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# JEWISH MIGRATION FROM TURKEY TO ISRAEL AFTER THE FOUNDATION OF ISRAEL

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### Abstract

From Turkey to Israel after the foundation of the Israeli state is one of the most interesting events in recent Turkish history. Foundation of the Israeli State was one of the main reasons that led to the immigration of most of the Turkish Jews from Turkey to Israel. If this issue is looked at closely, it could also be seen that the reason behind the migration of some of the Turkish Jews were rather personal, such as higher pay rates, better employment opportunities, and religious feelings. It is also important to emphasize that, on the whole, Turkish Jews who migrated from Turkey to Israel had positive impressions and memories about Turkish society and Turkey.

**Keywords:** Israel, Turkey, Turkish Jews

## İSRAİL'İN KURULMASINDAN SONRA TÜRKİYE'DEN İSRAİL'E YAHUDİLERİN GÖÇÜ

### Öz

İsrail Devleti'nin kurulmasından sonra Türkiye'den İsrail'e Yahudi göçü, yakın Türkiye tarihinin en dikkat çekici olaylarından birisidir. Türkiye'den Museviler yoğun biçimde İsrail'e göç etmişlerdir. Bu göçün nedeni olarak daha yüksek ücretle çalışabilecekleri iyi bir iş edinme umudu yanı sıra dini duygular da etkili olmuştur. İsrail'e göç eden Museviler, Türk Toplumunu ile İsrail arasında iyi ilişkilerin oluşumuna önemli katkılar sunmuşlardır.

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İsrail, İsrail'e Göç, Türkiye, Türkiyeli Museviler, Türkiye ve İsrail

It is known that Judaism has had a long and deeply rooted history in Turkey. During its transformation from the Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic, there have been political changes in Turkey's regulations regarding the remnants of minorities from the Ottoman Empire. Treaty of Lausanne, signed on July 24th 1923, approached the status of Turkish Jews as a minority just as it had done with other minorities<sup>1</sup>. Jewish communities lived in various locations in Turkey, and among these places Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa and Edirne were where the Jewish population was dense. They had their own synagogues as their places of worship. They kept their unique culture and lived as law-abiding citizens of Turkey. Apart from the proposal of Turkification of the Jews during periods of extreme Turkish patriotism<sup>2</sup>, there have not been any major problems between the Jewish minority and Turkish society. Even during the years of War of Independence, the differences in opinions that were experienced between the Turks and the Armenians and the Orthodox Greeks were not experienced between the Turks and the Jewish community. Moreover, Rabbi Nahum Efendi and his congregation openly supported the efforts of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to establish a new nation and to fight against imperialism<sup>3</sup>. In addition to the Third Sword sent from the Republic of Bukhara, 500 Turkish Liras were sent by a Jewish businessman, Misbah Efendi, to the order of the Commander of the West Front<sup>4</sup>. There was a great admiration for especially Mustafa Kemal Pasha among the Jewish community. According to the famous Jewish writer Avram Galanti from Turkey, Mustafa Kemal was and is the greatest man of all times<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, Davit Fresco expressed on the El Tyempo on 27 October 1922 that freedom of religion, justice and tolerance had prevailed in Turkey for over centuries and that the Turkish Jews were going to continue living with same feelings. He was expressing that they would closely observe the developments in this transition period and advising the Turkish Jews to fulfill their responsibilities in this new period; and he concluded his article by saying "Because we are the children of this homeland". Rabbi Nahum Efendi was the person who was appointed by

<sup>1</sup> Çetin Yetkin, *Türkiye'nin Devlet Yaşamında Yahudiler*, Afa Press, İstanbul 1992 p.241.

<sup>2</sup> Asım Us, *Hatıra Notları, 1930-1950*, İstanbul, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> Kemal Arı, "*Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Musevi Cemaati ve Hahambaşı Hayım Nahum Efendi*", *Communiques The Joint Turkish-Israeli Military History Conference: II*, Gnkur Press, Ankara, 2003, p.43-57.

<sup>4</sup> Kemal Arı, *Üçüncü Kılıç: İzmir'in Kurtuluşu ve Yüzbaşı Şerafettin*, Zeus Press, İzmir, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Avram Galanti, *Türkler ve Yahudiler*, Gözlem Press, İstanbul, 1995, p.45.

Mustafa Kemal Pasha during the Turkish War of Independence to explain the Turkish thesis to the Western countries and especially to the United States, and he was the advisor of the committee responsible for the status of the minorities during the Treaty of Lausanne<sup>6</sup>. When King's commission came to Turkey and asked about the attitudes of the minorities about this period of transition, the Jewish community was not provoked by any of the external instigations. During this new period, Turkish Jews did not step back from showing their commitment to Turkey. The *Ikdam* and the *Vakit*, which were papers printed in Turkey, contained articles about the behaviors and position of Rabbi Nahum in Lausanne. Moreover, the *Ikdam* wrote about him as: "Someone who had always worked for the best of the nation with all his effort. We shake and even kiss his clean hands. He and those like him always have a place on top of our heads. For the people of this country, there is no difference among Ahmet, Mehmet and Rabbi Nayum"<sup>7</sup>. Despite these positive feelings, the Jewish community was affected by the feelings of fervid nationalism. First on the *Tasvir-i Efkâr* then on the *Ileri* and the *Türk Sesi*, articles that expressed ideas against the Jews made their appearance<sup>8</sup>. Although it was seen in the interview between the Chief Rabbi of Izmir, Rabbi Moshe, and the *Tasvir-i Efkâr* that there were humiliating remarks about the Jewish community and the chief rabbi, this was only for a transitory period. Within the framework of attempts to create a national economy, these negative thoughts were based on the fact that the Jews had the possession of considerable capital. Although these negative views appeared on the press from time to time, they were never observed at administrative levels. What is more was that this negative period was replaced by a wiser period after a year or two. During this period, income tax that had started to be collected on November 11th 1942, which was the time of World War II, was disrupted. The aim of this taxation was to get tax from those who had unfairly made money during World War II. This taxation was mainly targeting the minorities and it was said that it was with the influence of Germany. For example, one of the people who had great responsibility in the issuance of this tax, Treasurer of Istanbul, Faik Ökte had written in his memoirs "*Hitler's hysterical rashtas have started to pass by our borders*"<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Avner Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler*, İletişim Press, İstanbul, 1996, p.22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, s.22.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> Faik ÖKTE, *Varlık Vergisi Faciası*, Nebioğlu Press, p..81

Filled with ups and downs, the strongest blow of this period came with the foundation of the Israel State on the Palestinian land in 1948. This was, without doubt, one of the most significant events of the postwar years. Palestine was on a region related to Syria under the administration of the Ottoman Empire until World War I. The army commanded by General Allenby detached Palestine from the Ottoman Empire in 1918. After World War I, French mandate was formed in Syria, and Palestine was handed over to English mandate. Balfour Declaration was proposing the foundation of a Jewish country on this territory<sup>10</sup>. While they were under the English mandate, there were continuous struggles between the Jewish settlers and the Palestinian Arabs. A continuous Jewish migration was irritating the Arab residents in the region, and as new settlements were being established, there were bloody hostilities and terrorist activities that were even unstoppable by the British. As the problem became bigger and bigger, all the Arab world became concerned about it and the Jewish presence in the region was faced with the reaction of Jordan and Egypt. The dense Jewish massacres that took place in Germany and to some extent in Italy during World War II had created a positive image and sympathy in public opinion worldwide. Immediately after the war, the idea of providing these oppressed people with homeland where they would be able to live peacefully started to be written about on significant newspapers and to be uttered by politicians. This period gained momentum after the war. Settlers on Palestinian land and their political representatives talked more and more about a Palestinian motherland. As more Jews migrated to the region, the pressure on the Palestinian Arabs was increasing, and they were being forced to abandon their lands and emigrate, and the Palestinian refugees were immigrating to the Arab countries in the region. This state of affairs caused serious concerns among the Arab world. During this period, Turkey was presenting itself as being closer to the Arab world's thesis. Actually, this could very clearly be observed in the official reports of England and the USA. There was a sense of Islamic unity, and Turkey was observing this sense Islamic closeness with interest within the conjuncture of those times. On the other hand, as the region was under the mandate of England, she was constantly expressing that it was against the foundation of the Israeli state<sup>11</sup>.

In the meantime, attacks on the Palestinian Arabs were not coming to a stop, and the English administration could no way stop these. The Jews were attacking the Palestinians endlessly. When some Palestinian cities were laid

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<sup>10</sup> Levi, *ibid*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 158-162.

siege to by the Jewish troops, and when Jewish troops started attacking Jerusalem, a united army of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon entered Palestine. This was how the Arab Israeli War began<sup>12</sup>. All Palestinian land was being the stage where one to one combat took place and there was bloodshed everywhere. A Secretary Of Arab Unity was formed in Damascus and announcements related to the issue were being made by it<sup>13</sup>. At the beginning of this period, the Jewish Council declared the Foundation of the Israeli State<sup>14</sup>. It was officially founded on May 14th 1948. The name of this state was Israel. After this declaration, England made an official announcement stating that its mandate of Palestinian lands have seized. On May 15th 1948, General Cunningham left the Palestinian lands. This marked the end of the 27-year old English mandate of the region. King Abdullah of Jordan had the mission of bringing peace until then, but had not been able to succeed in his attempts. Egypt expressed that it would not allow the foundation of an Israeli state adjacent to its border, and started taking action and Syria and Iraq contributed to the United Arab army by providing significant number of soldiers. Israel was besieged from four sides; and King Abdullah published a decree stating that since the English Mandate in the region had ended, Balfour Declaration was null and void<sup>15</sup>. Despite the fact that the president of the USA, Truman, had been stating that it was against the foundation of an Israeli state, and the only solution in Palestine should be serving peace on world, its hesitant posture to accept this new state did not last long and the USA accepted the Israeli State. The argument proposed was not to loose the political support of the Jewish residents in America<sup>16</sup>. On one hand the United Arab Army was advancing on the Palestinian lands and Egyptian troops were approaching Tel Aviv, on the other hand countries were as if they were in a competition to accept the Israeli State. On the day following the USA officially announced its acceptance of Israel, the USSR also declared its acceptance of the new state<sup>17</sup>. In the meantime, British troops in the region were still abandoning the Palestinian lands. After a week-long military encounters, Egyptian and Jordanian armies had united, the problem was on a path to be solved as wished by the Arab world, the USA and England delivered a note to the Arab countries to

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<sup>12</sup> Cumhuriyet, 15 May 1948.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 15 May 1948.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 15 May 1948.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 15 May 1948.

<sup>16</sup> Abidin Daver, "Kan ve Ateş İçinde Doğan Bir Devlet", Cumhuriyet, 16 May 1948.

<sup>17</sup> Cumhuriyet, 18 May 1948.

follow the ceasefire as called out by the UN Security Council<sup>18</sup>. The president of the new Israeli State, Weizmann, was reporting to worldwide news agencies that the USA was going to donate money and weapons to Israel<sup>19</sup>.

These being the state of affairs on the world, the Arab Army had not stopped, and were in Jerusalem and were approaching Tel Aviv. As Israel requested help from the USSR, the Arab World accepted the armistice proposal. The ground was prepared for armistice on June 10th<sup>20</sup>.

In reality, the English Mandate had spent efforts for the foundation of an Israeli State. Therefore, the Arab world had always objected to the English mandate rule. Shortly before the Second World War, England believed that a national Jewish homeland was founded and decided to keep the population of Palestine as 2-3 Arab and 1-3 Jewish. It was restricting the Jewish immigration to the region according to this principal. Hence, England had the idea of establishing an Arab Jewish state. However, even this fact could not satisfy the Zionists. Hence, after the war had ended, they did not refrain from opposing England who had been very generous in donating Palestinian land to make their homeland. They were making use of their power in the USA for this. When the United Nations decided to divide the land between the Israeli State and the Palestinians, Palestinian Arabs rebelled; and as response the Jews got armed and conquered many places in Palestine. Consequently, Arabs were forced to migrate, and they left their homeland and went to Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo and Egypt as refugees<sup>21</sup>.

As the Arabs were being forced to abandon their homelands, a vast wave of Jewish migration started from all over the world to Israel. Regardless of whether from East or West they were migrating from the USA, the USSR, Bulgaria, Romania, and Germany. Actually, this was not something that happened by itself. Israel was especially supporting the Jewish migration. According to what the American reporters in Tel Aviv stated, and what was reported on the Herald Tribune, Israelites were intending to house at least one million Zionist immigrants in the Negev Region. These immigrants had already been arriving in large waves to Israel<sup>22</sup>. There were rich sources of mines in the Negev region, and they could be a source of economic gain<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 25 May 1948.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 26 May 1948.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 10 June 1948.

<sup>21</sup> Ömer Rıza Doğrul, "Filistin Savaşı'nın Hakiki Mahiyeti", Cumhuriyet, 18 June 1948.

<sup>22</sup> Cumhuriyet, 7 November 1948.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 7 November 1948.

The news of the foundation of Israel was a source of motivation for the Jews who immigrated to that region to become Israeli citizens. Of course, reasons behind migrations to Israel varied from time to time. Besides the economic reasons, there were political and mystical reasons. Perhaps, the aim of the mystical reason was that the Jews who had lived more than 2000 years in the Diaspora perceived the foundation of the Israeli state as a mystical obligation. It is possible to understand this feeling from the perspective of social psychology. It can be said that this feeling was very intense between the years of 1948-1954, where migration numbers were at peak. Of course, the Turkish Jews could not remain ignorant when approximately 6 million Jews were massacred in Germany<sup>24</sup>. This genocide created a sense of unity among the Jews worldwide. This strong sense of unity prepared the psychological grounds for migrations to Israel for the sake of unification after the foundation of Israel. Moreover, effects of "Wealth Tax" were still observed on the Jewish community in Turkey, and "Turkist/ Nationalist" waves and discourse related to these feelings were stated as being the primary reason that provoked the Turkish Jews to immigrate to Israel. After all, such political fluctuations were causing the rise of reasons preventing the amalgamation of the communities on ethnic and religious basis<sup>25</sup>.

Foundation of the Israeli State caused great enthusiasm among the Turkish Jews just as it had among the Jews elsewhere on the world. Right before the foundation, the number of Jews in Turkey was around 120.000<sup>26</sup>. They had started to view Israel as their homeland. After the Foundation of Israel, owing to the support of the Israeli politicians, the disposition to immigrate to Israel from Turkey gained momentum, and it was the same everywhere on the world. These emigrants were expecting a powerful economic future in the new state. The aftermath of World War II was that of economic depression and hardly anyone was economically comfortable<sup>27</sup>. The unpleasant memory of the 1943 Wealth Tax was still very fresh in the memories of people. With the introduction of this tax, bankruptcy had become inevitable, and those who had not been able to pay their taxes had been made to work at work camps. This, of course,

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<sup>24</sup> Selim Amado, "İsrail'de Türkiye Kökenli Yahudiler", *Görüş*, September 2003, p.52.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.

<sup>27</sup> Kemal Arı, "İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yıllarında Türkiye'de Savaş Ekonomisi Uygulamaları ve Fiyatlar", 6<sup>th</sup> Military History Conference (*İstanbul; 20-22 October 1997*), Vol.I, Gnkur. Press, Ankara, 1998, pp. 447-458.

brought with itself an economic recession for many members of the Jewish community. However, one thing was sure: Turkey had not been able to overthrow the burdens of the war years. Therefore, Wealth Tax and Severance Tax were still being collected. These years witnessed many people's prospering through black marketing as it witnessed the bankruptcy of many wealthy people. In big cities like Istanbul and Izmir, there were members of the Jewish community who were poverty stricken and hopeless, who had lost their homes and had to live in others' houses, and even there were those who were street traders, porters, servants and panhandlers. However, the newly founded state was promising them a powerful and a bright future. At least, Turkish Jews strongly believed in this. They were hoping that they would have new opportunities in the new state and would rise to affluence.

Jews had been living all around the world, and the fact that they were scattered caused them to view uniting on the motherland as a national motivation. This was a Zionist duty. In their history as a religious community, there had been scattering, exile and migrations for thousands of years. The genocide that the Jews were the victims of in Germany during World War II had sharpened the shared feeling and had fueled feelings of unity and cooperation. This period filled with tears, bloodshed and deaths had encouraged the religious and mystic motivations that had been in them for years over years. It was without doubt that the Jewish Community in Turkey had not remained ignorant to the massacre and genocide of the Jewish population the number of which had reached around 6 million<sup>28</sup>. This event had created a strong sense of unification among the members of the Jews worldwide. After the foundation of the Israeli State, this strong sense of unity became the psychological foundation of the Jewish migrations. The "Turkic/Nationalist" emotional fluctuations and the related discourse may have been perceived as one of the major causes that led the Turkish Jews to emigrate<sup>29</sup>.

As the Second World War ended, the Turkish government of the time took some measures to ease travelling abroad, and this made travelling to the land of Palestine easier. This reason and the announcement of the foundation of the Israeli State escalated the number of the people who wanted to emigrate from Turkey. It was quite striking that the majority of those who applied were Turkish Jews. At first, it was perceived as the decrease of pressure of the post-war years.

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<sup>28</sup> Amado, *ibid*, p.52.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.

Those who were applying for passports were planning to go to Italy and France as well as Palestine<sup>30</sup>. Eventually, there was an increase in the number of those who wanted to go to Palestine. Because Turkey had not accepted the newly founded Israeli state, it was referring to the land where these people had immigrated to as Palestine. Only in August and September of 1948, the number of those who applied to go to Israel had exceeded 800. Owing to this increase in applications, there were waiting lines to get passports. Majority of those who were applying were the young generation members. When asked about their reason of travelling, they were responding as “to see their relatives, due to medical reasons, for education and “ to settle in Palestine which was accepted as the homeland of the Jews”. It was clearly seen that this strong urge to immigrate to Palestine was going to increase even more. Salomon Adatto, a Turkish Member of the Parliament of Jewish background, had stated that this desire to go to Israel was partly provoked by travel agencies. According to him, these agencies were making up stories and drawing a picture of paradise-like Palestine. However, Adatto was stating that “these people who are going there to satisfy their greedy ambitions will have to face unpleasant conditions”<sup>31</sup>. The numbers of those applying to get passports to travel to Israel were increasing. By the end of 20 October 1948, their number had reached 1200. According to the observations of one reporter, it was quite shocking that majority of those who wanted to emigrate were from the wealthy backgrounds. There were rumors that the Turkish Jews would travel on a ship either sent from Israel or rented from Istanbul and their destination would be Haifa. These rumors spread to cities out of Istanbul. There was even news that some of the Jews living in Bursa had started collecting gold from the local people by offering them prices high above their real value. There were suspicions that these gold collected would be sent to Israel with some kind of a secret organization<sup>32</sup>. However, that was a serious issue back then, because Turkish laws and practices were strictly prohibiting taking valuables that were observed as Turkish wealth and capital out of Turkish boundaries.

There had been people who had immigrated to the land of Palestine before the foundation of the Israeli state. With the migrations from all over the world, the numbers of those expecting to be housed on the lands taken away from the

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<sup>30</sup> Cumhuriyet, 20 October 1948.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 20 September 1948.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 21 October 1948.

Palestinian's was increasing. It was as if Jews from everywhere were pouring to Haifa ports. Those who had emigrated from Turkey to those lands started sending letters to their relatives and friends and they were expressing how hopeful they were about the future of Israel and emphasizing that the early settlers were acquiring certain economical privileges. Meanwhile, Israeli Army was being founded and it was developing. It was among the rumors that they were hiring military officers for vacant positions. Furthermore, there were exaggerations stating that Turkish Jews who had completed their compulsory military duty in Turkey and who had immigrated to Israel were being promoted to high positions in the Israeli army. Of course, these overstatements were promoting more people to immigrate to Israel. As the Arab population was being distanced from these lands, more places to settle were becoming available. More places to settle meant more constructions and more employment opportunities. This meant a rise in certain business sectors; for example, there was a high demand for building and road constructions. It was among the rumors that immigrants were employed by this business or were the owners of these businesses. The immigrants were employed in service industry, having administrative duties, working as road construction contractors, agriculture experts, or were the founders of new settlements. These exaggerated remarks and news were forming the basis of a strong urge among the Turkish Jews to immigrate<sup>33</sup>.

Meanwhile, the visit of the American Secretary of Treasury, Morgenthau, to Israel resulted in some propaganda made by Israel: "America is going to pour money and gold to Palestine; we are going to fight with our arms<sup>34</sup>. We will become affluent, and we will buy all the Arabic bosses and their countries one by one" were some of the common discourse of those days among the Jews. It was quite unlikely that these were true utterances at an official level; however, rumors have effects on communities. Meanwhile, the Arab-Jewish tension and war were still in progress in Palestine. There were even interpretations of the immigrations of the Turkish Jews to Israel as being part of the Soviet scheme which was intending to make the region communist. This plot was observed in countries under the Russian influence. That 10000 Bulgarian Jews were planning to immigrate to Israel was among the rumors of the time. More than half of this number was from Sofia and the remaining was from south Bulgaria. It was stated that Russian army officers were in total charge of the Jewish immigration to Israel in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Albania. Moreover, there were Jews

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<sup>33</sup> Amado, *ibid*, p.52.

<sup>34</sup> Cumhuriyet, 22 October 1948.

who were sent to the region by Russians. These Jews were trained in camps for terrorism and then were subjected to an exam given by the screening committee. After this process, these Jews were transported to the countries in the region. However, having obtained their passports from these countries, they could not enter Palestine directly. These Jews came to the Mediterranean ports in Italy and France; and, then, they were transported to Palestine on ships rented by Zionist organizations. One of the transshipment ports used by Russians was the Porto Drach in Albania, and the other was Port of Split in former Yugoslavia, now in Croatia<sup>35</sup>.

Under such circumstances, especially when Cold War was gaining momentum, such attempts were natural just as exaggerated news and rumors were.

As Turkish Jews got their passports, they started looking for means of going to Palestine. The first big company applied to the Maritime Administration to sail from Turkey on the Romanian ship Transylvania. However, they were rejected for there were not enough people to fill the ship. This made them search for other means such as another ship or a cargo ship or a yacht. They had even indirectly requested that the Israeli government send them a ship to get them. As the Israeli government was not opposing these immigrations, they were not totally against such requests. It was even reported on the papers of the time that a ship named Israel would sail from Israel and pick up the Jews from Istanbul<sup>36</sup>. After these developments, the first company of 41 Turkish Jews embarked at Istanbul for Haifa on October 22nd at 9:00 pm on a small British ship named Polisine<sup>37</sup>.

This revival of Judaism among the Jews in Turkey attracted not only the attention of the public and politicians in Turkey but also that of the other countries. The New York Times was relating this rapid Jewish emigration from Turkey to the political changes in Turkey. It was also interpreted that although this did not appeal to the feelings of the Turkish people as majority of Turks were Muslims; supporting the Arabs was a policy maintained very skillfully<sup>38</sup>. Actually, concrete observations that would lead to this conclusion were made. Until that year, Turkish diplomacy which had been observed to be more on the side of the Arab world was seen to be inclined to accept this fait accompli and behave

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid* , 22 October 1948.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid* , 22 October 1948.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid* , 23 October 1948.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid* , 27 October 1948.

in manner that would eventually result in the recognition of the newly founded Israeli state. In fact, Turkey was not alone about this matter. This approach was almost the same in the capitals of all the western countries. It was being reported on newspapers that the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs of the period, Necmettin Sadak, had stated that Turkey could not be on the side of the Arab world which had a population of 40 million but which had not been able to beat Israel with a population of 500 thousand<sup>39</sup>. What was more was that the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not even impugned these news.

In November 1948, Turkish government took a decision to restrict the emigration of the Turkish Jews, who wanted to go to Israel, to Palestine. This decision resulted in panic among the Turkish Jews. There were those who had sold their homes and shut down their businesses. Owing to this new condition, Israel had sent a commission of 5 members to Ankara and had requested the government to withdraw this decision. Salomon Aldatto was stating: "This decision taken by the government is restricting the citizens' right to travel"<sup>40</sup>.

In any event, this condition did not last for very long. It was understood that this precautious attitude of the government was a temporary policy in order to prepare measures to be taken to prevent attempts to take assets, money and valuables out of the boundaries of Turkey. This new state of affairs was considered at length by some reporters of Jewish background on the papers. Eli Shaul wrote a series published on the Democrat Izmir. In his writings, he was defending the fact that every Turkish Jew who would emigrate from Turkey to Israel would be a Turkish propagandist and Turkey would only benefit from this. There was chance to be a both faithful Turk and a good Jew, and these two phenomena were not contradictory<sup>41</sup>.

By the end of November, migrations had gained momentum again. Those applying to get passports were applying to go to Italy and France besides Palestine. In addition to this, Turkish Maritime companies started to have ships from Istanbul and Izmir ports to Haifa. On November 23, a Turkish ship the Peyk left Istanbul for Haifa with 400 passengers on board. On the night of the same day, 130 Jews left on the Feyyaz, which was a smaller ship. These passengers were a big crowd made up of children, men, women and the elderly. It was surprising that there were more women on the Peyk than men. As an explanation to the

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 27 October 1948.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 24 November 1948.

<sup>41</sup> L' Etoile du Levant, 26 October 1948

reason why the number of woman who were migrating was more than that of man, it was stated they would be able to get married without portion. A reporter asked an elderly lady why she was going, and the answer she gave was: " Only God knows that! Now, we only think of going." Some of the younger Jews were aiming to find a way to go to America and settle there. Most of these young people were aimless and unskilled people. Some of them had set on their journey without a guide and without any knowledge about the world and their wish was only adventure. The only wish of these poorly dressed people who had come from Izmir, Edirne and Bursa to Istanbul was to go to Israel. Majority of the Turkish Jews who had left Istanbul were those who had no jobs<sup>42</sup>. Some of these people had even applied to the authorities stating that they had no homes and no homeland and asked for the removal of the restrictions. Some of them even requested permission to stay on the ships after they had come to Istanbul as they had nowhere else to stay.<sup>43</sup> These poor young people who had come to Istanbul from other provinces were staying in cheap hotels as they were waiting for their turn to be able to get on the ship and sail off. Those who could find a solution earlier were leaving on smaller ships or cargo ships. According to the news on the papers, a high number of Turkish Jews had left Izmir to go to Palestine on the Yilmaz and other smaller ships. For example, on November 28, the Yilmaz left Izmir for Haifa with 480 Jews on board<sup>44</sup>.

As soon as Jews disembarked, they tore their Turkish Id cards and passports and threw them into the sea, and they knelt down and kissed the soil. There were even some of them who took out the silk Jewish flag that they had been keeping in their bosom all through the journey, and waved it enthusiastically when the ship was approaching the Haifa port and saluted their new homeland. Some of them were even yelling out;" We don't want to go back to Turkey". This group of Jews who were from Izmir were welcomed by the President of Israel and his wife with a special ceremony. As they disembarked in Haifa, some of these Jews even kissed the tires and bumpers of the president's car<sup>45</sup>. On 19 February, the Bintash left Istanbul with 224 passengers for Israel.. These new immigrants were mostly made up of teenage Jewish girls and they were seen off by a large crowd<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Cumhuriyet, 24 November 1948.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 6 January 1949.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 29 November 1948.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 29 November 1948.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 20 February 1949.

There were various reasons causing the Turkish government to make different decisions. The critical attitudes of the Arab world towards these immigrations from time to time, the incomprehensible function of the USA in this process, and worries about the fact that national wealth and economy would be harmed were among some of these factors. Even though some steps to ease the process of obtaining a passport had been taken, new measures were taken to be applied to Turkish Jews who were applying to get passports to go to Israel. There were some new restrictions to be applied. There was even a time when those who stated that they were intending to go to Israel directly were not issued visas. To bypass this decision, Jews tried applying for a visa to travel to Italy or France, and this was a practice that had been done before. Once they would go to either of these countries, they would start looking for ways to go to Israel from there. Therefore, Turkish government brought a restriction to Jews who wanted to go to one of these countries. Turkish Jews were required to be granted a visa by the consulates of these countries before the issuance of a visa by the Turkish authorities. This was something quite difficult as these countries were not issuing visas to people from Turkey<sup>47</sup>. This meant, in a way, that the Jewish migration would come to a halt. However, after sometime, the Italian Consulate approved issuing Jews visas on condition that they would travel on Italian ships. In order to prevent the loss of money resulting from travelling on Italian ships, Turkish ship owners requested that they be transferred to Turkish ships<sup>48</sup>. In February, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs officially announced that no restrictions would be imposed upon Jews wishing to go to Palestine. Owing to this official announcement, the number of Jews applying to obtain passports accelerated once more<sup>49</sup>. Only on February 16, the number of those who got passports to go to Israel was 1200. Until then, the number of emigrant Jews had exceeded 10000. There would be arguments between those waiting in line to get their passports, and they would try their best to secure a place for themselves on the Pirlant and the Buntas after getting their passports<sup>50</sup>.

After all, all this process had created a chaotic environment. Not everything was done legally. It was frequently observed that restrictions were being forced to be broken and all the ways, including illegal ways, were being tried so as to leave Turkey. For instance, it was being witnessed that some unskilled and

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid* , 6 January 1948.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid* , 4 February 1949.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid* , 11 February 1949.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid* , 16 February 1949.

unemployed Jews were doing fraudulent acts. Some of these swindlers were purchasing merchandise in bulk from big businessmen on credit. However, the businessmen who had sold the merchandise would have no information that the buyer would be going to Israel. Once the buyer would obtain his visa to go to Israel, he would transfer the merchandise to someone else for a price below its cost and market value and leave. Many Turkish and Jewish businessmen had suffered big losses because of these fraudulent activities. Therefore, they were requesting that Turkish Jews applying to obtain a visa to go to Israel should get a clearance document from the Office of Treasury and Chamber of Commerce stating that they did not have any debts and present it to the passport officers when applying for a passport<sup>51</sup>.

This legal process was not applied in a fair and timely manner. It was observed that many people under legal restrictions were attempting to mix with others and escape; and, when legal ways were not permitting then, they would not hesitate to use all possible illegal means to reach their aims. Those who had not completed their obligatory military service, those who owed the government tax money but did not want to pay their debts, or those who had committed a crime but were trying to escape the penalty were among those who were trying all illegal ways to escape from Turkey. For example, a group of 70 Jews who had been involved in an illegal migration process were caught by Turkish customs officers as they were secretly trying to embark the *Levend* on the night of March 9. There was even a woman who was breastfeeding her baby. Most of this group was made up of young people who owed either tax or military service to the government; therefore, none of them had passports. Under these conditions, laws were not permitting them to leave the country. These military service and tax escapees had talked and agreed with the captain of the *Levend* ship that they would embark the *Binnaz*, a small ship, and sail off and transfer to the *Levend* in the open waters of Silivri. All the details had been planned very carefully by these escapees; however, just as they were transferring from the *Binnaz* to the *Levend* they were caught by the customs officers. It was noted that these arrested people were referring to Israel as "homeland" during their interrogations. Joseph, who was working as a painter in Tahtakale, expressed that: "Going to Palestine is an ultimate goal for all of us. We are not going to hide this"<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid* , 18 February 1949.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid* , 11 March 1949.

There were even times when those trying to go by illegal ways were resorting to arms and violence. Once, 69 Jews who had embarked the Erkan from Izmir pointed their guns at the captain of the ship and ordered him to sail to Palestine. The captain of the ship sailed towards the rock bound Eshek Island and pounded the boat on the rocks, and this caused a hole on the bottom of the boat. However, the Jews on board fixed the hole and forced the captain to sail off to Haifa unlawfully. After sometime, the captain of the ship gave an account of this illegal boat journey<sup>53</sup>. Another illegal attempt of the Jews to go to Palestine was on April 19 when 80 Jews arranged the captain of the Shahinkaya at the Port of Ayvalik. The escapee Jewish teenagers had offered the captain a bribe. According to the scheme, this small boat named Shahinkaya was going to sail off to the open sea from Ayvalik with the escapees on board, and then these escapees were going to transfer to another ship. The captain of the ship agreed to this scheme; however, the boat they were on and the ship could not meet at the scheduled place and time. Therefore, the captain returned to the Port of Ayvalik and the captain took the escapees to the police to be arrested. These escapees were young men who had not completed their compulsory military service. In case of such occurrences, the police were investigating whether or not there was any involvement of foreign exchange smuggling<sup>54</sup>. These Jewish men arrested were transported to Istanbul and it was observed that majority of escapee men were aged 20 and 21 and they were members of poverty stricken families. One of these men, Avram Cilibi, had reported that the captain of the ship had asked for a high bribe, and when they could not pay it, the captain informed the police. This Jewish man was stating that they had totally forgotten about their military service obligation owing to the excitement about going to their motherland newly founded in Palestine<sup>55</sup>.

Jews who were leaving Turkey and going to Israel were attempting to take a lot of Turkish Liras , the Turkish currency, with them and at those times it was among the preferred currencies in the Middle Eastern countries<sup>56</sup>. There were even instances when they tried to take their gold by melting the metal and making pots and pans with it and putting tin glaze on them and trying to take them with themselves. It was also observed that women tried to hide their jewelry by sewing it into their shoulder padding and attempted to smuggle it with

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid* , 31 March 1949.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid* , 20 April 1949.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid* , 22 April 1949.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid* , 11 March 1949.

themselves. Another means that Jews chose as a method of escaping from Turkey was getting listed to work as cooks and crew members<sup>57</sup>. None of these were lawful and they were regarded as crimes according to the laws valid at those times.

However, the list of belongings that these emigrants were legally permitted to take along with themselves was officially announced to the public, and passengers travelling to Israel on whose passports reason of travel was indicated as other than “transfer of home” and “emigration” were regarded as going to Israel for temporary. Moreover, there was no agreement between Turkey and Israel to regulate neither emigration nor transfer of homes. Therefore, Jews going to Israel were considered as going to Israel on a temporary basis. Those going to Israel could take with themselves money not exceeding 100 Turkish Liras, their personal clothes, any kind of local food item each of which could not weigh more than 5 kilos and the total value of which could be maximum 100 Turkish Liras, bedding items that they would need during their journey, and food and pots and pans to use during their journey. Customs regulations did not permit taking anything other than those listed outside the boundaries of the country. If any passenger would declare to the customs officer that he/she had anything worth more than 100 Turkish Liras within his/her possession, then he would not be allowed to take it with him. If it would be discovered that anything was being attempted to be taken secretly, then that act would be a crime. If such was the case, whatever the item a passenger was trying to take with himself would be confiscated, and he would be fined as twice the value of the item. Any jewelry made of gold, silver and platinum, and any foreign assets and money were prohibited from being taken outside the boundaries of Turkey. The passengers were allowed to have with themselves a gold watch and their wedding bands<sup>58</sup>. Despite these strict regulations, passengers were attempting to smuggle valuables in strange ways, and hiding their valuables in their under wears was one of the common ways used. When such an attempt would be caught by the officers, it would be transferred to Attorney General and reported on the papers<sup>59</sup>.

During these immigrations, of course the immigrations of the Arabs from Palestine to the neighboring Arab countries was gaining momentum. More land had to be cleared so that there would be land to house the Jewish immigrants

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid* , 26 June 1949.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* , 8 August 1949.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid* ,11 August 1949.

who were increasing in number in Israel. The number of refugee Arabs who were forced to abandon their homes reached almost a million within less than a year<sup>60</sup>. Supreme Commissariat of Refugees which had only been founded in 1948 to deal with the problems of the war refugees after World War II was not a powerful foundation yet. A direct interference to an immigration of such magnitude and meeting their housing, food, and health demands would require a big budget and a well-organized network. One fourth of the Arabs on those lands were displaced. America had promised to give 16 million dollars, and similarly 500000 Franc by France and 1 million Pounds by England were promised to be donated in order to be spent on solving the problems of these refugees. Supreme Commissariat of Refugees had also allocated 32 million dollars in its budget. The problem was very big, and it did not seem to be solvable with this money<sup>61</sup>. The big accumulation of these emigrants in the neighboring Arab countries was causing problems for the administrations of those countries, and causing wretched conditions to occur. Therefore, Arab countries to which the displaced Palestinian Arabs immigrated were rising their voices in The United Nations and other political platforms and complaining about Israel as it had been the cause of this problem; this issue was turning into a serious international problem.

Obviously, a comfortable life was not what all immigrants coming to Israel were going to have. Despite all the exaggerated discourse, as Israel was a newly founded state and it had to fight against all the Arab nations, it was faced with economic depression. Immigrants who had come to Israel had to confront these hardships. These problems were both for the rulers of the newly founded state and for the immigrants. Although there had been a lot of propaganda, hardships were awaiting for the immigrants whose number was increasing at an alarming rate. As there were new residential areas being built, there were new employment opportunities for the immigrants; yet, the wave of immigrants was becoming gigantic and the newly opening employment opportunities could not meet the demand. Employment opportunities were not ready to embrace the immigrants who came to these infertile lands and called these lands their motherland. Those who disembarked were first taken to immigrant camps. Immigrant commissions in Israel were trying to find housing and jobs for these new comers. However, this was not always possible as fast as an immigrant would wish because of the high number of immigrants, and as this painful waiting period was

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* , 17 March 1949.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid* , 17 March 1949.

being added to the wretched conditions in the camps, life was becoming unbearable for these people. Because of the high number of immigrants, the price of commodity goods in the market had skyrocketed. The cost of 1 egg was 5 kurush and of a kilo of bread was 350 kurush in Palestine. Scarcity of meat and oil was very intense. Israeli government had already started to provide these immigrants with housing and with land. Even if they would have been given a place to live, they would still be unemployed. Under such circumstances, the number of immigrants who both had a house and had a job were incredibly low<sup>62</sup>. As the influx of immigrations continued, authorities started to house the new comers with the already settled immigrants and they started living in crowded houses. A few families or a number of people were brought together to be housed together. Once the immigrants would disembark at the port, they would have to undergo a health inspection in medical centers. Those who were diagnosed with any kind of contagious disease would be put in quarantine. All the immigrants were disinfected. Only after the health inspections and disinfections the immigrants were taken to the camps. Immigrants were allowed to stay in these camps for a month. There were wooden houses and tents in the camp areas. Women were housed in the wooden buildings and men were put in tents. However, Jews coming from the near east and Middle East attempted to prolong this period as they were too lazy. Besides this, there was a diverse censorship, and this was to eliminate the possibility of reporting the conditions in Israel. This was not something that the Israeli government could undertake the risk of. Therefore, there was a lot of effort to censor anything that could be written about the difficult living conditions and hardships encountered in the camps. There was a lot of effort to prevent reporters from entering these camps. Although it appeared to be almost impossible to enter the camps for the reporters, there were reporters who were able to go into these housing areas and camps and they would make news revealing the reality. This censorship was applied to the foreigner crew members of the ships carrying immigrants to Israel<sup>63</sup>. For example, only two crew members of the Yilmaz which had brought immigrants to Haifa from Turkey were permitted to disembark at the port<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid* , 27 April 1949.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid* , 16 December 1948.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid* , 29 November 1948.

Despite all these unbearable conditions, ships were continuously coming to the Port of Haifa and were transporting immigrants from all over the world. The number of immigrants who had only come from Izmir had reached 4000 by December 15<sup>65</sup>.

Most of the immigrants who came to Israel had been involved with farming in their backgrounds. They had farming skills to earn them bread and characteristics to be employed in hard labor. In short, farmer Jews who had formerly earned their bread through farming were coming to the center of a desert l. However, this was not the case for immigrants coming from Turkey. In Turkey, minorities mostly lived in big cities, and they were skilled in service industry or business. Majority of the Jewish immigrants from Turkey had been city dwellers. Moreover, when viewed in general, their production habits were different in where they came from. Firstly, they came from different economic systems. Some came from a capitalist production, and some came from a socialist-communist production system. Social, economic, political and cultural behaviors varied as they all came from different social, economic and political backgrounds. These people whose behaviors, skills, and psychologies had been shaped by different systems and cultural environments were meeting in a totally different natural, social, political and economic geographical location. Coming from different backgrounds and having different roots, they were then expected to mix in the same pot. It was very apparent that there would be adaptation problems in this new environment. It would not be possible to develop shared production and social behavior patterns soon. In a way, it was as if the walls that separated systems during the Cold War had disappeared in this location; and people seemed as if they were being given a test to assess their behavioral patterns and relations.

In this period, the political and economic system that Israel was going to follow had not become certain yet. America and the Soviet Union almost competed in their recognition of the newly founded Israel. The common belief was that the Soviet Union agents would not leave this country by itself on the Mediterranean, and through their influences and leakage, a model close to that of the Soviet Union would be implemented. However, this general opinion was to change soon. Yet, at least, an effective system in social and political structuring had not been applied during the foundation process. Immigrant groups were trying to retain their attitudes, behavioral patterns and relationships as it had

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid* , 16 December 1948.

been before. There was a lot of chaos in this new country. Those coming from the Iron curtain countries tended towards a system called kibbutz. Common product that was produced was shared equally among those who produced it. A Kibbutz was similar to collective farms in Russia. The dominant spirit in these farms was not the individual spirit but the social one. The profit made was not evenly distributed among the individuals, but instead the capital of the colony was increased. It was not the individual who got from the profit, because it was assumed that as the capital of the company increased the life standards of the individual would go up. Individuals were not given the right to have any possessions. Life was very dull in the kibbutz. There was no luxury. The members of the colony would enjoy themselves among themselves, get married, reproduce and die. Anyone who would try to go outside this system would have to give up all his/her rights. The main occupation of the members of this group was farming. Moscow's had developed an agricultural colony method. The system was more like a cooperative trading system. Everyone earned as much as they worked. Work was shared but what was earned was not shared; in other words, what each person earned belonged to the individual. A Jewish person who lived in a Kibbutz and shared all that he had with the others in the Kibbutz could see how another capitalist Jewish person living in the moshov would acquire wealth.

What was very interesting was the behavioral differences among the people who had all been familiar with different social and economic structures but who had come and had united on this new motherland. On one hand, there were Jews who new very well how to produce and do business liberally, on the other hand there were Jews who came from a socialist background, and , therefore, knew how to work with their labor. This was creating a vast difference. Class distinctions were becoming very apparent. On one hand, there were those Jews who were beginning to become wealthy, but on the other hand, there were those Jews who were fully living in poverty. On one hand, there were entertainment places with all kinds of luxury, prosperity and admirable possessions, but on the other hand, there were gloomy and moderate conditions, and simple houses. On one hand , there were extreme socialist behaviors and characteristics, on the other hand, there was endless liberalism<sup>66</sup>.

Immigrants who were accommodated in the immigrant camps for some time were transported to residential and agricultural areas called Kibbutz and

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid* , 2 May 1949.

Moshov to form new residential units. Jews who had come from Turkey were mostly placed in Moshovs. They had formed an immigrant organization named Irgun Ole Turkiya, and main responsibility of this organization was to deal with the problems of Jewish immigrants who came from Turkey. The name of this fraternity was later altered and it became Itahdut Yotsei Türkiye, meaning Fraternity of Jews from Turkey. Aviv and the surrounding areas, and Bat-Yam were areas densely populated with Jews from Turkey. However, it was also possible to see many Jewish families that emigrated from Turkey in other locations in Israel. In other words, they were scattered all over Israel as their main mission was to establish new residential areas in these new lands. Jewish immigrants from Turkey had gone to areas like Yehud, Lud, Ramle, Yafa, and Jerusalem as the houses of the Palestinian families who abandoned their homes and lands and fled had become vacant<sup>67</sup>. They were trying to establish new lives on these new lands. Among these immigrants from Turkey, there were some families that had become wealthy and they were relocated to residential areas such as Holon, Bat-Yam, Rishon Letziyon, Havya and socio economically more well off neighborhoods of Jerusalem and south and north neighborhoods of Tel Aviv<sup>68</sup>.

Israel, who was trying to solve all these problems during those years, did not have any significant income. The amount of its imports was totaling around 600 million Turkish Liras, but it hardly had any exports. Orange, orange based products, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and cut diamonds were among its main export items. %50 of the imports was allocated to clothing, % 25 was allocated to raw materials and %25 of the imports was allocated to manufactured goods. In addition to this, the government was putting all its efforts so as to get the financial support of the Jews living elsewhere.

There was a big housing problem in Israel. Government had founded a construction company worth 50-60 million Liras. The number of houses this company was expected to build was around 50000. However, the newly constructed houses were being given to the discharged soldiers and refugees were having hard times. Due to these problems, Israeli government had ordered portable homes from the USA and Sweden. Unfortunately, until housing problem was successfully overcome, the Israeli government was faced with the obligation of providing everything for the unhoused refugees. Yet, while the refugees were staying at the camps, they could work and earn for themselves. If a refugee could

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<sup>67</sup> Amado, *ibid*, p.53.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.

find housing on his own and leave the camp, then, the government would provide the refugee with about 50-150 Liras, bed, mattress, two bed sheets and blankets. Moreover, the refugee would be exempt from paying any rent till he would find work. Most of the immigrants would work in the factories, orange yards, farms and construction sites in or around cities. Those who had brought money with themselves to Israel, could open a store, and do business. However, this group was only a minority. The biggest competitor of the immigrants who could be workers were the discharged soldiers from the military. The government felt responsible for finding employment for the newly discharged<sup>69</sup>.

One of the officers from the Israeli Ministry of Immigration, Victor Eliachar came to Istanbul to complete the passport and visa obtaining processes of the Jews in Turkey. The Turkish Government allowed him to come to Turkey. The number of immigrants that came to Israel until July 27th was 300000, and approximately 20-25000 of these immigrants were from Turkey. Population of Israel exceeded 1 million with the new arrival of this new group of immigrants. Eliacher had been thankful to the Turkish government for helping him perform his duties in Turkey<sup>70</sup>.

However, it was not long before immigrant Jews from Turkey in Israel started mailing letters of complaints to their relatives in Turkey. They were expressing their wishes to return to Istanbul. Their main complaints were hunger, malnutrition, not having been able to adapt to the climactic conditions in Israel, and the attack of certain strange insects in the tents that they were staying in<sup>71</sup>. There were even those who regretted having immigrated to Israel and attempted to return to Turkey. Having had first-hand experience of the severe life conditions in Israel, those who had secretly hid in the deep dark corners of old ships to flee from Turkey were trying all means to return to Turkey. Moiz was one of those immigrants who had succeeded in returning to Istanbul, and upon being asked to answer the questions of a reporter, he wiped his tears with his handkerchief, sighed and said: " I will never forget the Turkish proverb May God never deceive anyone, and I wish that those who cheated us will get what they deserve from God, I cannot say anything more..... You are asking me to give you an account of my experiences, but I do not know which one to start with. I sold my house, my shop and worst of all my business which was doing very well,

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<sup>69</sup> Cumhuriyet, 2 May 1949.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 27 July 1949.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 28 September 1949.

and I left for Palestine. After having lived the life of an immigrant for six-seven months, and having spent all the money that I had, I returned. Both my family members and myself suffered a lot. I feel like I am reborn. I am trying to establish my life again with the money that my relatives and my friends have raised. When we were in Israel, we reported to the authorities that we were willing to accept any employment opportunity that they were willing to offer. However, big cities are totally full, so we were transported to a suburb near Tel Aviv. They gave my family of nine people a tent. They found each of us a job so that we could earn our daily needs. My father who is 55 was going to work at a building construction site, and I and my brother were going to work at a highway construction site. These were the jobs offered to us. I cannot say that, at first, we did not think of rejecting these job offers. However, when our relatives who had immigrated from Germany told us that in case we did not accept the job offered to us, we would be accused of being lazy, we felt worried and accepted the jobs. Some of us worked in making a wall, and the others dug with an ax for about 4-5 months. Supposedly, we were going to help Palestine prosper. Our applications to be relocated to Tel Aviv were left unanswered. Finally, we found an opportunity to return to our motherland. Those who immigrate to Palestine are being made to work in manual jobs because most of the jobs are already taken. For example, a friend of mine who was an apprentice to the Famous Coffee shop, Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi also had come to Palestine. Although he has no education, he is now working with the uniform of a captain. At that time, there were vacant employment opportunities. The fact that our unqualified friends were given important ranks in Palestine presented us a glossy view of life in Palestine. It is almost impossible to do business in Palestine. Jewish people who had emigrated from Germany, Poland and Bulgaria had occupied all the important positions in Palestine. Those who did not learn the Hebrew language would not be able to earn even basic living. Palestine has a cosmopolitan population"<sup>72</sup>.

As a result, it can be said that Jewish migration from Turkey to Israel after the foundation of the Israeli state is one of the most interesting events in recent Turkish history. Foundation of the Israeli State was one of the main reasons that led to the immigration of most of the Turkish Jews from Turkey to Israel. If this issue is looked at closely, it could also be seen that the reason behind the migration of some of the Turkish Jews were rather personal, such as higher pay rates,

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 1 February 1950.

better employment opportunities, and religious feelings. It is also important to emphasize that, on the whole, Turkish Jews who migrated from Turkey to Israel had positive impressions and memories about Turkish society and Turkey<sup>73</sup>.

This undesirable state of affairs soon was replaced by pleasant relations and cooperation. Young Israeli state gathered a lot of sympathy among the Turkish people. A lot of positive comments were being made about how the desert had become green, about the developments in science, art, business and Turkey regarded Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East. The two nations worked in cooperation against the spread of communism and terrorism. The frequency of the tensions in the relationships both between Syria and Turkey and Egypt and Turkey strengthened the relations between Turkey and Israel. As emphasized by Dr Shaul before, Turkish Jews that had immigrated to Israel from Turkey constituted a strong Turkish lobby in Israel. Israel contributed to balance the efforts of the Armenians, Greek Orthodox population and Arabs against the Turks.

1970s were the years when leftist politics were awakening in Turkey. Especially the 1968 events had a significant role in the strengthening of leftist ideology in Turkey. The Arab-Israeli War that started in 1967 and the unprecedented victory of the Israelis in the 6-Day War played a significant role triggering the leftist movements in Turkey. Israel and the Arab World symbolized the rightest America, whereas Phalistine symbolized the leftist Soviet Union. This development had especially disturbed those who were supporters of the leftist ideologies, and this started constitute a pressure upon the Turkish Jews who were powerful economically<sup>74</sup>.

When Turkish Jews who had immigrated to Israel were looked at closely, it was observed that they mostly communicated in Turkish in Israel despite the fact that they had formerly been blamed for not speaking Turkish. Moreover, they were publishing a newspaper and a magazine in Turkish, and they had named the blocks that they lived in as Hazar Building and Sevinc Building. For centuries they had lived in Turkey as "Jews", and now they were being referred to as " the Turks".

This group known as the Turkish Jews among the other minorities in Turkey was an addition to the newly forming social structure in Israel, and it was

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<sup>73</sup> Walter F. Weiker, *The unseen Israellis-The Jews from Turkey in Israel*, Center for Jewish Community Studies, Boston, 1988, p. 40

<sup>74</sup> Amado, *ibid*, p.52.

due to this fact that this group which had social, cultural and economic ties with Turkey became a significant part of the Israeli population. This population has had an important impact on determining Turkey's politics concerning Israel and the Middle East.

There have been significant observations that the Turkish Jews who had immigrated to Israel did not form a homogeneous group. The native language of those who migrated till 1954 was Hebrew. Their socio-economic status was rather low. However, those that migrated in the later phases had schooling in Turkish schools, and spoke Turkish and had higher socio-economic status. Since the formation of the Israeli State, it is the third generation of Turkish Jews who are residing in Israel. This group displays a mixed makeup that speaks Hebrew, Turkish and Ladino<sup>75</sup>. Eventually, identity of Turkish Jews has developed into Sephardic Jews. Effects of Turkey have been observed in some organizations and activities. It was observed that contemporary values that had been developed in new Turkey by Atatürk had significant impact on the Turkish Jews who had immigrated to Israel. There is a forest near Haifa named after Atatürk<sup>76</sup>. According to the data obtained from the Israeli Institute of Statistics, the number of Turkish Jews who had immigrated to Israel from Turkey from 1948-2001 is 70407. If the number of those who had come to Israel for touristic purposes and have stayed in Israel is included, then the total number can be said to be around 80000<sup>77</sup>.

Jews who emigrated from Turkey did not have a common denominator as far as their skills and jobs were concerned. There was a wide spectrum ranging from educated intellectuals to uneducated individuals who would be content with common labor work. Among the early Jewish emigrants from Turkey, there had been legal practitioners, academic staff, doctors, diplomats and industrialists. Of course, there were those who admired the life of these people and who wanted to emigrate. This wave of migration continued for some time, and in the years that followed, the big wave of migration, immigrants formed nostalgic family, relative and neighbor ties with those who had stayed in Turkey. Of course, feelings of the post migration years had impact on the characteristics of the later smaller migrations. Some family members had migrated at an early age, and the parents who had stayed would then decide to migrate to unite with

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p.54.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.

their family members. This same motive to migrate was observed in kinship and neighbor relations. A Jewish person could have easily decided to immigrate to Israel by admiring the sometimes exaggerated accounts of life they were being given by their relatives or neighbors. They would join this caravan of migration hoping to have higher socio-economic standards.

#### Jewish Emigrants from Turkey

Pre 1948 ..... 8.277

1948-1951 .....34.547

1951-960..... 6.871

1961-1964..... 4.793

1965-1971 .....9.280

1972-1979.....3.118

1980-1989 .....2.088

1990-2000 .....1.215

2001..... 108

The last country they lived in: 110

Total Jewish emigrants from Turkey: 70.407.

As of now, the number of Jewish community in Turkey is approximately 20000. The number of the community members who immigrate to Israel on a yearly basis is about 100. Those who have migrated from Turkey to Israel form the majority of population in Israel that is known to have closeness to Turkey. These immigrants have a significant role in preserving this value in the cultural mosaic of Israel.

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