



ROOM 12

The Exile

At the beginning of August 1492, small groups of people began to leave from the Catalan villages and cities. They had decided to remain true to the Jewish faith and take the path of exile. It was long and difficult, and full of misfortunes, dangers and uncertainties.

Most of the exiles from Girona and its surrounding areas went to the Rosellon (southern France). Some who reached Perpignan were: Astruc Abraham, Leon Aninai, Mosé Vidal, Samuel Salamó and Esdras Bellshom, who had been secretaries in the synagogue of Girona. They arrived with the Scrolls of the Law and sacred books and objects that they had been able to take from the synagogue. At the beginning of September 1493, the king of France gave the counties of Rosellon and the Cerdagne Valley to the King of Castile and Aragon. As a consequence, King Fernando extended the edict of expulsion to all the Jewish people of his dominions. All the Jews and Jewesses from Perpignan, Cotlliure, Elna and Millas were expelled. At the beginning of

October, a group of 39 Jews left the port of Cotlliure; counted among them were members of the old lineages from Girona such as the Piera, Nissim or Asdrai families.

Some of those exiled from Catalonia settled down in Livorno, Naples or Rome, where the “Catalan” memory of a part of the Jewish community lasted until the end of the nineteenth century. Others went to more distant places like the Balkan coasts or some cities of the Ottoman Empire, where they were heartily welcomed because they were seen as a new source of wealth and prosperity. So began the Judeo-Catalan community of Salonica, which kept some cultural remembrances and specific traits until its destruction at the hands of Nazi barbarism.

Today, there are few remains of the Catalan Jewish people who had to leave that which had been their land for so many centuries. Even so, we maintain its memory and its legacy because they comprise part of the essence and essential intrinsic wealth of our past, our history and our memory.



■ Representation of a ship. *Wood painting. MNAC, Barcelona.*

PUT IT BACK IN ITS PLACE, THANK YOU