begin civil war
- **1945** Britain intervenes to ensure Greek royalists take control
- **1946** After unsteady truce, civil war breaks out again. 50,000 killed. Communists defeated by 1949
- **1949** A shattered society. Since 1938, population has dropped by 1/8th, 1000 villages obliterated
Greek economy in tatters, 20% of nation homeless



timeline

GREECE THROUGH THE AGES / 6

■ General timeline ■ Jewish timeline

... TO MILITARY JUNTA

- **1949** A conservative, repressive, royalist govt takes power backed by anti-democratic army
Many communists imprisoned. Leftists & their families discriminated against for many years
- **1952** Greece joins NATO. During Cold War, Greece is a staunch supporter of US
Constant tension with Turkey and also with Slav population in Macedonia
But with massive US aid, economy recovers from free fall although remains stagnant
Mass migration. In next 20 years, 1 m. Greeks settle in north Europe, Australia, & elsewhere
- **1961** A flawed "democracy." Conservatives stay in power after rigged election
The beginning of mass tourism in Greece
- **1964** Center-left party win election, raising army fears
- **1967** Supported by king, army seize power. Opponents imprisoned, culture stifled
Military government's anti-modern attitude includes banning long hair, mini-skirts
Migration to Israel sees Jewish population drop to 6,500
Athens largest community (2,800)
- **1969** Greece banned from Council of Europe but tourism continues
- **1973** Military violently squashes demonstrations by anti-junta students in Athens
- **1974** Seeking nationalist boost, military encourage coup in Cyprus & Cyprus uniting with Greece
A Greek humiliation: Turks respond by capturing Northern Cyprus. Cyprus divided.

A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY & TO EUROPE

- **1974** Failed Cyprus adventure leads to collapse of Greek military junta
A two party (center-right, center-left) system will dominate Greek politics for next 40 years
They bring stability, security, democracy & gradually, higher standards of living
But huge tax exemptions & heavy spending lay foundations for later economic crises
- **1975** Economy hit as Greek migrant workers return from recession-hit Germany
- **1979** Nobel Laureate for Literature Odysseas Elytis part of growing Greek role in European culture
- **1981** Greece full member (and poorest state) of European Economic Community
A second Marshall Plan. Greece receive huge payments from EEC & later from EU
Greece considered one of Israel's harshest critics in western Europe



timeline

GREECE THROUGH THE AGES / 7

■ General timeline ■ Jewish timeline

- **1992** Civil marriage example of social liberalization & weakening Greek Orthodox Church
- **1996** A period of privatization as new leader seeks modernization, integration into EU economy
- **2000** Left-wing terrorism has diminished but not died. A British diplomat assassinated
- **2002** Greece accepted into Eurozone (after downplaying level of debt). Drachma replaced by Euro
- **2004** The Year of Miracles: Greece wins European Soccer Championship and hosts Olympics
Living standards & expectations continue to rise as does national debt & bank loans
A changing, aging society. Birth rate 1.4 per woman, was 4.1 in 1934.
First kosher restaurant in Greece opens since WWII
- **2005** Welfare cuts, privatization & end of job security laws lead to protest
- **2007** International financial crisis leads to concern about Greek level of debt
- **2008** **Previously frosty Greek-Israel relations improve significantly. Military, trade, diplomatic ties**
- **2009** Fear that Greeks will default on debt repayment starts country's economic crisis
Over next 8 years, Greece suffers longest recession of any advanced economy on record
Radical austerity measures, social welfare system collapses, migration of many educated
Despite reforms, government requires a series of bailout loans to avoid debt default
- **2012** Post-junta political system weakens as protests rise & Europe demands more cost-cutting
Far-right, racist Golden Dawn win 7% of votes & 21 parliamentary seats
- **2013** 26.8% of workers unemployed (highest in Europe). Youth unemployment 60%
Government launches crackdown on hate speech, arrests Golden Dawn leaders
- **2015** Anti-austerity, radical left-wing party Syriza win elections
Facing expulsion from Eurozone, govt. agrees to more cuts in exchange for another bailout
Migrant crisis at peak. In one year, 100,000 migrants from Middle East reach Greek Islands
- **2017** GDP per person has dropped from \$32,000 in 2008 to \$18,600
- **2018** A degree of economic stabilization. 33 million tourists visit, tourism 25% of economy
Country of Macedonia changes name to North Macedonia, ending long dispute with Greece
- **2019** **Moses Elisaf elected mayor of Ioannina. Believed to be first Jewish mayor in Greece**
Greek population: 10.8 million
Greek Jewish population: c. 5,000. Communities in nine areas, largest Athens