

Place de la Juiverie



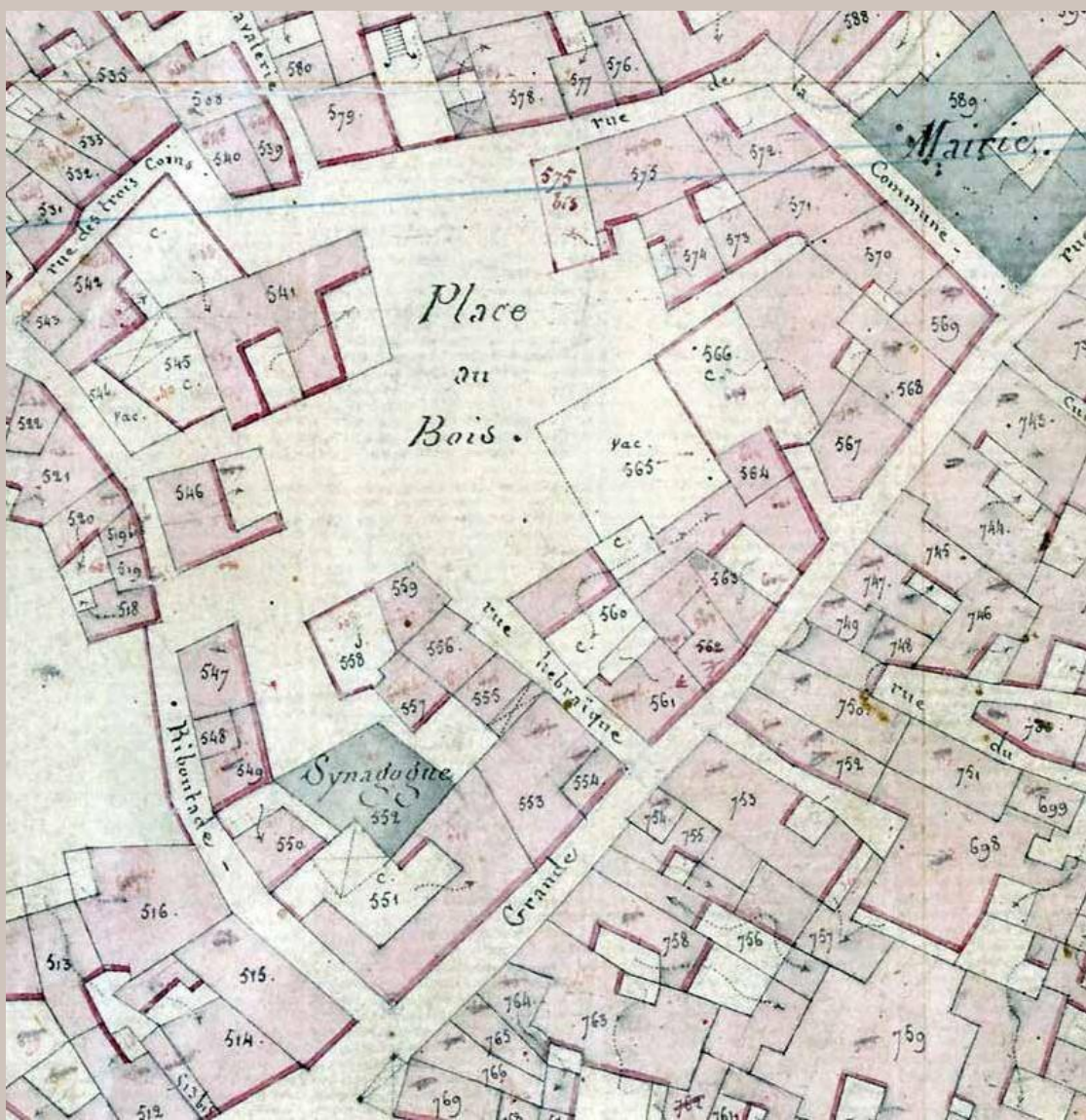
The Orgon lamp. One of the oldest relics attesting to the presence of Jews in France. Oil lamp from the 1st century BCE.

© Cavaillon archaeological museum

The first written reference to the presence of a Jewish community in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue dates back to 1268. There is strong evidence that the Jewry, situated within the city walls in the Villefranche district, existed on the site well before this date.

In 1274, the Comtat-Venaissin was placed under the authority of the pope. This protection allowed Jews to live in relative freedom on this papal land, while they were being persecuted and expelled from other places (England in the late 13th century, France in the early 14th century, Spain, Portugal and Provence in the late 15th century).

In the 15th century, the papal authorities toughened regulations on the Comtat's Jewish communities. To separate them from Christians, Jews were forced to live in a single street that was closed at night: the Jewish quarter, known as *carrerria* in Provençal. In 1624, they were grouped into four Jewish quarters – in Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon and L'Isle. They were nicknamed *Arba Kehilot*, meaning 'the four holy communities', in reference to the holy cities of Israel. The 'Pope's Jews' of L'Isle continued living in this way for nearly two centuries, until their emancipation in 1791 when the Comtat-Venaissin was annexed to France.



The Jewish quarter on the 1828 cadastral map
© Archives Départementales de Vaucluse

The Jewry

In its 18th-century configuration, the Jewry extended over approximately one hectare. It was accessed via two gates situated to the east (now Rue Alfred de Musset) and the west (Rue Louis Lopez). The life of the community was structured around a central square – the hub of economic activities, which primarily focused on the textile industry. The houses were often four or even five storeys high, so as to optimise space which had become invaluable. At least two buildings particularly representative of late-18th-century civil architecture are still standing. These buildings are characterised by a refined style, visible in the quality of the ironwork, balconies and plasterwork decoration.

The second half of the 18th century was marked by a dramatic improvement in living conditions and the resources used to renovate buildings and places of worship (synagogue, ritual baths, etc.).

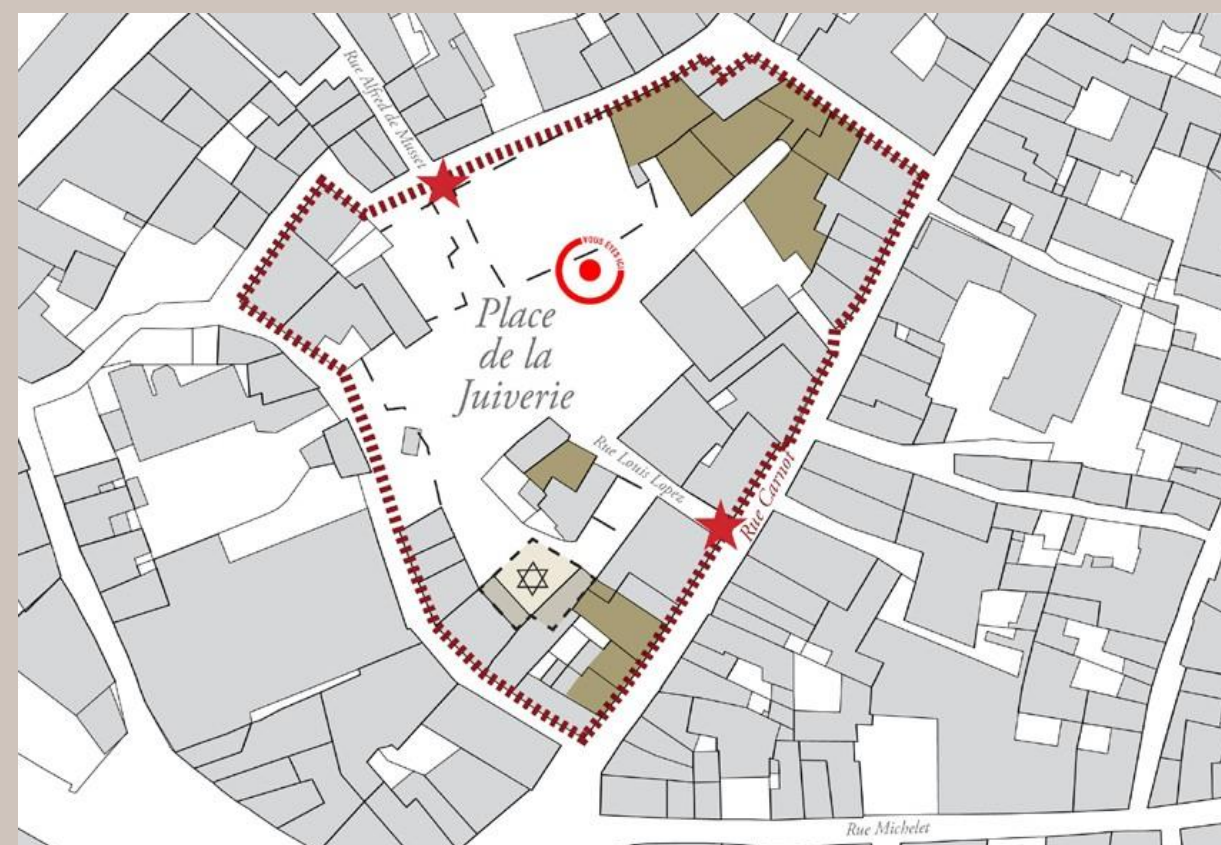
The synagogue

An earlier synagogue existed before the 16th century, as the bishop of Cavaillon authorised its reconstruction in the south-east corner of the Jewish quarter in 1523. François Brun was tasked with restoring it in 1676. It was however rebuilt again in 1759. Its architecture and decoration were probably very close to those of Cavaillon or Carpentras. After suffering serious damage during the French Revolution, the synagogue was finally destroyed in 1856. All that remains is a wrought iron railing, now visible in the collegiate church.

The cemetery

The Jewish cemetery is located over one kilometre from L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue city centre, at the border between the villages of Caumont and Le Thor. This distance may be attributable to a shared burial space with Le Thor before the Jewish communities of the Comtat Venaissin were grouped into four Jewish quarters in 1624 (Avignon, Carpentras, Cavaillon and L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue). This cemetery – classified as a Historic Monument – has numerous tombs and enclosures laid out in the 19th century by the last families of L'Isle's Comtat Venaissin Jewish community.

Ironwork railing from the late 18th century, held in a building located near the synagogue site.



- Site of the synagogue
- Comtat Venaissin Jewish buildings identified
- Old gates
- Section demolished since 1820
- Boundary of the Jewish quarter

