

PERSPECTIVES OF TURKEY'S JEWISH MINORITY AND TURKISH-
JEWISH IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL:
THE NARRATIVES OF THE MASS-MIGRATION OF JEWS TO ISRAEL
BETWEEN 1945 AND 1955

by

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Title: Perspectives of Turkey's Jewish Minority and Turkish-Jewish Immigrants in
Israel: The Narratives of the Mass-Migration of Jews to Israel between 1945 and 1955.

This study scrutinizes the oral narratives of the mass migration of Turkey's Jews to Israel in the late 1940s, both as memories of suppressed or ignored historical events and as traces of the contemporary identity issues of Jews. A detailed historical background of the migration and history of Ottoman and Turkey's Jews are given according to two contradictory approaches. The memories and different ways of remembering the migration are analyzed with the aim of highlighting micro and macro factors of the migration such as individuals' strategies and pull, push factors. The main discrepancies and similarities between narratives of the informants in Turkey and in Israel of the migration are also analyzed. It is argued that the age, class status of the informants and the political dynamics of the country where informants currently residing elucidate the discrepancies and similarities of narratives. The perceptions of the Turkish-Jewish identity of informants in Turkey and in Israel are also analyzed through the narrations of migration. The main sources of this thesis are oral narratives of elderly migrants who migrated from Turkey to Israel and Jews in Turkey who did not prefer to migrate in the years between 1945 and 1955 as well as written narratives of migrants.

Bo aziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve nkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü'nde Yüksek Lisans derecesi için Deniz Nilüfer Erselcan tarafından 31 A ustos 2009'da teslim edilen tezin özetini

Ba lık: Türkiye'deki Yahudi Azınlık ve srail'deki Türk-Yahudi Göçmenlerin Bakı Açısından: 1945 ve 1955 Arası Yahudilerin srail'e Toplu Göç Anlatıları.

Bu çalı ma 1940 sonlarında Türkiye Yahudilerinin srail'e toplu göç anlatılarını hem tarihsel olayların bastırılması ya da yok farzedilmesi anıları olarak hem de güncel Yahudi kimli inin izleri olarak incelemi tir. Göçün detaylı tarihsel arkaplanı ve Osmanlı, Türkiye Yahudilerinin tarihi iki kar ıt tarihsel yakla ıma göre anlatılmı tır. Göç anıları ve göçün farklı hatırlama biçimleri ki isel stratejiler ve göçün itici ve çekici faktörleri gibi makro ve mikro yapılarını vurgulamak amacıyla incelenmi tir. Türkiye ve srail'deki görü mecilerin anlatıları arasındaki farklılık ve benzerlikler de analiz edilmi tir. Görü mecilerin ya ı ve sınıfsal durumu, ya adıkları ülkenin politik dinamiklerinin anlatılardaki farklılık ve benzerlikleri açıklayabilece i tartışılmı tır. Ayrıca göç anlatıları üzerinden, Türkiye ve srail'deki görü mecilerin Türk-Yahudi kimli i algılaması de erlendirilmi tir. Bu tezin ana kaynakları yazılı olanların yanı sıra, 1945-1955 yıllarında Türkiye'den srail'e göç etmi ya lı göçmenler ve Türkiye ya ayan, göç etmeyi tercih etmemi , döneme tanıklık etmi Yahudilerin sözlü anlatılarıdır.

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to the memory of our beloved grandmother, Roza Fatma Mediha

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem and the Aim of the Study

The history of the minorities in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic has recently taken into more consideration by academics, researchers and journalists. The history of the Ottoman Jews and the Jews of the Turkish Republic have not taken the priority yet, but they have started to attract attention from the perspective of policy-making and of social science. A limited number of studies on this topic mostly reconstructs the official and dominant discourse of the authorities. The most astonishing and important aspect is how the authorities of the Jewish community in Turkey and the Turkish authorities adopt the same discourse.

Tranquility and peace, clemency and hospitality are the key words of the official and the dominant discourse on the Jewish-Turkish relations in Turkey. According to the Turkish and Jewish authorities, the Jews were the *millet'i-sadıka* (loyal community) in the Ottoman Empire; likewise in the Republican period. They have always lived in tranquility and in peace. Even though some undesired events occurred like *Varlık Vergisi* (Capital Levy)¹ in 1942 or the Events of September 6-7² in 1955, the Jews were

¹ Varlık Vergisi: Turkish capital levy which was mostly collected from the minorities between 1942 and 1944. The tax rate calculated on the basis of annual revenue earned was 5% for Muslims, 156% for Greeks, 179% for Jews and 232% for Armenians. In Esther Benbassa, Aron Rodrigue, *Türkiye ve Balkan Yahudileri Tarihi* (Istanbul: İletim Yayınları, 2001), p. 376. For full discussions on Capital Levy, see Rıdvan Akar, *A kale Yolcuları, Varlık Vergisi ve Çalı ma Kampları* (Istanbul: BelgeYayınları, 2000). See also Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve Türkle tirme Politikaları* (Istanbul: İletim Yayınları, 2000).

never the target. Examples given of the loyalty and the amicable lives of Jews can be summarized as: Sultan Beyazıt II's mercy in opening the doors of the Ottoman Empire to Jews who had been expelled from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1497, the participation of Jews in the Ottoman administration, the contribution of the Jews to the Turkish army during World War I and the War of Independence, the Jewish community's refusal to acquire special rights during the negotiations Lausanne Treaty and acceptance of full Turkish citizenship, and Turkey's role in rescuing European Jewry from the Holocaust during World War II. Briefly, this discourse states that the Ottoman Empire and Turkey were safe havens for Jewry.³ However, the discourse on the tranquillity of Jews ruled by Turks which is commonly adopted by Turkish and Jewish authorities is inadequate to understanding the push and pull factors of the expeditious and mass migration of Jews in 1940s.

Between World War II and the mid-1950s, during and after the foundation of Israel, forty percent of the Jewish population in Turkey migrated to Israel.⁴ According to many sources, between 1948 and 1956 the number of Jewish emigrants from Turkey to Israel has been estimated to have been between 34,000 and 38,000.⁵ Only between

² The events of September 6-7: In 1955, after the news was released that the house where Atatürk was born had been burnt by Greeks, Turkish mobs looted the commercial property of minorities in various districts of Istanbul where mainly minorities lived in. For a full discussion of this events, see Ayhan Aktar, *Türk Milliyetçiliği, Gayrimüslimler ve Ekonomik Dönüşüm* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006).

³ This expression is taken from an article on the website of Turkish Jews: *A Haven for Sephardic Jews*. Available [online]: <http://www.turkishjews.com/history/haven.asp> [19 January 2008].

⁴ Benbassa, p. 386.

1948 and 1949, after the foundation of the State of Israel, approximately 30,000 Jews left Turkey. In 1945, according to census records, 76,965 Jews were living in Turkey; however, in 1955, the number descends to 45,995.⁶ This is the second largest migration out of Turkey in the history of the Republic after the migration of Turkish workers to Europe, mainly to Germany in 1960s. However, the dynamics of the Turkish workers' migration differs from the migration of Jews, especially considering the Turkish Jews' minority position in Turkey.

After the Greek-Turkish population exchange, the migration of Jews is the second largest mass emigration of minorities out of Turkey.⁷ What differentiates this migration from the Turkish-Greek population exchange of the early 1920s is its non government-mandated character. In other words, Turkey's Jews immigrated to Israel on their own free will. Even though this is one of the most crucial and extensive ethnic migrations, it has always been neglected in the history of modern Turkey. The migration underestimated and assumed to be an unimportant event even by the leaders of the Jewish community in the past. The interview which was conducted with Hanri Soriano, the President of the Jewish Community released in *alom* (The newspaper published in

⁵ Stanford, J Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic* (London:MacMillian Press Ltd., 1991), p. 285 indicates that in 1945 the population of the Jews was 76,965 then in 1955 it descended to 45,995. Rifat Bali, *Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü: 1946-1949* (istanbul: leti im Yayınları, 2003), p. 258, he points out that the number of immigrants was 34,647. Walter Wieker, *Ottomans, Turks and the Jewish Polity: A History of the Jews of Turkey* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1992), p. 255, gives the number of refugees as 33,159. Ester Benbassa, Aron Rodrigue, *Türkiye ve Balkan Yahudileri Tarihi* (istanbul: leti im Yayınları, 2001), p. 392 gives the number as 38,000.

⁶ Fuat Dünder, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar* (Istanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1999), p. 168, 175.

⁷ ule Tokta , "Turkey's Jews and Their Immigration to Israel," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no:3 (May 2006), p. 505.

Ladino and Turkish since 1947) in December 17, 1947 displays the aspects of the underestimation:

“-In one of the Turkish newspapers which is published in our city, it is claimed that Jews of Istanbul are going to Palestine. What do you think about it?
-There is nothing serious about this news.
-How many people have gone till now?
- If there are few people, their reason is either business or visiting their families as if they are going to New York, Paris or London.
-Is there any commission which deals with their departure in Istanbul?
-As far as I know, there is not any commission like this.
-What do you think of the article on the situation of the Jews of Turkey in this newspaper?
-There is no reality about the situation of the Jews in Turkey as in this article by that newspaper. I am sure that this newspaper was uninformed.
- What do you think of the recent situation of Palestine?
Mr. Soriano waited for some minutes before responding.
-We are sorry to read newspapers which report the conflict between two nations. We hope that in the near future all differences will disappear and Jews and Arabs will come to an agreement.”⁸

Since the Jewish elite and the leaders of the Jewish community also appropriate the official discourse, the causes of the migration have not been discussed enough to explain the migration of approximately 40.000 people.

The key concern of this thesis is the migration of Turkey’s Jews to Israel between the fourth and fifth decades of the twentieth century. This thesis aims to focus on the narratives of the mass migration of Turkish Jews. The main question of the thesis is “how is the migration narrated and remembered in Turkey and in Israel by

⁸ “- ehrimizde yayınlanan bir Türk gazetesinde, birkaç gündür stanbul yahudilerinin Filistin’e gittikleri yazıyor. Sizin bu konudaki fikriniz nedir?/- Bu yazılarda gerçekten hiçbir ey yok./- imdiye kadar kaç ki i gitti?/- Bir kaç ki i varsa e er;gidi nedenleri ya i içindir,ya da ailelerini görmek için New York, Paris veya Londra’ya gider gibi gidiyorlar./- stanbul’da gidi i lemleri ile ilgilenen bir komisyon var mı?/- Bildi im kadarı ile böyle bir komisyon yok./- Bu gazetede yayınlanan makalede;Türkiye Yahudilerinin durumu hakkında yazılanlar do rultusunda fikriniz nedir?/- Gazetecinin iddia etti i gibi, stanbul Yahudilerinin Filistine gitme kararı hakkında hiçbir ciddi gerçek yok. Ben eminim ki, bu gazete yanlış bilgilendirildi./- Filistin’in durumu hakkındaki güncel görü ünüz nedir?Sayın Soriano cevap vermeden önce birkaç dakika dü ündü./- Gazetelerde iki millet arasında bazı anla mazlıklar oldu unu üzümlere okuyoruz. Ümit ediyoruz ki, çok yakın bir gelecekte bütün farklılıklar yok olacak ve Yahudiler ile Araplar arasında bir anla ma sa lanacak.” Avram Leyon, *Türkiye Yahudi Cemaati Ba kanı SaygınHenri Soriano ile bir görüş me*, [11 December 1947] in Moris Levi, Sara Yanarocak, et al., *alom’da 60 Yıl* (stanbul: Gözlem Gazetecilik Basın ve Yayın, 2007), p. 17-18.

immigrants from Turkey in Israel and Jewish people who preferred not to migrate in Turkey?”. I also reflect the implications of Turkish-Jewish identity through the narrations of migration which led me explore the aspects of the concepts beyond migration.

It is not possible to explain the reasons of mass migration of Turkey’s Jews to Israel solely with economic, ideological or social reasons. Therefore, I tried to explain the push and pull factors and the stages of this migration, and also its relation with Turkey’s internal and Middle Eastern policy, through the medium of emigrants’ memories. I also utilized the narratives of Jewish people who preferred not to migrate and have lived in Istanbul in order to make analyze the discrepancies between narratives of informants in Israel and in Turkey.

The macro and micro structures of the migrations are explained by different migration theories. Macro structures can be summarized as political economy of world market, relationships among sending and receiving states, the laws and institutions which established to regulate migration flow and settlement.⁹ Micro structures are explained as informal networks, personal relations such as family, friendship and community, organization for mutual help on economic and social problems.¹⁰

Migration theories tend to be dominated by either economic or sociological explanations. Neoclassical Economics analyzes cost benefits and usually focuses on the individual decisions. Therefore, it deals with micro structures.¹¹ Furthermore, the Dual

⁹ Stephen Castles, Mark J. Miller, *Göçler Ça ı: Modern Dünyada Uluslararası Göç Hareketleri* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008), p. 29-44.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 31-34.

Market Theory and World Systems Theory analyze the macro structures such as transnationalism, economic globalization and modern industrial economics. They generally ignore the micro-level decision process.¹² The Migration Systems Theory however, generalizes the foregoing theories by analyzing both macro and micro-structures as well as the push (demographic pressures, lack of economic opportunities, political repression) and pull (demand for labor, economic opportunities, political freedom) factors of the migration.¹³

Therefore this study analyzes the macro and micro structures of the immigration of Turkey's Jews to Israel, looking at memories of migration with the aim of highlighting micro and macro factors such as individuals' life strategies, pull and push factors as is in the Migration Systems Theory. It seeks to associate the political, economic and social circumstances with the stages of migration with the aim of examining the memories and different ways of remembering the migration.

This study does not however seek a single or unique explanation, nor does it trace the statistics and the official documents of the migration in the archives. Rather, it discusses ways of remembering particular events and the representation of the past, by focusing on the migration of Turkey's Jews. I try to see how these people who experienced the 1940s and 1950s remember the traumatic anti-minority events and the political dynamics of the first thirty years of the Turkish Republic in order to analyze the differences between memories and understanding of pull and push factors of the migration.

¹² Douglas S. Massey et al., "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal," *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 3 (September, 1993), p. 432.

¹³ Castles, p. 35-40.

Based on my research both in Israel and in Turkey, I argue that there is a gap between the two groups' conceptualizations of the reasons for the migration of Turkey's Jews resulting from the different understanding of nationalisms in different conditions. For example, in Israel it was observed that Turkish and Israeli nationalisms are combined in immigrants' identities. While exploring the discrepancy between the understanding of nationalism in Israel and in Turkey, I identified class difference, the age of the informants and the political dynamics pertaining to the country in which the informants were currently residing.

There is a contradiction between informants in Turkey and Israel on their approaches to migration and the Jewish identity. In Turkey, the silence of the informants marked the research and sometimes the interviews. The informants that I was able to contact refused to be interviewed. The informants with whom I was able to conduct oral history interview usually kept their silence when the questions were asked about the policies of the early Republican Period.

Thus the discrepancies are not just Turkey-Israel based; different approaches on migration and identity issue appeared among different generations in Turkey. I conducted interviews with three middle-aged Jewish people, due to my inability to persuade any older people. Based on the narratives, it was obvious that the younger generation is much more open to talking about the Jewish identity and discrimination issues, even though they did not experience the events that were being asked about during the interviews. Moreover, the younger generation had the tendency to criticize Turkey's minority politics and the Jewish community.

Oral history not only tells us about the memories of people but also reflects their ideologies which are certainly related to the dynamics of the present time. The openness of younger generation is about these changing dynamics. One of these dynamics is the

changing attitude of both minorities and Turkish authorities towards past events. Even though older generations keep their learned silence about the past events, younger generations are more confident to talk about their parents' experiences as a direct result of this change. Recent years anti-minority events become "discussable" in public sphere. Therefore it is important to understand the recent context of both Turkey and Israel for deepen the analyses of what was said and was not said by interviewees.

Contrary to the "silence" of older informants in Turkey, in Israel informants described the discrimination that they had experienced in Turkey, what being minority meant in Turkey and its impact on the migration decision without any hesitation. It is also observed that the same informants expressed their devotion to Turkey. They emphasized their Turkishness. Another contradiction between approaches of informants in Turkey and Israel was about the issue of the motivation for migration. In Turkey, it was stated that the most significant motivation for the migration was enjoy better economic conditions. However in Israel, idealism or Zionism was the most common motivation of the informants for immigrating to Israel. The same informants in Israel criticized Turkey and discrimination that they had faced, but they also expressed how proud they were to be Israeli Turks.

By focusing on the experiences of migration, this study also explores the main reasons lying behind the problems of minorities in Turkey connected to the creation of a Turkish nation during the foundation of the Republic. Considering that a common language, religion and history played crucial parts in this creation, minorities were always the "others" of the nation. Turkey was one of the few countries that emerged as a nation state after the fall of an empire in which the minorities felt as if they were outsiders and were alienated by discriminatory policies, especially during the single-party era. Push factors such as the limited economic conditions of lower class Jews, the

social exclusion and discriminatory policies of single-party era, and pull factors such as the economic opportunities that the State of Israel offered, the immigrants' goal of eluding their minority status, reaching the promised land of the Jews or ideological concerns (mainly Zionism) motivated them to migrate.

To understand the aspects of the migration and what being Jewish in Turkey and Turkish Israeli in Israel meant, I conducted a field study among Jewish people who had emigrated from Turkey to Israel and those who had not participated to mass migration and continued to live in Turkey. With the aim of constructing a comparative study, the research was conducted with Turkey's Jewish minority and Turkish-Jewish immigrants in Israel. The field study in Turkey was conducted with twelve informants in Istanbul within six months, from September 2008 to January 2009, and the field study in Israel was conducted with twenty informants over the course of one and a half months, between January and March 2009. All of the informants interviewed in Israel were over the age of 75. However, three informants in Turkey were around the age of 60, due to various reasons which will be discussed in the fourth chapter. Other than these interviews, seven books on the memories of Turkey's Jews,¹⁴ three novels based on real events about Jewish minority in Turkey¹⁵ and three interviews which were done by the oral history project Centropa in Turkey were analyzed.

¹⁴ Elli Kohen, *The Kohens Del De Campavias: A Family's Sweet and Sour Story in Ottoman and Republican Turkey* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2004); Yahya Koço lu, *Hatırlıyorum: Türkiye'de Gayrimüslim Hayatlar* (Istanbul: Metis Yay., 2003); Erol Haker, *Bir Zamanlar Kırklareli'de Yahudiler Ya ardı...* ed. Rıfat Bali, trans. by Natali Medina (Istanbul: İletim Yayınları, 2002); Erol Haker, *Istanbul'dan Kudüs'e Bir Kimlik Arayışı* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004); Liz Behmoaras, *Bir Kimlik Arayışının Hikayesi* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2005); Bensiyon Pinto, *Anlatmasam Olmazdı: Geni Toplumda Yahudi Olmak*, ed. Tülay Gürler (Istanbul: Do an Kitap, 2008); Eli aul, *Balat'tan Bat-Yam'a*, ed. Rıfat N. Bali, Birsen Talay (Istanbul: İletim Yayınları, 1999).

¹⁵ Stella Acıman, *Bir Masaldı Geçen Yıllar: 1926-1960* (Istanbul: +1 Kitap, 2006); Hakan Akdoğan, *Struma: Karanlıkta Bir Ninni* (Istanbul: Do an Yayıncılık, 2007); Do an Akhanlı, *Madonna'nın Son Hayali* (Istanbul: Kanat Kitap, 2005).

This study seeks to fill in the gap of the experiences and perspectives of the individuals who participated the migration flow from Turkey to Israel and who witnessed it in the Jews of Turkey's literature. After I realized the gap of narrations of the migration in the literature, I began to search for the traces of migrants and those who chose not to migrate. Jews in Turkey are concerned as well as migrants in order to reveal the variety of social experience of the migration in the community. According to Paul Thompson, a more valuable form of oral history can be written when the other groups' experiences are involved.

I also aim to challenge the homogenized picture of Jews by focusing on the experiences of the immigrants and observations of Jews in Turkey by highlighting their different interpretation of the migration as well as their ideas on Turkish-Jewish identity. Usually connotations of the "Jew" are rich merchants living in Istanbul, concerned only with money, Zionists, loyal to Israel and the USA more than Turkey, sometimes even racist due to their closed society as the Jew were portrayed in the cartoon magazines of the early Republican period.¹⁶ As Alessandro Portelli writes, oral history makes us to learn more than presidents and generals history or the literary canon.¹⁷ Therefore, narrated experiences are taken into consideration with the life and migration stories of the informants. In other words, it is very important to understand the memories of pre-migration and the life conditions of each agent which assigns the ways of migration, their motivations and "conflictual social space in which the

¹⁶ For a full discussion of the Jewish stereotype in the cartoons of 1930s and 40s, see Hatice Bayraktar, *Salamon und Rebeka: Judenstereotype in Karikaturen der türkischen Zeitschriften Akbaba, Karikatür und Milli Inklap 1933-1945* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag: 2006).

¹⁷ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (New York: State University of New York State, 1991), p. viii.

experiences took place.”¹⁸ Hence, as Portelli claims facts are not always in the written documents, written sources are not superior to oral sources in the hierarchical order of reliance.¹⁹ Therefore, this study concentrates on oral narratives in making and understanding the social context of the era and the pre-migration lives of the informants.

The time frame for the interviews covers the period between 1945 and 1955. This periodization was chosen for specific reasons. First, it was in 1945, before the foundation of Israel, when the immigration to Israel started through legal or illegal ways. Second, the majority of the informants were born in the early 1930s, thus, it was impossible for them to remember events before 1945 in detail. The timeframe was extended to 1955 in order to analyze the relation of the Events of September 6-7 and the migration.

This study is composed of five chapters. In the second chapter, the historical background of the Jewish community from the Ottoman Empire until the fifth decade of the Turkish Republic is portrayed. The aim of this chapter is to explore two controversial historiography approaches to Jewish history as a part of the *millet* system in the Ottoman Empire and as a minority in the Turkish Republic. The third chapter provides a setting for the stories of Jewish migrants. In this chapter three different life and migration stories are explored. Two of them are the life stories of former Turkish citizens, now Israelis. One is chosen among the narratives by the informants in Turkey in order to elaborate the difference of the experiences and reactions between immigrants in Israel and Jewish citizens of the Turkish Republic.

¹⁸ Maral Jefroudi, “A Re-politicized History of Iranian Transit Migrants Passing through Turkey in the 1980s” (MA thesis, Bozaziçi University, 2008), p. 4.

¹⁹ Portelli, p. 51.

The forth chapter scrutinizes the meaning of being a Turkish immigrant in Israel and the Jew as a minority in Turkey by arguing the differences and similarities between the statements and approaches of the informants in Turkey and in Israel. The theme of Sound of Silences displays the attitude of Jews in Turkey as minorities when they feel insecure and how this changes according to age of the informant. Also it argues that this silence no longer exist in Israel among the migrants from Turkey. Class difference and Zionism reveal the contrast between estimated reasons in Israel and in Turkey. In Turkey, poverty seems to be the only reason for the migration; however, in Israel, Zionism or idealism is the individual reason for the informants. Belonging explores the complex and controversial nationalisms of the informants both in Turkey and Israel. In Turkey, the Jews have an idealized image of Israel but they did not want to migrate there. In addition, in Israel, nationalism for both Turkey and Israel is common, even among the informants who had immigrated to Israel due to push reasons. In the conclusion, I summarize the main arguments of the study and speculated on the future research of the migration.

In Turkey we learn to forget to think about social issues that have played critical roles in history. The mass migration of Jews in the late 1940s is just one example of this. Thinking about the reasons for and results of forgotten events, confronting the responsible agents and victims, are crucial in order to focus on issues beyond these events which are key concerns of the problems that we are facing in Turkey and in international arenas. In short, dealing with the past is very important in order to understand the problems and find a solution to violence, illegality and intolerance that are on the rise in Turkey.²⁰ This thesis is an attempt to confront one of those issues by

²⁰ Mithat Sancar, *Geçmişle Hesaplaşma: Unutma Kültüründen Hatırlama Kültürüne* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p. 255-260.

recording individuals' experiences of being Turkish immigrants in Israel or being a minority in Turkey. In this attempt, I particularly rely on the method of oral history because oral history offers us an invaluable tool to understand the suppressed or ignored narratives of historical events as well as understanding contemporary issues of identity.²¹

Literature Review

This study is the first one in the field of studies on the oral history of both Jews in Turkey and Jews who migrated from Turkey to Israel. Except for some article series and interviews which concern the lives of immigrants in newspapers or in magazines, it constitutes one of the first examples of field-based research. This study also serves as a collection of the memories of the last generation that witnessed the first migration flows from Turkey to Israel between 1945 and 1955.

The history of the non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire and officially recognized minorities in the Turkish Republic have been taken into consideration by the academics, researchers and journalists. The history of the Ottoman Jews and the Jews of Turkish Republic have never been the priority, but they have started to attract an attention from the perspectives of policy-making and of social science. Sabbateanism refers to the followers of Sabbatai Sevi, who declared himself the messiah of Jews and later converted to Islam due to the oppression of Sultan in Izmir in seventeenth century recently has been taken into consideration and attracted a great interest in the last twenty

²¹ Leyla Neyzi, *İstanbul'da Hatırlamak ve Unutmak: Birey, Bellek ve Aidiyet* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999), p. 2.

years in the context of Ottoman Jewry as well as of the modernism project of the Turkish Republic.

Regarding the status of Jews in the Ottoman Empire, there is a richness of literature on Jews of Ottoman Empire. These works focus on the structure of the *millet* system and the status of the Jews as part of non-Muslim *millets*. The main argument of these studies is that the Jews in Ottoman Empire did not experience oppression or expulsion as Jews of Europe did and the tolerance in the Ottoman Empire attracted the migration of Jews as well as other expelled non-Muslims. These published or unpublished works usually reconstruct the official and dominant discourse of the authorities as in the number of works on the status of Republican Turkey's Jews.

The status of Jews in Republican Turkey has subjected less attention than the history of Jews in the Ottoman Empire by scholars. The works on Jews of Turkey mainly focus on the early Republican period between 1923 and 1945. The status transformations of Jews from *millet* to modern citizens and "Turkification" pressures have been explored in the light of the nation-building process and modern formation of citizenship and state. However, the contemporary Jewish community in Turkey and the history of Jews after 1945 have received little attention. This is related to the reticence of the Jewish community and their tendency to be invisible in the public sphere. The oral history method is very useful in giving voice to the personal accounts of the Jews in Turkey and explaining how the past is experienced, understood and interpreted by subjects. Therefore, this study contributes to literature by bringing the voices of the Jews into the minority experience in Turkey and migration studies.

Recent debates on Kemalist modernism project and global interest in identity and subjectivity in the social sciences have paved the way to growing interest in minority studies. The studies on the political activities of the Jews almost do not exist in

the literature. Just the contribution of Jews to some political movements in the Ottoman Empire has been taken into consideration. The civic rights of minorities after the Lausanne Treaty, the educational institutions and schools of minorities and endowments have been the favorite concerns in studies of Turkey's minorities.

Even though there have been many studies on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, the migration of the Jews to other lands has been neglected in the migration literature of Turkey. Even though deportations does not belong to the issue of migration, Armenian deportations and massacres in the late nineteenth century take up a crucial part of studies on minorities.²² The mass migration of Greeks from Turkey to Greece during the Turkish-Greek population exchange in the early 1920s has received the most interest in the migration literature of Turkey. Existing studies on migration and Turkey focuses on Turkish workers immigration to Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. Although the migration of Jews from Turkey to Israel is the second largest mass emigration out of Turkey, there have been only a few studies on it.

The major works focusing on the migration of Jews from Turkey to Israel are those of Walter Weiker, Rifat Bali and Ule Tokta . Weiker's study²³ focuses on the integration of Jewish immigrants from Turkey in Israel. He gives important statistical data and explores the identity dimensions of the immigrants. His main point is that Turkey's Jews are integrated in Israel and therefore they are "invisible" among Israelis.

²² R. J. Rummel, "The Holocaust in Comparative and Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Social Issues* 3, no.2 (April 1998). Available online: <http://www.ideajournal.com/articles.php?id=17>

²³ Walter Weiker, *The Unseen Israelis: The Jews from Turkey in Israel* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1988).

Bali's study²⁴ focuses on the migration of Turkey's Jews in the years 1946-49 in terms of reasons for and process of the migration. He mainly uses newspapers, documents and books as secondary sources in order to give an idea about the situation of the Jews in the Republican Turkey and the reasons for the migration as well as actors of it. The study claims that there is a direct correlation between discriminatory policies and Turkification policies and the mass emigration of Jews from Turkey.

Ule Tokta's semi-ethnographic study²⁵ is a comparative one exploring the Turkey's Jews migration in the citizenship context. She focuses on the transformations in citizenship of the present day Turkish Jewish community both in Israel and in Turkey. Instead of focusing on the theory of the development of citizenship in Turkey, this study constitutes an empirical view combining Jewish minority and immigrants within the citizenship framework.

There are other major studies that consider the migration briefly. Benbassa and Aron's work²⁶ touches on the migration from Turkey to Israel with only four-five pages by focusing on the Jews of the Balkans. Shaw's work²⁷ on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey which is one of the most comprehensive works on the Ottoman and Republican Jewry, summarizes the migration flow only in one page as an insignificant issue in their history.

²⁴ Bali, *Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü: 1946-1949* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003).

²⁵ Ule Tokta, "Turkey's Jews and Their Immigration to Israel" *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (May 2006), p. 505-519.

²⁶ Esther Benbassa, Aron Rodrigue, *Türkiye ve Balkan Yahudileri Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001).

²⁷ Stanford J. Shaw, *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic* (London: Macmillian Press Ltd., 1991).

The migration of Turkey's Jews also is discussed partially in articles and theses. One such is Selim Amado's article²⁸ on the close relationship of Turkish Jewish immigrants with Turkey. Semiha Kayaalp's BA thesis²⁹ briefly analyzes the migration of Jews from Izmir to Israel. Mücahit Düzgün's MA thesis³⁰ on Turkish-Israel relationship also contains a chapter on the impact of the foundation of Israel and the migration of Jews in Turkish print media. Erdem Güven,³¹ focusing on the integration of Turkish Jews in Israel, explores the reasons for the migration and the phases of migration in chronological order in his thesis in one chapter.

Story of the Field

The research was conducted in order to combine and compare the experience of migration among immigrants from Turkey in Israel and the people who attested the migration of their relatives or friends among Jews in Turkey. I undertook fieldwork for this study from April 2008 until beginning of March 2008. The research was based on information from the primary sources, the informants, obtained during interviews both in Turkey and in Israel.

²⁸ Amado, Selim. "Kopmayan Ba : srail'de Türkiye Kökenli Yahudiler" Görü , (September 2003). Available [online]: <http://www.turkisrael.org/TurkishMain/ISRAILDE%20TURKIYE%20KOKENLI%20YAHUDILE1.doc.pdf>

²⁹ Semiha Kayaalp, "İsrail Devleti'nin Kurulu undan Sonra Izmir Yahudi Cemaatinin Göçü (1948-1951)" (BA thesis, Ege University, 2000).

³⁰ Mücahit Düzgün, "Türk Kamuoyunda srail: 1948–1973" (Ph.D. diss., Dokuz Eylül University, 2006).

³¹ Erdem Güven, "Türkiye Yahudilerinin İsrail'e Entegrasyonu" (MA thesis, Marmara University, 2006).

My key informants were chosen from among candidates over seventy years of age in order to find out their own experiences or their witnesses of migration between 1945 and 1955. However, three informants among twelve in Turkey were middle-aged for various reasons which will be discussed in Chapter Four. In total 35 interviews, of which fifteen were conducted in Turkey and 20 in Israel, were undertaken.³² The informants were ordinary members of the Jewish community in Turkey and Turkish-Jewish immigrant groups. However, among them there were authors, journalists, community authorities (religious or social), association spokesmen and representatives, making up twenty per cent of sample.

All of the interviews were conducted in Turkish and face-to-face, sometimes with the assistance of a third person in order to avert misunderstandings with the informants whose Turkish was not longer fluent. All interviews were recorded with digital recorder and transcribed. Transcriptions were put into written form word-by-word. However, regardless of information's chronological order it was categorized in various topics. Before and during the interviews I assured the informants that their identities would not be exposed, and pseudonyms would be used.

A multiplicity of techniques that included a survey questionnaire, in-depth and semi-structured interviews, one focus-group interview and participant observation were employed. The survey questionnaire was applied to all informants; however, interviews were applied to twelve informants in Turkey and sixteen informants in Israel. The three remained interviews were done by the oral history project Centropa in Turkey. With four informants unstructured short interviews were conducted in Israel.

The survey questionnaire provided for data on the statistical characteristics of the informants such as age, sex, place of birth, mother language, educational status and

³² For further information on details of sample section, see Appendix A, Appendix B.

migration patterns. The interviews lasted between one and three hours during which the basic aim was to clarify the ideas, values and personal histories of the informants. The interviews were designed to explore the memories of their childhoods and youths in Turkey, experiences as members of a minority group and of migration, their past and present aspirations and their past expectations either in Turkey or in Israel.

In the focus group interview, which was done in Turkey once with two couples, I tried to organize semi-structured discussions of their minority experiences and life in Israel as far as they knew. Of interest there were their perceptions of Turkey as homeland and Israel as dreamland and also their ideas on current political issues in both countries. However, due to my relative unfamiliarity with the focus group, these conversations had a tendency to be a loosely ordered.

I participated in several social and religious activities in order to acquire information and experience with the socialization of immigrants from Turkey in Israel. However, participant observation did not compose the major source of data. Rather, it served to provide background information about the informants and general characteristics of immigrants from Turkey in Israel. Unfortunately participant observation could not be employed due to the community's highly suspicious attitude towards anyone who does not belong to the community.

Depending on my experience in both fields, it can be claimed that the different attitudes in Turkey and in Israel are related to the boundaries of communities which are determined by religious or ethnic belongings. This could be defined as different understandings of Jewishness. My in-between religious position was perceived very differently in the two countries. My grandmother's mother was Jewish, but she converted to Islam after she married a Muslim soldier in Izmir. According to messianic laws, Jewishness comes from the mother side whether or not the mother converts to

another religion. Therefore, their children and grandchildren are assumed to be Jewish as well. According to this law, my father was assumed to be Jewish because of his Jewish grandmother, but I was not. My personal story played an important role in both explaining my interest in the topic and in facilitating if not acceptance, sympathy among Turkey's Jews in both countries. However, it can be a speculation to claim that I would not have been welcomed if I had not had Jewish ancestors.

In Turkey, the boundaries of Jewish community are very strict in the context of belonging to the Jewish community in which religion as social and cultural construction play crucial roles. It is very clear that one is either a member of the community or not. A position in between like mine has no negative or positive influence on members of the community. A study being done by a non-member or outsider of the community is perceived usually as a suspicious attempt.

In Israel, however, my personal story attracted great interest. Members of the groups of immigrants from Turkey asked various questions about it and expressed their goodwill about discovering my distant Jewish relatives in Israel, even though I had not mentioned any wish on it. More important than my story was my presence there as a guest from Turkey, which made me a part of the group. Combined with other factors such as their majority position in Israel, their Turkish identity in cultural meaning, my story and their pleasure in a young woman who was interested in their life stories, in which their own grandchildren were not interested, facilitated my access to the field in Israel.

Finally, I surveyed a series of literary publications such as biographies of Jewish elites, novels on Jewish minority experiences and memoirs of immigrants from Turkey. Watching movies about minorities in Turkey or memoirs and also surveying newspapers of the migration times played an important role in deepening my

understanding of the minority experience in Turkey and perceptions of migration. A great number of phone calls and some regular visits served to introduce myself and arrange both my research in Israel and my visits to informants.

Field Research in Turkey

My fieldwork in Turkey took place in Istanbul between April 2008 and December 2008. At first, I thought accessing the field would not be difficult except for conducting a study abroad due to economic reasons. I believed that my personal story would facilitate my acceptance in the field. I was not told that access could be so difficult because of a sample group's highly suspicious attitude towards non-members of the community.

I was able to conduct twelve interviews in Turkey after a long and difficult period of efforts. At first, I tried to reach people through Jewish friends or friends of friends. In other words, I began with personal contacts. I was able to persuade many of my young acquaintances to conduct oral history interviews with their grandparents. When I asked if I could get an interview with their grandparents, they turned a sympathetic ear to my request. Nevertheless my requests were rejected by their grandparents. The informants that I could hardly reach refused to talk about migration. Most probably expected "bothersome" questions about discrimination were the main reason of the rejections. In Spring 2008, I almost lost my motivation because of the refusals and one in particular one which ended with prospect informant turning me away at the entrance of her house. I stopped my research for a while at that point.

In Autumn 2008, I was finally able to conduct an oral history interview with an author Jinet. I asked her if I could interview her mother who was over eighty. Two

weeks after our interview, she said that her mother had refused me as well. She advised me to send e-mails to *alom* newspaper. I was invited to their office. At the office I was told that I could use their archives, but they had had not been able to find informants for me. I was frustrated one more time. But they were very nice and benevolent. Later they helped a great deal in reaching some written documents.

I met a friend of friend through personal contacts in November who promised to help me. He became my sponsor in Turkey in the end. Under the auspice of him I was able to do four interviews with his elderly relatives. I was also given some telephone numbers and e-mails by the author Rifat Bali. I sent e-mails, almost everyone and everywhere that might be helpful. After a while, I was invited to the Chief Rabbinate in Istanbul. I guess my e-mails reached the Chief Rabbinate. Accompanied by my sponsor, I went there. They permitted me to conduct interviews only at their Hasköy Rest Home after I presented myself and my study and showed my authorization letters from professors of the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boaziçi University. I was also able to make short interviews there with two officers of the Chief Rabbinate.

Until I was granted approval by the Chief Rabbinate, I spent six months in order to approach the field. It was obvious that Chief Rabbinate was the gatekeeper of the Jewish community, thus the research. Without their permission it would have been impossible to enter the most important field the Hasköy Rest Home, where I conducted the most important interviews for my study.

In many ethnographic studies, snowball sampling is used as a technique to reach different informants.³³ However, in my case it did not work; social networking was

³³ For full discussions on gatekeepers and snowball sampling, see Karen O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005) p. 84-91; see also Martyn Hammersley, Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 35-39; 49-53.

more useful. Selecting informants on the basis of a social network rendered me six informants. Therefore, the permission of Chief Rabbinate played a crucial role to have a confidence both for me and for my informants.

Table 1. Sample Method Used in Turkey

Social Network	5
Through the medium of Chief Rabbinate	5
Snowball	2
<i>In total</i>	12

Field Research in Israel

My field work in Israel took place mainly in Bat-Yam, Yahud, where the community of Jews from Turkey mainly settled, also in Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa, between January 2008 and March 2009. Bat-Yam is a small city located in Tel-Aviv District. With high-rise apartment buildings and a long beach, it reminds one of Izmir in Turkey.

Even though I had no connection with the informants before arriving in Israel, I managed to conduct interviews with 20 people. Unlike in Turkey, through the intervention of the associations and organizations founded by Turkish Jews in Israel, reaching informants was unbelievably easy. The two leading members, my sponsors at two different associations, agreed to assist by initiating contact with subject and introducing me to other members of their associations.

The Association of People Coming from Turkey (*Türkiyeliler Birli i/Itahdut Yotsei Turkia*) was one of the two associations with which I was in contact before my arrival in Israel. It was centered in Bat-Yam and every Thursday elderly immigrants constituted their council, discussing current political issues in Turkey or in Israel and also the relationship between Israel and Turkey. My attendance at one of their meetings facilitated my relationship with the members of the association. After my sponsor's introduction, I gave a short proposal speech and asked for informants. Subsequently, at the end of the meeting some of members let me know their contact information without asking questions. Some of the interviews were conducted in the office in Bat-Yam with those members of the association who voluntarily participated in my research. My sponsor also provided a meeting in the branch of the same association in Yahud. The personal stories of those informants were similar to each other and regardless of their age or education, they were politically involved.

However, members of the Bat-Yam Friendship Association (*Dostluk Bat-Yam Derne i*) were not politically involved as them. The group was founded for elderly or middle-aged Jews of Turkish origin, in order to preserve their culture and amuse themselves by having parties, playing cards and organizing trips. My sponsor at the Bat-Yam Friendship Association helped me so kindly that at our first meeting in her house, she showed me a list of eventual respondents with contact information of each that she had prepared for me. I participated in their weekly meeting every Saturday in order to introduce myself with the assistance of my sponsor. Right after my proposal speech, a line of people emerged in front of me. It was astonishing after my experiences in Turkey. Therefore, in Israel the snowball technique was used solely with three informants.

Table 2. Sample Method Used in Israel

Social Network	1
Through the medium Association T.	8
Through the medium Association D.	8
Snowball	3
<i>In total</i>	20

I attended three meetings at their meeting place in the basement of an apartment building in Bat-Yam as well as a celebration of *Tu Bishvat*³⁴ on February 9, 2009 and a trip out of Tel-Aviv District to Hamat Gader on February 14, 2009. I also participated in religious activities during my visit such as Shabbat dinners and Saturday prayers in a synagogue which was built in the Turkish style by Turkish immigrants to Jerusalem in the 1960s. Participant observation during those events was not used directly in the research, but they provided a better understanding of the immigrant community. I also visited the libraries of Bar-Ilan and Tel-Aviv, National Library in Jerusalem and the Diaspora Museum in Tel-Aviv in order to deepen my research.

³⁴ Tu Bishvat is a Jewish religious holiday celebrated by planting trees and eating dried fruits and nuts. It is one of the four new years in Jewish calendar.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE JEWISH MIGRATION FROM TURKEY TO ISRAEL AND THE MIGRATION PROCESS

In 2009, when these words were being written, demonstrations were taking place all over the world against the current policy and military operation of Israel in Palestine. On 27 December 2008, Israeli airborne forces entered Gaza airspace, and eight days later Israel launched a land assault. Even though a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas had been the on the agenda since the 22nd day of the war, Israel's assaults and Hamas's rocket attacks continued. The first demonstration in Turkey took place in Taksim Square, the most popular meeting point in Istanbul, on the same day of the air attack of Israel. Approximately two thousand people participated in this demonstration.³⁵ On 2 January 2009, several demonstrations in which tens of thousands of people participated took place in various cities in Turkey, especially in front of mosques following the Friday prayers.³⁶

On 16 January 2009 another protestation took place in front of the Fatih mosque and Beyazid mosque after the Friday prayer. The crowd was full of people carrying placards against Israel. Some placards said: "We wish that our ancestors did not take

³⁵ *Hürriyet*, 27 December 2009. Taksim'de protesto. Available [online]: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/10655055.asp?gid=229> [10 January 2009]

³⁶ Haber7. 2 January 2009. *Israil vah etine Beyazıt'ta Cuma öfkesi*. Available [online]: <http://www.haber7.com/haber/20090102/Israil-vahsetine-Beyazitta-cuma-ofkesi.php> [12 January 2009]

you from Spain.”³⁷ One extremely anti-Semitic statement was noteworthy: “Hitler was right! Jews are all the same in all countries. They cannot be human beings.”³⁸ Other anti-Semitic placards were seen in Eskişehir at the press release of the Association of the Culture of Osman Gazi. One said: “Entrance is forbidden to Jews and Armenians. Dogs may enter.”³⁹ The comments of the readers of this news were also significant about the issue, especially those who interpreted the protest as democratic.⁴⁰

Demonstrations took place in various cities in Turkey. Tens of thousands of people protested Israel’s offensive against Gaza in demonstrations held in several Turkish provinces on 18 January 2009. Even though anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism are totally different ideologies, and Turkish Jews have never been related directly to the politics of Israel, it is impossible to differentiate Turkish Jews from the anti-Israeli atmosphere which emerges from time to time, especially after Israel’s invasions in the Middle East. Anti-Israel movements have a tendency to turn into anti-Semitic, as can be observed in the examples mentioned above. One of the Turkish Jews who had migrated

³⁷ “*Dedelerimiz sizi ke ke spanya’dan alıp getirmeseydi.*” *Radikal*, 17 January 2009. *Irkıçı pankartlar yine ellerde*. Available [online]: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=BugunkuRadikal&Date=17.01.2009> [20 January 2009]

³⁸ “*Hitler haklıymı . Yahudi her yerde aynı. Onlar insan olamaz.*” *Radikal*, 17 January 2009. *Irkıçı pankartlar yine ellerde*. Available [online]: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=BugunkuRadikal&Date=17.01.2009> [20 January 2009]

³⁹ “*Yahudiler ve Ermeniler giremez. Köpekler girebilir.*” *Radikal*, 7 January 2009. *Köpekler girermi , Yahudiler ve Ermeniler giremezmi !* Available [online]: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalDetay&ArticleID=915950&Date=07.01.2009&CategoryID=77> [13 January 2009]

⁴⁰ *Radikal*, 7 January 2009. Available [online]: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalDetay&ArticleID=915950&Date=07.01.2009&CategoryID=77> [13 January 2009]

to Israel many years ago commented on the anti-Semitic placards in the Turkish Jews' Forum on the Internet: "Anti-Semitism exists everywhere. It just sleeps. When the occasion arises, it awakens."⁴¹

Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan criticized Israel's military action in Gaza in a speech on 7 January 2009. He opened his speech with these words: "We are speaking as the descendants of the Ottomans who hosted your ancestors in these lands when they were expelled."⁴² Although the Prime Minister's aim was to criticize Israel's foreign policy, he referred to the "hospitality" of the Ottomans to the Jews who had been exiled from Spain and Portugal five hundred years earlier. This statement is significant for two different reasons. First of all, it establishes a direct connection with the earlier Sephardic Jews, who were settled in the lands of the Ottoman Empire five hundred years earlier and still lives in Turkey, and the people who live in Israel today. Secondly, it defines the situation of the Jews with the verb "host," which is the key word in understanding the situation of Jews as one of the minority groups in Turkey.

In the same speech that he gave ten days after the display of the anti-Semitic placards, Erdoğan recited in English and in Hebrew the sixth of the Ten Commandments which are believed to have been given to Moses from God: "You shall not kill." He also expressed the dangers of anti-Semitism:⁴³ "I am one of the first

⁴¹ "Anti-Semitism her yerde mevcuttur. Uyur. Eline fırsat geçince hortlar." David. e-mail group Dostluk-Bat-Yam. [25 January 2009].

⁴² "Dedeleriniz, ecdadınız kovuldu u zaman, sizi kalkıp da bu topraklarda a ırlayan, misafir eden Osmanlı'nın torunları olarak konu uyoruz." *Hürriyet*, 7 January 2009. *Osmanlı torunuyuz mazlum yanındayız*. Available [online]: <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=10714958&tarih=2009-01-07> [20 January 2009]

leaders who has said that anti-Semitism is a crime against humanity. My Jewish people managed to take an honorable stance against all kinds of anti-humanism. The Turkish State and Government are the guarantor of the safety of all minorities. In one of our cities, there were some statements made which said something like “some may enter, some may not, dogs may enter. These are especially improper. This is against the Turkish nation’s clemency which comes from our history.”⁴⁴ Clemency is a word which defines kindness or mercy to a person or a situation whom or which have a negative connotation, such as parents to their children or judges to the convicts while punishing. In this sense, stating that the Turkish nation shows indulgence to Jews actually puts Turks and Jews into a hierarchical order in which one is situated above and the other below.

After the speech of the prime minister, the Turkish-Jewish community also expressed its concern about anti-Semitic reactions: “We have been living in this land for centuries, speaking and thinking in Turkish, and fulfilling all our duties as citizens. We see ourselves as a fundamental part of Turkey. We know that the administrators, intellectuals and our conscientious nation hear our concern.”⁴⁵ Here it is apparent that the reaction of the Jewish community draws upon the concepts of citizenship and duty.

⁴³ *Radikal*, 17 January 2009. *srail’e ‘öldürmeyeceksin’ diye seslenen Erdo an ırkçuları da uyardı*. Available [online]:

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetay&ArticleID=917391&Date=17.01.2009&CategoryID=98> [20 January 2009]

⁴⁴ “*Anti-semitizmin bir insanlık suçu oldu unu ilk söyleyen liderlerden biriyim. Musevi vatanda larım da insanlı a kasteden her türlü davranı kar ısında onurlu bir duru sergiliyor. Türkiye’de tüm azınlıkların; Ermenilerin, Musevilerin, Rumların, Hıristiyanların güvenli inin güvencesi Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devleti ve hükümetidir. Özellikle bir ilimizde, buraya unlar unlar unlar giremez, köpekler girer ifadesi çok yanlış bir ifadedir. Böyle bir ifadeyi kullanmak asla duyarlı olan, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatanda lı ı hassasiyetini, Türk milletinin tarihten gelen ho görü anlayı ını yakalayan insanların yapaca ı i de il.*”

⁴⁵ *Hürriyet*, 18 January 2009. *Turkish Jewish community concerned*. Available [online]: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/domestic/10794413.asp?gid=243> [20 January 2009]

The necessity they feel to remind everyone that they are fulfilling their duties as citizens is indicative of the defensiveness in this expression. People defend themselves when they are criticized for something. This, then, is another sign of a hierarchical order between Turks and Jews in Turkey and a correlation between Israel and Jews in Turkey. This does not necessarily have to be done by the Turkish authorities, but it also derives from Turkish-Jewish communities themselves.

How can hospitality and the situation of being guests continue for five hundred years? Why does not the Jewish Community react against the terms of “guest” or “host”, but rather emphasizes the duties of citizenship? One of the aims of this chapter is to analyze the dilemma that lies behind the official discourse. The terms “clemency” or “hospitality” are parts of the understanding of minorities as guests, as in the speech of the prime minister, and also as in the Turkish-Jewish community’s statements, which also depend on the duties and living in Anatolia for centuries in tranquility. Still, anti-Semitic statements and events can exist together with this discourse, even though there has not been a conflict between Muslims and Jews in Turkey.

Exploring the internal or external economic, social and political dynamics of the migration to Israel is the basic aim of this thesis. The aim of this chapter is to revise the history of Jews in Turkey, starting from the Ottoman times, and ending with the first thirty years of Turkish Republic. In this chapter two specific history writings of Turkey’s Jews are overviewed. Rather than examining the Jewish presence in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, this chapter is categorized into two main parts. These parts are divided according to two different approaches to the history of Jews in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: “A Story of Tranquility, Indulgence, Hospitality and Loyalty” and “The Other Side of the Coin.”

The first part focuses mainly on the official discourse which is shared by the Turkish and Jewish authorities. This discourse is comprehensive and commonly accepted. Both the academic works and the works released by mass media organs such as articles on the Internet or in the news and in non-fiction or history books mainly utilize the Story of Tranquility, Indulgence, Hospitality and Loyalty. Basically, this discourse claims that the Jews have lived in tranquility in the Ottoman Empire and in the Turkish Republic; the Turks showed indulgence and welcomed persecuted Jews in the Ottoman and also in the Republican periods. In this regard, Jews have always been very loyal to Turks and they fulfilled all their duties.

The second part of this chapter examines discrimination and exclusion stories. This narration of the history of the Jews focuses on the discriminatory policies, especially during the single-party era⁴⁶ of the Republic of Turkey, regarding to the homogenization of society. In other words, while a Turkish nationality was created, Jews were under the pressure of “Turkification.”

A Story of Tranquility, Indulgence, Hospitality and Loyalty

“A haven for all those who have to flee the dogmatism, intolerance and persecution”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Single-party era (1923-1945) covers the first thirty years of the Turkish Republic. It is known as single-party era since the Republican People’s Party (CHP) was the only political party dominating the Republic’s policy until the transition to the multiparty system in 1945.

⁴⁷ *Equality and a New Republic*. Available [online]: <http://www.turkishjews.com/history/equality.asp> [20 January 2009]

The official discourse of the Turkish-Jewish community and the commonly adopted discourse of the Turkish authorities depend on some key words such as “tranquility,” “indulgence,” “hospitality” and “loyalty.” The story of hospitality and tolerance starts with the expulsion of the Jews shortly after the fall of Constantinople and the transition of the Ottoman State into an Empire. The expulsions of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and from Portugal in 1497 were two of the major mass migrations in the Jewish history. At the same time this was the starting point of an over 500 year old relationship with Turks when the Ottoman Empire provided a principle refuge. According to many sources, the immigration of the Jews to the Ottoman Empire was the result of the Sultan’s mercy and tolerance.

The Ottoman-Turkish Sephardim Culture and Research Centre emphasizes this theme of tolerance: “According to some historians, 93,000 of the persecuted Jews came to the Ottoman Empire, and they were accepted by Sultan Bayezid II. They were not obliged to build walls around their settlements or to keep themselves separate from the native people through the indulgence in the Ottoman Empire.”⁴⁸ However, it is also known that providing a principal refuge to the Jews from Spain was part of the great efforts to turn the Ottoman State into a great empire.⁴⁹

The migration of the Sephardic Jews and the Ashkenazim Jews from various European countries to the Ottoman Empire continued until its collapse in the early twentieth century. The Ottoman Empire attracted Jewish migrants and refugees who had

⁴⁸ “Yine bazı tarihçilere göre bunların 93 000 kadarı Osmanlı mparatorlu u’na gelirler ve zamanın Sultanı II. Bayazıd tarafından kabul edilirler. ... Osmanlı mparatorlu u’nda hüküm süren ho görü sayesinde Sefaradlar köyelerinin etrafına duvarlar in a etmek zorunda kalmamı lar ve kendilerini geldikleri ülkenin yerli halkından ayrı tutmaya da mecbur olmamı lardır.” <http://www.istanbulsephardiccenter.com/> [29 January 2009]

⁴⁹ *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Ed. Benjamin Braude, Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), p.159.

lived under oppression and discrimination in their home countries.⁵⁰ The Ottoman state and society were organized into ethno-religious communities called *millets*. Although a Jewish presence in the Ottoman lands dated back to the Byzantium Empire, along with other non-Muslims, Jews took their part in Ottoman *millet* system.⁵¹ In this system, each non-Muslim religious community was responsible for its own institutions. Thus, under Ottoman tradition, these oppressed and discriminated Jewish refugees and immigrants enjoyed religious and social liberties.

Furthermore, unlike in some European countries, in the Ottoman Empire, incidents such as Janissary attacks on Jewish neighborhoods never turned into pogroms. Similarly Christian “blood libel” attacks on the Jews were punished and the Ottoman rule guarded the Jews against these attacks.⁵² Avram Galanti states the joy of Jews in Turkey as follows: “The Jews of Turkey have earned the title of ‘Sadık Millet’ (loyal community) for they have always shown their commitment to the country, they have taken their shares of its joys and its catastrophes... No Jews of any other country in the world has ever enjoyed a greater guardianship. The Jewry knows this, and Jewish history has written it with honor.”⁵³

The story continues with the loyalty and gratitude of the Jews to the Ottoman Empire. Since Jews knew several languages and were connected to European countries

⁵⁰ İhan Tekeli, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’ndan Günümüze Nüfusun Zorunlu Yer Değiştirilmesi ve Sorunu” *Toplum ve Bilim* 50, (1990), p.58.

⁵¹ Avram Galanti, *Türkler ve Yahudiler: Tarihi, Siyasi Tetkik* (İstanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1947), p.10-15.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.26-30.

⁵³ “Türkiye Yahudileri her mamlekete daima bağlılıklarını gösterdikleri için “Sadık Millet” unvanını kazanmış ve memleketin saadet ve felaketine iştirak etmişlerdir. ... Dünyanın hiçbir memleketinin Yahudileri, Türkiye Yahudileri kadar himaye görmemişlerdir. Yahudilik bunu biliyor ve Yahudi tarihi de bunu altın harflerle yazıyor.” Galanti, p.23.

due to their path of immigration, they gained high positions in the economy, finance, trade and medical sectors. Also Ottoman diplomacy was often carried out by Jews.

First the Tanzimat Declaration in 1839, then the Declaration of the *Hatti Humayun* (Reform Edict) in 1856, made all Ottoman citizens, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, equal under the law. The religion-based categorization of the *millet*s was denounced, and all the administration of justice, taxation and military service was reorganized equally for all subjects. As a result, the leadership of the community began to shift away from religious figures to secular forces.⁵⁴ Thus, in addition to occupying important positions in the economic and social development of the Empire, Jews also served in the army and later they were even elected to the Grand Council of State. The service of Jews in the military was also very important in the Ottoman army during World War I. Half of the Jewish population of Anatolia migrated or died in World War I and the Turkish War of Independence.⁵⁵

The nineteenth century witnessed several revolts of non-Muslim groups. The Greek Orthodox community revolted against the Ottoman Empire and supported the foundation of Greece, and the Bulgarian Orthodox community supported the foundation of Bulgaria. Similarly, Armenians revolted many times for secession with the support of Russia. Jews were the only non-Muslim group who did not revolt against Ottoman unity. The Zionism that emerged in Europe in the late 1890s did not give rise to nationalism among the Ottoman Jewry.

⁵⁴ *Equality and a New Republic*. Available [online]:
<http://www.turkishjews.com/history/equality.asp> [20 January 2009]

⁵⁵ Justin McCarthy, "Jewish population in the Late Ottoman Period", in *Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, edited by Avigdor Levy (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), p.258-263.

Education was also very important in the history of the Ottoman Jews in the secularization context. The Alliance Israelite Universelle schools played an important role in the education of the Ottoman Jewry. The Alliance supported the integration of Jews into Turkish culture, and their social, economic and cultural development. This was actually a modernization and westernization of Oriental Jews. Alliance schools promoted the Jewish identity and at the same time contributed to the secularization of education and everyday life of Jews.⁵⁶ Westernization and secularization were correlated to the ideology of the Young Turks. Regarding this, the Jews also served in the ideological formation of the Young Turks and the Committee of Union and progress in Salonica and their revolution in 1908⁵⁷ that give rise to the formation of the leaders and ideology of the Modern Turkish Republic.⁵⁸ During the Turkish War of Independence, unlike other minorities, the Jews supported the Muslims and fought in defense of Turkey.

This story of loyalty and living in tranquility with the Muslims also continued after the foundation of Turkish Republic. In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne recognized the Republic of Turkey as a fully independent state, and it accorded minority rights to the three principal non-Muslim religious minorities (Armenians, Greeks and Jews). The

⁵⁶ Aron Rodrigue, *Türkiye Yahudilerinin Batılıla ması: Alliance Okulları, 1860-1925* (Ankara : Ayraç Yayınevi), 1997.

⁵⁷ Feroz Ahmad, “The Special Relationship: The Committee of Union and Progress and the Ottoman Jewish Political Elite, 1908-1918,” in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*, edited by Avigdor Levy (Syracuse; New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002); see also Eugene Cooperman, “The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the Jewish Community of Salonica” in *Studies on Turkish-Jewish History: Political and Social Relations, Literature and Linguistics*, edited by David F. Altabe, Erhan Atay, Israel J. Katz., et.al (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1996), p. 168-180.

⁵⁸ Yücel Bozda lıo lu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2003), s.142.

Treaty of Lausanne's 37th and 45th articles permitted minorities to carry on with their own schools, social institutions and funds.⁵⁹ They were also granted special social and cultural rights. In 1926, with Turkey's adoption of the Swiss Civil Code, the leaders of the Jewish community renounced its minority status on personal rights voluntarily. Jews were the first non-Muslim community to reject the privileges granted to minorities in Turkey by the Treaty of Lausanne.⁶⁰ In 1926, in one of the popular newspapers in 1926 journalist, David Fresko, who was a columnist of *El Tiempo*, commented on the renouncement: "With this renouncement, the Turkish Jews are willing to show their loyalty to the country and declare their gratitude on behalf of all the Jewish people in the world."⁶¹

The close relationship of Jews and Turks continued during World War II. As early as 1933, Ataturk had invited a number of prominent German Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany to settle in Turkey.⁶² These refugees, among whom were intellectuals, scholars and artists, were received and employed at Istanbul University during the reformation of the university. They contributed a great deal to the

⁵⁹ Article 40: "Turkish nationals belonging to non-Muslim minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

⁶⁰ Galanti , p.61-64.

⁶¹ "Türk Musevileri, bu feragat ile memlekete olan ba lılıklarını göstermek ve Cihan Musevili i namına minnettarlıklarını ifade etmek istiyorlar." Newspaper article cited in: Galanti, p.66.

⁶² For full details of German refugees in Turkey see: Frank Tachau, "German Jewish Emigres in Turkey" in *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*, edited by Avigdor Levy (Syracuse; New York:Syracuse University Press, 2002)

development of the Turkish university system. Throughout World War II, Turkey let the Jews escaping the Holocaust transit or illegally migrate to Palestine.⁶³ The number of the Jews of Europe who visited Turkey as transit migrants on their way to Palestine between 1934 and 1944 was approximately 37,000.⁶⁴ The words of the 500 Yil Vakfi (The Quincentennial Foundation) are impressive in order to understand the meaning of the “tranquility” and “hospitality” of Turkey from the perspective of Turkey’s Jewish authorities:

During the World War II, Turkey served as a safe passage for many Jews fleeing the horrors of Nazism. While the Jewish communities of Greece were wiped out almost completely by Hitler, the Turkish Jews remained secure. Several Turkish diplomats ... spent all their efforts to save the Turkish Jews from the Holocaust in those countries, and succeeded. Turkey continues to be a shelter, a haven for all those who have to flee the dogmatism, intolerance and persecution.⁶⁵

Turkish ships saved Jews fleeing from Hitler’s threat in Europe by transporting them from different countries first to Turkey and then to Palestine. Also many Jews from Italy and Greece were saved with the efforts of Turkish diplomats.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the Turkish ambassadors of Vichy France tried to save the former Turkish citizen Jews

⁶³ Stanford Shaw, “Roads East: Turkey and the Jews of Europe during World War II” *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A Shared History, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*, edited by Avigdor Levy (Syracuse; New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

⁶⁴ Benbassa, p. 154.

⁶⁵ *Equality and a New Republic*. Available [online]: <http://www.turkishjews.com/history/equality.asp> [20 January 2009]

⁶⁶ Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Yahudiler, Hukuki ve Siyasi Durumları* (stanbul: leti im Yayınları, 1998), p.149-150.

who were in danger of being sent to concentration camps by providing them with Turkish citizenship documents.⁶⁷

With the multi-party system and the Democrat Party's (DP) rule in the early 1950s non-Muslims enjoyed the relaxation of Turkification policies of the RPP. Contrary to the RPP, the DP "articulated Islam in politics and facilitated the periphery, such as rural masses, becoming a medium of power against state elites, then non-Muslims, as elements of the periphery also found a more liberal environment for their communal identities."⁶⁸ The Jewish press increased in number and variety as a result of relative freedom in Turkey.⁶⁹ The number of Jewish members in parliament dramatically increased during the DP rule.⁷⁰

The official discourse, which is shared by both Turkish and Jewish official authorities, claims that Jews have lived among the Turks in tranquility without expulsion or extinction for over 500 years and Turkey has been a haven for them. However, all migrations are motivated by push and pull factors. The story of the tranquility does not give us a clue about the push factors for the mass migration of Jews from Turkey to Israel in the late 1940s. Apart from personal problems, why would people who have never had any problems where they have lived for more than five hundred years, leave their country and go to an unknown place where they do not even

⁶⁷ Ule Tokta , "Perceptions of Anti-Semitism among Turkish Jews" *Turkish Studies* 7, no.2 (2006), p. 204.

⁶⁸ Ule Tokta , "Citizenship and Minorities: A Historical Overview of Turkey's Jewish Minority" *Journal of Historical Society* 18, no.4 (December 2005), p. 407.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 406.

⁷⁰ For full details of liberal atmosphere for the Jews under the DP rule, see Avner Levi, p.151-160.

speak the language? Even if the number of emigrants is not in the thousands of but the hundreds people, there should be a more comprehensive explanation than this story of tranquility for the Jews in Turkey.

The Other Side of the Coin

“Ni vapor en la Mar Nero, ni mujer de Rumania, ni kaza en Turkiya.”⁷¹

The other side of the coin tells a different story than the story of tranquility, indulgence, hospitality and loyalty. These two narrations of history conflict with each. On the other hand, these two narrations of Jewish history complete each other, giving an overview of Jewish history from the Ottoman era to the mid-1950s Turkish Republic. The stories of the other side of the coin, which cover discriminatory policies, especially during the single-party era, may explain the push factors of this migration better than the tranquility story.

According to some intellectuals of the Jewish Community in Turkey, these two approaches on the Jewish history may be defined as Jewish history and the official history of Turkey. Beki Bahar, author and researcher, explains that Jews had existed in Ottoman Lands before the expulsion and arrival of the Sephardic Jews: “I believe that the conflict of Jewish history and the official history of Turkey starts off from the

⁷¹ “Neither a ship from the Blacksee, nor a woman from Romania or a house from Turkey,” “Ne Karadeniz’den vapor, ne Romanya’dan kadın, ne Tüürkiye’den ev.” Quotation from Roni Margulies, *Bugün Pazar Yahudiler Azar: stanbul Yahudileri Hakkında Ki isel bir Gözlem* (stanbul: Kanat Kitap, 2007). This saying belongs to the Jewish community in Turkey.

statement that the Jews came to this land five hundred years ago. It is we, Jews, who have stated this. Why is this? To thank and to pay our gratitude...”⁷²

Beyond gratitude, social and political consensus can be another explanation. Walter Weiker, in his study on the Jews of Turkey in Israel, considers the role or the position of Turkey’s Jews in Israeli society as “unseen”. He argues that this “unseen” character derives from the fear of endangering the status quo where they had learned to be “unseen,” “in their community in Turkey, where inconspicuousness, yet quiet enterprise, was described as the key to their success.”⁷³

In the *millet* system, *millets* were recognized officially as religion-based separate units. The Muslim *millet* was the dominant one. Thus the doctrine of difference functioned to differ Muslims from the other *millets*. Therefore the system imposed limitations on religion-based categorized groups. Non-Muslims had to wear clothes of different colors than Muslims; they were forbidden to carry arms, reside next to mosques or built houses taller than six meters.⁷⁴ Weiker explains these limitations as follow:

Minorities in the Muslim society were under a variety of disabilities, ranging from having to pay special taxes to limitations on dress. There were also not infrequent incidents in which militant segments of the Muslims like the Janissaries would perpetrate attacks and general humiliation and in general pressure the government for strict enforcement of limitations on the height of

⁷² “[Yahudilerin tarihi ile Türkiye’nin resmi tarihinin] çatı ması, bence Yahudilerin bu topraklara be yüz yıl önce geldi i lafindan çıkar. Bunu söyleyen de biz Yahudileriz. Neden? Te ekkür etmek, ükranımızı bildirmek için...” “Türkiye’de Yahudi Olmak: Beki Bahar ile Söyle i,” interview by Güliz Türko lu, Zeynep Kutluata, *Kültür ve siyasette Feminist Yakla ımlar Dergisi*, no:7 (Mart 2009). Available [online]: <http://www.feministyaklasimlar.org/> [20 April 2009]

⁷³ Weiker, *The Unseen*, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Millet Sistemi* (Istanbul: A aç Yayıncılık, 1992), p.41.

buildings, the prohibition on building new synagogues or repairing existing ones without special permission.⁷⁵

The eighteenth and nineteenth century witnessed the decline of the Ottoman Empire, which influenced the Jewish community as well it did the rest of its subjects. However, the Jewish community was more disadvantageous than other minorities due to their unprotected status. Other minorities were protected by European powers. The low level of education was another problem, the result of the fragmented structure of the community,⁷⁶ which was not centralized until 1836, when a Chief Rabbi was nominated as the leader of the Jewish community. The cooperation of the subjects of a non-Muslim minority *millet* was the single way to improve educational and welfare institutions.

During the Balkan Wars and later in World War I, non-Muslims served in the Ottoman army. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) were in power in the early twentieth century. Separatist movements reached their peak and CUP was not able to quell these revolts. Due to continuance of wars and riots, universal conscription was made obligatory in 1909. This caused the emigration of young non-Muslims to Palestine and South (far less North) America who did not want to be drafted into the Ottoman army. However, Palestine was the primary destination of Turkey's Jews. It was not the only reason for migration. General turmoil and the weakening of the Empire and the depressed situation were the main reasons for people to search for a better place to live. This situation reinforced the prejudices that non-Muslims were untrustworthy.

The loyalty of the Turkish Jewry was questioned and turned into propaganda against them after an incident related to a letter which was sent to the Spanish

⁷⁵ Weiker, *The Unseen*, p. 10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

authorities celebrating the discovery of the American continent in February 1926 by the Turkish Jewry. The mainstream newspapers such as *Milliyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *kdam* and *Vakit* condemned and reported that the Turkish Jewry had announced their loyalty to Spain in the letter.⁷⁷ Jewish authorities denounced the letter and visited state officials declare their loyalty to the Turkish Republic.

Similarly the Elza Niyego incident was turned into campaign against Jewish community in 1927. Elza Niyego was a young Jewish woman who was murdered in Istanbul by a Muslim man whose proposal had been rejected. Her funeral was turned up into a protest of the failure of the police in the incident. Newspapers such as *Cumhuriyet*, *Son Saat* and *Vakit* claimed that the Jewish community had protested against the Turkish authorities and that they had insulted the Republic of Turkey.⁷⁸ Articles insulting Jewry and questioning the loyalty of Jews was published in newspapers. As a result, the prosecutor filed charges against some of the Jews who attended the funeral and freedom of travel was restricted for Jews out of Istanbul for several months.⁷⁹

In the first years of the Republic, the definition of nation was defined as a political and social whole formed by citizens united by a common language, culture and goal. Ethnicity was not mentioned. However, in practice non-Muslims were discriminated against since Turkishness was tied up with Islam.⁸⁰ Actually, Mustafa

⁷⁷ Rıfat Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkle tirme Serüveni (1923-1945)* (Istanbul: İletim Yayınları, 2005), p.77-84.

⁷⁸ Avner Levi, p.76.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.84.

Kemal Atatürk's definition of Turkishness which was made on May 1920 is very important to understanding the exclusion of non-Muslims from the limits of the Turkish context. His definition was as follows: "The intent here is not just Turks, not just Kurds or Laz. It covers all the constituents of Islam which is a sincere congregation."⁸¹ The 1930s was the most intensive decade of Turkish nationalism bringing in discriminatory executions and strong pressures for "Turkification." Turkification was the most important process in the creation of the Turkish nation, which depended on having a common language, common culture and history.⁸² Since Turkishness was identified with the Sunni Muslim heritage, the Turkish national identity became exclusionary for non-Muslims.⁸³ In other words, non-Muslims were never in fact fully acknowledged as Turks and unlike Arabs, Kurds, Azeris, Laz and other Muslim communities, non-Muslims were subjected to the "Turkification" measures of the early Republic.⁸⁴

The most overt expression of the time was the "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" campaign, which was especially against foreign language speaking minorities. Students of Istanbul University's Faculty of Law launched the campaign in 1928. The aim of the

⁸⁰ Ule Tokta , "Citizenship, Minorities and Immigrants: A Comparison of Turkey's Jewish Minority and Turkish-Jewish Immigrants in Israel"(Ph.D. diss, Bilkent University, 2004), p.80.

⁸¹ Quotation from : Feroz Ahmad, *Bir Kimlik Pe inde Türkiye* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008), p. 100.

⁸² For further information on the construction of Turkish national identity, see Tanıl Bora, " n a Döneminde Türk Mili Kimli i," *Toplum Bilim* 71 (Kı , 1996), p. 168-190.

⁸³ Leyla Neyzi, "Remembering to Forget: Sabbateanism, National Identity and Subjectivity in Turkey," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no 1 (January 2002), p. 140.

⁸⁴ Kader Konuk, "Eternal Guests, Mimics, and Dönme: The Place of German and Turkish Jews in Modern Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 37, (2007), p.14.

campaign was to make the minorities to speak Turkish in the public sphere. Spreading a common language was seen as fundamental aspect of the nation-building process. It had a great impact on society. Public declarations, posters, bulletins and articles in newspapers played a crucial role spreading the campaign. People who spoke a language other than Turkish in public were the target of warnings. These warnings turned out to arguments, sometimes even fights.

Some Jewish intellectuals such as Avram Galati and Moiz Kohen (Munis Tekinalp),⁸⁵ it should be noted, strongly supported this campaign. Galanti mentioned that the aim of the campaign was sublime, as follows: “The goal of the Student Community of the Faculty of Law is immensely sublime, holy, and in every respect admirable.”⁸⁶ This can be considered as an effort to increase the integration of the Jews into the nation state. However, Article 39 of the Treaty of Lausanne, which the leaders of Jewish community voluntarily renounced, had granted the free use of any language among minorities.⁸⁷ The campaign caused the disappearance of Ladino –Judeo Spanish, the language of Sephardim Jews- among Jewish youth.⁸⁸

⁸⁵For discussions of Munis Tekinalp’s understanding of Turkish nationalism, see Behmoaras.

⁸⁶ “*Hukuk Fakültesi Talebe cemiyetinin maksadı gayet ulvi, mukaddes ve ezher cihet te vike ayandır.*” Galanti, p.160.

⁸⁷ Article 39: “No restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings. Notwithstanding the existence of the official language, adequate facilities shall be given to Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech for the oral use of their own language before the Courts.”

⁸⁸ Avner Levi, p. 162.

According to the definition of Turkishness, non-Muslims were discriminated. They were not assumed to be Turkish in general. Also the rise of racism in Europe and the upcoming world war affected the policies of the Republican Peoples' Party (RPP). Defense and national security became the most important issues on Turkey's agenda. Hence the non-Muslim minorities were the "untrustworthy" elements of the new-born state, they became the most suspicious subjects of the Republic.

Related to this, anti-Semitic writings rose in far-right publications. The domination of Jews in trade and finance also drew a negative attention to the Jews. Especially the cartoon magazines of the 1930s and 1940s "stereotyped Jews as rich, money grubbing merchants living in Istanbul and speaking heavily accented Turkish, utterly lacking in affinity or loyalty to the nation, with money as their master."⁸⁹ Cevat Rifat Atilhan and Nihal Atsız were the authors of most of the anti-Semitic publications.⁹⁰

In 1934, the Law on Settlements No. 2510 was passed as a result of the national security and defense policy of RPP. The Law on Settlements was developed especially after the report of Thrace by the official auditor brahim Tali Öngören.⁹¹ According to this law, people were grouped as having Turkish culture, people who were integrated into Turkish culture and those who are not Turkish and did not have Turkish culture.

⁸⁹ Tokta , "Citizenship and Minorities," p. 401-402. For full details of Jewish stereotype in the cartoons of 1930s and 40s, see Bayraktar, 2006.

⁹⁰ For further details of the publications by Atilhan and Atsız, see Bali, 2003, p. 107, 117-122; see also Bali, *1934 Trakya Olayları* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2008).

⁹¹ Berna Pekesen, "Umumi Müfetti brahim Tali Öngören: Müfetti lik craatları ve 1934 Trakya Tefti Gezisi Raporu," *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no.7 (Spring-Summer 2008), p. 145-179.

Jews were grouped as people who were to be integrated into Turkish culture with the other non-Muslim minorities.⁹² Thrace was on the border with Greece and Bulgaria, which were under the threat of Nazi Germany's attack. The main goal of the law was to maintain the security and control of settlement policy in the "problematic" provinces. The Thrace Events were not a direct result of this law, but it drew attention to the idea of the relocation of minorities to other places from those "problematic" provinces.

The 1934 Thrace Incidents were some of the anti-minority outbursts that took place during the RPP years leading to the disappearance of Jewish communities in some of the cities and towns like Tekirdağ, Çanakkale, Gelibolu and Edirne, due to commercial boycotts, threats, looting and physical abuse. These events started after the anti-Semitic campaigns of far-right publications and unsigned threatening letters against Jews on July 3, 1934. During the events Jews were attacked, beaten and their houses and shops were either destroyed or ransacked. While Jews fled to Istanbul, they sold their remaining goods cheaply.

These incidents led to the concentration of Jews in Istanbul and Izmir, cities which had more tolerant and liberal atmospheres. Some of them stayed in Istanbul, but many immigrated to Palestine.⁹³ However, as Zafer Toprak indicates, Prime Minister smet nönü reacted with a powerful speech condemning anti-Semitism, saying that this was an anti-Semitic fact which was related to the rise of fascism between the two world wars and that the political responsibility for the incidents rested with the government.⁹⁴

⁹² Bali, *1934 Trakya*, p. 38-41.

⁹³ Avner Levi, p.10.

⁹⁴ Zafer Toprak, "1934 Trakya Olaylarında Hükümetin ve CHP'nin Sorumluluğu," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 34 (October, 1996), p. 25.

The Thrace Events not only caused the migration of Jews to Istanbul and Palestine, but also gave rise to Zionism among Jews.⁹⁵

It is also hard to say that the discrimination was not part of state policy. It was even sometimes a part of a daily life for minorities. Non-Muslim minorities were always seen as the “others” and “untrustworthy” elements in society. Between 1926 and 1965 Law No. 788 prohibited non-Muslims from working as public servants.⁹⁶ Another Law No. 2007 called “The law on Arts and Services Allocated to Turkish Citizens in Turkey” (*Türkiye’de Türk vatandaşlarına tahsis edilen sanat ve hizmetler hakkında Kanun*) prohibited non-Muslims from working in some professions including medicine, pharmacy, driving and even doorkeeping.⁹⁷ The grounding of the law emphasized the strategic importance of those professions, which actually was evidence of distrust and the externalization of minorities. In his diary, Eli Aul points out that in the secondary school, he was expelled from the class during the “National Security” courses.⁹⁸

During World War II militarism spread to almost all countries in Europe, even in Turkey, which was not involved in the war. National policies were shaped around security and defense. Strengthening the economy and military were given the priority. Policies on minority issues in the Turkish Republic mainly were dominated by militarism while minorities were considered as the “untrustworthy” elements of society. The Twenty Class Reserve Soldiers was an example of these policies. In 1939, all non-

⁹⁵ Tokta , “Citizenship and Minorities,” p. 402.

⁹⁶ Aktar, *Varlık*, p.121.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁹⁸ Eli Aul, *Balat’tan Bat-Yam’a* (İstanbul: İletişim Yay., 1999), p. 15.

Muslims regardless if they had served in military previously, had to enlist in support of the services. In other words, it was a special mandatory military service only for non-Muslims even if they had already completed their military service before. Turkish non-Muslims in Turkey from the age of 18 to 45 were enrolled in the military, segregated in separate units and instead of being soldiers were made to work in labour camps which reminded many Jews of the Nazi's concentration camps.⁹⁹ After then recruitment of non-Muslims into the military service, they were not allowed to carry guns during service nor were they placed in strategically important areas. They served as support branch and worked on building such things as roads, railways and in cleaning.¹⁰⁰ It was no coincidence that rumours spread among the Jews about crematoriums in Balat that were said to be used to exterminate Turkish Jewry.¹⁰¹ The non-Muslim soldiers served as reserve forces for a year and they were released in 1942. However, in 1942 a new measure for non-Muslims was introduced.

In December 1942, as an effort to resolve the depressed economic conditions caused by wartime mobilization measures, the Assembly enacted a special one-time tax which also was designed to discourage profiteering and speculations in the economy, on the assets of companies and individuals called the Capital Levy (*Varlık Vergisi*). In practice however, Muslims were treated lightly and the levy brought against non-

⁹⁹ Benbassa, p. 374; see also Neyzi, *Ben Kimim?*, p. 49-77.

¹⁰⁰ For full details of Twenty Class Reserve Soldiers, see Bali, *II. Dünya Sava ında Gayrimüslümlerin Askerlik Serüveni: Yirmi Kur'a Nafia Askerleri* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2008).

¹⁰¹ For full discussion, see Rifat Bali, "II. Dünya Sava ı Yıllarında Türkiye'de Azınlıklar II: Balat Fırınları Söylentisi," *Tarih ve Toplum* 180, (December, 1998),p. 11-17. Shaw, *The Jews*, p. 255.;Marie-Christine Varol, *Balat, Faubourg Juif d'Istanbul*, (Istanbul: Isis, 1989), p. 10-11.

Muslims most heavily. There were four categories which were used as a tool for determining the estimated tax: Muslims, non-Muslims, converts¹⁰² and foreigners. In valuable data given in Ayhan Aktar's study on the Capital Levy, the different treatment for non-Muslims is shown.¹⁰³ Those who were unable to pay were subjected to hard work at the A kale labour camp. Some of them died because of conditions at the camp.

The tax had to be paid in a very short time and there was no chance of objection. Many non-Muslims had to sell their real estate and businesses. Eli aul, a non-Muslim and one of the victims of the Levy, tells much about how Jews experienced these measures.¹⁰⁴ The Levy was an economic extension of the "Turkification" policy through transferring the capital from non-Muslims to Muslims, aiming at creating a Muslim bourgeoisie.¹⁰⁵ According to Akar, 98% of the real estate of non-Muslims was bought by Muslims or confiscated by the state.¹⁰⁶ In 1944 the Capital Levy was abolished and tax debts were cancelled. The Capital Levy aggrieved many, including the Jews, which gave rise to migration to Palestine. In the years 1943-1944 the number of Jews who migrated to Palestine was 4000.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² The converts (dönme, Sabetaycı) are the group of people who followed Sebbetai Zvi that declared himself as messiah in the 17th century. Due to political reasons he converted to Islam and his followers performed the Islamic laws in public sphere. However, in their private life they performed Judaic principles. For further information on convert and their existence in today's Turkey, see Leyla Neyzi, "Remembering to Forget: Sabbateanism, National Identity and Subjectivity in Turkey," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 1 (January 2002), p. 137-158.

¹⁰³ Aktar, *Varlık*, p. 154, 155.

¹⁰⁴ aul, p. 83-119.

¹⁰⁵ Aktar, *Varlık*, p. 215-243.

¹⁰⁶ Rıdvan Akar, *A kale Yolcuları, Varlık Vergisi ve Çalı ma Kampları* (İstanbul: BelgeYayımları, 2000), p. 147.

All of these incidents and discriminatory politics caused the Turkish Jews to feel insecure and in danger of expulsion like the other minorities. Especially, the Armenian genocide and expulsion in 1915 and the deportation of the Greeks during the first years of Republic due to a population exchange between Turkey and Greece gave rise to these fears. In addition, internal conflicts within the Jewish community paved the way for preparing the conditions which gave rise to the migration of Jews such as class differences and the decrease of religious and cultural activities which weakened the communal institutions, due to the secularization project of the Turkish Republic. Zionism also arose, especially among youth and lower classes after the World War Two both as a reaction to the discriminatory policies and the effect of rise of the worldwide Zionist activities.

In 1945, the single-party era ended with the emergence of the Democrat Party (DP), which came to power in 1950. Although a more liberal atmosphere occurred in social and political life, the Cyprus conflict between Turkey and Greece caused tragic events on September 6-7, 1955. While the Tripartite London Conference was going on in order to find a solution to the Cyprus conflict, news broke of the bombing of the Turkish consulate and birth place of Atatürk in Thessaloniki (Greece). The already existing state of tension turned into anti-Greek violence. Other non-Muslims were also aggrieved along with Greeks in Istanbul and in Izmir. The shops and houses owned by non-Muslims were assaulted and despoiled. The September 6-7 Events caused a non-Muslim migration from Turkey to Greece for Greeks and to Israel for Jews. During the 1955 the number of emigrants from Turkey to Israel was only 339; however in 1956 and 1957, the total number of immigrants were 3621 after the September 6-7 events.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Benbassa, p. 383; see also Shaw, *The Jews*, p. 285.

¹⁰⁸ Weiker, *The Unseen*, p. 22.

Turkey's Diplomacy in the Middle East and Migration

The official proclamations of Turkey constantly emphasizes that Turkey is not just a Near Eastern, Asian country, but also a European and a Mediterranean one. The synthesis of European, Asian and Middle Eastern character plays a crucial role in domestic and international affairs.¹⁰⁹ As a direct result of this synthesis, the role of the Republic of Turkey as a secular and westernized country has always been ambiguous in the Middle East.

From the establishment of Republic in 1923 to the end of World War II, Turkey's policy in the Middle East can be defined as "neutralism." However, liberation movements and self-determination processes after World War II and shifting power equilibrium between the USA and the Soviet Union in the Middle East brought Turkey to move from neutralism to activism.¹¹⁰ The first major event that required activism in the Middle Eastern affairs was the United Nations' resolution on the partition of Palestine on 29 November 1947. Turkey opposed this partition of Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab, through siding with the Arabs due to the fear of the formation of a communist Israel. Soviet support for the Zionist enterprise exacerbated Turkey's security concerns due to the Soviets territorial demands.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Oral Sander, *Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası*, 2. bsm, (İstanbul: İmge Yayınları, 2000), p. 223.

¹¹⁰ Bozdağlıoğlu uses "neutralism to activism" as a term to explain Turkey's changing attitude on foreign policy after World War II, see p. 150.

Although the partition was accepted in 1947, the immigration had started many years earlier. Social and political issues paved the way to migrations both in Palestine and Turkey. The first example of these migrations occurred after the killing of seventy Jews in Hebron by Arabs.¹¹² A group of Turkish Jews emigrated to Palestine. The Thrace Incidents also caused many Jews to immigrate and the establishment of first concealed Zionist associations. *Aliya Bet*, the illegal migration started in the 1940s as a result of these associations. According to some sources in 1942-1945 approximately 2000 Jews, including 175 children and youth were sent in cooperation with *Aliyat Hanoar*, a Zionist association.¹¹³

Six months after the partition, Israel was officially proclaimed a state on 14 May 1948. Immediately after the proclamation, the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq attacked Israel. During the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Turkey prevented the participation of its citizens in the war by forbidding any migration to Palestine. In October, the restriction was abolished and the Jews were permitted to go to Israel just as tourists. Only in three days after permission was granted 2000 passports were taken by

¹¹¹ In March 1945, The Soviet Union denounced its pact of friendship and non-aggression which it had concluded with Turkey in 1925. Set of demands are listed including joint control over the Straits and readjustment in the Turkish-Soviet border. In 1947 the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan was a convincing proof of taking her part with USA, consequence of her need to backing of the West against these demands. For full details, see Kemal Karpat, "Turkish and Arab-Israeli Relations" in Kemal Karpat, et.al, *Turkey's Foreign Policy in Transition 1950-1974* (Leiden: Brill, 1975.)

¹¹² Bali, *Aliya*, p. 88.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Jews who aimed to emigrate to Israel.¹¹⁴ The sudden increase of immigration was also reported in Turkish journals.¹¹⁵

External factors also played crucial roles during the migration. The Arab-Israeli conflict and the Middle Eastern policies of imperialist countries such as Britain, the USA and the Soviet Union determined the Turkish government's attitude towards migration and Turkey's change of its Middle Eastern policy from neutralism to activism. For instance, on 1 November 1948, all of the passport procedures of Jews, also the passports that were given before November 1 were abrogated on the order of the government. The official reason was to prevent the emigration to Turkish citizens to Palestine in which a war had already started.¹¹⁶ Three days later the procedure started again, but all passports were made "valid in all countries except Palestine," with a special stamp. With these passports it was impossible to return to Turkey after entering the Palestine.

On 20 December 1948, the Minister of Interior send directive to the Istanbul Police Department indicating that without any visa belonging to the destination country, no passports would be given to Jews who affirmed that they would go to Italy or France to get a passport and then would go to Israel. Since France was a member of the Palestine Reconciliation Committee, it rejected giving a visa. Italy also rejected due to the restricted number of visas that it could give. Czechoslovakia offered a visa for Jewish refugees, but Jewish community did not want to get visa from Czechoslovakia

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

¹¹⁵“İstanbul'dan Filistin'e Yahudi Akını”, *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 20 Ekim 1948; “Filistin'e ilk Kafile Gitti.”, *Cumhuriyet*, 23 Ekim 1948; “Bir Yahudi Kafilesi Daha Filistin'e Hareket Etti.”, *Cumhuriyet*, 27 Ekim 1948.

¹¹⁶“Filistin'e Gidemiyen Yahudiler”, *Cumhuriyet*, 3 Kasım 1948.

because of the Cold War. Although they had already sold their houses and businesses, many Jews especially those from Anatolia were affected very badly. They had to stay in hotels or in the gardens of Jewish cafes; they did not have sufficient money due to the restrictions to prevent the flow of money.

There are debates on the reasons for this issue. The neutralization policy is one of the suggestions. Turkey was a member of the Palestine Reconciliation Committee and had to remain neutral during the Arab-Israeli War. Jewish refugees who fought for Israel against the Arabs were still Turkish citizens. Related to this, the compulsions and protestations of Arab countries is another explanation. Moreover, diplomatic reasons like avoidance of criticisms from the countries that had not recognized Israel yet in the United Nations also was an important issue.¹¹⁷

After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Turkey voted with the West against Arabs by supporting the United Nations Resolution calling for the Palestine Reconciliation Committee to find a settlement between Israel and the Arabs. Turkey, along with the USA and France, was a member of this committee. The close relationships between Israel and the Western countries convinced Turkey that Israel would not be an advocate of the Soviets. Israel and Turkey in the Middle East had a lot in common as leading countries which had achieved rapid modernization and progress. As Bozda lio lu writes, “They had the same aim of modernizing and westernizing the country by introducing the principle of secularism and democratic institutions.”¹¹⁸

The declaration of Turkish Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadak¹¹⁹ on 8 February 1949 was a sign of recognition of Israel which paved the way to mass migration, *Aliya*,

¹¹⁷ Bali discuss on the issue by citing from some documents, see *Aliya*, p. 170.

¹¹⁸ Bozda lio lu, p. 141.

again. The next day the Head of the Istanbul Police Department declared that the processing of passports had been restarted. The government had Turkish ships to carry Jewish refugees to Israel. There were thousands of applications for passports. More state servants were sent to the Istanbul Police Department Passport Office to accelerate the procedure.

Table 3: *Aliyah*, Jewish Migration in the Balkan Peninsula

<i>Countries</i>	1919 1923	1924 1931	1932 1938	1939 1945	1946 15.8.1948	15.8.1948 31.9.1949	<i>In total</i>
Bulgaria	328	1209	1121	3220	1179	35089	42146
Greece	158	815	5651	1161	982	1540	10307
Turkey	478	1303	2179	4196	121	30657	38934
Yugoslavia	145	154	640	858	147	6596	8540
<i>In total</i>	1109	3481	9591	9435	2429	73882	99927

Source: Esther Benbassa, Aron Rodrigue, *Türkiye ve Balkan Yahudileri Tarihi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p.392.

On 28 March 1949, Turkey recognized Israel. The recognition of Israel pleased the Jews. Even journalists opposed to the formation of Israel wrote articles in favour of this recognition.¹²⁰ With the increase in migration in 1949, 26,295 people immigrated to Israel. After the sudden increase in migration and recognition of Israel, on 26 July 1949 Viktor Elyasar was appointed as the official responsible for immigration from Israel to Istanbul. However, Turkey did not promote or obscure the migration on the state-based relations. Later on, in Beyoğlu, the State of Israel- Minister of Immigration, Delegation of Istanbul was opened to organize the immigration and health control of immigrants.

¹¹⁹ “The State of Israel is a fact. More than thirty countries have recognized it; Arab representatives, too, are talking to the Israeli representatives.” *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 9 Şubat 1949.

¹²⁰ Ömer Rıza Doğrul, “İsrail’i Tanımak”, *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 30 Mart 1949.

Dating from 15 October 1949, Jewish refugees were asked to go through health control and to get visas from Israel from the representative of the Minister of Immigration.

Turkey established diplomatic relations on 9 March 1950. Though Turkey was the first Muslim country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, it was the last in Europe. In the 1950s rate of migration decreased. In 1950, the number of migrants to Israel was 2439.¹²¹ This was in response to the difficulties the Jews had experienced in Israel, the scarcities of jobs and housing opportunities for emigrants due to more than one million refugees who had immigrated to Israel between 1948 and 1950. In 1951 the number of migrants to Israel decreased to 1198. The Jews who preferred to stay in Istanbul belonged to the upper-class and did not want to risk their status by migrating to Israel. According to the census of population in 1955, the number of Jews in Turkey decreased to 45,995.¹²²

According to different sources, between 1948 and 1956 the number of Jewish emigrants from Turkey to Israel is estimated to have been between 34,000 and 38,000.¹²³ Only between 1948 and 1949, after the foundation of the State of Israel, approximately 30,000 Jews left Turkey. In 1945, according to census records, 76,965 Jews were living in Turkey; however, in 1955, the number decreased to 45,995.¹²⁴ The

¹²¹ Bali, *Aliya*, p.258.

¹²² Dündar, p.202.

¹²³ Shaw, *The Jews*, p. 285 indicates that in 1945 the population of the Jews was 76,965 then in 1955 it descents to 45,995. Bali, *Aliya*, p. 258, he points out that the number of immigrants was 34,647. Weiker, *Ottomans*, p. 255, gives the number of refugees as 33,159. Benbassa, p. 392 gives the number as 38,000.

¹²⁴ Dündar, p. 168, 175.

booklet on the Turkish Jews, which is written in Hebrew, displays different numbers though. The author of the book *Judaism in Turkey in the Past and Now*, Mordechai Falcon, states that in the years 1948-50 45,000 Jews emigrated to Israel, including those who migrated illegally.¹²⁵

Table 4: *Aliyah*, Jewish Migration in Turkey

<i>Year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>In total</i>
1948	2294	2068	4362
1949	13 003	13 292	26 295
1950	1224	1215	2439
1951	573	625	1198
1952	143	210	352
<i>In total</i>	17 237	17 410	34 647

Source: Rifat Bali, *Aliya: Bir Toplu Göçün Öyküsü: 1946-1949* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), p. 258.

After 1951, migration slowed as can be seen in Table 2. There was also migration in the opposite direction after the first flow of migration between 1948 and 1950. These returnees preferred to come back to Turkey due to integration problems and disappointed expectations, including economic ones.¹²⁶ However, there are no reliable sources about the number of returnees. The Jewish migration increased especially after economic or social events. After the Events of 6-7 September 1955, the number of migrants was 1,710 in 1956 and 1,911 in 1957.¹²⁷ The migration of Turkey's Jews still

¹²⁵ Mordechai Falcon, , . (*Judaism in Turkey in the Past and Now*) (Jerusalem, Modern Graphics: 1998), p. 26.

¹²⁶ Bali, *Aliya*, p. 311-327; see also Tokta , "Turkey's Jews," p.512.

¹²⁷Tokta , "Turkey's Jews," p. 511.

continued in lesser numbers until the present day. The estimated number of Jews in Turkey in 2008 was 17,415.

CHAPTER III
STORIES OF DIFFERENT MIGRATIONS

*Mother, I long for Jerusalem
To taste its fruit and drink its water
The Master of the world shelters and comforts me
I can see the Temple in front of me
It looks like the growing moon
The Master of the world shelters and comforts me
They are building it with precious stones
Decorating it with precious stones
The Master of the world shelters and comforts me¹²⁸*

Everybody has her own unique experiences in her lives, especially when it comes to fundamental transformations like migrations. Each migration story is different from that of others and all stories are real. The narratives of real lives and migration... The lives of the informants of this thesis were totally changed after their migration to Israel; hence, their lives had already changed in Turkey. Each of them his or her had migration experience, even though they occurred in the same years, from the same city to the same place. Their ways of going, motivations, and agents were all different.

In this chapter three different life and migration stories are explored. Two of them are the life stories of formerly Turkish citizens now Israelis informants. One was chosen from among the informants in Turkey in order to elaborate the difference of the

¹²⁸ Quoted from the album *Mano Suave* by Yasmin Levy. Traditional Ladino Song.
“*Irme kero madre a Yerushalayim/ Komer de sus frutos, beber de sus aguas/ En el me arimo yo/
I en el m’afalago/ I en el senior de todo el mundo/ I lo estan fraguando kon piedras presiozas/ I
lo estan lavorando kon piedras presiozas/ I el Bet Amikdash lo vor d’enfrente/ A mi me parese
la luna kresiente*”

experiences and reactions between immigrants in Israel and Jewish citizens of the Turkish Republic.

Jak's life was full of round-migration between Turkey and Israel and he was always alone in his migrations. His story is also one of ravages and resuscitation. He had a strong Israeli nationalism and he was a Zionist which had led to his illegal migration when he was faced with limitations in Turkey. His illegal migration was the last phase of his rebellion against his family and the unwritten rules of being a part of a minority group in Turkey.

On the other hand, Ester's life and migration story was the classic one, repeated by almost all of the interviewees in Turkey, excluding the bothersome details. She migrated with her brother due to their poverty, in legal ways. She also stated that she missed her sister who had migrated to Israel with her Zionist husband before the whole family moved to Israel. A few months later, other members of the family migrated to Israel as well. Instead of one of rebellion her life was a story of obedience. She came to Israel when she was eighteen years old and she almost forgot Turkish, even though she visited Turkey many times after she had migrated to Israel.

Nisim's story was almost unknown, because he declined to answer many of my questions. I especially chose his life story as his silence and his refusal to answer was reflected the characteristic of the older Jewish generation in Turkey, which carried my studies many times to a dead-end. He was from a very poor family and as much as he told me he had not cared about anything but earning money and saving his life. To be a minority in his life experience was the last concerned on his agenda. His struggle had been against poverty and his class position.

These three stories reflect the problematic of the disputes over the migration of the Turkish-Jewish community to Israel. It is very important to understand the

memories of the pre-migration stories and the life conditions of each agent which determined the ways of migration and the motivations of the individuals concerned. In other words, when the stories are known, the statements of the narrators are more meaningful rather than quotations in a text taken out of context.

Jak's Story

“Dad, why are these men black and shiny?” asked six-years-old Jak to his father in Tripoli after a long train journey from Izmir. He was shocked by what he saw. They were black soldiers from Syria and it was midday; therefore, the soldiers were sweaty. His father answered: “These men polish their faces with black color every morning to be shiny.” This was Jak's first memory about the last station of the Toros Express which they had taken from Izmir in 1943. After they arrived in Tripoli, they moved to Hayfa, from there to Tel-Aviv, where his father had decided to live.

Life in Tel-Aviv was not as easy as they had expected. Palestine was under British mandate. The rules were strict and Jak's father only had a tourist visa. To work, he needed a work permit. Besides that, he was a Sephardic Jew. There was discrimination against Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews¹²⁹ which was done by Ashkenazi Jews.¹³⁰ This discrimination was so harsh that when his father found a shop for sale in Tel-Aviv, the owner of the shop did not want to sell it to a Sephardim and he did not. For two years the whole family, two children including Jak and his parents, tried to

¹²⁹ Mizrahi Jews or Mizrahim are Jews had immigrated to Israel from the Arabic and Muslim-majority countries including Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran, Afghanistan, Georgia and Ethiopia.

¹³⁰ Ashkenazi Jews or Ashkenazim descended from Germany and France, who migrated to Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Eastern Europe.

settle in Tel-Aviv. Jak went to school there alone because his sister was just a baby at the time. Jak's father was about to run out of money and he could not find a job.

It was really hard to decide to go back to Turkey, since Jak's father was so angry at Turkey about the Capital Levy and Twenty Class Reserve Soldiers. He had been recruited into the Twenty Class Reserves even though he had completed his military service before. At the same time he had to pay a big amount of tax because of Capital Levy. After he came back home from the army, he had not wanted to live in Turkey anymore; he felt it was not safe for his family. The Nazis were at the border as well. But there was no other choice but to return. They returned to Izmir in 1945. His father opened a shop and sold electrical apparatus.

After two years spent in Israel, Jak could not get used to life in Turkey. He said "The freedom in Israel was different than in Turkey."¹³¹ According to Jak the two years had affected his life in a very positive way. He mentioned that he had enjoyed his freedom in Israel. But in Turkey the fear and repression among Jewish society annoyed him too much. He got bored of being kept from talking to Muslims and assuming a humble attitude when he was with his Muslim friends. His family warned him many times, because he was disobedient. He always felt that he was no different from the Muslims. So why did he have to obey the unwritten rules of his community? He described his rebellion as such: "When I went out of the house, I used to beat whoever opposed me. They came to my home to complain about me. It was known that I would bring trouble, since this was the way I had been brought up (in Israel). ... Such a great

¹³¹ "*Israil'deki serbestlik ba kaydı.*" ISRL14, 73, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 09.02.09.

fear and repression... It was not for me.”¹³² He considered himself to be Israeli, after two years spent in Israel. Even though he was only thirteen, he wanted to go back to his homeland and to be a part of the Jewish state, but there was no legal way for him.

He had friends who were bad lots in his neighbourhood in Izmir. Although Jak was a thirteen, his friends were much older. Two of them were draft dodgers and another was a dangerous criminal who was on trial for killing a man. It was not surprising that he had such friends because of his rebellious character.

The trouble that was expected from Jak came soon. After the foundation of Israel, Jak convinced them to flee to Israel. “I said many times ‘What am I doing here? I want to go back.’ They guarded me. We took the train.”¹³³ He stole five hundred liras which he needed for his journey and new life in Israel from his father’s pocket. This was a big amount of money for the time. They arrived in Iskenderun (Alexandretta is the biggest city of Hatay in the southern Turkey). In Iskenderun, there was a fisherman, Camo, who was known as a smuggler and would lead them to the Israel border. They found him and paid for their illegal travel.

Camo was transporting carp to Israel. They hid in some of the many fish barrels on board. When the custom officials came to inspect the boat, they did not realize that there were four stowaways in the barrels. After officers left the boat, the boys came out of the barrels, stinking of fish. They washed in the sea. Four days and four nights on the way... When they arrived in Hayfa, the first thing they did was ask for food. Officers in

¹³² “Ben soka a çıkıyordum, önüme geleni dövüyordum. Eve geliyorlardı. Bela getirece im malumdu çünkü yeti me tarzım böyleydi. ... Büyük korku, büyük baskı, ben buna gelemiyordum.” Ibid.

¹³³ “Kaç kere dedim, ‘Benim burada i im ne? Ben gitmek istiyorum.’ Bunlar aldılar beni himayelerine, trene bindik.” Ibid.

Hayfa gave them food and showed them a place to stay. They also sent a telegraph to Jak's family.

Jak's mother took a boat, *Kadesh*, as soon as she received the telegraph. It took almost a week. When she found Jak in Hayfa, the first thing she did was slap his face while she was crying. She wanted to take him back to Turkey but she could not. Jak did not have a passport and did not want to go back. Long discussions and arguments could not convince him to go back with his mother. In the end she went back to Turkey alone.

Jak went to a kibbutz where he went to school half of the day and worked as dairy farmer the other half. He also helped the poultry man of the kibbutz. He has lots of good memories about the life in kibbutz. He left the kibbutz in 1950 and went to a technical school where he learned the engine system of airplanes. He would have a profession if he could graduate. A letter from his mother, however arrived informing him of his father's unexpected death.

He had to go back to Turkey. Thus his sisters were not mature enough to work and his mother was a housewife. He went back to Izmir in 1954 and became the "male bread winner" of the family. He said: "I lived in Turkey twenty years, twenty hard years. Do you know what people used to tell me? 'Jak was born a Jew by mistake.' If someone told me something bad, I would not wait for a second, I raised my fist and punch. Of course, it was a hard situation. Whenever I went to a police station, I was the one who was declared guilty. Even the man who hit my car from behind was declared to be in the right. ... It was impossible to live under these circumstances."¹³⁴

¹³⁴ "Yirmi sene kaldım Türkiye'de, yirmi zor sene. Benim için ne derlerdi biliyor musun? "Jak abi bizden, yanlışlıkla Yahudi doğdu." Birisi bir şey söyledi mi elimi kaldırır çarpardım, hiç bakmazdım. Ve zor bir durumdu. Eninde sonunda her karakola düştüm ümde haksız çıkardım. Otomobilimin arkasından çarpan adam, karakolda haklı çıkardı. ... Bu arılar altında ya amama imkan yok." ISRL14, 73, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 09.02.09.

According to him, life was not easy for a Jew like him in Turkey, but he was good at his job and he was happy with his wife. He expanded his father's business. He owned a factory which produced electrical apparatus and he sold all his products to a firm in Istanbul. That firm's owner was also his close friend. He stayed in his house when he was in Istanbul and vice versa.

One day he read in the newspaper. This man, his friend, was a swindler. He had defrauded many businessmen in Istanbul, escaped with sixteen million dollars. All Jak had left his factory and his debts. He sold his factory in order to discharge his debts. "Whatever I had, I sold them all until I was able to discharge my debts." said he.¹³⁵ Afterwards, his wife divorced him. He was on his own again.

He went to Israel one more time, with only five hundred dollars left in his pocket. He had to start from the beginning. After some days spent in Tel-Aviv, he saw a job advertisement in the newspaper for someone whose mother language was English and who would be responsible for the sales of lands in the USA. He did not speak English good, but he went there anyway to try his chance. He spoke English, French and Ladino, showed all his skills. At the end of a long interview, he got the job. He did his job so well that he managed to regain his economic status, but this time in Israel. He visited Turkey every year till the "One minute" crises emerged between Israel and Turkey.¹³⁶ He declared that he would never visit Turkey again unless the Prime Minister

¹³⁵ "*Ne varsa her eyi sattım. Hiç kimseye borcum kalmadı.*" Ibid.

¹³⁶ Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan clashed with the Prime Minister of Israel Shimon Peres about the Israel's military operation in Gaza during the World Economic forum in Davos in 29 January 2009. While the debate between two Prime Ministers was going on, Erdogan was cut off by moderator as he replied Peres. Erdogan accused the moderator of not allowing him to speak and said "One minute" in English in a very aggressive way. This expression of Erdogan became the motto of Muslims who opposes the policies of Israel in the Middle East.

apologised to Israel for his accusation. It was obvious that he had a love and hate relationship with Turkey.

Ester's Story

On the boat, 11 March 1949: The sky was stormy. The boat was swaying like a nutshell on the sea. There were approximately a hundred passengers on the boat, families, children, young girls and boys... Half of them became sick after some hours because of the swaying movements of the boat. Ester was trying to find her little brother, Menahem, on the deck. He was also sick and went out of the small cabin which was full of passengers to breathe some fresh air. She panicked. Fortunately the boat was small and she found her brother on the quarterdeck, throwing up with a pale face.

The trip was supposed to last only three days, but it was the fifth day at the sea. They were still on the way. There was no electricity on the boat because a storm damaged the generator. In the middle of the night, the thunderstorm became unbearable for everyone in the boat. The captain entered the passenger's cabin and announced that the boat was about to sink. He said: "We had dropped anchor and stopped. This all we can do." All of the passengers went into a panic. Some of them started to cry and shout; others prayed loudly. Ester held her brother tight and quietly prayed to God to save them. The storm did not let up until the last night of their nine day trip. On 20 March 1949, they arrived in Hayfa in the morning.

Ester had not known that the journey would be that difficult, when the young man who had organized their trip to Israel had come in the afternoon to their house in Bursa, in the *Altıparmak* district (Jewish district of Bursa). He had said "Ester, tomorrow is the day of departure. You and Menahem have to go to Istanbul in the

morning to take the boat.” They had packed before and were ready to go, only waiting to learn the exact day of their departure. Ester and Menahem were on the way to Istanbul the next day. When they arrived in the port of Istanbul, Ester was deeply disappointed by what she saw. It was not a ferry, instead it was only a small boat and the boat was not even at the port. The passengers were transferred to the boat by dinghies. Neither the beginning of their passage, nor the end was easy.

Ester was tired but happy to be in Israel after a long and terrible journey. Ester’s sister, Eti had been living in Israel for almost a year. Eti had married and right after her marriage she and her husband had emigrated to Israel in 1948. Eti’s husband was a strong Zionist and wanted to fight for the foundation of the Jewish state. Ester was very close with her sister. She had missed her sister so much that when Menahem has said he wanted to go to Israel, she had accompanied him voluntarily. She described her feelings as such: “I came here because I had a sister here. ... I missed her so much that I wanted to be next to her. ... My little brother also wanted to come here very much. I did not want him to be alone on the way. I came with him.”¹³⁷ Menahem went to a kibbutz and Ester went to live with Eti. Menahem lived on the kibbutz for seventeen years. He married to another immigrant from Turkey who lived there. The four children of the couple were brought up there.

Their father, Mishon, was a trader who purchased and sold goods and jewelry to villages of Bursa. He had ridden his horse to different villages once every fifteen days. Sometimes he had been away for ten days or even more in winter. Mishon had had a small shop where he had sold what he got from the villages and mostly gold in the

¹³⁷ “*Ben geldim buraya çünkü benim ablam vardı. ... Ben çok özlemi tim onu yanında olmak istedim. ... Küçük karde im de gelmeyi çok istiyordu. Onu yalnız bırakmak istemedim. Onunla geldim.*” ISRL4, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 06.02.09.

centre of Bursa. One day when he had returned from one of these villages, he had found that his shop had been burgled. Later on brigands stole all he had on the way back home from a trip. Mishon and the whole family had found themselves in very bad economic circumstances. They run out of steam. There was some gold left at home which Ester's mother had kept for her four children as reminiscence from their father. But it had not taken long to lose them. Their house had also been burgled. Ester's mother had been a housewife. Ester had started to work in a factory which produced silk after she finished elementary school out of necessity. Her sister and brother had done the same.

During the World War II, they had been relatively lucky. Mishon had not been assessed Capital Levy due to their economic situation. Because Mishon was over forty and his two sons were younger than sixteen, they were not enlisted as Twenty Class Reserves. After the establishment of Israel, they had discussed for a couple of months immigrating to Israel. They had had nothing to lose and Eti had already gone there with her husband. Due to Eti's presence in Israel, they had learned that they would live in tents in one of the refugee camps maybe for years, but they could have their own house in the end. Ester, Eti, Menahem and Natan could have better opportunities in Israel. They had decided to try their chance there.

Ester had been her father's beloved daughter. When Menahem had wanted to go after his sister Eti, Ester had felt torn. She had not wanted to leave her father behind but she had missed her sister Eti and she could not leave her little brother on his own on the way to Israel as well. The decision had been difficult for her to make. Mishon had already decided to emigrate to Israel, but his other son Natan was doing his military service. They had to wait for Natan. After a while Mishon had said to Ester: "We will come as soon as Natan finishes his military service." They would join Ester and Menahem later. This had made Ester's decision easier. Although she had set on the

journey, she was confused. She described her confusion as such: “I came here but how? I was not enthusiastic to come here. I had an attachment to my father and he had to me. My father loved me a lot, me as well. My father became sick after I came to Israel. Longing for his children was hard for him.”¹³⁸

A couple of months later, Natan had finished his military service and married his fiancée. At the end of 1949, Natan, his wife, Mishon and Ester’s beloved mother had emigrated to Israel on the ship *Varol*. A year after Ester had arrived in Israel, she had met Hayim. Ester had been living with her sister Eti. One day their neighbor, an old woman, had visited Eti and told her about the young and handsome soldier Hayim, who was living with his family. They got married a couple of months after this visit. Hayim said: “It was the best thing that I ever did, getting married to Ester.”¹³⁹ Ester was quiet and smiled softly while Hayim was talking about her.

Nisim’s Story

Nisim was born in Istanbul, in Galata, the second son of his family, in 1920. He had one brother and two sisters. When he was four or five, his father died. He did not know what had happened to his father. Was he sick? Was he killed? He had no idea. He did not know what his father’s occupation had been.

¹³⁸ “*Ben geldim ama nasıl geldim? O kadar da gönüllü gelmedim ki. Ben babama çok ba lıydım, babam da bana. Babam beni çok severdi, ben de onu. Hakikaten babam geldi im zaman hasta dü tü. Uzaklık çok zor geldi.*” Ibid.

¹³⁹ “*Hayatımda yaptı im en iyi ey Ester’le evlenmekti.*” ISRL3, 80, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 06.02.09.

He, his brother and two sisters were brought up by their mother and their mother's brother, Sami. He hardly remembered his second sister. He told me that she had died when she was a baby. He and his family moved to Sami's house. It was a two storey house and on the first floor his mother, brother and sister lived. Nisim was fostered by Sami. He went down and up in the house. Wherever he wanted to stay or eat that day, it was up to him.

He started to work in a printing house when he was nine. He went to Kasımpa a elementary school only for two years. He had to earn money. Sami had children as well. His income was not enough for two families. The printing house where he was working was in Tahtakale in Unkapanı. He probably had to walk across the bridge between Unkapanı and Galata every day.

Galata was one of the Jewish districts of Istanbul, but within Galata there were different parts where the poor Jews lived and the rich ones lived. The name of the poor part of Galata where he lived was Azapkapı.¹⁴⁰ He said that there were also many "Turks" living in Azapkapı. The Jews were settled in the upper parts of Galata. Up and down... like a symbol of economic status. Regarding my question on his mother language, he answered me with these up and down symbols of status. The conversation was as such: "I asked your mother language because in some families French was their mother language." "No, no, not that much." He was laughing. "We would not speak French at home. Those who spoke French were in the upper part. Education... We were not educated that much."¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Azapkapı is on the cost of Goldenhorn across Unkapanı, at the down side of Walls of Galata.

¹⁴¹ "Bazı evlerde Fransızca konu uluyormu da o yüzden sordum." "Yok, yok, o kadar de il. Evde Fransızca konu acak de ildik. O Fransızca konu malar yukarı taraflarda. Tahsil

I tried the technique of the silent probe many times with Nisim which consisted “of just remaining quiet and waiting for an informant to continue,”¹⁴² because he gave one word answers. But it did not also work out. I tried my chance over and over again with my questions. I thought men usually liked to talk of their memories of military service. I asked about this. Unfortunately, he was not willing to answer. It was not hard to realize his unwillingness as such:

-Where did you do your military service?

-In various places.

-When?

-Between 1941 and 1944.

...

-What kind of things did you do during your military service? Did you do something about printing?”

-No, we were in the Reserves. It means we built airports and things like that.

-Do you mean like workers?

-Not like workers, it was military service. We were busy. Sometimes we worked, sometimes not.¹⁴³

I was confused. I did not understand if he had been one of the Twenty Class Reserves or not. I had asked him previously whether he had served as Twenty Class Reserves or not. He had said that he had not been in the Reserves, he was with Muslims. I kept asking question in order to understand, as such:

-I read that reserve soldiers were not entitled to carry guns.

-No guns for non-Muslims.

-Were you also not entitled to carry a gun?

tabi... O kadar tahsil yok bizde.” I.TR10, 89, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Hasköy, Turkey, 16.12.08.

¹⁴² H. Russel Bernard, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks; London; New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000), p. 197.

¹⁴³ “-Askerli inizi nerde yaptınız?/-Muhtelif yerlerde./-Hangi yıllarda? /-1941-44/.../-Neler yaptınız askerde? Matbaa i inde mi çalı tınız yine?/Yok. Hayır biz Nafiadaydık. Yani nafıa demek meydan yapardık, bilmem ne yapardık... /-Yani i çi gibi mi?/ çilik de il de askerlik i te. Me guliyet vardı. Çalı ıyorduk, bazı çalı mıyorduk.” I.TR10, 89, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Hasköy, Turkey, 16.12.08.

-We were entitled when we were on guard. We carried bayonets.
-A bayonet? It means no firearm.
-Noo, only a bayonet.
-I learned that Twenty Class Soldiers built roads.
-Some built roads, some built airports. We all worked somewhere. I would not know.¹⁴⁴

Later on, I tried to be more direct when asking questions. I asked about the Capital Levy and the A kale camps. He said he did not remember, because he had not experienced these. It was a sort of not telling or he was not really interested in the subject. Afterwards, he started to ask questions me. He wanted to know about my university and my research. His third question was quite interesting. It was as such:

-You are also Jewish, are not you?
-No, I am not.
-What are you?
-I am Muslim.
-Are you a Muslim?¹⁴⁵

He murmured after his last question, but I did not understand what he was saying. He did not seem to be surprised by my religion. Therefore, it might be a speculation to claim that he did not answer my questions after he learned that I was not a Jew. He kept asking questions and answered mine, “I do not remember” and “I was not interested it”. If he did not desire to be interviewed, why had he accepted my offer? Regarding this question on my mind, I passed other questions by which I might have learned about past events and asked about migration. He kept the same attitude, silence, and not telling as such:

¹⁴⁴ “-Bu 20 Kuraya gidenlere silah verilmemi . Yani öyle okudum ben. /-Zaten gayrı-Müslime silah yok. /-Siz de mi vermediler./-Bize verirlerdi. Nöbette... Kasatura verirlerdi./-Kasatura mı? Yani ate li silah de il./-Yook. Kasatura./-20 Kura'da askere gidenler yol yapımlarında çalı mı lar./-Kimi yol yapımı, kimi havalımanı. Hepimiz bir yerde çalı tık i te. Ne bileyim ben.” Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ “-Sen de Musevisin de il mi? /-De ilim./-Nesin sen?/-Müslümanım. /-Müslüman mısın sen?” Ibid.

-In 1948 many people migrated to Israel. Do you have any relatives who migrated to Israel?

-There were some of our relatives who went to Israel. In 1944 I was discharged from the army. In 1945, I married. Think about it now, our deal was subsistence, work. How would we find a shareholder, how would we buy a machine? When did they go, what happened...? If we decided to go as well, we would have to think about it. It was not for us to think about. We thought of our business.¹⁴⁶

Poverty was one of the main reasons for migration. If there was a lack of economic opportunities for him, why had not he tried his chance in Israel as many other people had? In order to understand this, I mentioned that immigrants were given job and house there. He said: "I do not know. I was not interested in it. We were interested in our jobs and subsistence here."¹⁴⁷

I admitted my defeat after his response to my last question. We came to the end. My question was about his opinion about who had participated the migration mostly. If I am not overinterpreting, his response was very satiric: "Who would it be?" While laughing he said: "Jews."¹⁴⁸

Although I unable to learn enough about Nisim's story due to his silence or the irrelevancy to my questions, his narrative was very important in reflecting the general characteristic of the older Jewish generation in Turkey. Many prospective informants in Istanbul refused to be interviewed for my study. After the interview with Nisim, I comprehended how an interview might be if I could convince the informants who had refused my request.

¹⁴⁶ "-1948'de Israil kuruldu unda birçok ki i gitmi oraya. Akrabalarımızdan da giden oldu mu?/- srail'e akrabalarımızdan giden oldu. 1944'te askerden terhis oldum. 45'te evlendim. imdi dü ünün ki bizim derdimiz i ti, geçimdi. Nasıl ortak bulaca ız, nasıl makine alaca ız? Bununla me gul olduk. Ne zaman gittiler, ne çektiler... E er biz de göç etmeye karar verseydik, biz de bunu dü ünecektik. Biz bunu dü ünecek eyde de ildik. Kendi i imizi dü ündük." Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ "Hiiiç bilmiyorum. Alakadar etmedi. Biz burada baktık kendimize bir i sahibi olmak, geçim sahibi olmak." Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ "Kimler gider. Museviler gitti." Ibid.

Breaking Down Barriers: What Does the Oral History of the Migration
Mean?

Questions From a Worker Who Reads

*Who built Thebes of the seven gates?
In the books you will find the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
And Babylon, many times demolished
Who raised it up so many times? In what houses
of gold-glittering Lima did the builders live?
Where, the evening that the Wall of China was finished
Did the masons go? Great Rome
Is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them? Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph? Had Byzantium, much praised in song
Only palaces for its inhabitants? Even in fabled Atlantis
The night the ocean engulfed it
The drowning still bawled for their slaves.*

Bertolt Brecht¹⁴⁹

These different narratives of the migration stem from the different experiences and perspectives of the narrators and also the nature of the oral history interviews.

Regarding the first, it is assumed that the economic, social, political perspectives of an individual usually determine what is remembered and what is not. People who took the same boat on the way to Israel and came from the same organization at the same time would remember different parts of the same story. It is about economic, social and political perspectives. Regarding the latter, there are many debates on the credibility and objectivity of oral history, especially which are argued mostly by political historians.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted from: Bertolt Brecht, *Poems*, edited by John Willett and Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1976).

According to some historians, memory is subjective, false and incomplete. The response to this criticism comes from Alessandro Portelli who suggests that oral history gives us information about the everyday lives of ordinary, illiterate people and the silenced ones, “whose written story is either missing or distorted.”¹⁵⁰ In other words, the experiences and perspectives of people who have been excluded from history contribute to the existing written sources through oral history. Through oral history these hidden people of history inscribe their experiences in the historical records and they provide their own interpretations of history.¹⁵¹ Paul Thompson describes the contribution of oral history as breaking the walls, as such: “It can break down barriers between teachers and students, between generations, between educational institutions and the world outside; and in the writing of history it can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place.”¹⁵²

The credibility of oral history concerns many historians. But can we really claim that written documents are credible? Written sources can be distorted and most of the written documents reflect the attitude of authorities. Therefore, written sources are not superior to oral sources in terms of credibility, because reality is not unique; it is complex and many-sided.¹⁵³

Furthermore, memory is witnessing the events, not written but to be experienced, under some conditions more reliable than history, which has a tendency to

¹⁵⁰ Portelli, *The Death of*, p.viii.

¹⁵¹ “Introduction” in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), p. ix.

¹⁵² Paul Thompson, “The Voice of the Past” in *The Oral History Reader*, p. 22.

¹⁵³ Thompson, p. 24.

hegemony. As Davis and Starn mention, tension between memory and history seems necessary and productive:

The process of adjusting the fit [between what actually happened and received narratives about the past] is an ongoing one, subject to continual debate and exchanges in which memory and history may play shifting, alternately more or less contentious roles in setting the record straight. Sometimes this task is best performed by the ... operations of memory, sometimes by rules ... belong to historical discourse.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, history and memory do not constitute opposite sides of history, instead they complete each other. Thompson asserts that with the contribution of oral history, history becomes more democratic as follow: “The scope of historical writing itself is enlarged and enriched; and at the same time its social message changes. History becomes, to put it simply, more democratic. ...The use of oral evidence breaks through the barriers between the chroniclers and their audience; between the educational institution and the outside world.”¹⁵⁵

Oral history is not objective. But it is a question whether it really has to be objective since the written sources are not objective in the hands of historians. Taking sides is intrinsic to the nature of oral history. Hence, sides exist even in the narration process. Portelli also asserts that sides of the interviewer and interviewee are usually different. “The confrontation of their different partialities –confrontation as ‘conflict’, and confrontation as ‘search for unity’- is one of the things which make oral history interesting.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, Randolph Starn, “Introduction,” *Representations*, no.26 Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ Thompson, p. 24.

Oral history also gives us a chance to trace the footprints of people's recent and past hopes, ideas and beliefs. Portelli argues that oral history not only "reveals unknown events or unknown aspects of known events," but also tells us "what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think about they did."¹⁵⁷

The events of the Turkish Republic are not a secret. However, the effect of these events on subjects might only be revealed by the narratives of these subjects. Related to this, oral history offers us an invaluable tool for not only understanding the suppressed or ignored narratives of historical events, but also clues about how these events are experienced and interpreted through the medium of memory.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, oral history gives us not just more history but also meaning. In the light of this argument, I focused not only the migration as a historical event but also the meaning of it in the informants' life.

Oral history provides an interactive study and requires dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. Oral history sources are humans, they respond and react, even ask questions of the interviewer. Therefore, without their participation it is impossible to conduct an oral history study. Portelli says that "... the documents of oral history ... [are] a result of a shared project in which both the interviewer and the interviewee are involved together."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different" in *The Oral History Reader*, 1998, p. 73.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁵⁸ Neyzi, *Istanbul'da Hatırlamak*, p. 2

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

In this sense, oral history interviews do not depend on monologue rather dialogue. At first I was the one who is asked questions. My personal story and motivation were important most of the time. I was always asked: “Why do you care about this subject?”, “Did your professors give this research to you?” All of the interviewees wanted to know my motivation. After I convinced them that I had chosen the subject of the research myself, I had to repeat my Jewish grandmother’s conversion story in every interview. My personal story played an important role in both explaining my interest in the topic and in facilitating if not acceptance, sympathy.

In Turkey, the boundaries of the Jewish community are very strict in the context of belonging to the Jewish community. In this belonging, religion determines the social and cultural construction of the individuals. Related to this, one is either a member of the community or not. A position in-between, like mine, does not have a negative or positive influence on members of the community. In any case, I was the “other”. Therefore, a study done by a non-member or outsider of the community is perceived as a suspicious attempt.

On the other hand, in Israel, my personal story attracted a great deal of interest. Members of the groups of immigrants from Turkey asked various questions about it and expressed their goodwill about finding my distant relatives, even though I had not mentioned any wish for it. My presence as a guest from Turkey among the immigrants from Turkey played a more crucial role than my personal story. Also, I was at the same age as their grandchildren and was very interested in their life stories, unlike their grandchildren.

This shows that the relationship between interviewer and the informant is an active process and the flow of the oral history interview depends on this relationship. However, sometimes this relationship is vulnerable. The interviewee may refuse to

answer some questions or gives irrelevant answers, like in the interview of Nisim. The discrepancies and irrelevant answers or silences might be perceived as little or no political interest. Nevertheless, instead of ignorance, irrelevant answers and silences are usually manifests of the considered historical events.¹⁶⁰

It was hard to meet in common issues with the thirty-five interviewees during the interviews. In some interviews irrelevant responses made me rethink and recompose my questions or it the end listen to the sound of silences. Some interviews turned out to be chaotic conversations. In some of them, as a researcher, I had to hide my feelings, which was extremely hard. According to the statements of the informants and their memories, I tried to analyze the narratives of the migration of Jews from Turkey to Israel. I tried to argue the meanings of their memories by clustering them under the titles of the Sound of Silences, Class Difference and Zionism and Belonging in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁰ Luisa Passerini, “Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism” in *The Oral History Reader*, p. 59-60.

CHAPTER IV

BEYOND MIGRATION

This chapter is devoted to the presentation of the main differences and similarities between views of the informants living in Turkey and in Israel on the issues of migration and the Jewish identity. These differences and similarities depend on the age, class status and life experiences of the informant, which led some of them politically motivated and the country in which the interview was conducted. These themes pave the way to focus on issues beyond migration.

The first noteworthy contradiction of the views of migration and Jewish identity stands between informants in Turkey and Israel. In Turkey, as was explained in Chapter One, *Story of the Field*, the silence of the informants was the most important factor that affected the interviews. The informants that I reached with difficulty refused to talk about migration. Most probably they might have expected “bothersome” questions on discrimination when migration was the main topic. The informants that I was able to interview told their life stories, but when the questions turned into more individual ones they preferred to give answers such as “I do not know” or “I do not remember.” The interview with Nisim was full of these answers, as was explored in Chapter Three, but it was also reflected in the power of the silence in many interviews in Turkey.

The younger generation was much more open to talking about the Jewish identity and discrimination issues. It was difficult to persuade enough old people aged between 75 and 85, but I conducted interviews with three middle-aged Jewish people. They mostly answered related questions as much as they had heard from their elders or parents. Moreover, they all had a critical approach to both Turkey’s minority politics

and the Jewish community itself. These criticisms mainly focused on the silence of the older people about the hard times in Turkey and the Jewish community's attachment to the status quo.

Contrary to the informants in Turkey, the older informants in Israel expressed and also emphasised the discrimination that they had faced in Turkey and what being a minority meant in Turkey. Many of the interviews started with the discriminatory politics of the era such as the Capital Levy or anti-Semitic events even though they had not been asked yet. Astonishingly the same informants expressed their devotion to Turkey. They stressed their Turkishness, saying they still spoke Turkish, ate Turkish cuisine and how often they visited Turkey.

This contradiction between the approaches of the informants in Turkey and those in Israel is also very clear on the migration's motivation issue. In Turkey, almost all of the informants stated that the most significant motivation had been the economic conditions of the migrants, which meant that lower class Jews left Turkey as soon as Israel was founded. Also they stated idealism or Zionism as a motivation of migration was very rare and there were only very few young adventurers who went under the effect of this.

However, in Israel, idealism or Zionism was the most common reason given for the migration by almost all of the informants. Many of them had gone to Israel in order to make a contribution to the foundation of the country. Also they did not underestimate the poverty of the families that migrated from Turkey during the first years of migration. In addition to that, many of the informants who thought that poverty was an important factor for those who had had nothing to lose by moving abroad did not place themselves into this group even though they described their families as poor. In any case, idealism drew ahead of other reasons in Israel.

One of the controversial issues that I focus on this chapter is the different understanding of nationalism of the immigrants from Turkey in Israel and the Jewish community in Turkey. In Turkey, the informants said that their homeland was Turkey and their mother language was Turkish.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, they talked about Israel as a dream land. The image of Israel for many of them was much more idealized, despite having said that they did not think about living there. They expressed that they belonged to Turkey.

The informants in Israel criticized Turkey and the discrimination with which they had had to cope, but they maintained their interest in Turkey, such as watching Turkish TV and having interest in politics in Turkey, visiting Turkey regularly and keeping their Turkish characteristics even though they no longer had any relatives in Turkey. The criticism and love of Turkey went hand in hand. They preserved their Turkish-Jewish culture and mostly chose their social environment among the other immigrants from Turkey. Many of them mentioned that they were Jewish but also Turkish. This situation displays that Turkishness and Jewishness are not two different sides of the coin, but they are correlated to each other in the identities of the immigrants from Turkey in Israel.

This chapter scrutinizes the meaning of being a Turkish immigrant in Israel and a “guest” in Turkey by arguing the differences and similarities between the statements and approaches of the informants in Turkey and in Israel. The theme “The Sound of Silence” helps one to understand the attitude of Jews as minorities when they feel insecure and how it changes according to the age of the informant. “Class Difference and Zionism” reveals the contrast between the estimated reasons in Israel and in Turkey.

¹⁶¹ When their mothertongue was asked in Israel, only four informants gave the answer “Ladino” out of twenty. The others said that their mothertongue were Turkish and Ladino. In Turkey, five out of fifteen mentioned that their mother language was “Ladino”. See Appendix A and B.

“Belonging” scrutinizes the complex and controversial nationalisms of informants both in Turkey and Israel.

The Sound of Silences

*“Silences are, in the widest sense, political.”*¹⁶²
Diana Gittins

*“Silence is exhaustion
If not exhaustion, it is despair,
If not despair, it is yearning,
If not yearning, it is grief
If not grief, it is a profound thought, a memory,
Or it is all of these.
Or maybe some.”*¹⁶³
Mehmet Uzun

Silences and cracks in the narrative are also very important in order to understand the role of what has to be forgotten and remembered, what is has to be told and silenced. In this chapter silence is used as a noun and also a verb: silence and to silence. First refers to the absence of sound and being quiet, the latter refers to censor. The silence of the Jewish minority, how they were silenced and their choice to forget can be examined in the power relations context as follows. Questions like who silences whom, what is not remembered are crucial in understanding the political meaning of the silence that I faced throughout my research in Turkey.

¹⁶² Diana Gittins, “Silences”, in ed. by Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson *Narrative and Genre* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 46.

¹⁶³ “*Sessizlik yorgunluktur, /Yorgunluk de ilse kederdir, /Keder de ilse hasrettir, /Hasret de ilse acıdır, /Acı de ilse derin bir dü ünce, bir anıdır /Veya bütün bunlardır./ Veya bunlardan bazıları.*” Mehmet Uzun, *Diclenin Yakarı ı* (Istanbul: Ithaki Yayınları, 2006), p. 120.

Censoring a memory or forgetting a memory might have the same meaning. Memories can be lost, but fear, pain and shame can cause a repression of memory.¹⁶⁴ Therefore freedom is correlated to memory. One should feel free, not repressed so that one should recall one's memories. Gittins explains the relationship between repression and silences as follows: "Not just individuals but whole groups over time have been largely acknowledged, unseen, unheard because a dominant group, or the discourse of a dominant group, defines individuals or groups as "irrelevant" or unworthy of being remembered."¹⁶⁵

The memories turn into narratives, but some narratives are silenced by dominant narratives. The two different narratives of the Jewish history of the Republican Turkey, which is discussed in Chapter One was also a result of power relations. The dominant one represses the "other." The memories of the Jews in Turkey threaten the official narrative. Therefore it had to be silenced. In this silencing process, power relations were a determining factor. Trouillot's analysis is very useful to understanding the power relations that led some narratives to exist and others to be silenced:

History reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives. Only a focus on that process can uncover the ways in which the two sides of historicity intertwine in a particular context. Only through that overlap can we discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others.¹⁶⁶

Therefore silences are in between individual and collective, historical and memorial by no means political. What is of interest in history is the Jews'

¹⁶⁴ Gittins, p.46.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.47.

¹⁶⁶ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), p.25.

reconstruction of the Turkish Republic's dominant discourse. Not just the authorities but also individuals of the community repeat and rewrite the dominant discourse, which assumes Turkey is haven for Jews. Therefore, the silence of the Jews about the issues which question the dominant discourse is collective and individual at the same time. It is distinguishable that in the literature of the history of Jews in modern Turkey, except Rıfat Bali's works, all the books that are written by Jews possess the "story of tranquillity, indulgence, hospitality and loyalty". The response is silence to outsiders who ask questions about what has not remembered. This collective silence also usually is applied to the younger generation of the community.

During my research I realized the effect of the collective silence on the young generation. When I first met with my sponsor who was in his mid-twenties, I was asked about my academic purpose and about the questions that were going to be asked of the informants. After a while, we started a nice conversation on the minority experience in Turkey. I asked if his grandfather had any memory on the Capital Levy or the Twenty Class Reserve Soldiers. He had no idea. He said: "Yes, I have heard something, a little, but I do not think that my family had such an experience. If so I would have known." A month later, I met his grandfather and he told me his unpleasant memories of the Capital Levy and the Twenty Class Reserves. My sponsor was not the only one knew nothing about his grandparents' individual memories. It seems like that grandchildren of the old Jewish generation do not know their grandparents' experiences, but they are aware of what happened in the past.

My failure in reaching the informants in Turkey was a result of this silence. The friends of friends that I could convince to conduct an oral history interview with their grandparents also belonged to younger generation. When I asked if I could interview their grandparents, they turned a sympathetic ear to my request. When their

grandparents definitely rejected my request, they were as disappointed as I. This demonstrates that the younger generation is far more open to talking about the contradictions between the “story of tranquillity, indulgence, hospitality and loyalty” and the narrative of the older generations’ individual experiences.

The informants who were not willing to be interviewed like Nisim in Chapter Three kept their silence by repeating, “I do not remember.” Ten minutes after we started the interview with Nisim, I understood that it was not going to be my easiest interview. Later, his sincere answer to my question about the Capital Levy and other anti-minority events almost ended the interview, because the answers were as follows: “I do not remember. It is not that I do not remember actually, but we did not engage in this. In order to remember, one has to be interested in it. We were not.”¹⁶⁷

This attitude of Nisim might stem from consciously “not telling” as a way of resistance to the dominant paradigm. According to Minkley and Legassick, “not telling” is a part construction method of history that works hand in hand with the ways of telling. The social, economic and political context of an individual, his ethnicity, gender and class is related to moments of “not telling.”¹⁶⁸ Therefore, “not telling” also refers to power relations in history. It is a sign of resistance against the dominated one, silent remembering. By not telling, the individual also determines the power relations between himself and the questioner. If the questioner belongs to hegemonic group, “not telling” reverses the power relation between being dominant and being dominated. In other

¹⁶⁷ “*Hatırlamıyorum. Hatırlamıyorum de il, me gul de ildik biz bununla. Bir eyi hatırlamak için enterese olmak gerekir. De ildik.*” I.TR10, 89, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Hasköy, Turkey, 16.12.08.

¹⁶⁸ Gary Minkley and Martin Legassick, “Not Telling: Secrecy, Lies and History” *History and Theory* 39, no. 4 (December, 2000), p.7.

words, my outsider position came out with distrust due to “pressures to assimilate and fear of unwanted attention or retribution.”¹⁶⁹ The silence of the Jews in Istanbul also observed by Amy Mills while she was doing research among minorities on locality and nationality in Kuzguncuk, an old multi-ethnic district in Istanbul. She writes that after she had completed her research in Tel-Aviv, she believed that “silencing” does occur in Istanbul regarding the discriminatory event which could be threatening to the dominant national narrative.¹⁷⁰

The words of Jak (whose narrative also was explored in Chapter Three) who defines himself as Zionist and Israeli, explain what it was to be silenced and learn to be in silence in the Jewish minority in Turkey: “What we have learned in Turkey is ‘*Kayades*’ (which means “silence” in Ladino), ‘One has to work so as to earn money.’ That was all.”¹⁷¹ Referring to the question of the non-existence of Turkish Jews in the Knesset (parliament), he said: “The new generation politically involved, works on it. Elections are held in the Jewish community in Turkey. Nobody goes there, says: ‘It is none of my business, I have things to do!’ This is because of ‘*Kayades*’. It is implanted in our soul.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Amy Mills, “The Place of Locality for Identity in the Nation: Minority Narratives of Cosmopolitan Istanbul,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, no. 3 (August 2008), p. 385.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

¹⁷² “*Türkiye’de bir ey ö rendik biz. “Kayades” Para kazanmak için çalı mamız lazım. Hepsi bu kadar. Türkiye’deki Yahudi cemaatinde de seçimler var. Kimse gitmiyor, “Bana ne yahu, i im mi yok!” diyor. Bu Türkiye’de ö rendi imiz “Kayades” sebebiyle. Türkiyede bu ruhumuzun içine sokuldu.*” ISRL14, 73, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 09.02.09.

During the interview with Estreya, which took place in Bat-Yam, she also mentioned the silence about “bothersome” events among the older generation. She had gone to Israel in 1955 because she had wanted to free herself from her family. She said that she had learned about the past events from books not from her parents when I asked about the “Citizen Speak Turkish” campaign to Albert, her husband ten years older than she. She said: “I have just read a book of Rifat Bali. I have learned things that I did not know. I said to my brother ‘I read a book and learned a lot.’ He said, ‘Our mother and father did not tell us these things.’ Probably they wished to get over it, these would not be known.”¹⁷³

Silence and to be silenced, fear and frighten are related to each other in the context of power relations. The dominant group imposes its discourse on the inferior one. The dominant represses the inferior group or discourse due to the fear of one different from itself. This fear directs the dominant to frighten the “other” group or discourse. Inferiors learn to be silenced. Then, the silence remains. In my opinion, the Jewish minority’s attitude was the result of this learned silence, which was also taught to younger members of the community. Sometimes the younger ones rejected being silenced and left Turkey, such as in the case of Jak.

In Jak’s story the role of repression was decisive. However, this repression derived not only from the dominant, but also from the Jewish community’s itself. He and his family emigrated to Israel right after the Capital Levy in 1943. They lived in Tel-Aviv for two years. According to Jak these two years affected his life in a very positive way. He mentioned that he enjoyed his freedom. Two years later they returned to Izmir where he had been born, because his father had been unable to find a job with a

¹⁷³ “Rifat Bali’nin kitabını ben okudum yeni. Bilmedi im eyleri ö rendim. Annemler bize anlatmazlardı bunları. Karde ime dedim ki ‘Bir kitap okudum ve çok ey ö rendim’. ‘Bizim annemiz babamız böyle eyler anlatmazdı’ dedi. Bitsin duyulmasın isterlerdi galiba.” ISRL9, 70, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 02.02.09.

tourist visa and also because of his Sephardic roots. After the foundation of Israel, Jak left Turkey illegally and went back to Israel in 1949. He emphasized that the fear and repression among Jewish society triggered his illegal migration as such: “When I came home, I was told ‘For goodness sake do not talk, do not talk against Turks, do not become friends with Turks, you will bring trouble...’ Such great fear and repression... It was not for me.” Referring to his two years in Israel he continued: “When I went out of house, I used to beat whoever opposed me. They came to my house to complain about me. It was known that I would bring trouble, since this was the way I was brought up. In 1949 I ran away. No passport, nothing... I boarded a boat and came here. A swayaway... I was thirteen.”¹⁷⁴

Moshe, who took an active position in one of Zionist organizations in Izmir and spent more than six months in prison in Syria after he was caught when he was leading illegal immigrants in 1945, also stressed how trying to keep silence forced one to waive his honor: “In high school, such foolish things happened to us. We had to waive our honor. We were brought up like this: ‘OK, do not give a damn, get along with him.’ ‘Let’s buy some presents or do favor, so they will not harm us.’”¹⁷⁵

The statements of Jak and Moshe are evidence of the difference of attitudes between immigrants from Turkey in Israel and Jews as a part of the minorities in Turkey. When we compare the narratives in Israel and Turkey, it is clear that the

¹⁷⁴ “Eve gelirdim Izmir’de: ‘Aman konu ma, ba muza bela getireceksin, duvarların kulakları var, aman Türklere kar ı bir ey konu ma, aman Türkler’le arkada olma, aman bela getireceksin...”. Büyük korku, büyük baskı, ben buna gelemiyordum. Ben soka a çıkıyordum, önüme geleni dövüyordum. Eve geliyorlardı. Bela getirece im malumdu çünkü yeti me tarzım böyleydi. 49 senesinde, evden kaçtım. Ne pasaport, ne bi ey... Atladım vapurların birine, geldim. Kaçak. 13 ya ndaydım.” ISRL14, 73, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 09.02.09.

¹⁷⁵ “Lisede, okulda o kadar saçma olaylar oluyordu ki bize kar ı, biz kendi gururumuzdan feragat ederek ya adık. ‘Hadi canım aldırma, biraz idare et’ ‘Bir iki hediye alalım da kötülük yapmasınlar’... Bu havada büyüdüük.” ISRL5, 83, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 10.02.09.

informants in Turkey usually “do not remember” or “do not know” the anti-minority events. They kept their silence. However, in Israel the informants were much more open about answering the same questions about anti-minority events or anti-Semitism and the impacts of these events on their daily lives. Moreover, experiences of discrimination, prejudices and persecution were the main themes of the narratives during the interviews that were conducted in Israel even before any questions about these experiences were addressed.

The Capital Levy was pointed out as the most unfair taxing of non-Muslims. According to many informants, the Jews were the most disadvantaged group among non-Muslims because they were leaders in trade. Therefore some of them claimed that the Capital Levy had been an anti-Semitic event. It is no a coincidence that David’s narrative started with the Capital Levy as follows: “In Turkey, *Varlık* (the Capital Levy) came. At the time, kids wanted to come to Israel for idealism.”¹⁷⁶

In Israel also it was stated that the Twenty Class Reserve Soldiers and work camp in A kale for individuals who could not pay the Capital Levy were considered to be concentration camps like in Nazi Germany. In addition to these, it was also mentioned that crematoriums built in Balat and, according to some sources in other Jewish districts of Istanbul and Izmir, caused a panic among the Jews.¹⁷⁷ Related to these events, many informants in Israel stated that Zionist thought had spread among Jewish youth. They became aware of their situation of being guests in Turkey.

¹⁷⁶ “*Türkiye’de bize Varlık Vergisi koydular. O vakit Varlık Vergisi koydular zaman, çocuklar idealist için Filistin’e gelmek istiyordu.*” ISRL1, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 09.02.2009.

¹⁷⁷ Many informants in Israel confirmed the existence of “crematoriums”; some of them witnessed its existence during the interviews, see also Bali, “II. Dünya Sava 1 Yıllarında,” p. 11. For the picture of the “crematorium” and for further information, see Varol, 1989, p. 10-11.

During the interview with Hayim in Israel, he was quite thrilled and happy to talk as if he had waited a long time to tell his story. He sometimes stood up, sometimes exclaimed. In short, the interview was very dramatic. Although he interpreted the anti-minority events as having been anti-Semitic, he also cited his positive feelings for Turkey. His narrative shows how the anti-minority events made him to decide to migrate to Israel:

After the establishment of Israel this happened. Young people, we started to talk. We met and talked. It was not a secret, it was known. Hebrew had to be learned but there was no time left. We arrived in Israel. That's how it was. We passed through the *Varlık* (Capital Levy), the Twenty Class Reserve; we got through the famine of the Second World War. Bread was given with only certificate, everything was with certificate. I mean we grew up with poverty. That's why we said, 'whatever happens, let's start a new life'. ... I was frustrated at Turkey a lot, a lot, a lot. Non-Muslim, non-Muslim... The *Varlık* was for non-Muslims, the Twenty Class Reserve was for non-Muslims. All for non-Muslims... We said 'We are guests here for five hundred years.' We said enough maybe, it was enough for me, but not for others. They still continue (to live) there. If we were 40,000 Jews at the time, 20,000 came here. 20,000 stayed there.¹⁷⁸

Another important contradiction was between the narratives of the younger generation and older generation in Turkey. Despite the silence of the older generation, the younger generations, who were in middle aged, were much more open talking about the anti-minority events and criticize the minority-based discriminatory policies. In Turkey it was hard to reach and convince the older generation who were in their eighties due to the self "silencing" of non-official narratives and individual experiences. Therefore, I conducted oral history interviews with three middle aged Jewish people, sons and daughters of the older generation whom I wanted to interview. Thus they had

¹⁷⁸ " *sraile kurulduktan sonra bu ortaya çıktı. Gençler konu mayıba ladık aramızda. Toplanıyorduk, konu uyorduk. Gizli bir ey de il yani bilinen bir ey. branice ö renmek lazımdı ama vakit kalmadı. Biz sraile vardık. te böyle. Biz Varlık ı geçtik, 20 Kurayı geçtik, 2. Dünya Harbini açlıkla geçirdik. Karneyle ekmek, her ey karneyle... Yani yoksullukla büyüydük. Onun için sraile dedik, yeni bir hayata ba layalım ne olursa olsun. ... Türkiye'ye çok kırıldım. Çok, çok, çok... Gayrimüslim, Gayrimüslim... Varlık Gayrimüslime, 20 Kura Gayrimüslime. Hep Gayrimüslim. "Biz burada misafiriz." 500 yıllık misafirlik. "Yeter" dedik belki. Bence yeter, ba kalarına de il. Onlar devam ediyorlar. Orada 40,000 Yahudi varsaydı o zamanlar, 20,000'i buraya vardı, 20,000'i orada kaldı" ISRL3, 80, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 06.02.09.*

partially learned about discrimination and past events from their parents and mostly learned from books, especially the books of Rifat Bali. They answered all of my questions without any hesitation. Their critical approach was not just towards the anti-minority politics of Turkey, but also towards the Jewish community's silence and attachment to the status quo.

The attitude of younger generation is directly related to the recent context of Turkey, specifically about the expansion of discussions on the anti-minority events. Recent years anti-minority events become "discussable" in public sphere. Moreover, hidden identities become more open in public spheres such as Kurds, *Alevi*s, Syrian Orthodox, and Sabbateans. Kurdish expansion move of parliament, recent studies on minorities, The Quincentennial Foundation Museum of Turkish Jews and Centropa are examples of these publicities. Therefore, younger generation feel confident when they talk about past events and their identity.

Jinet was my first informant in Turkey. We met in her beautiful house near the Bosphorus. She is the author of a number of biographies of well-known intellectuals. She is a very intelligent, well-educated, very good looking 59 year old lady. She answered all my questions honestly. She criticized both the official discourse of the Turkish Republic and the Turkish-Jewish community during our interview. I asked all my questions even though I knew that she had not experienced those years, but she had heard about her parent's experiences. During the interview, she said that the Jewish community in Turkey aimed to achieve consensus as follows: "I am angry with our community. I find their attitude too ambiguous. They are trying to maintain the status quo. This is why there are some silences and some things are left unspoken."¹⁷⁹

Jinet also criticized the Capital Levy after she had told her grandparents' experience with it. Her mother's family had lost everything they had had when they were trying to pay the Capital Levy. In the end they sold their jewellery, furniture, and their shop. But the money was not enough. So, her grandfather was sent to A kale. She was not angry when she was telling her family's story, like Hayim in Israel. She used the words I had not even heard from the informants in Israel. Here is her opinion on the Capital Levy:

The Capital Levy was like a slap in the faces of non-Muslims. It meant 'You think that you are Turkish, but you are not'. It was like evidence of this sentence. That's the Capital Levy, that's how I interpret every time I read about it. Because it was a horribly arbitrary thing and extremely discriminatory, racist. It frightened the non-Muslims, but I am concerned in the Jews now. Jews said 'Here is not our country. In Palestine, a Jewish State will be established. We will be in our own country, in our home.'"¹⁸⁰

Regarding the nation state, she argued the "others" in the nation state, whereas my question was about the RPP. "The nation-state creates its 'others' automatically. In other words, when the nation state draws its borders, the people who are outside of these borders become 'others'. But the nation-state had spoken and unspoken borders. The Jews were put outside of unspoken borders. Because these borders were unspoken, Jews

¹⁷⁹ "Bizim cemaate kızıyorum ben. Çok mu lak buluyorum tavrını. Yani statikoyu de i tirmemek için çabalyorlar. Sessizlikler, bazı konuların konu ulmaması bu yüzden." I.TR12, 59, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13.11.2008.

¹⁸⁰ "Varlık Vergisi bir tokat gibi patlıyor ve bütün gayrimüslimlere "Siz kendinizi Türk zannediyorsunuz fakat de ilsiniz." (gülerek söylüyor) Bunun kanıtı gibi bir uygulama oluyor. Varlık Vergisi bu, ben öyle algılıyorum her okudu umda. Çünkü korkunç keyfi bir ey ve korkunç ayrımcı bir ey, ırkçı. Bir Varlık Vergisi korkutuyor yani insanlara dedirtiyor ki gayrimüslimlere, ben Yahudileri ele alıyorum, "Burası bizim ülkemiz de il. Filistin'de bir Yahudi ülkesi kurulacak, kendi evimizde, kendi yerimizde olaca ız." I.TR12, 59, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13.11.2008.

sometimes were not able to realize these borders. When they realized them, they became frustrated.”¹⁸¹

Avram was an official at the Chief Rabbinate and he was a rabbi. I met him at Chief Rabbinate when I was invited there to get permission to conduct interviews in Hasköy Rest Home. Although he was an official, he did not hesitate to make negative comments about Turkey’s minority politics. It was most probably that it was not an official commentary and I did not record, I only took notes. Also my Jewish sponsor was with me during my visit. He criticised the anti-minority politics of Turkey which were related to a misunderstanding of the meaning of nation-state according to him. “The Turkish Republic misunderstood the essence of the nation-state. Therefore, minorities have never been an essential element.” He continued to remark on the Law No. 788, which prohibited non-Muslims from working as public servants. “Thirty years ago, it was not easy to be an academic. You could only be an assistant of a professor.”¹⁸²

As it was explained above, the younger generation broke the walls of silence among the Jewish community towards “outsiders.” They were comfortable with criticizing both the silence of the Jewish community in order to maintain the status quo and the anti-minority politics of Turkey. This difference between the younger and older generations also was articulated by a reflective informant, Salomon, who was a

¹⁸¹ “*Ulus devlet kavramı zaten otomatik olarak ötekiler yaratıyor. Yani ulus devletin sınırı çizildikten sonra sınırın dı nda kalanlar ötekile iyor. te ama ulus devletin konu ulan sınırları vardı, konu ulmayan sınırları vardı. Yahudiler konu ulmayan sınırların dı nda kaldılar ve o konu ulmadı ı için bu sınırları bazen göremediler. Göremedikleri zaman da büyük bir dü kırıklı ına u radılar.*” I.TR12, 59, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13.11.2008.

¹⁸² “*Türkiye ulus devlet mantı nı yanlı anladı. Azınlıklar da bu mantıkta hiçbir zaman asli unsur olmadılar. Bundan otuz sene önce Yahudi bir bilim adamı olmak kolay de ildi. Asistan olarak kalırdınız.*” I.TR13, 64, interview by the author of the thesis, note taking, Istanbul, Turkey, 27.11.2008.

journalist in Turkey. He had visited Israel many times and he had relatives there. He was very brief and clear during our interview in a coffee shop in a nice upmarket area of Istanbul. He was a real gentleman and it was obvious that he was very intellectual. It would not be exaggeration to say that he gave me a lecture like in university about migration, in a very nice way. He was very objective. Even though he was over eighty, he talked about discrimination as open as the informants in Israel and criticized the anti-minority politics without any hesitation. On the other hand, it was probably the influence of his job that he did not mention his feelings. He mentioned the difference between young and old Jews when we were talking about the silence as follows:

This is the shadow of the past. You see it among people of my generation, which means people older than fifty-five, sixty, because they are the children of the war. They have heard about all this within their families. But middle-aged people like the ones who work in *alom* (Newspaper), they are very brave and tell everything, they excoriate. But the ones who experienced the war, they are timid and anxious. ... “No need”, “Maybe one day, he/she will spy on us.” There is a fear like this.¹⁸³

Class Difference and Zionism

*“Not for money. I tell you what:
You are a Turk, I am a Jew.
Everybody wants to be with someone like him.
... Israel is good for me, Turkey is good for you.
If you would be a Jew, you would also think like that.”
Menashe¹⁸⁴*

¹⁸³ “Geçmişten kalan bir iz bu. Belki benim kuşağımızda daha çok görürsünüz bunu, yani yaşları 55-60 ve üstü olanlar. Çünkü bunlar savaş çocuklarıdır. Ailelerinde hep bunları duymuştur. Ama orta yaşlı olanlar, *alom*'daki ekip çok genç bir ekipti, bunlar gayet cesurdur ve her şeyi söylerler, yerden yere vururlar. Ama savaşta yaşlı olanlarda bir çekingenlik ve endişe vardır. ... “Neme lazım kardeşim” mantığı, “kim bilir kimdir, bir gün gelir tescil eder bizi”. Böyle bir korku var.” I.TR15, 81, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 17.12.2008.

¹⁸⁴ “Para için değil. Evvela sana söyleyeyim; Sen Türk'sün, ben Museviyim. Herkes kendi tarafına çekmek lazım. ... *alom* benim için iyidir, Türkiye senin için. Esasen sen Musevi

Insecurity and unjust treatment played important roles in the migration of the Jews from Turkey to Israel. Yet another important fact was that many of the Jews did not have any reason to stay. In other words, they had nothing to lose by leaving Turkey. Many of the refugees were workers from the lower or middle classes.¹⁸⁵ In addition to the common complaint of the Jews that they were always seen as foreigners despite the official definition of a citizen and a Turk, many of those who had emigrated to Israel would have continued to remain poor if they had stayed. Especially after the proclamation of the State of Israel, it was claimed that the Israeli State would provide a job, a place to stay to every new immigrant. Those who had nothing to lose hoped to have a better life or rise to a higher class at least for their children if not for themselves. Walter Weiker writes that the immigrants from Turkey are happy in Israel and “confident and optimistic about their children’s futures” according to his interviews with immigrants from Turkey in Israel.¹⁸⁶

In Turkey twelve out of thirteen of the informants that I personally interviewed as well as three informants who were interviewed by Centropa explained the migration with poverty. According to them, poverty was their basic reason to leave and the hope for access to better economic opportunities attracted lower-class Jews. In other words, most of the lower-class families had very bad economic conditions and they also had nothing to leave behind. Those immigrants were encouraged by the chance to start new lives, in a new country where they would no longer be minorities.

olaydın sen de aynı fikre gelirdin.” ISRL6, 78, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 11.02.09.

¹⁸⁵ Weiker, *Ottomans*, p. 253.

¹⁸⁶ Weiker, *The Unseen*, p.1.

Karin's expressions are a good example of the stress on the poverty as a reason of the migration. I met Karin at the Hasköy Rest Home in Turkey when I was trying to persuade Nisim to make an interview in the big living room of the rest home. While he was not answering, Karin was sitting in the room as well and was busy with making stuffed grape leaves. I was not aware that she was listening. After a while she could not stop herself and said to me "I know, ask me." After I accepted that I had been defeated by the silence of Nisim, I made a short interview with Karin. She was an energetic, good looking 64 year old woman. She had emigrated to Israel in 1971 with her husband and two children, because her husband had been a communist. They had been rich, but her husband had believed that Israel was much closer to the socialist system. She said, "We went there because of a caprice." After her husband died in 1997 she came back to Turkey. She was living with her married daughter and working at the Hasköy Rest Home two days a week voluntarily. During our interview I did not actually ask questions. She told me everything that she thought on the issue. We talked about her father's military service and the days in A kale. She suddenly said that people had immigrated to Israel in the 1940s because they were poor.

Karin also mentioned that there was no idealism among Turkish Jews. "If you wonder why the Turkish Jews migrated to Israel, except for the great idealists, Turkish Jews are not idealists. They like Turkey more. Their ideal is more money, their financial situation. I remember that in the old times our servants at home were all Jewish. After the 1950s you were not able to find a Jewish servant. We hired Turkish servants. ...Man likes the place where he earns his bread, do you understand what I mean?"¹⁸⁷ She also stressed the class difference between herself and the immigrants in Israel as follows:

It means Jews did not immigrated to Israel because of anti-Semitism or anything else. Moreover, when my husband said, ‘Let’s go to Israel’ I answered ‘Are you crazy? Are we going to go to country where servants go?’ This was my answer. Maybe other people grew up differently, but that’s the way I grew up. I mean, idealism, Israel was not an ideal in our house when I was growing up. In our house people who went to Israel were servants and porters. It was the atmosphere where I grew up.¹⁸⁸

Poverty was a very important pull factor for migrants and it should not be underestimated. But if the main push factor was poverty for many Jewish families, how can we explain the situation of six informants who stated that the main reason for their migration was poverty among Jewish families because they were also born in lower-class or lower-middle-class families? They asserted that they did not even think about immigrating to Israel. These remarks show that poverty cannot be the single explanation of the migration of thousands. Or their answer could also drive from their disinclination to talk about other push and pull factors. Only two of the informants mentioned that the social exclusion and discriminatory policies of single-part era were push factors as well as many Jews’ bad economic condition.

Jinet, my first informant in Turkey, a relatively young author, also speculated about the migration because she did have any migrant relatives or close friends in Israel who left Turkey in the late 1940s. She told me that her grandfather had been sent to A kale because he could not pay the whole amount that was assessed in the Capital

¹⁸⁷ “*Türk Yahudilerinin srail’e neden gitti ini merak ediyorsan, büyük idealistlerin di nda ki Türk Yahudiler idealist olmazlar, Türkiye’yi daha çok severler, onların ideali daha çok paradır, mali vaziyetleri. Ben hatırlarım; eskiden evlerimizdeki yardımcıları hep Yahudiydi. 1950’lerden sonra artık Yahudi yardımcı bulamazdın, Türk yardımcı aldık. ... nsan ekme i neredeyse orada ya amayı sever anlatabiliyor muyum?*” I.TR11, 64, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul-Hasköy, Turkey, 16.12.08.

¹⁸⁸ “*Yani imdi Yahudiler Türkiye’den anti-semitizm yüzünden veyahut da undan bundan gitmediler. Hatta kocam bana ilk srail’e gidelim dedi inde “Sen deli misin? Hizmetçilerin gitti i yere mi gidece iz?” demi tim. Cevabım bu oldu. Ba ka insanlar ba ka türlü büyüdüler ama ben bu ekilde büyüdüm. Yani bir idealizmle büyümedim. Yani srail hep ey, bir mevzu olmadı. Bizim evde konu ulmuyordu. Bizim evde srail’e gidenler hizmetçilerdi, hamallardı. Ben öyle büyüdüm*” Ibid.

Levy and the family lost everything that they had had. She told me that poor people had emigrated to Israel. Then, she realized that her mother's family had become very poor suddenly at those times:

Actually there was nobody who immigrated to Israel in my family or among close friends at the time. Yes, but why? As far as I am concerned I know the most important reason of the migration was poverty. My grandfather and his brothers were sent to A kale. Moreover, one of them died there because of tuberculosis. They lost everything. My mother and my mother's brother had nothing to lose. They had economic problems. When my grandfather died in 1960, he left nothing but debts. After the Capital Levy, they could not pull themselves together. He became unemployed and lost everything that he had had. There remained only the house of the family in Moda. My grandmother rented out half of the house and she was tutoring. I guess neighbours kept the jewels of my grandmother. They were sold. They were a picture of misery. My grandmother was telling us that they bought everything on credit for two years when my grandfather was in A kale. That is very interesting that they did not go to Israel. I do not know why especially my mother's brother did not go.¹⁸⁹

Samuel is also a good example of the poor people who preferred to stay in Turkey. He was one of the informants with whom I conducted the interview at the Hasköy Rest Home. He was eighty-seven but he was still very energetic and he looked seventy. He had been born in Tekirda (a small city in north-western part of Turkey). The most important detail about him was that he had very interesting memories about the Thrace Events in 1934. Unfortunately there are only few people left who were young enough to remember those days. The official, who helped me to find healthy old

¹⁸⁹ "Aslında yakınlarımdan da göç eden yok. Evet ama neden? Bir kere bildi im kadarıyla gitmenin en büyük etkenlerinden biri yoksulluktu. Dedem, dedemin a abeyleri, karde leri A kale'ye gönderildi. Hatta bir tanesi orada verem mikrobuna yakalanıp öldü. Her eylerini kaybetmi lerd. Belki annemin, dayımın o a amada kaybedecek çok eyi yoktu. Yoksulluk problemi vardı. Dedem 1960'da öldü ünde borçtan ba ka bir ey bırakmadı. Varlık'tan sonra bir daha da toparlanamadı. sizdi, her eyini kaybetmi ti. Bir tek Moda'daki ev vardı. Anneannem yarısını kiraya veriyordu, ders veriyordu. ... Bir de zannediyorum büyükannemin mücevherlerini bir kom uya vermi lerd. Ondan sonra iade edildi, onlar satıldı. O kadar sefalet içinde kaldılar. Anneannem anlatır iki sene boyunca her eyi veresiye almı lar dedem A kale'deyken. Hakikaten çok enteresan bir noktaya parmak bastınız. Niye gitmediler, özellikle niye dayım gitmedi bilmiyorum." I.TR12, 59 , interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13.11.08.

aged informants at the Hasköy Rest Home had picked him up randomly. Neither the official, nor I knew that he had experienced those events. After so many rejection and silences, the interview with Samuel was extremely satisfactory because he answered all of my questions. He told me his story sometimes even before I asked.

At the beginning of the interview Samuel especially said that he did not want me to use his name. Except for this warning, he told me about memories of the events of the past in such detail that I was almost shocked. About the migration he also mentioned that poor people went to Israel. In addition, at the beginning of the interview he told me that he had had to leave the school because they could not afford it. “The teacher saw the light in me. He asked me to buy books, other needs and also said to me that, ‘You have to keep going to school’. But we could not afford it. Therefore, I left school and started to learn shoemaking in Tekirda .”¹⁹⁰ If only the poor people had immigrated to Israel, Samuel also would have been one of them. Instead he stated that “I never thought about immigrating to Israel.”¹⁹¹

In Turkey, only five of the informants mentioned that idealism or religious motivation could also lead people to go to Israel. The key word here is “idealism,” not “Zionism.” Idealism can refer to any belief or principle. However, Zionism refers to a specific ideology which could recently have negative connotations. It is important to mention that the use of Zionism has changed over the time. In the late ninetieth century when the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, started the political movement, Zionism

¹⁹⁰ “*Ö retmen benden çok ey gördü, kitap alacaksın, eyedeceksin, daima ilerleyeceksin demi ti. Ben de onu almak durumunda de ildim. Alamadım. Onun için okulu bırakmak zorunda kaldım. Oradan kunduracılı a ba ladım Tekirda ’da.*” I.TR9, 87 , interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 16.12.08.

¹⁹¹ “*Ben göç etmeyi hiç dü ünmedim.*” Ibid.

was a national liberation movement of Jews that aimed at the self-determination of the Jewish people in the land of Israel. However, after the foundation of Israel, due to the expansionist politics of Israel, Zionism became a negative ideology for many, especially for those who reside outside of Israel. Therefore, in Turkey, when the question about young Zionists who left Turkey in order to be a part of the foundation of the Jewish State was asked, almost all of the informants said that there were no Zionist Jews in Turkey and there had not been. “Zionist” or “Zionism” made them feel uncomfortable. For this reason, I asked this question using the terms “Idealists” or “Idealism.” Then the answer became “There were few of them.”

Contrary to this, in Israel “Zionism” is more comprehensible than “idealism”. Instead of being abrasive, the informants themselves use “Zionism,” even if the question comes with the word “idealism.” Sometimes some of them did not even understand what I meant by idealism.¹⁹² The question was repeated with the word “Zionism” and then came the answer. Zionism or idealism which did not seem a valid reason for the migration by the informants in Turkey was the most popular answer in Israel. Eleven informants out of twenty stated that they had immigrated to Israel due to their Zionism or idealism. Additionally, they stressed that most of immigrants from Turkey were poor. In other words, economic factors were not underestimated. But their motivation was Zionism or idealism. Eight of them used “Zionist” referring to themselves. Two of informants who called themselves Zionist had worked in illegal Zionist organizations which had encouraged and supported young Jewish people to immigrate to Palestine before Israel had been founded. Eight out of twenty informants

¹⁹² “Idealism” was not understood especially by the illiterate informants and by the informants whose Turkish was poor. During many interviews, at first I used the term “idealism”. Then, I repeated the question with “Zionism”. After this, almost all of the informants used both idealism and Zionism. It was a natural result of the active process feature of the oral history interviews.

immigrated to Israel illegally with the leadership and cooperation of Zionist organizations in Turkey. Three informants stated that they were idealist and had decided to go to Israel with this motivation. Only four informants noted that they wanted to start a new life due to economic hardships in Turkey and their relatives had already landed in Israel. The others had different reasons like obligations to their families or society and the influence of their friends who wanted them to immigrate to Israel.

Jak insisted on the idealism. He claimed that idealism was the main pull factor of the Jews who went to the Promised Land. Furthermore, he mentioned the importance of the class factor, as follows:

All of newcomers at that time were idealists. Do not forget that repression pushes one to go somewhere else. If it were not Israel but the USA, who said 'Open the borders, come here,' they would have gone to USA. Repression... Repression also caused nationalism. What does one do in Israel if he is not nationalist? What does an American millionaire do in Israel? There are huge numbers of factories here, but without chimney stacks. Why do they establish them here? If he does not want to be a part of development, why would he come here? ... I tell you the truth. We have not ever been in demand. ... There is a class differences among people. Class is not about money, it is about education. If you send your children to me as an apprentice instead of sending them to school, they will be eighth-class people not even seventh. I can be first-class, because I was educated. All these people from Havra (a street in Jewish settlement in Izmir) street were poor. They thought that they would be well when they came to Israel, their own country. In fact it happened. ... If they had worked for two more years in Turkey, would they have bought a house? They had their own houses, their kids went to schools. My gardener has two sons. One is a doctor, the other one is a financial advisor. They have searched for a new future.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ "Buraya gelenlerin hepsi idealistti. Unutma ki baskı, seni ba ka bi yana gitmeye zorlar. E er ki, Israil de il de Amerika deseydi 'Açtım kapıları gelin' Amerika'ya gideceklerdi. Baskıdan dolayı. Baskıyla beraber aynı zamanda milliyetçilik de do du. Milliyetçi olmayanın burada i i ne? Amerika'da oturan milyonerlerin burada i i ne? Dünyanın fabrikaları var burada. Ama bacalı de il, kafa fabrikası. Bunlar neden burada kuruluyor? E er memleketin kurulu una yardım etmek istemese neden buraya gelsin?... Do rusunu söyleyelim, istenmedik hiçbir zaman. ... nsanlar arasında sınıf farkı vardır. Sınıf parayla olmaz. Okumayla olur. E er sen çocu unu mektebe yollayaca na, benim yanıma çırak verersen, o da çıraklıktan tayyareyi düzeltmesini ö renirse, o sekizinci sınıf olur yedinci olamaz. Ben birinci olabilirim, çünkü okudum. Bütün bu mezarlık taraftakilerin, Havra Sokak hepsi fakir fukara. srail'e, kendi memleketlerine gelince daha büyük bir rahata kavu acaklarını zannettiler. Nitekim öyle oldu. ... Türkiye'de 2 sene daha çalı mı olsaydı, evi olacak mıydı? Burada evi oldu, çocukları okudu.

Izak was one of the idealists who went to Israel legally in 1948 after the foundation of Israel when he was sixteen. His family was living in Tepeba 1. His father was the owner of an apartment building, therefore the two shops on the first floor belonged to his father. Izak was the fourth of seven children. He was well-educated and he was studying at high school when he decided to go to Israel. He did not know anybody there, but it was not a problem for him. His father tried to warn him about the hard life in Israel, but he did not listen to him. He quoted his father as follows: “What are you going to do in Palestine? You will go there and work like a horse, you will hardly find something to eat.”¹⁹⁴ He said that he had wanted to be a part of the Jewish state, but he also said that there were many poor people who had gone to Israel due to their economic problems:

As you understand, my life there was really good. This Palestine issue was on the agenda. Let’s talk openly; it was put in our minds. Everybody wanted to go to Palestine. Do you understand that it was not for a need? There were many people who came here because they were in need of money. You see me, I did not come here because I needed money, I came here as a citizen. ... There was a fantastic movement. Zionism, patriotism, started to get into in every Jew’s mind.¹⁹⁵

Benim bahçivanın iki o lu var: Birisi doktor, birisi yeminli mü avir. Kendilerine yeni bir gelecek aradılar.” ISRL14, 73, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 09.02.09.

¹⁹⁴“*Ya o lum senin ne i in var Filistin’e gidiyorsun? Gideceksin orada hammal gibi çalı acaksın, orada anlıyor musun ekme i zor bulacaksın” ISRL13, 77, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 05.02.09.*

¹⁹⁵ “ *imdi o zamanda ben gördü ünüz gibi, hayatım gayet iyi, güzeldi. Mektepteydim. Bu Filistin meselesi çıktı. imdi açık konu alım, nasıl derler buna, herkesin içine bir kurt gibi girdi. Herkes Filistin’e gitmek istiyor. Bu ekilde anlatayım ben size bunu. Anlıyor musunuz, ihtiyaç olarak de il. Vardı, çok insanlar ki ihtiyaç olarak geldiler. Görüyorsunuz beni, ben buraya ihtiyaç olarak gelmedim, ben geldim vatanda olarak mı derler. ... Müthi bir ey vardı, müthi . Siyonizm, vatanseverlik herkesin içine girmeye ba ladı Yahudilerin.” Ibid.*

Zionism became a prominent factor of the migration during the interviews in Israel. There are some explanations for this. The informants in Israel were between twelve and eighteen when they immigrated to Israel. They had all been single and came alone, without their parents. The older member of the families who migrated to Israel with the whole family due to economic reasons after 1948 would have been at least ninety years old in 2009. Thus, even if it were possible to find these people, it would have been impossible to talk to them because of their health problems. This caused a handicap.

Furthermore Zionism was not the only motivation of the informants when they immigrated to Israel. During the time, an unconscious effort to accelerate the integration to Israeli society, and the militarism and strong nationalism in Israel might have an impact on their memories. Weiker also mentions that in the great wave of 1948-49, a large portion of the poor Jews in Turkey went to Israel. However, it was not the reason that they themselves reported: “They insisted repeatedly that they went in response to being able to go to a ‘Jewish state.’”¹⁹⁶

This demonstrates that the self-presentation of the informant through oral history interviews has a leading role in the narration. Oral history interviews are arenas of struggle for meaning and the control of interpretation, and most importantly for identity formation which is embedded to ideologies.¹⁹⁷ Ronald Grele explains this struggle as follows: “...Despite a struggle for the assigning of meaning to aspects of the narrative,

¹⁹⁶ Weiker, *The Unseen*, p. 23.

¹⁹⁷ Ronald J Grele, “History and the Languages of History in the Oral History Interview: Who Answers Whose Questions and Why?”, in ed. by Eva M. McMahan, Kim Lacy Rogers, *Interactive Oral History Interviewing* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1994), p. 3.

or the struggle for interpretative power, the partners feel that their conversations with one another and their conversations for the record have allowed each of them to legitimate the dominant meanings or to resist those meanings.”¹⁹⁸

David is a good example of the above-mentioned resistance of meaning. He resisted the importance of the economic factors which made him and his family decide to immigrate to Israel. He was thirteen when he immigrated illegally to Israel in 1943. He started his talk with heavily accented Turkish: “The Capital Levy came. (*Varlık geldi.*)” It was very impressive, because my question was: “Where were you born?” After they had had to pay a high amount of Capital Levy, his father had gone into bankruptcy and unable to pay the whole tax, was sent to A kale. They lost everything they had had after the Capital Levy.

This was the end of his father’s story but the beginning of his. He decided to go to Israel. When I asked him if idealism or economic problems had been more effective on the migration, he stated that achieving higher living standards, in his words “money,” could not be the reason of Jews’ immigration to Israel: “Idealists. I was thirteen. Did I need money? We, friends were meeting. We heard that [Jews] were going to Palestine. He says ‘I will go’, she says ‘I will go’ then I would go. ... If there had not been Capital Levy ... Turkish kids made difficulties, this hurt us.”¹⁹⁹

Albert is also very good example of the same resistance of the economic motivation of the migration. The interview was conducted in his small apartment in Bat-

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ “*Idealist. 13 ya imdaydım , bana para lazım mıydı? Biz çocuklar toplanıyorduk, Filistin’e gidiyoruz diye i ittik. O diyor ‘Ben gidiyor’, o diyor ‘Ben gidiyor’ o zaman ‘Ben de gidiyor’ diyoruz. Fakat Varlık olmasaydı bile; Türk çocukları bize zorluk yaptılar, bizi bu incitti*”. ISRL1, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 09.02.09.

Yam. His wife Estreya was also with us. She helped me during the interview because Albert had an illness; he would easily get tired and sometimes could hardly understand Turkish. Although, he spoke Turkish very well. After I asked him when he had come to Israel, Estreya immediately answered: “In 1948. It was Palestine then. When he was seventeen his mother told him ‘We are a poor family. You go first then we will come.’”²⁰⁰ He continued with these words: “Firstly, they sent my sister to a kibbutz. After that they sent me here. ... All of the poor people came here, the rich people did not. Those who had money did not come.”²⁰¹

Later I asked his dreams about Israel and what had pushed him to come here. His response was full of patriotism. “We would have our own country. That is why! ... They wanted to take me to a kibbutz. I said ‘If you do not enlist me in the army, I will go back.’ I came here to be a soldier.”²⁰² At the end of the interview I asked almost the same question and his answer was quite different: “Until I took the boat, I did not think about it. Everybody was going, I thought that we would also go there. After I got off the boat (in Israel), I understood what was happening.”²⁰³

²⁰⁰ “48’de Filistin vardı daha. 17 ya ndayken annesi o luna dedi ki ‘Biz fakir bir aileyiz. Sen de git, biz sonra geliriz’”. ISRL9, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 02.02.09.

²⁰¹ “ İlk önce ablamı kibbutza yolladılar. Ondan sonra beni yolladılar buraya. ... Bütün fakirler geldiler, zenginler gelmediler. Kimde biraz para vardı, gelmediler.” Ibid.

²⁰² “Bizim memleketimiz olacaktı. Bunun için. ... Beni kibbutza almak istediler. ‘Beni askere almazsanız, ben geri dönüyorum’ dedim. Ben asker olmak için geldim.” Ibid.

²⁰³ “Vapura binene kadar bir ey dü ünmedim. Yani herkes gidiyor, biz de gideriz diye dü ündüm. Vapurdan inince anladım.” Ibid.

Jews in Turkey shared the excitement of Israel State's settlement, which was basically reflected as "idealism"²⁰⁴ and "the opportunity to settle in the real homeland". Most of the people in this study stressed their joy when they had heard the foundation of Israel. Especially those who had settled in Israel, felt free to explain their ideas on the foundation of Israel at the time and their will to immigrate. Jak recalled those days as follows: "'Israel was founded!' 'It was founded!' Everybody is going there! I am also Israeli. What am I doing here?'"²⁰⁵

Eli aul expresses the Jews' feelings as follows: "Jews, who had been wandering here and there for two thousand years, had no chance but to surrender to their masters. They had been dismissed, robbed or put into gas rooms up to then. After such harsh experiences, this race was naturally excited and happy to see the existence of a Jewish state in 1948."²⁰⁶

One of the most impressive explanations about Zionism came from Moiz, who was hanging around in one of the two associations' offices when I was trying to ask questions on Zionism to David. His words were well chosen in spite of his poor Turkish:

It was necessary to settle in Israel, in order to constitute a government. First youth came, then people from Europe. Thereby, they constituted the Israeli government. They did not come here cursorily. According to our history, Israel is our homeland. Why have not we gone to the States? We could also have gone there, but we learned that this is our country. You have your holy book and we have our holy book. In our holy book it is written that 'Israel is the Promised land'. That is why we founded Israel...²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Bali, *Aliya*, p. 269.

²⁰⁵ "*Israil kuruldu!, Israil kuruldu!*". *Herkes Israil'e gidiyor, ben Israilliyim. Benim burada i im ne?*" ISRL14, 73, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 09.02.09.

²⁰⁶ aul, p. 173.

Moreover, Jak thought that after the foundation of Israel Zionism had become useless: “Zionism means nationalism, to settle Zion. Zion is here. Here is the place to get married and become a family. Zionism is dead because Israel has already been founded. Zionism served for Israel. There is no need for Zionism. They have translated patriotism as Zionism.”²⁰⁸

The patterns of migration were determined to some extent by kinship relations and took place in two stages. In the first stage, young Jewish refugees migrated to Israel. Many of those young people went there either to fight the Arabs or to try the opportunities given by state. The second stage came after the social integration in Israel of those young Jews sent for their parents, relatives and spouses. Therefore, many people emigrated in order to unite their families. Previous immigrants supplied the newcomers with housing and assistance in finding jobs. Among the types of motivation mentioned above, David’s sister’s residence in Israel encouraged him: “I have two sisters. At first both of them came here. My brother was enlisted in Turkey. He also wanted to come, but he could not [because of military service].”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ “Burada bir hükümet kurmak için srail’e yerle mek lazımdı. Önce küçükler geldi, sonra Avrupa’dakiler; böylece hükümeti kurdular. Öylesine gelmediler. Bizim tarihimize göre, srail bizim memleketimiz. Neden Amerika’ya gitmedik? Oraya da gidebilirdik ama bizim memleketimizin burası oldu unu ö rendik. Sizin kitaplarınız var, bizim de kitaplarımız. Kitaplarımızda “ srail bizim memleketimizdir” diye yazıyor. O yüzden böyle bir devlet kurduk...” ISRL2, 82, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 09.02.08.

²⁰⁸ “Siyonizm, milliyetçiliktir. Siyon’a yerle mektir. Siyon burası, burada yerle mektir. Burası evlenip, yuva kurma yeridir. Bugün siyonizm bitmi tir. Çünkü Israil vardır. srailizm vardır. Siyonizm, srail olmadan evveldi. srail kuruldu u zaman, Siyonizme ihtiyaç yok ki. Vatanseverli in ismini Siyonizm olarak çevirdiler.” ISRL14, 73, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 09.02.09.

Drahoma

Regarding economic factors, it might be argued that some traditions which seem sometimes as details of life can be examples of encouraging factors to migration due to economic troubles, such as *drahoma*. *Drahoma* a tradition of the Jewish community in Turkey, based on money or property that is given to the groom by the bride's family. The amount of money or the quantity of properties varies according to the economic conditions of the bride's family. Therefore, it is directly related to the class status of the family. The families that had young daughters and could not afford *drahoma* could either accept their situation, wait for a groom who would not ask for *drahoma* or send their daughters to Israel, where this was a forgotten tradition. Many families sent their daughters to Israel or immigrated as a family. During the interviews, the female informants were more interested in the topic. They started to talk about the effect of *drahoma* on the migration sometimes even before it was asked.

At the Hasköy Rest Home, during the interview Karin gave an example of *drahoma*-based immigration to Israel that she remembered, even though I did not ask anything. "There was a porter, Hayim, who worked for my father. He had four daughters. Since he could not afford *drahoma* for all of his daughters, he left. I remember what my father said: 'Hayim cannot afford *drahoma*, he went to Israel out of necessity'."²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ " *ki ablam var, ilk önce ikisi geldi buraya. Benim a abeyim askere gitti Türkiye'de. O da gelmek istiyordu, gelemedi.*" ISRL1, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 09.02.08

²¹⁰ "*Babamın yanında Hayim diye bir hamal vardı. Onun dört kızı vardı. Dört kızına da drahoma vermedi inden gitmi ti. Hatırlıyorum, ben küçüktüm 5-6 ya larındaydım, babam:*

Jinet also mentioned how the *drahoma* issue could be very important for a young poor girl and her family. She answered my question on the *drahoma* as follows: “It can be a factor; then it was one of the worst things that could happen to a family, that their daughter could not get married. At first I found your question weird; I thought that does anyone leave just because of *drahoma*? But it is possible. Nobody wants to marry her because she does not have money. It is very bad.”²¹¹

Estreya, the wife of Albert, immigrated to Israel in 1955. After she had visited the Jewish Agency (*Sohnut*) once or twice she decided to go to Israel. All she wanted was to be away from her family and to be free. She was told that there would be no family there, no oppression of family or society. She confessed that she had been affected. Even though her parents had tried to prevent her departure, she managed to go to Israel. When I asked her about *drahoma*, she told about her first experience with it when she was fifteen. She and her mother had met a young man on the boat in Istanbul who lived in Israel. The mother of this young man liked Estreya very much and wanted him to marry her. But the matter of *drahoma* was a big trouble for everybody, because she was about to go to Israel and her family knew that there was no *drahoma* in Israel. “His mother called my mother and said ‘My son wants to marry your daughter. Let’s come here and talk.’ My family went there; they asked for *drahoma*. My father said, ‘My daughter is going to go to Israel, what is the deal with *drahoma*?’ Then, it did not happen. Disabled, poor girls and those who could not get marry there... For example,

‘Hayim drahoma veremiyor, mecbur Israil’e gitti.’ derdi” I.TR11, 64, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 16.12.08.

²¹¹ “*Olabilir, tabi o dönemde bir kızın evlenmemesi bir ailenin baına gelebilecek en kötü eylerden biriydi. ... Ba ta sorunuz komik geldi, bir drahoma yüzünden gidilir mi diye ama olabilir. Kızın parası olmadı ı için kimse almıyor. Çok kötü bir durum.*” I.TR12, 59, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 13.11.08.

my French teacher in primary school had a humpback. When I told my mother that she was going to Israel, she said, ‘Aaa the humpback woman will find a husband there’.”²¹²

Sara, the wife of Izak, was next to us when I was conducting the interview with Izak in their apartment. I have to confess that Sara responded more than her husband, which sometimes bothered me because Izak was the one that I had arranged to interview. She was so nice however, she said so many important things on the issue that I realized that the interview was a very interesting and useful one in the end. When we were talking about young idealists from Turkey, she suddenly broke into the conversation and said: “In our community there is a *drahoma*. The fathers who could not afford *drahoma* sent their daughters when they realized that all these girls managed to get marry, have a family. They sent their daughters on their own. ... They could not be married off to a man without *drahoma*. Here (in Israel) there is no *drahoma*. It is gratis. Everybody came here. No Zionism, no patriotism for Israel, nothing...”²¹³

This shows that economic conditions were very important in every part of life. Being a “spinster” was one of the worst things that could happen to a young girl, especially due to economic problems such as *drahoma*. Therefore, it is very understandable that families allowed their daughters to go to Israel on their own. After

²¹² “...Annesi benim annemi aradı. “Benim o lum sizin kızı be enmi . Evlenmek istiyor, gelin görü elim.” diye. Gitti annemler, *drahoma* istemi ler. Babam da “Benim kızım zaten *srail*’e gidecek ne *drahoması*” demi . Olmadı o i . Sonra sakatlar, fakirler, orada evlenemeyecek olanlar... Benim Fransızca ö retmenim vardı ilkokulda. Biraz kamburu çıkmı tı. ‘Benim ö retmenim *srail*’e gidiyormu ’ dedim anneme. ‘Aaaa kambur kadın bulur orada bir koca’ dedi.” ISRL10, 70, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 02.02.09.

²¹³ “Bizde *drahoma* var. Gelenler zaten, *drahomayı* veremeyen babalar, kızlarını gönderdi ve gördüler ki her biri evleniyor, her biri ev kuruyor. Kızları yalnız gönderdiler. ... Kızlarını veremezlerdi kimseye, *drahomasız* kız gitmez. *Drahoma* vermek yok burada, bedava. Herkes geldiler. Ne siyonist vardı, ne *srail*’i kurmak için, ne u, ne bu.” ISRL20, 70, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 05.02.09.

they got married, the parents moved to Israel as well. It was the first step of the migration and also demonstrates that these girls were a guarantee in preparing easier conditions of migration for their families.

Zionist Activities in Turkey

Two of the basic pillars of the reformation of Turkey were nationalism and secularism. Nationalism was defined as the opposite of internationalism, and that no ties were to be officially permitted with any ideology such as communism, socialism, Zionism or organizations like the World Zionist Organization.²¹⁴ Zionism was an international political ideology that resembled a national liberation movement the aim of which was the self determination of the Jewish people in the land of Israel.

Religion and Jewish nationalism were important factors in the formation of Zionism among the Jews of Turkey. During the Ottoman rule, the non-Muslim minorities lived in the *millet* system, which depended on religious autonomy. For Jews, religious identity was the most important aspect that connected them to the society and which constituted the way of living. However, during the ideological conciliation of the Turkish nation state, religious and Hebrew language instruction were limited at schools and permitted only a few hours in a week. Secularism involved the disestablishment of religion.

On the other hand, important aspects of religion were taught and the Jewish identity was transmitted by the older generation to younger generation within a family

²¹⁴ Weiker, *Ottomans*, p. 242.

through traditions and religious celebrations like Passover. Despite the disunity and fair integration or assimilation, the Jewish identification became stronger in two groups: the lower class and upper middle and middle class youth.²¹⁵ Lower class Jews were far from the impact of the modernization project of the Republic and the influence of Alliance schools due to their economic conditions. They lived in Jewish neighbourhoods which precluded them from forming close relationships with Muslims, and many of them had hardly graduated or left elementary school. For this reason, lower class Jews remained uneducated and deeply influenced by traditions and religion.

The second group who adopted the Jewish identity and Zionism among Jews of Turkey were well educated and the youth of the middle and upper-middle classes.²¹⁶ They were motivated to be a part of Jewish activity in Palestine especially as a reaction to their second class citizenship status despite the secular characteristic of the Republic. During the World War II and until the founding of Israel, more than 1000 young immigrants went to Israel by Youth Aliyah.²¹⁷ He writes that 1045 people were brought to “Palestine” between 1939 and 1945, which is more than all countries except Germany. Between 1945 and 1948 attention was given to Holocaust survivors, but between 1949 and 1952 Youth Aliyah brought 2,570 young immigrants from Turkey.²¹⁸

Zionism and religious factors overlapped in the case of returning to the Promised Land and contributing to the constitution of a new homeland. It is known that returning to the Promised Land before dying was the main motivation of many middle-aged

²¹⁵ Weiker, *The Unseen*, p. 17.

²¹⁶ Weiker, *Ottomans*, p. 238.

²¹⁷ Weiker, *The Unseen*, p. 19.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.32.

people for migration.²¹⁹ It is also known that many of their prayers ended with a wish to meet in Jerusalem the following year. Also call for the *Aliya* increased with the foundation of journals in Ladino named *abat*, *alom*, *Aktiva* and *Or Yehuda*. Even *Or Yehuda* organized a lottery in which ten people won an excursion on a ship that would go to Hayfa.

Although Zionist activities were strictly banned, single-party politics and the exclusion of non-Muslims in the formation of a Turkish nation state triggered the revival of the Jewish identity and caused a rapid increase in the rate of Jewish migration. Among the Balkans, Turkey was the second country after Bulgaria that experienced extensive Jewish migration.²²⁰ An important part of the migration took place illegally before the foundation of Israel and at the end of 1948, when the Turkish government banned migrating to Israel due to international politics. The illegal migration was called *Aliya Bet*. Young people without passports, especially those who were at or near the age of conscription, migrated under the auspices of illegal Zionist associations and with the financial support of the American Joint Distribution Committee.²²¹ Passports were obtainable but males had to prove that they had fulfilled their legal military service. Length of military service, the hard conditions in the military, Israel's constitution, and the ongoing struggle to seize the real homeland were the main motivations behind those illegal migration waves.²²²

²¹⁹ Bali, *Aliya*, p. 268-269.

²²⁰ Benbassa, p. 392.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

²²² Bali, *Aliya*, p. 190.

The activities of Zionist organizations in Turkey are not well-known. There have only been three studies done, written in Hebrew but they far from academic quality.²²³ Unfortunately, there are not any other resources on the illegal Zionist organizations and their activities in English or in Turkish. In the light of the information which comes from the books mentioned above and my informants who had worked for these organizations and who had immigrated to Israel illegally under the auspices of these organizations, I learned about on the two main organizations which were called *Neemaney Zion* (Trustees of Zion) and *Beitar*.²²⁴

The activities of Zionist organizations started at the end of the ninetieth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.²²⁵ The continuous relationship was maintained between Jewish habitants in Palestine, the heads of the settlement movements, the Zionist immigrants and of the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul. This affinity continued and through them most of the immigrants who came from Eastern Europe, especially those who made their way by foot, passed by Istanbul, which was the central passageway.²²⁶ The Zionist leaders and the leaders of the Jewish settlement in

²²³ These books are: Mordechai Falcon, *Judaism in Turkey in the Past and Now* (Jerusalem, Modern Graphics: 1998); Avraam Tsikoral-Arel, *The Story Of Neemaney Zion Movement-Hahaluts in Izmir, Turkey*, (Israel: 2001); Mordechai Falcon, Tsiper Daniel, Avidan Mashiah, *Judaism in Turkey and the Zionism.* (Israel: 2000).

²²⁴ Ule Tokta also mentions two more illegal Zionist Organizations, which are called Hahalutz and Irgun Tsinoi Be Kusta. However, she does not give more information on organizations. See Ule Tokta, "Turkey's Jews," p.509.

²²⁵ Avraam Tsikoral-Arel, *The Story Of Neemaney Zion Movement-Hahaluts in Izmir, Turkey* (Israel: 2001), p. 31.

Palestine visited Istanbul, the centre of the Ottoman Empire for various reasons. During the active years of Herzl, he visited the Ottoman Empire a couple of times in order to get the Sultan's help as a part of his activity to get international recognition for solving the Jewish problems.

Other leaders of the Israeli settlement like Ben Gurion and Yitshak Ben-Zvi, travelled to study in Istanbul in 1912.²²⁷ These visits made an impression on the Jewish community. At this time began the first signs of local Judaism integration into the Zionist activities. After the declaration of the Constitution in 1908, spirit of freedom and liberty began amongst the Jewish youth, which was a great base for the developments of Zionist youth organizations between 1909 and 1911. In Istanbul, the Macabi Society, which organized Zionist cultural activities and sport activities, was established.²²⁸ The party had thousands of members. After the establishment of the Republic, a sports team named Bar-Cochva (son of the stars) was set up instead of the Maccabi party because Zionist activities which based on non-Turkish ideologies was banned.²²⁹

Neemaney Zion (Zion Trustees) organization in Istanbul was established in the middle of the 1930s. Later a branch was established in Izmir in 1942.²³⁰ The main goal of the leaders of *Neemaney Zion* was to immigrate to Israel; the ideology was not

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

²²⁸ Mordechai Falcon, Tsiper Daniel, Avidan Mashiah, . 2000 (*Judaism in Turkey and the Zionism.*), (Israel: 2000), p. 44; see also Varol, p. 4.

²²⁹ Tsikoral-Arel, p. 32.

²³⁰ Falcon, Tsiper, Mashiah, 2000, p. 45.

important for them.²³¹ The organization got its momentum with establishment of the Jewish Agency office in Istanbul, under the management of Dr. Goldin, with the beginning of the Rescue Jury's activities, under the leadership of Haim Barlas. *Beitar*, the revisionist organization gained the momentum in the 1930s as a result of the split in the Zionist movement world-wide and also a branch was opened for the organization in Izmir.²³²

Beitar, Neemaney Zion differed in its ideology. About this difference, Moshe, who was an active member of *Beitar* in the early 1940s stated, "They were a party, but we were not like them. They were saying 'Let's go to Israel and ingratiate ourselves to England.' but we said 'No, by force of arms'. Ideology was different. They were saying 'Let's go there and bring land into cultivation,' but we said, 'We will go there and send the British away.' They were living in kibbutzim. My people were not, my people joined illegal organizations there.' My group was working on armed resistance."²³³ The Jewish youth began to be active in the organization *Beitar* when their main aspiration was to immigrate to "Israel" and to help the immigrant and the refugees to come to "Israel" in an illegal way.²³⁴ Most of them succeeded in going to Israel, but some did not. In these years, the revisionist movement was very active in the Jewish streets and in

²³¹ Tsikoral-Arel, 2001, p. 37.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²³³ "Bunlar partiydi, biz farklyydık, diyor ki "Biz srail'e gidelim ama ngilizlere yaranalım." Biz "Hayır silah zoruyla" diyorduk. deoloji farkı vardı. Bunlar diyorlar ki "Oraya gidelim, topra ı i leylim." Biz diyorduk "Hayır biz oraya gidece iz, ngilizleri kovaca ız". Onlar kibutzlara yerle iyorlardı. Bizimkiler kibutzlara gitmiyorlardı, gizli örgütlere katılıyorlardı. Bizim grup daha çok silahlı direni e yönelikti." ISRL6, 83, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 10.02.09.

²³⁴ Tsikoral-Arel, p. 34.

Jewish sport clubs.

At the beginning of 1942 the Jewish Agency for Israel (*Sohnut*) set up an office in Istanbul. Dr. Goldin was appointed as head officer of the Agency and oversaw the immigration department.²³⁵ The office of Goldin served as a centre for Agency activities in every Balkan country and with collaboration with British consulates, taking care of granting visas to refugees from these countries, and also to trying to make connections with the Jews under the Nazi conquest. These days were the "Quota" days of 75,000 certificates that the mandate authorities had granted, European Jews could not use them because they were under conquest of Nazis. Just a few of them succeeded at running away from the Nazis and using the opportunity to get the certificates. During this period, the Agency decided to allocate some certificates to Turkish Jews.²³⁶

These Zionist organizations cooperated in the migration of young idealists with the Agency. After the Agency announced the number of visas, the leaders of the organizations decided the names of the immigrants according to their will and education which had been stipulated by the leaders of the organizations. This was based on the athletic and agricultural training, which would be useful for the life in kibbutzim; the Hebrew language course and courses on the Jewish intellectuals, the history of Jews and geography of the "Israel" was also thought.²³⁷

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 35.

²³⁶ Tsikoral-Arel, 2001, p. 35.

²³⁷ Avraam Tsikoral-Arel, , - . - . 2001, . (*The Story Of Neemaney Zion Movement-Hahaluts in Izmir, Turkey*) (Israel: 2001), p.37, 40, 45. Mordechai Falcon, Tsiper Daniel, Avidan Mashiah , , . 2000 (*Judaism in Turkey and the Zionism.*) (Israel: 2000), p. 46, 49. Also six informants detailed the education during the interviews.

At the end of the World War II, even though many young idealists were ready for the migration, the number of visas was limited to a few. Therefore, the organizations started to search for illegal ways. Sea lanes and railway lines were used mostly.²³⁸ A group of emigrants would first arrive in Adana or Mersin under the auspices of the organizations, usually with a leader. They stayed there for some time until the organizations arranged the details of the trip to Israel. There were small Jewish communities in Adana and Mersin who helped the party members to cross the border illegally to Israel. If the leaders were able to convince a captain of a boat to carry illegal migrants, the group hid in small containers or in a secret part of the boat until the boat had crossed the border.

Table 5: Routes Used by Informants on the Way to Israel

	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>		<i>In total</i>
	Legal	Illegal	Legal	Illegal	
Sea lane	7	4	5	0	16
Railway and Bus	0	4	0	0	4
<i>In total</i>	7	8	5	0	20

Source: Narratives of informants. See Appendix B.

²³⁸ See Table These informations are obtained by the members of illegal Zionist organizations that I have interviewed. Moshe was one of the leaders of *Beitar*: ISRL6, 83, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 10.02.09. Yeshua was an active member of *Neemaney Zion*: ISRL7, 80, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 31.01.09. Albert went to Israel illegally in 1948 under the auspices of one of these organizations that he did not mentioned just couple of months before Israel was recognized: ISRL9, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 02.02.09. David came to Israel with a forged visa under the auspices of one of the organizations that he did not mentioned in 1943: ISRL1, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 09.02.09.

If the leaders found the sea lanes dangerous, they used trains. The group of illegal migrants jumped out of the train when they came close to the border or when they passed the Syrian border. From there, they had either walked or travelled to Haifa with a vehicle that the organizations had arranged before the group arrived there.

Moshe was one of the leaders of *Beitar* in Izmir in the early 1940s. In 1945, when he was eighteen, he was leading a group to Israel, but the sea lane had become dangerous after two-three groups had been caught. They started to send groups by train. Trains were passing over the border of Syria on the way to Urfa. When the train passed over the border they jumped out of the train. One of the groups had come back to Izmir because the British soldiers had held all the doors of the train, when the train passed over the border. They had to find a new way to go to Israel. The leaders decided to try to go by land: First Diyarbakır, then from Diyarbakır to Mardin, and then Syria. This way had never been tried before. As he was their leader, he went with six members of the organization who were educated enough to take this dangerous way. They walked only at night with the leadership of professional smugglers from Diyarbakır to Syria. In Syria, they were caught. He spent more than six months in prison in Syria. He described the ways of illegal migration that they often used:

Our group brought more than 800 people illegally. Ten to fifteen percent were caught, at most twenty percent. The others escaped and came to Israel. We were not lucky; because of this Hadj problem that year. Can you imagine that an eighteen year old boy left and came here from Izmir? He would go to Mardin first, from Mardin to Syria, from Syria to Lebanon, from Lebanon to here. These things were happening; a reasonable one would not do this. When we came to the border of Lebanon, there were *kibbutzim* there. They knew that we were on the way. For example, when three-five people came, they had given those huts and pickaxes before the British soldiers understood what was happening. Nobody knew it anyway.²³⁹

²³⁹ “*Bizim grup 800 den fazla ki iyi kaçak olarak getirdik. % 10- 15 yakalanan oldu, % 20 maksimum. Di erleri kaçtı geldi. Bizim ansımız olmadı, o sene Hacc meselesi oldu. Bakın dü ünebiliyor musunuz, 18 ya nda bir çocuk çıkıyor zmir’den çıkıyor geliyor buraya.*”

Yeshua had been an active member of the Neemaney Zion in Izmir. He had become a member of the group after his father had been sent to A kale due to Capital Levy in 1943. His father had lost his grocery store and their household goods had been confiscated because of the Capital Levy. His two brothers had been enlisted in the Twenty Class Army. They had suddenly become impoverished as they no longer have income. His family had decided to immigrate to Israel after his father had come back. They had all taken their passports but he had not been able to as he was near the age of conscription. He had had to go through illegal ways, yet he was an active member in *Neemaney Zion* and he had been educated there for three years. He described his illegal travel as follows:

I went to Mersin. There was a Chief Rabbi in Mersin. He took me and gave me a room. I lived in his house for two months, me and a friend. There we paid smugglers and I came here illegally. The smugglers asked for too much money. Our group, *Neemaney Zion* in Izmir, paid this amount. For each person it was thousand liras. It was too much money at the time. They were carrying goods here. It was a cargo ship, but it was not big. Its captain took and locked us into a storage room. Officers came to ship from Customs and inspected the ship. It took two-three hours. They searched, but could not find anything. Then we ate fish, fish, only fish for four days. We were on the way for four days.”²⁴⁰

Mardin’e, buradan Suriye’ye geçecek, Suriye’den Lübnan’a geçecek, Lübnan’dan da buraya gelecek. Oluyor bunlar, insan akli olsa olmaz bunlar ama oluyordu. noluyordu simdi Lübnan hududuna geldi imiz zaman orda çalı an kibutzlar vardı. Haber ediyorlardı, haberleri vardı. Geliyor mesela 3 ki i - 5 ki i 10 ki i, hemen alıyorlardı onları ngilizler daha haber almadan, birer apka birer kazma veriyorlardı. Kimse bilmiyordu zaten.” ISRL5, 83, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 10.02.09.

²⁴⁰ “*Mersin’e gittim, Mersinde bir hahamba ı vardı. O beni aldı ve bana bir oda verdi. Onun evinde 2 ay ya adım, ben ve arkada ım. Orada kaçakçılara para verdik öyle böyle ve kaçak olarak buraya geldim. Kaçakçılar çok para istedi. Parayı bize grubumuz verdi. zmir’de Neemaney Zion. O zaman her insan üstüne 1000 lira verdik. Çok paraydı yani. O zamanlar çok para. ... Buraya e ya getirirlerdi. Yük gemisi ama büyük de ildi. Onun kaptanı bizi aldı. A a ıda... Orada bizi depoya kilitledi. Gümrükten geldiler, tefti ettiler. Bu i 2 saat 3 saat sürdü. Baktılar, bir ey bulamadılar. Ondan sonra biz 4 gün olarak balık, balık, balık yedik. Yol 4 gün sürdü.”* ISRL7, 80, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Jerusalem, Israel, 31.01.09.

David had come to Israel with a forged visa in 1943 when he was thirteen. His journey had been planned by one of the illegal Zionist organizations. He said that he had not paid for anything. Even though he had been a kid when he came to Israel he remembered all the details of his adventurous way to Israel. He recounted that memory as follow: “We came by train. We passed Aleppo. One person was waiting for us in Aleppo. He was young. He was arranging these things. He brought us sandwiches. We stayed overnight in Aleppo one night. From Aleppo we went to Beirut. Our people were waiting there for us. They took us into a vehicle and we came to Haifa.”²⁴¹

Albert had gone to Israel illegally in 1948 under the auspices of one of these organizations the name of which he did not mention, just a couple of months before Israel was recognized. His mother had first sent his sister to a kibbutz, and then asked him to go. He had been eighteen and he was unable to take a passport, as he was about to be enlisted to the army. There had only been one way to go and it had to be illegally:

My mother took me to Haydarpa a (The main train station in the Anatolian part of Istanbul). I took the train. For two days and a night I was on the train. We came to Iskenderun (Alexandretta is the biggest district of Hatay in the southern Turkey). We were ten or twelve people. We waited in Iskenderun, thus we were waiting for other friends to come for a week. We stayed in a hotel, we had the money. Ten to fifteen more people came. It was not a boat, it was a freight vessel. We took that and in one night we arrived in Israel. The half of the night our eyes were shut, so that we could not see. Then, we opened some holes in the container. In the middle of the night we crossed to the Cyprus. In the morning, we came here. It took one night and we came in Haifa. Before 1948, here there was a British government. I came in January 1948. It was very cold and snowy. In Haifa there were British soldiers and we were terribly hungry. They gave us food first.²⁴²

²⁴¹ “Trenle geldik. Halep’ten geçtik. Halep’te de bekledi bizi bir insan. Gençti. Bu i lerde idare ediyorlardı. Bize sandviç getirdi. Halep’te bir ak am uyuduk, Halep’ten Beyrut’a gittik. Beyrut’ta beklediler bizi bizim insanlar. Taksiye bindirdiler, Hayfa’ya geldik.” ISRL1, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 09.02.09.

²⁴² “Annem beni Haydarpa a’ya getirdi. Trene bindim. 2 gün ve 1 gece trendeydim. skenderun’a geldik. Birkaç arkada la, 10-12 ki iydik. skenderun’da bekledik, birkaç arkada daha gelsin diye. Orada 1 hafta bekledik. Otelde, paramız vardı. 10-15 ki i daha geldi. ...vapur

Belonging

*“We came here to be Mehmetçiks (Turkish Soldier) of Israel!”
Hayim²⁴³*

*“The Turkish blood circulates in our veins. That’s it!
This will never end till we die.”
Izak²⁴⁴*

Belonging is one of the most controversial issues in the identity construction of Jews in Turkey and the immigrants in Israel from Turkey. The expressions of the informants both in Turkey and in Israel demonstrate that Turkishness and being a Jew are the two main parts of their identity construction and these categories are not inherent. This displays that identity construction is an endless process. It is not solid, stabile or unchangeable. In other words, identity is continually in a process of reproduction and it changes according to time, place and context.

de il, yük ta ır, aldılar bizi. ... Bir gecede yelkenle srail’e geldik. Yarım gece gözlerimizi kapalıydı, görmeyelim diye. Biraz görmek için (sandık gibi bir kutu) araladık. Gece yarısı Kıbrıs’ı geçtik. Geldik buraya sabah. Bir gece sürdü, Hayfa’ya geldik. O zaman 48’den önce, ngilizler vardı. 48 Ocak ayında geldim. Burada kar vardı, çok so uktu. Hayfa’da ngilizler vardı ve çocuklar çok açtılar. Önce yemek verdiler.” ISRL9, 79, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 02.02.09.

²⁴³ *“Biz buraya Israil’in Mehmetçikleri olmak için geldik.” This is told by Hayim before I conducted interview with him, in my first attendance to weekly meetings of one of the associations which was founded by Jews of Turkey in Israel. ISRL3, 80, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 06.02.09.*

²⁴⁴ *“Bizim damarlarımızda Türk kanı akıyor. Bu kadar! Bu bitmez, ölünceye kadar.” ISRL13, 77, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 05.02.09.*

In Turkey, the informants claimed that Turkey was their homeland and it was where their ancestors' graves were. On the other hand, they did not state that they were Turkish as strongly as the informants in Israel did. But they also reported that they belonged to Turkey. Also, according to their statements, it can be argued that they felt as if they partially belonged to Israel, because when they talked about Israel, the image of Israel, life in Israel were much more idealized. What is of interest here is that they also admitted that they never preferred to immigrate to Israel. They highlighted the advantages of living in Israel. It was also recommended to the young generation. The religious factor is effective in this context as much as belonging. According to messianic belief, Israel is the holy and promised land of all Jews. In their traditional songs and also prayers longing for Israel and meeting there next time is stressed.

I met Eli and his wife Rebeka in the focus group interview in Istanbul. The focus group interview was done only once with two couples. They were in their early seventies. During the interview I tried to organize semi-structured discussions of their minority experiences and life in Israel as far as they knew. They perceived Turkey as their homeland and Israel as their dreamland. They were also very interested in the current political issues in both countries. According to Eli, living in Israel was more advantageous. He stated this as follow: "Here, there is no job for young people. You will go somewhere and work, then you will come back and see that everybody is gone. What will you do? Go there (Israel), at least you will get a job. At least you can be a sewerman. It is not a shame. I went to Israel. I saw a woman who was cleaning the washroom. It was her job. But she was dressed up so nicely that you thought that she was going to a party. Nothing is embarrassing there. It is a very nice thing."²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ "*Burada artık gençlere i kalmadı. Gideceksin bir yerlere çalı acaksın, döneceksin burada kimse yok. Ne yapacaksın? Git oraya hiç de ilse i ini gücünü kurarsın. Neticede, gidersin oraya la umcılık yaparsın. Utanmak yok. Ben srail'e gittim. Tuvalet temizleyicisini*

After Eli's words on Israel, I asked questions on migration. Eli said, "Jews here really love this homeland, but when it is necessity, what can a hungry man do? They went out of necessity."²⁴⁶ Rebeka started to talk about how she liked Israel and how she liked Turkey. She also mentioned the difficulties of life that the new immigrants had to deal with in the first years of Israel. Rebeka answered my question, "Have you ever thought of living there?" as follows:

It is really hard thing to start life from the beginning. You have to learn the language. I have lived here, I have grown up here. What am I going to do there? ... We love this homeland. ... I first went to the USA. After that, I went to Israel. I did not know, but I liked it there. But they had hard times. My sister's house was new, very nice in Rishon, but there was no asphalt on the roads. It was just sand. She commuted from her house to work on the muddy roads for years. Was not it hard? But there was a life there. At least they earned money. The kids were at school. They all had cars, their own houses. They became right men there. They could hardly go to school here. That's why she went.²⁴⁷

Later, we continued on to the reasons for migration. Eli argued that poor people went to Israel mostly. Than topic changed and it came to the names of Jews in Turkey, how they became Turkish names. Eli and other informants Ilya and Beki said that it was easier to have a Turkish name instead of a Jewish name. Beki cracked a joke about the fear, which could also be the reason for using Turkish names. Rebeka's voice rose and she

gördüm orada. i o. Ama kadın gayet güzel giyinmi , sanırsın davete gidiyor. ... Ayıp yok orada. Çok güzel bir ey." I.TR6, 74, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 29.12.08.

²⁴⁶ "*Buradaki Yahudiler umumiyetle bu vatani seviyorlar. Hakikaten. Ama mecburiyet oldu mu, aç adam ne yapar? ... Mecburiyetten gittiler."* Ibid.

²⁴⁷ "*Zor tabi, orada da ba tan ba layacaksın. Dil ö reneceksin. Ben ya adım burada, büyüdüüm burada. Ne i im var benim orada? ... Biz bu vatani çok seviyoruz. ... Ben önce Amerika'ya gittim. Amerika'dan sonra srail'e gittim ilk olarak. Bilmiyorum benim çok ho uma gitti. Çok kötü günler ya adılar. Benim ablamın evi, Ri on'da ama sıfır bir apartman. Çok güzel. Asfalt yoktu. Kum... Benim ablam bu ekilde kumun çamurun içinde eve gitti geldi. Zor de il mi? Ama orada hayat vardı. En azından para kazanıyordu. Çocuklar okulda. Arabaları, evleri var orada hepsinin. Adam oldular orada. Burada okula bile zar zor gönderirdi onları. O bakımdan gitti."* I.TR7, 71, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 29.12.08.

stated how she belonged to Turkey as follows: “There were people who went because they were poor, but the fear is not a word! Until now, nobody has killed us. God knows. I also argued this out in Israel, believe me. I am a fanatic of here, not there. Here is my land. I was born and grew up here. My kids are also like this. It is hard for us to go.”²⁴⁸

The informants in Israel talked much more openly about the social and state-based discrimination that they had experienced in Turkey as discussed above. Yet they had preserved their “Turkishness”. They had become Israeli Turks after they had immigrated to Israel. They had maintained their interest in Turkey’s politics, watching Turkish channels on TV, maintaining the customs and visiting Turkey even if they did not have relatives left there.²⁴⁹ In other words, they preserved their “Turkishness” and interest in things concerning Turkey. They were involved in the activities of the associations of the Turkish-Jewish community. Therefore, they chose their social environment to be among the Turkish-Jewish community. Even though the informants criticized anti-minority events in Turkey bitterly and mentioned that they had to come for push reasons, they also cited good memories. Almost all of them had positive feelings towards Turkey.²⁵⁰ Many had Turkish spouses. “But even those who do not

²⁴⁸ “*Fakir için gidenler ama korkmak için diye bir şey yok. İmdiye kadar kimse öldürmedi. Allah var yukarıda. Ben İsrail’de de kavga ederim bunun için. Nan ki öyle. Ben buranın fanatiyim. Oranın de il. Esas benim toprak burası. Ben do ma büyüme buralıyım. Benim çocuklarım da böyle. Bize gitmek çok zordur.*” Ibid.

²⁴⁹ For further discussion on the issue, see Amado.

²⁵⁰ Walter Weiker also observed this tendency of immigrants from Turkey in his semi-ethnographic study, see Weiker, *The Unseen*, p.6.

have kept their identification with Turkey at a high level and are proud of it. They also identify strongly as Jews and Israelis, however.”²⁵¹

This combination of Turkishness, Jewishness and Israeliness was also reflecting their religious activities. In Jerusalem, I visited the Sephardim synagogue in the Yemin Moshe district where former residents had been immigrants from Turkey, mostly from Izmir. Although Yemin Moshe gentrified many years ago and there was no Turkish-Jewish community left, the worshippers were the children of the former residents of the area. Every Friday they came from different parts of the city to meet and worship there. They kept their “Turkishness” even though only the older generation spoke Turkish. They all showed their hospitality when they learned that I was from Turkey.

The Jews from Turkey are one of the groups who are from the Middle-East region and did not come to Israel as a part of population exchange, but can return to their place of origin.²⁵² Therefore, they kept visiting Turkey and their relatives who resided in Turkey more often than other groups in Israel. It maintained their preservation of Turkishness and interest in things concerning Turkey.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Turkish-Jewish community in Israel constitutes a lobby for Turkey. Under the auspices of Turkish-Jewish associations, they are involved in activities which maintain good relations between Israel and Turkey. They also support Turkey in international conflicts such as the Armenian Genocide conflict between Turkey and Armenia.

Salomon, a journalist in Turkey who had visited Israel many times, had migrant relatives there. Due to his job and his relatives, he knew a lot about Turkish-Jews in

²⁵¹ Ibid., p.58.

²⁵² Daniel J. Elazar, “Foreword” in Weiker, *The Unseen Israelis*, p.vii.

Israel. As he had visited many countries due to his job, he shared his opinions on the immigrants from Turkey, especially Turkish-Jews in Israel as such:

Throughout my journeys including South Africa, America, I met many Greeks, Armenian and Jews who had emigrated from Turkey. It is very interesting that their heart still beats for Turkey. They left Turkey, but its nostalgia continues. They do not hate Turkey. Instead, they remember their neighbours and the Bosphorus. They say ‘The government at the time did this and this to us’. ... You will see when you will go to Israel. The Turkish-Jews there are trying to do something for Turkey as a duty that they feel. Just like the lobbies in the USA, although there are few Turkish-Jews, they constitute a lobby in Israel. In Germany three million Turkish people live, but I have not met anyone who tries to constitute a lobby for Turkey. In Israel, there is Association of People from Turkey, there is such devotion. This identity is retained there. In the country where people came from hundreds of different countries still say ‘Atatürk did these and these...’ It means that there remains no hatred. ... You will see there eighty year old people from the old generation. They experienced a lot of difficulties here, but they still speak in Turkish, their cuisine is Turkish. This has also an influence on the younger generation.²⁵³

Moiz, who came to Israel when he was sixteen illegally, said that he had immigrated in Israel for Zionism, which he strongly supported. During my interview with David at the Association of People from Turkey’s Bat-Yam office, he was walking around the office first. Then he came closer and sat next to us. After a while, when David were talking about discrimination in Turkey and the Capital Levy, which was a disaster for his family, he suddenly interrupted David and supported Turkey. He could not tolerate the criticism of Turkey even if was done by a kin. He stressed his positive

²⁵³ “Ben seyahatlerim boyunca, Güney Afrika’dan Amerika’ya kadar çok Rum, Ermeni ve Yahudi gördüm. Çok enteresan ki, adamların kalbi hala Türkiye için çarpıyor. Gidiyor, fakat nostaljisi devam ediyor. Türkiye’den nefret etmiyor. Bilakis, Bo azı, kom usunu hatırlıyor. ‘ te, o zamanki hükümet bize bunu yaptı’ diyor. ... srail’e gidince de göreceksiniz, Türk-Yahudiler var orada. Türkiye’ye hizmet duyguları içinde bir eyler yapmaya çalı an insanlar... Nasıl Amerika’da lobi yapanlar var ise, orada bir avuç Türk-Yahudi var, onlar lobi yapıyor. Almanya’da 3 milyon Türk var, orada hiç lobi yapan Türk görmedim. srail’de ‘Türkiyeliler Derne i’ var, böyle bir ba lılık var. Bu kimli i ta ima durumu var. 100 ülkeden gelen insanların içinde bir Türk Yahudiler böyle ‘Atatürk unu yaptı, bunu yaptı’ diyorlar... Demek ki öyle nefret falan kalmıyor. ... Orada göreceksiniz, 80 ya nda eski ku aktan insanlar var. Onlar ki burada baya ı sıkıntı çekmi insanlar, ama adam hala Türkçe konu uyor, evde Türk yemekleri pi iyor. Gençlere de sirayet ediyor bu” I.TR15, 81, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Istanbul, Turkey, 17.12.08.

feelings towards Turkey and Zionism as a reason for migration like this: “Turkey was good for us. We did not flee Turkey. When we were leaving we did not say, ‘Turks or Turkey is not good’. Turkey is a good country. Why did we leave Turkey then? Because according to what we were taught, one day Israel would be ours. That is called Zionism. All Jews read this and knew that when the day came, here Israel would be founded. We always loved Turkey, we were born there.”²⁵⁴

Ernst Renan argues that nationalism constitutes two basic principles: the past and the present. According to him to have a common legacy of remembrances and common will to continue to live together in the present are two of the important bases of nationalism.²⁵⁵ The Jews of Turkey in Israel had common or similar remembrances of their life of Turkey. They had their past in common. Also most of them had a common present since many of them lived together in the same districts, such as Bat-Yam and the associations and organizations founded by Turkish Jews in Israel. Therefore, their Turkishness continued. They wanted to preserve their Turkishness. However, as Izak mentioned, it was not the same for the younger generation. They had become Israelis.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ “*Bizim için Türkiye çok iyiydi. Biz Türkiye’den kaçmadık. Türkiye’den çıkarken de “Türkler ya da Türkiye iyi de il” demedik. Türkiye, bizim için iyi memleket. Biz neden çıktık Türkiye’den? Çünkü ö rendiklerimize göre, bir zaman gelecek ve srail bizim memleketimiz olacaktı. Buna Siyonizm derler. Bütün Yahudiler bunu okur. Zamanı gelince burada memleket kuracaklarını bilirler. Biz Türkiye’yi her zaman seviyorduk, çünkü orada büyüdük.*” ISRL2, 82, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 09.02.08.

²⁵⁵ Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?”, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 17.

²⁵⁶ “Turkishness” is preserved among the older generation. However, the younger generation that I met in Israel are far from their parents’ preservation of “Turkishness”. They did not speak Turkish, they knew only some words in Turkish. They were not interested in things concerning Turkey same as their parents were. However, they usually chose their spouses out of whose parents are either from Turkey or from the Middle-East.

Izak had immigrated to Israel in order to be a part of it. He was the fourth son of an upper-class family and well-educated. Even though he had been an idealist and also Zionist, as he mentioned, he stressed his Turkishness and also complained about how it would come to end when the older generation disappeared in dramatic words: “This old aged people as Turks; we still live in a Turkish atmosphere. But there is another point. It is almost gone and ended....Do you know what? The Turkish blood circulates in our veins. That’s it! This will never end till we die. The Turkish blood circulates in our veins.”²⁵⁷

Mena e’s words are very important to understanding how immigrants from Turkey became Israeli Turks in Israel: “People call me ‘Turk’ here; in Turkey I am a Jew.”²⁵⁸ Craig Calhoun explains the ethnic identity in the context of nationalism, which also helps to understand the Turkishness and Israeli identities of the informants in Israel. Nationalism, is a collective identity and also it is the base of a specific form of state which has dominated the world for the last two hundred years.²⁵⁹ Thus nationalism provides a sense of belonging in a large and complex system of the world, it is something sensuous.²⁶⁰ Therefore, it is not just a politic, but also a cultural and individual matter of fact. He claims that in every periphery, cultural and ethnic

²⁵⁷ “*Bu ya ta olanlar Türk olarak... Biz halen Türkiye havası ile ya ıyoruz. Fakat ba ka bir ey daha var. Bu gidiyor ve bitiyor. ... Biliyor musunuz nedir? Bizim damarlarımızda Türk kanı akıyor. Bu kadar! Bu bitmez, ölünceye kadar. Bizim damarlarımızda Türk kanı akıyor.*” ISRL13, 77, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 05.02.09.

²⁵⁸ “*Burada beni tanırlar Türk, Türkiye’de ben Yahudiyim.*” ISRL6, 78, interview by the author of the thesis, tape recording, Bat-Yam, Israel, 10.02.09.

²⁵⁹ Craig Calhoun, *Milliyetçilik*, Translated by Bilge Sütçüo lu, (stanbul: stanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2007), p. 3.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 175.

differences are organized differently. In order to explain this, he gives cultural and ethnic differences among Jews in Israel as an example as such:

... Jews are not only ethnically diverse because of histories in disparate cultures, but which features of Jewish identity became salient –for Jews or for others- has varied enormously with context. ... Jews who came to Israel from different parts of the world brought a variety of influences from the settings where they and their ancestors had lived, often spoke different languages before learning Hebrew, practiced different forms of Judaism and in some cases looked different from each other. Ethnic identities, in short do not just come from within; they are produced in worlds of plural ethnic identities. They divide as well as unify ... In this, ethnic identities are like national identities, which also never stand alone.²⁶¹

These demonstrates that belonging is complicated, contradictory and multiple.

This is much more recognizable especially in immigrant countries where people such as Israel migrants emphasize their ethnic identities more than their native country in order to preserve their culture and to distinguish themselves from other ethnic groups. This situation unites them with other Jews who are from Turkey but separates them from other Jews in Israel where ethnic origin is different. In the end, the Israeli identity exists with the Turkish identity together. In other words, their Israeli nationalism can exist together with their ethnic identities as Turks in Israel.

42. ²⁶¹ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The migration of the Jews of Turkey has been one of the largest mass emigrations of minorities out of Turkey. Although the migration of Jews from Turkey is one of the most crucial and extensive ethnic migrations, it has not been given much attention by scholars or researchers. What differs their migration from those of other ethnic emigrations out of Turkey and from other immigrant groups in Israel was Turkey's Jews immigration to Israel depended on their own free will. They could return to visit or to live in Turkey. However, since the Jewish elite and the leaders of the Jewish community and the Turkish Republic have appropriated the official discourse, which claims that Jews lived in tranquility and peace in the Ottoman Empire and in Turkey, the migration of 40,000 people as an historical and social event has been underestimated.

Migrations are multi-dimensional social, politic, economic and historical events. Therefore, explaining the reasons for the mass migration of Turkey's Jews to Israel solely by economic, ideological or social reasons is incompetent. Regarding this, this study analyzed the memories of migration with the aim of highlighting micro and macro factors in the light of the Turkey's internal and Middle Eastern policy. In other words, this thesis associated the political, economic and social circumstances in Turkey with the stages of migration with the aim of examining the memories and different ways of remembering the migration.

The creation of a Turkish nation in which a common language, religion and history considered in the foundation of Turkish Republic after the fall of the Ottoman

Empire, caused the Jewish community in Turkey as with the other minorities subject to exclusion from the definition of Turkish nation due to their differences in religion and language. Therefore minorities were considered outsiders and were alienated by discriminatory policies, especially during the first thirty years of the Republic. This situation also played a role in the Jewish emigration out of Turkey. This study also argued that push factors such as the limited economic conditions of the lower class Jews, the social exclusion and discriminatory policies of single-party era, and pull factors such as the economic opportunities that the State of Israel offered the immigrants' goal of eluding their minority status and reaching the promised land of Jews or Zionism motivated the migration.

This study combined minorities and immigrants in one analysis in order to compare and contrast their perspectives and narratives of the migration. The narratives of the Turkish Jews in Turkey and in Israel explored and analyzed on an individual level to the memories of migration of Turkey's Jews between 1945 and 1955. Memories of the anti-minority events of the 1940s and 1950s and the political dynamics of the first 30 years of the Turkish Republic were analyzed in order to explore the contradictions between memories and understanding the pull and push factors of the Turkish Jewish minority and Turkish Jewish immigrants.

The method of oral history was used in exploring the narratives of migration because oral history offers an invaluable tool for understanding the suppressed or ignored narratives of historical events as well as understanding contemporary issues of identity.²⁶² Oral history also presents the effect of the past events on the subjects. In other words, oral history reveals how these events are experienced and interpreted

²⁶² Neyzi, *istanbul'da*, p. 2.

through the medium of memory.²⁶³ By focusing on the experiences of the immigrants and observations of the Jews in Turkey the study aimed to challenge the homogenized picture of Jews and migration by highlighting their different interpretations of the migration as well as their ideas about the Turkish-Jewish identity. Therefore, the narrated experiences were taken into consideration for analyzing the pre-migration stories and the life conditions of each agent which determined the ways of migration, their motivations and the social and political circumstances in which the experiences took place. In other words, this study focused on oral narratives in understanding the social context of the era, the pre-migration lives of the informants and the perspectives and experiences of the migration.

It was attempted to respond to the gap of the experiences and perspectives of the individuals who participated in the migration flow from Turkey to Israel and who witnessed it in the literature of Jews. This current study contributes to the existing literature by providing analyses on the individual level of people who experienced or witnessed the migration. Research was conducted on the narratives of the migration of Jews from Turkey who immigrated to Israel and Jews of Turkey who did not participate in the mass migration and continued to live in Turkey on the ethnographical base. By conducting oral history interviews with Turkey's Jewish minority and Turkish-Jewish immigrants in Israel a comparative study was constructed. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve informants in Istanbul within six months, from September 2008 to January 2009, and with twenty informants in Israel within one and a half months, between January and March 2009. All the informants interviewed in Israel and in Turkey were over the age of 70 except for three informants in Turkey, who were around age of 60. Apart from interviews, books on the memories

²⁶³ Portelli, "Oral History", p. 73.

of Turkey's Jews, fictions based on anti-Minority events in Turkey and interviews of the oral history project Centropa with Jewish minority in Turkey were involved in the study.

The main differences and similarities between approaches of the informants both in Turkey and in Israel on migration constituted the centre of the analyses. The present study argued that this differences and similarities depended on the age, class differences and life experiences of the informants. The country where informants currently resided had a crucial role on determining the informants' approaches on past events and migration. These factors determine the narration of the migration, issues beyond migration such as the Jewish identity in Turkey and Israeli Turks in Israel were also analyzed.

It was argued that the ways of remembering the migration and the representation of the past differs. In exploring the discrepancy between the approaches of migration in Israel and in Turkey, class difference, the age of the informants and the political dynamics pertaining to the country where informants currently resided were considered. The first contradiction was between Turkey's Jews and the Jews from Turkey in Israel in the understanding of nationalism and the conceptualization of the reasons of the Turkey's Jews' migration. In Turkey, the silence of the older generation about the past anti-minority events was analyzed with regard to their existing minority status. However, in Israel the informants expressed the discrimination that they had experienced in Turkey, what being minority had meant in Turkey and its impact on the migration decision. Their majority status as being Jews in Israel affected the interviewees approaches to past events.

The different perspectives on the migration and identity issue among different generations in Turkey were also discussed. Based on the field research, the younger

generations' directness about discrimination and the Jewish identity was considered a reaction to the silence of the older generation and a deeply analyses of past events by the virtue of narrations and research on the issue as well as the changing dynamics of the time being. The younger generation's tendency to criticize Turkey's minority politics and Jewish community were also scrutinized.

Another contradiction between the approaches of the informants in Turkey and Israel was about the reasons for the migration. In Turkey, the most significant motivation for the migration was assumed to have been poverty. However, in Israel, the idealism or Zionism was the most common individual motivation given by the informants. The same informants in Israel who criticized anti-minority events also expressed their pride in being Israeli Turks.

Although in Turkey the informants assumed Turkey as their homeland, Israel was considered as the holy land. The image of Israel and life in Israel were highly idealized over life in Turkey. On the other hand, in Israel it was observed that Turkish and Israeli nationalisms were combined in the immigrants' identities. The older generation of immigrants maintain their "Turkish" culture, although they had become well-integrated Israelis. They expressed their devotion to Turkey and stressed their Turkishness.

The emigration of Turkey's Jews from Turkey is more complicated than the scope of this thesis. Therefore this study has certain weaknesses and contains a lack of analyses which might be dwelled in further research on the history of migration and modern Turkey. Communities in other cities in Turkey such as Izmir, Çanakkale, Bursa, Adana andanlıurfa should be examined in order to understand characteristics of the groups that are different from those of the community in Istanbul. Also in Israel, besides Bat-Yam, Yehud and Tel-Aviv, there are more cities where Jews from Turkey resides.

Interviews with them might lead to different analyses. This study presented mostly the older generation in Turkey and in Israel. In Israel the study covered only the immigrants who arrived in Israel between 1945 and 1955. However, more interviews could be conducted with the younger generation in Turkey and in Israel as well as with immigrants who arrived in Israel after 1955, which would make the study large-scaled and more dimensional.

It would be contributory of future research to focusing on the second and third generations of immigrants in Israel and Jews in Turkey. This study also presented mainly the male informants' perspectives and narrations. Because the time allocated for the study was limited; we were not able to chose more appropriate informants in order to reach equal analyses in the gender context. The interviews were conducted with only five female informants in each country. Therefore, this thesis presented male-dominant narratives. Nevertheless, gender deserves more attention in order to understand not only the different narratives of historical events but also to understand the effect of these events on women's lives. Moreover, the Jewish emigration out of Turkey had other destinations than Israel such as USA, France, Spain and South America. A future study which compares these communities with the one in Israel would contribute to the literature to a great extent.

It is hoped that this thesis contributes not only to the existing literature on migration and Turkish Jews, but also to confrontation of suppressed or ignored narratives of past events by recording individuals' experiences of being Turkish immigrants in Israel or being minorities in Turkey. Analyzing the reasons and results of the past events like ethnic migrations would contribute to the attempts at finding a solution to social and political problems that we face in Turkey. Regarding this, these analyses would elucidate the contemporary identity and nationality issues of Turkey.

APPENDIX A

PROFILE OF THE INFORMANTS IN TURKEY

Code	Age	Gender	Birth Place	Mother Tongue	Education	Emigrant Relative	Estimated Reasons for the Migration
I.CNTTR1 Leon	73	Male	Edirne	Ladino Turkish	Elementary	Yes	Economic Dispute inside the community
I.CNTTR2 Albert	83	Male	Istanbul	Ladino Turkish	Left Middle School	Yes	Capital Levy Events of 6-7
I.CNTTR3 Selim	85	Male	Istanbul Hasköy	Ladino	Elementary	Yes	Economic
I.TR4 Ilya 29.11.08	82	Male	Istanbul i hane	Ladino	None	Yes	Economic
I.TR5 Beki 29.11.08	71	Female	Istanbul Balat	Ladino	Middle School	Yes	Economic
I.TR6 Eli 29.11.08	74	Male	Istanbul Balat	Ladino Turkish	Elementary	Yes	Indigence due to 20 Class Capital Levy
I.TR7 Rebeka 29.11.08	71	Female	Istanbul Balat	Ladino	Left Elementary School	Yes	Economic
I.TR8 Berta 06.12.08	86	Female	Istanbul	Ladino	Middle School	Yes	Expediency Fear
I.TR9 Samuel 16.12.08	87	Male	Tekirda	Ladino Turkish	Left Middle School	Yes	Economic
I.TR10 Nisim 16.12.08	89	Male	Istanbul Galata	Ladino Turkish	Left Middle School	Yes	No idea
I.TR11 Karin 16.12.08	64	Female	Istanbul	Turkish	Left University	–	Economic

Code	Age	Gender	Birth Place	Mother Tongue	Education	Emigrant Relative	Estimated Reasons for the Migration
I.TR12 Jinet 13.11.08	59	Female	Istanbul	French Turkish	University	No	Indulgence Discrimination
I.TR13 Avram 27.11.08	64	Male	Istanbul	Ladino Turkish	Collage (Jewish Institute of Religion)	Yes	Indigence Freedom in Israel
I.TR14 David 27.11.08	77	Male	Istanbul	Ladino	Collage (Jewish Institute of Religion)	Yes	Economic
I.TR15 Salomon 17.12.08	81	Male	Istanbul	French Ladino Turkish	High School	Yes	Economic, Discrimination Idealism Expediency

APPENDIX B

PROFILE OF THE INFORMANTS IN ISRAEL

Code	Age	Gender	Birth Place	Mother Tongue	Education	Year of Migration Legal/Illegal	Reasons for Migration
ISRL1 David 9.2.09	79	Male	Bursa	Ladino	Left Elementary School	1943 Illegal	Idealism due to Capital Levy Friends
ISRL2 Moiz 9.2.09	82	Male	Cuba	Ladino	Left Middle School	1943 Illegal	Zionism
ISRL 3 Hayim 6.2.09	80	Male	Istanbul Sirkeci	Ladino Turkish	Elementary	1949 Legal	Zionism
ISRL4 Ester 6.2.09	79	Female	Bursa	Ladino Turkish	Elementary	1949 Legal	Immigrant Relatives Indigence
ISRL5 Moshe 10.2.09	83	Male	Izmir	Greek Turkish	High School	1943/1971 Illegal/Legal	Zionism
ISRL6 Menashe 11.2.09	78	Male	Tekirda	Ladino Turkish	Elementary	1948 Legal	Idealism
ISRL7 Ye ua 31.1.09	80	Male	Izmir	Ladino Turkish	-	1947 Illegal	Zionism due to Capital Levy
ISRL8 Leyla 1.2.09	77	Female	Istanbul Kasimpa a	Ladino	Elementary	1949 Legal	Indigence
ISRL9 Albert 2.2.09	79	Male	Istanbul Kasimpa a	Ladino Turkish	Left Elementary School	1948 Illegal	Idealism Indigence
ISRL10 Estreya 2.2.09	70	Female	Istanbul Galata	Ladino Turkish	Middle School	1955 Legal	Freedom
ISRL11 Leon 4.2.09	90	Male	Istanbul Kuledibi	Ladino French Turkish	High school	1934/1944 Legal/ Illegal	Zionism

Code	Age	Gender	Birth Place	Mother Tongue	Education	Year of Migration Legal/Illegal	Reasons for Migration
ISRL12 Yeuda 4.2.09	76	Male	Izmir	Ladino Turkish	Left Middle School	1948 Illegal	Zionism
ISRL13 Izak 5.2.09	77	Male	Istanbul Tepeba 1	Ladino	Middle School	1948 Legal	Zionism Indigence
ISRL14 Jak 9.2.09	73	Male	Izmir	Turkish	Left High School	1943/1949 Legal/ Illegal	CapitalLevy/ Zionism, Social Pressure
ISRL15 22.2.09 Rakel	71	Female	Istanbul Kadıköy	Turkish Ladino	Elementary	1950 Legal	Relatives
ISRL16 Daniel 5.2.09	78	Male	Kırklareli	Ladino Turkish	Left High School	1948 Legal	Friends
ISRL17 Yosef	85	Male	Izmir	Ladino Turkish	Elementary	1949 Legal	Relatives
ISRL18 Rıfat	80	Male	Izmir	Ladino Turkish	Middle School	1949 Legal	Poverty
ISRL19 Selim 27.01.09	70	Male	Izmir	Turkish Ladino	University	1970 Legal	Relatives Poverty
ISRL20 Sara 5.2.09	70	Female	Istanbul	Turkish Ladino	High School	1975 Legal	Relatives

APPENDIX C

PHOTOS OF MIGRANTS FROM TURKEY IN ISRAEL



Young Soldiers of Israel who immigrated from Turkey (1949)



Girls of Neemaney Zion in front of tents in kibbutz



Group of Young Immigrants from Turkey founded a kibbutz in Israel

APPENDIX D

PHOTOS OF MIGRANT FAMILIES IN ISTANBUL BEFORE MIGRATION







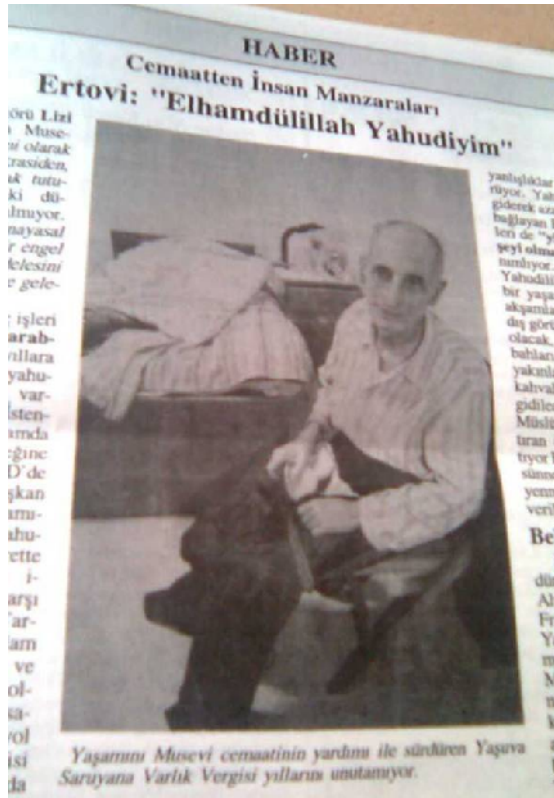


APPENDIX E

PUBLICATIONS OF TURKISH-JEWISH IMMIGRANTS IN ISRAEL



Newspaper *Haber*: Organo de los Judios de Turkia en Israel.



An article about a member of Jewish community in Turkey. He says: "Elhamdülillah (thank God in Arabic) I am a Jew."



Journal *Dostluk*: Special Issue on *Aliyah* (migration) December 1987- January 1988 No: 18.

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