





● Metal buckle with fantastic animal decoration.  
Montjuïc, Girona, 14<sup>th</sup> century.  
Museum of Jewish History, Girona

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## CONTENTS

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The Origins. 600 Years of History 4

The Jewish Quarter. Neighbourhood of Israel 6

The *Aljama*. Community Life 8

The Family. Tradition and Ritual 10

The Synagogue. Community Spaces 14

The Jewish Cemetery. Montjuïc 16

Girona, Mother City of Israel. Jewish Culture 18

Making a Living. Economic Activity 22

A Difficult Relationship. From Peaceful Coexistence to Marginalization 26

The Converso Community. The Inquisition 28

The Material Legacy. Archaeological Remains 34

The Creation of the Museum of Jewish History 36



# The Creation of the Museum of Jewish History

At the beginning of the 1990S, the City Council of Girona through its Call de Girona Municipal Board initiated a project to create a museum and study centre with the aim of recovering, studying, preserving and disseminating the Jewish history of Girona and Catalonia. The aim was to record and explain an ancient and important story that formed an integral part of the development of the city and country.

As in the case of the majority of Jewish communities that lived in Catalonia in the Middle Ages, the Jewish population of Girona left few physical traces. Jewish culture does not produce a great deal of artistic works, and there was no outstanding legacy of this kind, excepting the magnificent illuminated

manuscripts and some significant liturgical objects. And the more than 500 years that have passed since the population was present in the area have meant that most of the architectural and archaeological findings that might have been preserved have been lost. Despite this, some very important features have survived, including the **collection of Hebrew gravestones** from the Jewish cemetery in Montjuïc, Girona, and the ritual baths or mikvehs of Besalú (dating from the thirteenth century) and Girona (fifteenth century).

The rehabilitation of the spaces today dedicated to the museum was carried out in an architectural project that was respectful of the age of the buildings that housed Girona



Barcelona Haggadah (facsimile), Catalonia, 14<sup>th</sup> century. Museum of Jewish History, Girona





na's last synagogue, which was in use until 1492 (the year of the expulsion of the Jews). The project included technological elements and a modern, attractive museum design that also engaged in a dialogue with the history and heritage of its surroundings. The first phase, which tells the history of Jewish Girona, was opened in October 2003. The second phase, completed in 2007, is dedicated to Jewish culture and the last years of the Jewish communities in Catalonia. In 2015, the rooms on the first floor (which explore the development of the Jewish Quarter and the way the community worked) were renovated and in 2016 a new area dedicated to the society of the conversos was added. The most recent works, carried out in 2017, transformed the space housing the remains of the fifteenth-century mikveh into part of the museum.

The great Israeli writer Amos Oz wrote this phrase in the visitors' book: "This is a small museum, yet perfect and moving: a museum that 'opens' your eyes. Thank you for the visit and the memories of a Jewish life that flourished here in an exceptional way" (30/09/2010).

His words are a fitting reflection of the museum's main objective: to open the visitor's eyes, providing an explanation and reminder of the history of the Jewish life that developed in our country and city in a golden age rarely experienced in the history of the Jewish people.

● Patio with the paving of the Star of David,  
20<sup>th</sup> century