



The most famous of them is Joseph Nasi and Doctor Yaqoub

The Zionists in the Palaces of the Ottoman Sultans

Since early times, the Zionists found their way into the Ottoman palaces. And within a short period, they managed to control. For further explanation, some Zionists got appointed in remarkable positions. Moreover, during the rule of Sultan Murad II (1451-1421), they were allowed to possess lands. Therefore, he was called "the great humane person."

During the reign of Murad II, the chief Zionist physician, Ishak Pasha, who is considered to be one of the first to have a wide influence on the Sultan's court, emerged. Therefore, Murad II issued a decree exempting this doctor and his family from the tribute, and this was the beginning for many Zionist doctors to hold important positions and jobs in the Ottoman government.

The facts indicate that the Zionists found in the Ottoman Empire a refuge from the persecution, they faced in the European continent. That is, during the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror (1481-1451), the Turks recognized them within the Ottoman religious regime, Millet, which allowed them to live in Istanbul. Besides, a chief rabbi was appointed for them, "Moshe Gabsale", and the Conqueror granted him wide powers.

Mehmed the Conqueror summoned many Jewish families to live in Istanbul, and during his reign, the Jewish doctor Yaqoub, who obtained the rank of minister, emerged and carried out various diplomatic works for the Ottoman Empire, yet, in return, he was exempted from tribute and taxes. Thus, in the Ottoman Empire, the Zionist Jews lived in such a prosperity that they didn't encounter in the European continent.

In any case, the Jewish Zionists benefitted, greatly, from the Millet system. It was similar to the citizenship system, that gave them the opportunity to enjoy autonomy. And by the time, Rabbis got to exercise their power in both civil and religious affairs, especially, after the Jews settled in the Ottoman Empire, in late 15th century, hence, ending their diaspora after being expelled from the regions of Andalusia. That is, about 300,000 Jews were expelled, distributed among Portugal, Italy, Morocco and the Ottoman Empire.

During the reign of Bayezid II (1512-1481), a group of Zionist Jewish rabbis submitted to him a request to allow them to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire, and Bayezid agreed, unconditionally, and brought them from Andalusia and had them settled in Ottoman Turkey and its borders, while sent part of them to Chios. Besides, he issued a decree that these people shall live in complete freedom, and even more than that, he ordered the governors of the regions not to refuse their entry, stir up trouble before them, nor to receive them with great hospitality.

The English writer, Bernard Lewis, who specializes in Middle Eastern affairs, says about this: "The Jews were not only allowed to settle in the Ottoman lands, but the Ottomans encouraged and helped them, and in some cases, forced them to settle." This was confirmed by the French historian André Michal by saying: "the Ottoman Empire provided the homeland for the Jews. That is, it provided them with the guarantee of the organized nation, and the necessary protection under its own control, and, hence, all the Jews of the empire became subject to the rabbi Bashi, who resides in Istanbul and is considered an official figure in the country."

These Zionists happened to hold important positions, among them, for example, was the medical group of Sultan Bayezid II. The immigration of Jews to the Ottoman Empire continued. In the sixteenth century, they immigrated to it from the regions of the European continent. Ottoman and Jewish historical sources refer to the most prosperous periods, that is, the Jews lived in the Ottoman Empire between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, when a number of Jewish Zionists succeeded in holding some high positions and gained influence within the Ottoman court. Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, was the place where some of the fugitive Jews settled, till the population of the ghetto reached by (1590) over twenty thousand.

Western historians agree that the Ottoman Empire was the first to help the Jews settle and to give them autonomy

Historians, of the memoirs of the Europeans, refer to the influence of the Zionists in the court of the Ottoman Sultan, as well as their remarkable wealth. One of these historians says: "It was not exceptional to find among them (the Jews) some people, each of whom had a fortune of two hundred thousand ducats (golden European currency)", which is a very large amount at the time."

Perhaps one of the figures that emerged and had a significant impact on the Ottoman government during the reigns of Suleiman the Magnificent (1566-1520) and his son Selim II (1574-1566) was the Zionist Joseph Nasi, who descends from a Spanish family that immigrated to Istanbul. His influence appeared in the court of Suleiman the Magnificent, due to his knowledge of the conditions and affairs of European politics, of which he was very familiar, hence, his relationship with the legal sultan was strengthened.

During the reign of Selim II, the historical sources indicate that Joseph Nasi's influence reached its peak during his reign, as he became responsible for the treasury and was based on collecting imports from twelve islands of the archipelago in the Aegean Sea. The annual number of his salary is about sixty thousand ducats. This made him an influential figure in the Jewish community in Istanbul. He was confident and independent within the country of the Ottoman Sultan. He even had his political influence on the Ottoman-French relations, at the time. Yet, his actual influence ended with the death of Sultan Selim II. Still, there are countless number of Zionists in the history of the Ottoman Empire that had an impact on the Ottoman government at all the political, economic and social levels.

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