



## Synagogues of Bologna

Great and Small Synagogue:  
Via Mario Finzi 2, 40123 Bologna

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### The Small Synagogue - Beth Yedidiah

This synagogue has a unique architectural and artistic value and adds to Italy's important Jewish cultural heritage. Dedicated to Renzo Yedidià Soliani, it was inaugurated in 2017.

The Roman domus remains (I-II century AD) that can be admired under the glass floor, were discovered during the restoration of the community building and the main synagogue. A restoration made possible thanks to the joint efforts of the Jewish Community with public and private institutions.

The synagogue's "Tevà" (pulpit) is located in a central position, according to Italian custom. This choice follows local Jewish tradition, as in Bologna the "Machazor" (Formulation of Prayers) of Italian rite was printed for the first time.



BOLOGNA

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## Jewish Presence in Bologna

A lively Jewish presence can be documented in Bologna since the XIV century. Jews have contributed to the cultural and economic development of the city over the centuries, with prosperous periods often followed by difficult times.

In 1556, Pope Paul IV ordered to segregate the Jews in the ghetto, which was established between today's Zamboni and Oberdan Streets (via Dei Giudei, Del Carro, dell'Inferno, Canonica). All Jews were then expelled from the papal territories, Bologna included, in 1569. After returning to the city around 1586, Jews were expelled definitively in 1593.

After the first expulsion, the Pope donated the area of the Jewish cemetery in via Orfeo to the nuns of the Convent of S. Pietro Martire, inviting them to damage and destroy the tombstones and burials and to dispose of the area as they pleased. The cemetery was recently rediscovered and it is now the largest medieval Jewish cemetery in Italy.

After Napoleon Bonaparte's army reached Bologna in 1796, Jews acquired new liberties and could return to reside in the city. No longer forced into ghettos, they settled voluntarily between Marconi, delle Lame and Sant'Isaia Streets.

The Jewish Community was formally registered as "Israelite Voluntary Association" in 1864 and as "Israelite Community", in 1930. Marco Momigliano, from Piedmont, was its Rabbi until 1899, when succeeded by Rabbi Alberto Orvieto, who was in charge for more than forty years. Momigliano's commitment to the city's institutions led to the activation of the Certosa Jewish cemetery, still in use today.

All Italian Jews were subjected to the 1938 "racial laws" by the Fascist regime. Among the many discriminations and civil liberties restrictions, the Jews were expelled from public schools and universities, both as teachers and pupils. In Bologna the Community was able to provide private Jewish middle and high schools.

Nazi-Fascist deportations initiated in November 1943, hitting severely the Bolognese community. The many victims are remembered by the plaque at the entrance of the Synagogue in Via Mario Finzi, a street named after an anti-Fascist Bolognese Jew deported to Auschwitz.

The Community was officially rebuilt in 1946. It is still active, counting two synagogues, of which one greater and one smaller, the Beth Yedidiah Temple inaugurated in 2017.

## The Great Synagogue

An increase in the number of Jews in the city during the XIX century led some families to buy the building in via de 'Gombruti 9. Engineer Guido Lisi designed there a synagogue that was inaugurated in 1877, for the holiday of Shavuot.

This place of prayer soon became inadequate. Architect Attilio Muggia, a member of the Community, expanded and redesigned the entire building, at the beginning of the XX century. The great synagogue presented a sumptuous and decorative style and was inaugurated in 1928.

The synagogue was later destroyed in the great bombing of September 1943. Bolognese Jews painstakingly rebuilt the Community in the post-war era, and they decided to rebuild the synagogue as well. The project was entrusted to Engineer Guido Muggia, son of Attilio, who used his father's original project, simplifying it due to the lack of funds. The synagogue was inaugurated in 1954 and it is still in use today.

