

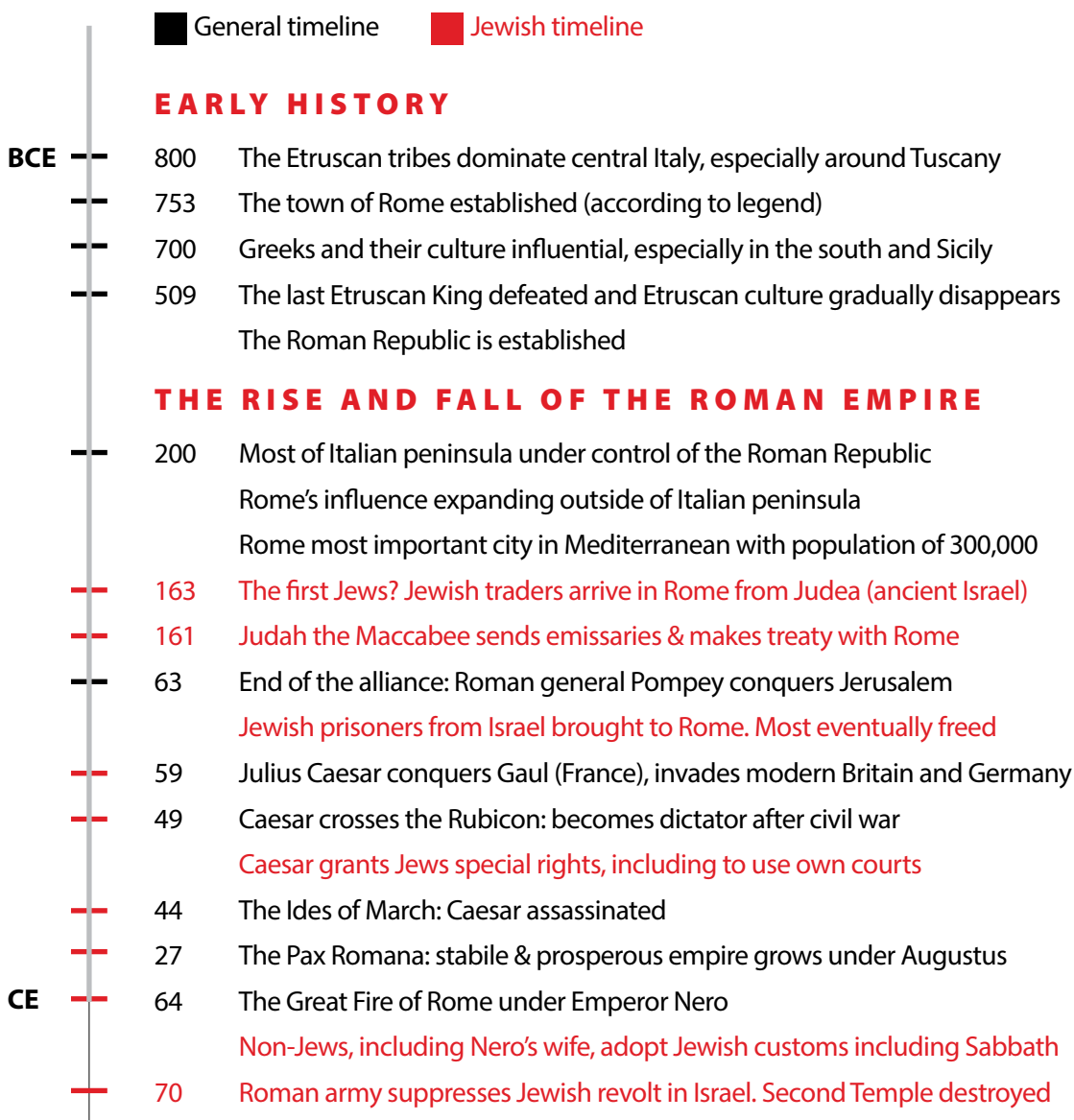


Timeline

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ITALY THROUGH THE AGES

Italy is loved for its art and style but also for its history. This timeline will help you get your bearings as we make our way from the glories of the Roman Empire to the La Dolce Vita (or good life) of modern Italy. We'll also look at the long history of the country's Jews, who arrived in Italy even before the Christians, and despite slavery, ghettos and the Holocaust, are a community known for their tolerance, unique customs, and creativity. Many of the dates and populations are estimates only.



- 80 100,000 Hebrew slaves sent to Rome
Building of Colosseum funded by loot seized from Land of Israel
Jewish community grows as slaves freed. Synagogues created
Jewish-Hellenism. Italian Jews read Torah and pray in Greek
- 117 Roman Empire reaches its zenith, includes areas from Scotland to India
- 132 Bar-Kochba revolt in Israel suppressed. Many Jews exiled to Rome
Roman Empire faces constant challenges from internal and external forces
- 211 Nonetheless, Roman Empire reaches its territorial zenith
Pagan tolerance: Jews settle throughout Italy and Empire
- 313 Constantine becomes first Christian emperor. Hostility toward Jews grows
- 330 Roman Empire split in two, with second, eastern capital in Constantinople
- 476 End of the Empire: Italy and Roman Empire overrun by Germanic tribes

DIVISION & THE RENAISSANCE

- 500 Italy suffers series of invasions with different rulers in different regions
Jewish situation varies depending on ruler, region, and church policy
Jewish population in Italy, once hundreds of thousands, now much lower
- 590 Pope Gregory I provides Jews with protection in Rome and elsewhere
- 1000 Normans establish empire and stability in Sicily and southern Italy
Jewish communities now mainly concentrated in south and Sicily
Dynamic city-states rule the north including in Venice, Florence, and Milan
- 1400 The Renaissance: intellectual and artistic flowering in the city-states
- 1452 Leonardo da Vinci, polymath and painter, born in Florence
- 1469 Spreading the word: Venice becomes world center for printing books
Jewish printers in Venice create revolution in access to Bible and Talmud
- 1492 Expelled Spanish and Portuguese Jews and forced converts come to Italy
They are joined by Jews fleeing Spanish-controlled southern Italy
Jews now based in north. Their position varies from city-state to city-state
- 1512 Michelangelo completes painting of Sistine Chapel
- 1515 The first ghetto: Jews of Venice can live only in this residential quarter
- 1555 Rome's ghetto created. Largest of Italy's ghettos
- 1600 30,000 Jews living in 70 Italian towns or cities, mainly in ghettos
Conditions and restrictions vary from ghetto to ghetto
City-states weaken. Italy rocked by wars & invasions by European powers
- 1805 Napoleonic France controls much of Italy
Napoleon declares Jews are citizens like all other. Ghettos demolished

BIRTH OF A NATION

- 1815 Napoleon defeated. Italy again under Austrian & European dominance
Return of the ghettos and restrictions on Jews
Rise of the Risorgimento: efforts for an independent, unified Italy grow
- 1859 Austrians driven out of central and north Italy by Italian nationalists & allies
- 1861 Italian revolutionaries led by Garibaldi conquers Sicily and south
Nation-state of Italy established under King Victor Emmanuel II

Local identities and languages remain strong. Only 3% speak Italian

1871 Rome incorporated into new Italian nation

Life expectancy less than 30 years

Jewish emancipation. Jews, less than 1% of population, flourish in new Italy

1890 Economy & industry in north begins to grow

South much poorer. Mass migration to US, Brazil, Argentina, & elsewhere

1901 Despite emigration, population grows to 33 million

Jewish life increasingly focused on Rome & urban areas

1904 Three Jewish prime ministers between 1904 and 1911

1912 All adult males eligible to vote

NEAR-DESTRUCTION OF A NATION

1914 Italy initially remains neutral upon outbreak of WWI

1915 Hoping to gain disputed lands, Italy declares war on Austria & join Allies

1918 Over 600,000 Italians killed in WWI; economy severely damaged

1924 The world's first Fascist government: Mussolini win elections

1926 Mussolini seizes dictatorial powers

Fascists do not initially interfere with Jewish social & legal equality

1927 Fascists strike agreement with Catholic Church

1935 Mussolini, dreaming of new Roman empire, invades Abyssinia (Ethiopia)

1938 Italy strengthens links with Nazis; passes anti-Jewish legislation

1940 Italy, seeking territory, joins WWII with Germany and Japan

Suffer military disasters in Greece, Balkans, Ethiopia, North Africa, Russia

Italian Fascists discriminate against but do not kill or deport Jews

1943 Crumbling regime: Western Allies occupy Sicily and south of country

Italy surrenders to Allies; Mussolini arrested

Germany occupies northern Italy, restores Mussolini to power

Long struggle between Allies & Nazis (& civil war) for Italy begins

Nazis start implementing the Final Solution in occupied northern Italy

Considerable Jewish and non-Jewish resistance to Holocaust

7,682 Jews out of pre-war population of 44,500 killed

1945 Allies liberate all of Italy. Mussolini killed while fleeing

OUT OF THE RUBBLE: THE ITALIAN ECONOMIC MIRACLE

1946 Italy poor & devastated. 1.2 million homes destroyed during war

King deposed and republic created. Women's suffrage was introduced

Purge of former fascists quickly abandoned

1947 Economy stabilizes with Marshall Plan assistance from US

1948 Christian Democrats, a center-right Catholic party, wins election

For next 50 years, they will lead coalition governments and control state

Strong Italian Communist Party is their main opposition. Cold war tension

Primo Levi's later-famous book on Auschwitz published but largely ignored

1951 Italy embraces European economic integration & proto EU organizations

An economic (& baby) boom. Population 47.5 million, double that of 1871

- Northern economy moving fast from agriculture to industry and services
- Massive aid and land reform program launched in south
- 1954 South remains poor with average incomes less than a third of that in north
- Local loyalties still powerful. Only 20% speak Italian exclusively
- 1960 An “economic miracle.” Economy grows by a remarkable 8 % each year
- Millions moving from rural south to urban north
- 1962 Vatican II reforms Catholic Church & condemns anti-Semitism
- 1965 32,000 Jews. Largest community in Rome including newcomers from Libya
- 1970 Life expectancy has risen to 72. Birth rates dropping, divorce legalized
- 1973 The Years of Lead begin: Far left & right terrorism, economic turmoil
- 1978 Abortion laws liberalized
- 1980 Economic recovery led by rise of small and medium-size businesses
- 1982 Palestinian terror attack on Rome’s Great Synagogue
- 1986 John Paul II first pope to visit Italian (or any) synagogue for centuries
- 1987 State recognizes Jewish right not to work on Shabbat and Jewish holidays
- 1993 Italy founder member of European Union
- 1994 Corruption scandals destroy Christian Democrats & other parties
- Rise of populist political parties and leaders especially Silvio Berlusconi
- Birth rates drop to 1.18 children per woman
- 1997 *Life is Beautiful* wins Oscars and raises Italian interest in Holocaust
- 2008 Italy, with high levels of debt, hit hard by Great Recession
- 2015 Italy at forefront of migrant crisis from Syria and Africa
- 2017 74.4 % define themselves as Catholic, 27% as actively engaged
- Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah opens in Ferrara
- 2018 Anti-immigrant regional party heads Italy government
- 2019 5 million foreign residents, about 9% of population
- 2019 Italian population 60.6 million
- Jewish population 30,000