



## PITIGLIANO – THE SMALL JERUSALEM

Built on a massive tufa block up on the Grosseto hills, in the middle of Maremma, crossed by a vast amount of tunnels housing Etruscan tombs, Pitigliano appears as a sculpture where the village houses are directly carved into rock.

Its mysterious origins appear remote, going as far back as pre-history, while its documented history starts with the Etruscan period, followed by the Roman and continues in the Middle Ages with its assimilation in the Aldobrandeschi County.

In the beginning of the year 1300 it became the property of the Orsini, Counts of Rome, and in 1500, the Medici family, lords of Florence, annexed it to their Granducato di Toscana.

Pitigliano is known to this day as The Small Jerusalem for a large Jewish presence that has been part of its history since four centuries ago.

In the spring of 1787 an illustrious pilgrim arrived in its walls, his name was Peter Leopold of Hapsburg-Lorena Grand duke of Tuscany and future emperor of Austria. In his detailed trip notes he writes: “They are very industrious, hard working and almost all own some land. It counts about 4600 souls and can be considered one of the most populated areas of the Sienese country”. The he added with surprise:” There are all the amenities, butchers, shops and four spice businesses, the majority of which are in Jewish hands”.

In 1784 the Jewish community counted 222 people over a total of 2000 inhabitants.

After Rome, Florence, Livorno and Venice, Pitigliano became the first small Italian city to have its own Synagogue, built in 1598, where the sacred rolls of a manuscript Torah which is said to come directly from Jerusalem are being preserved.

In the period after 1800 a small Jewish school and a library was built.

Being a small community, totally walled in and closed from the rest of the world, life between Jews and Catholics was always one of reciprocal tolerance and affection.

It is to be noted that during the Second World War, the Pitigliano Jews were not arrested or deported by the Nazis that never came close to that citadel, so well fortified and so united, where its citizens protected their Jews at all costs.