



حبر أبيض
WHITE INK



Muhammad Al-Saed

Money, State and fluence... three denominators brought Ottomans and Jews together!

The Jews were not new to the entity of the Ottoman Empire, nor they were a mere community with limited influence living on the margins of the Ottoman history, as some may imagine. The Ottoman Sultanate, due to its expansion and occupation of many countries and regions, multiple races and religions gathered therein, and formed different peoples under the authority, influence and occupation of the Ottomans.

The Jews were an integral part of the Ottoman administrative, commercial, political and even security structure. In this context, the most reasonable explanation to the state of acceptance and rapprochement between the Ottoman sultans and the Jews, is that the Turkish and Jewish races found themselves surrounded by Muslim Arabs. Both races have the same ambitions and superiority; thus, they united and made an alliance to resist the overwhelming Arab culture.

The Ottomans occupied large areas of the Arab world; however, they dealt with the Arabs with condescension and cruelty. The Ottomans treated the Arab world as subordinates, subjects and a lower class than them. In this context, the Ottomans never treated the Arabs as brothers or partners on religion and homeland. What determined the course of the relationship for five hundred years of ignorance and deliberate impoverishment, and excluding Arabs from the major positions of power, was the despicable racism and class adopted by the Ottomans.

On the other hand, the glorification of the Jews' role, bringing them around and satisfying them were evident inside the Ottoman Empire. Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh, for example – was sending letters and representatives to the Jewish communities in Europe offering them settlement in the Ottoman lands. He also granted them special privileges and guarantees in addition to the Ottoman citizenship, which entitle them the right to own, trade and worship. In this context, the Jews intensively settled in Palestine afterwards, as they were considered Ottomans, entitled to own and live in part of the Ottoman lands. Later, they turned their attention to attracting Jews from Western nationalities who joined their cousins from the Ottoman Jews, and settled with them in Palestinian cities.

The Ottoman Jewish community managed to control money, industry and banking in the Ottoman Empire. The Sultanate allowed them to engage in usurious transactions that were forbidden to others, which allowed them to become a huge financial authority that controlled the financing and trade instruments and granted them an enormous influence that would not have been obtained by others without the care of the Sultans.

The Ottoman Jews managed to dominate the Empire until they made their way to the royal court, the army and the political system. The Ottoman Jews became very close to many of the sultans.

The Jews represented the hidden right arm of the sultans. They were their advisors and private doctors. One of the most prominent doctors, was Joseph Hamon, the private physician of Sultan Bayezid II, and Sultan Selim I afterwards, he was next to these sultans at all times, treating them and maintaining their health. The Jews were also managers and money makers in the economy and politics, and they represented the bridge between the Jews in the European capitals and their messengers to Western politicians

The Jewish penetration of the Ottomans was also cultural, as the Jewish press was born in the era of Sultan Abdul Majid. "Ladino" newspaper was founded in Izmir in 1843 AD, the first of those means that were used to pass on Jewish ideas and culture and promote it, about ten years later, another Jewish newspaper was issued in Istanbul Under the name "Light of the Children of Israel", to be followed by a daily newspaper, "The Israeli Journal", which was founded by "Behzekil Gabai" in 1860 AD. Afterwards, Sultan Abdul Majeed confirmed this relationship by passing his order to open the "Qashri" Jewish kitchen in the Military College School to serve the Jewish students. He also ordered, the non-attendance of Jewish students on their Holy Saturday.

The Ottomans took advantage of that relationship with their Jewish friends and the Zionist movement to relieve political pressure on them following the Armenian massacres, and during the devastating economic crisis that exhausted their country. Sultan Abdul Hamid managed to make a deal with "Theodor Herzl", founder of the Zionist movement, to sell Palestine; such deal included huge financial donations from wealthy Jews and the Zionist movement to pay off the huge debts payable to the Union countries, led by Britain, France and Spain, in return for settling in Palestine, which is what happened.