

JEWISH YOUTH IN ISTANBUL:
HABITUS, GENERATION & EVERYDAY LIFE



M. ALKIM BAYRAKTAR

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M. ALKIM BAYRAKTAR

SUPERVISOR
PROF. DR. G. DEMET LÜKÜSLÜ

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PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Date: 18.01.2023

Name/Surname: M. Alkım Bayraktar

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on Jewish youth living in Istanbul and discusses them in accordance with the concepts of habitus, identity, everyday life, and memory. Within the scope of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with Jewish youth between the ages of 19-35 in Istanbul, and in the light of these concepts, their perceptions of Judaism, their identities, how their everyday lives were shaped, and what they remember through the social memory were examined.

The Turkification policies in the early Republican period and the traumatic incidents faced by the community caused the previous generations to have an invisible attitude in all society and the community to live an introverted life. However, although Jewish youth today understand this silent attitude of the past, they approach it critically and desire to go out of it. Judaism continues to exist as a set of traditions for them, despite its religious aspect.

Influenced by both Jewish culture and the culture they live in Turkey, Jewish youth have adopted a plural structured identity in which cultural influences play a major role. In spite of the fact that the interviewees are unwilling to stay in the shadow of the past generations, they live in what they named bubble, consisting only of Jewish spaces, and very few of the Jewish youth go out of this bubble by studying in public schools.

This habitus formed by Jewish youth also determines their tastes and preferences, and their cultural capital has undeniable importance when it comes to marriage. Since memory is a structure attributed to the whole of the community, it was discussed among Jewish youth what they remember both about past generations and their own.

Keywords: Habitus, youth studies, identity, everyday life, Jewish youth.

ÖZET

Bu araştırma İstanbul’da yaşayan Yahudi gençlere odaklanmakta ve onları habitus, kimlik, gündelik hayat ve hafıza kavramları çerçevesinde tartışmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında İstanbul’da 19-35 yaş arası Yahudi genç ile derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmış ve bu kavramlar ışığında Yahudilik algıları, kimlikleri, gündelik hayatlarının nasıl şekillendiği ve toplumsal hafıza ile neler hatırladıkları incelenmiştir.

Erken Cumhuriyet dönemindeki Türkleştirme politikaları ve cemaatin karşılaştığı travmatik olaylar, geçmiş kuşakların toplum içinde görünür olmayan bir tutum sergilemesine ve cemaatin içe dönük bir hayat yaşamasına neden olmuştur. Ancak günümüzde gençler geçmişten gelen bu sessiz tutumu anlayışla karşılasalar da eleştirel yaklaşmakta ve dışına çıkmayı arzulamaktadırlar. Yahudilik her ne kadar bir din olsa da Yahudi gençler için varlığını bir gelenekler bütünü olarak sürdürmektedir.

Hem Yahudi kültürü hem de Türkiye’de içinde yaşadıkları kültürden etkilenen Yahudi gençler, kültürel etkilerin büyük rol oynadığı çoklu bir kimlik yapısını benimsemişlerdir. Görüşmeciler her ne kadar geçmişin gölgesinde kalmak istemeseler de bir *bubble* olarak adlandırdıkları ve sadece Yahudi alanlardan oluşan dışa kapanık bir yaşam sürdürmekte ve gençlerin arasında çok azı karma okullara giderek bu *bubble*’ın dışına çıkabilmektedir.

Yahudi gençlerin oluşturdukları bu habitus onların beğeni ve tercihlerini de belirlemekte ve evlilik söz konusu olduğunda kültürel kapıtaıleri göz ardı edilemez bir önem taşımaktadır. Hafıza toplumun bütününe atfedilen bir yapı olduğu için Yahudi gençler arasında hem geçmiş kuşaklara dair hem de kendi kuşaklarına dair neler hatırladıkları konuşulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Habitus, gençlik çalışmaları, kimlik, gündelik hayat, Yahudi gençliği.

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PLAGIARISM.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ÖZET	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. A Brief History of the Jewish Community	2
2. METHODOLOGY	12
2.1. The Journey of the Research	12
2.2. Boundaries of the Research.....	15
2.3. Following the Footsteps of Jewish Youth.....	16
2.4. From Geertz's Path.....	22
2.5. My Jew Friends	23
3. JEWISH YOUTH: HABITUS, GENERATIONS, AND THE YOUTH	30
3.1. Jewish Habitus: A Tradition.....	30
3.2. The Youth.....	43
3.3. Bar/Bat Mitzvah: A sign of economic capital or a rite of passage?	45
4. THE PERCEPTION OF THE IDENTITIES	52
4.1. Intersection of the Cultures: Turkish Jew	52
4.2. Citizenship Transformed into Identity	56
4.3. The Effect of Place on Identity: Istanbul	57
4.4. Youth Associations and their Effects to Identity	58
5. YOUTH'S EVERYDAY LIFE	62
5.1. Controlled <i>Kayades</i>	62
5.2. Other Side of the Visibility: Social Media.....	65
5.3. The Spelling Bee: Names.....	67
5.4. Ghetto Out, <i>Bubble</i> In	70
5.5. Jew or Musevi?.....	73
6. A COMPLICATED DILEMMA: MARRIAGE.....	76
6.1. The Perspective toward Mixed Marriage	76
6.2. Families in Mixed Marriages	82
7. A JOURNEY TO THE MEMORIES.....	87
7.1. Unspoken Past.....	87
7.2. Memory of the New Age.....	89
8. CONCLUSION: END OF THE STORY.....	94
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	99

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, youth studies in Turkey have been one of the most attractive issues for social scientists. Approaching the concept of identity from a pluralistic perspective and ever-increasing number of subcultural groups have shown that youth is a structure far from homogeneity. With the rise and fall of Turkey's political environment, minority youths have started to attract the attention of youth studies. However, some of the minority youths are studied more than the others.

While designing this study, the fact that there were very few sources on Jewish youth was a factor that challenged me but could also bring the fieldwork I have conducted to the fore. When I started to be interested in the subject and learned historical background, I understood better the scarcity of studies on Jewish youth, and I would like to start my research with a detailed historical summary in order to better understand the current situation.

From the early 1900s to the present, the Jewish population in Turkey has been keeping emigrating and dwindling due to various reasons. In the 2000s, the Jewish population of Turkey was estimated between 20,000 and 25,000 (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 11). However, in the last 20 years, the changes in Turkey's political climate, the traumatic incidents experienced by the community, and the development and change of people's movement area with the effect of globalization have also affected the Jewish population in Turkey and caused it to decrease. Considering the numbers of the Jewish population around the world, according to the data for 2021¹, the Jewish population of Turkey is 14,500. The youth of the dwindling community is critical both in terms of revealing what has been handed down from past generations and predicting the future of the community. For this reason, in the introduction part of this study, providing a brief historical background is necessary in order to better explain the conditions of the community and the Jewish youth in today's Turkey.

¹ Jewish Population of the World, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-of-the-world, 02.11.2022.

1.1. A Brief History of the Jewish Community

Contrary to the popular belief, the history of the Jewish community living in these lands dates back to ancient times. Since the year 1492 is mentioned as the arrival of Sephardic Jews in many sources, it is understood as if there were no Jews in these lands before 1492. However, the history of the Jewish community in this land goes back to the BC era. Especially in the Aegean region, the ruins from the 4th year BC show that the Jews in Anatolia were not a new community at all (Güleryüz, 1993, p. 17).

When the year 1492 comes, the Catholics achieve a decisive victory on the purpose of re-Christianization of Spain and all eyes turned to Muslims and Jews, who were perceived as threats to the unity of Spain. Since Islam was a religion that came after Christianity, it could easily be called an aberration and was not given much attention. This situation, however, was not the same for Jewish people because Judaism was a religion that existed before Christianity (Lewis, 2021, p. 41-42). Jews were seen as an easy win, due to the fact that they had no leader and were far from a political union, so on March 31, 1492, the edict to expel the Jews from the country had been signed and brought into force in a month; all Jews would accept to be baptized by July 31 or leave the kingdom (Lewis, 2021, p. 44). The Ottoman Sultan Beyazıt II then became aware of the expulsion and issued an edict, which stated that the Jews coming from Spain must be accepted and not be turned away. The Jews, who took their first steps into the Ottoman lands in 1492, were settled in Istanbul, Edirne, and Selanik (Güleryüz, 1993, p. 60). A few years after the great exile from Spain, the large group that escaped from the exile and took refuge in Portugal was again faced with an exile in 1496 (Lewis, 2021, p. 45). This group of people who were forced to exile from Portugal found the solution by settling in Ottoman lands, like those who were exiled from Spain. In this exile, which caused one of the greatest movements in history, the majority of Sephardic Jews preferred Ottoman lands to settle down. Sephardic Jews, who were mostly settled in Thrace and Aegean regions, and Istanbul influenced both the Romaniote community that was rooted in those lands and the Ashkenazi community that came from Central Europe in a short time with the advantages of being more crowded and knowledgeable (Güleryüz, 1993, p. 41) and as a result of spending too long together, the Jewish people

from Spain and Portugal had assimilated all other Jewish communities except Karaites² (Rozen, 2010, p. 87).

Even though Jews have been living in this part of the world, the most difficult times started after the proclamation of the Republic³. In the 20th century, in the post-World War II era when the foundations of the Republic were being laid and the social and economic wounds were healed, the decision of establishing a nation-state had been made in order to eliminate the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. It was in this context that the relations between the groups, whose names were now about Lausanne Treaty minorities, and the state were determined. As Levi suggested in those years, Jewish people were located in two places, which were “*Istanbul and Thrace Region*” and “*Izmir and West Anatolia*” (2010, p. 14). The most crowded Jewish community was in Istanbul and the population was around 50 thousand as stated in unofficial sources, but according to El Tyempo, one of the Ladino⁴ newspapers of the time, the population was 90 thousand, and Balat, Hasköy, Galata were prominent neighborhoods (Levi, 2010, p. 18).

The anti-Semitism which spread rapidly after the war soon gained supporters in Turkey. In the first half of 1923, some contents began to appear in the press and humor magazines, which humiliated the Jews, portrayed them as money lovers, and stigmatized them as a threat (Bali, 2001, p. 43-44). In spite of the fact that it was thought that a small group of people such as nationalists or conservatives started the anti-Semitic ideas and propaganda in the beginning, through the strategic use of the press and humor magazines, these groups succeeded in rapidly spreading these discourses among the people. Some of the Jews of Turkey had decided to emigrate as they were disturbed by the tense environment with anti-Semitic thoughts and therefore at the beginning of 1924, there was the flow of emigration to Palestine (Bali, 2001, p. 47). It is important to note that, the only reason for the development of these anti-Semitic ideas was not the fact that it was a popular movement of thought in the post-war period. One

² Karaites believe only in the Torah, the main book of Judaism, and do not obey the Talmud, another important book of Judaism, but based on oral rules. Nowadays, they exist as a quite small community, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/karaites, 29.11.2022.

³ Işıl Demirel, in her master's thesis, studied the policies of the early Republican Period and the process that the Jews of Turkey went through, with the Çanakkale Jewish community.

⁴ The language that basically reflects the Spanish of the period when the Jews emigrated, and also contains words from different languages such as Turkish, Hebrew, Greek, French, Arabic, Aramaic, Italian (as cited Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 9).

of the main reasons was an economic one: the commercial gap which emerged after the War of Independence was filled by Jewish merchants (Bali, 2001, p. 53).

The aim of the republic, which was established with the nation-state mentality, was to make minority groups a part of the newly established structure and wanted to start this by providing a unity of language (Bali, 2001, p. 102). Even though the term “Turk” was a constitutionally inclusive concept in the newly established Republic of Turkey, it was not so in practice. The term “Turkish” mainly included Muslim citizens. Even on the path of establishing a *laïc*⁵ state, Islam was the first condition for being a Turk (Levi, 2010, p. 39). Religion and language are two integral parts of nation-states, especially if the nation-state is a newly established one. However, there is one more thing that is as significant as these two factors which is everyday life. It is obvious that people’s everyday lives are also related to these two factors. The Republic, at the first stage of its establishment, also worked towards making everyday life arrangement that was both common to all people and compatible with Western states, and declared the weekly compulsory holiday as Sunday, just like in Europe. Previously, every community had its holiday, and this day was Saturday, for the Jews since it is the Shabbath⁶. Since the vast majority of the Jews could not take a holiday twice a week due to economic reasons, they started to work on Saturdays and take a rest on Sundays, and like Turkey, they started to become *laïc* (Levi, 2010, p. 55). It is quite critical for a state to intervene in everyday life practices because of the fact that it is easier to spy on and control people in a place where everyone has the same everyday life.

While anti-Semitic winds were blowing among the people and the moves to Turkify minorities were being made, an incident had come about which brought the Jewish

⁵ The French word “*laïc*” was transferred to Turkish as “*laik*”. The word does not have an English equivalent, and since it is a different word from secular, which is used as a synonym with *laïc*, is used here and will continue to be used in this way in the continuation of the research. The concept of *Laïcité* comes from a Catholic school, that is, from a place where the church is the authority, and it is the application of age-appropriate rules to social life as opposed to competencies such as church, institution, rules; Secularism, on the other hand, has emerged from a social life with Protestant traditions and is the direction of people’s life by the age. After the establishment of the Republic, Turkey adopted the French model of *laïcité*. In the French model, religion and state affairs are separate from each other and do not interfere with each other, but due to the absence of an institution like the church in Turkey and the fact that religion is very intertwined with everyday life, *Diyanet*, an institution that can interfere with religion, when necessary, was established and thus religion was taken under control (Berkes, 2012, p. 17, 18 19 536, 537).

⁶ For Jews, the day of worship and rest, begins in the evening on Friday and lasts until the evening on Saturday (Bali, 2001, p. 559).

people into the agenda. A Jewish woman named Elza Niyego was killed by a man named Osman Ragıp in Galata on 17 August 1927 and this murder, in fact, was not about religion or ethnicity (Levi, 1996, p. 23-27). Osman Ragıp, who was married and even had kids, was in love with Elza Nyego murdered her since she did not reciprocate. This incident had caused the pressure and tension that had not been expressed until that time to come out in the Jewish community because of constant pressure on Turkification (Bali, 2001, p. 111). The Jews' search for justice was distorted in the press and reflected as a movement towards Turkishness which ended with many Jews being arrested, and it was realized that hostility to Jewish people was also present among many urban intellectuals (for a deeper analysis of the event see Levi, 2010, p. 75-85). These incidents were also met with anger outside of Istanbul and caused unexpected but not surprising cases. The houses where Jews lived were stoned in Edirne; an anti-Semitic demonstration was held in Izmir and boycotting the Jewish shopkeepers from local people and closing Jewish schools, newspapers and the chief rabbinate from the government were asked and on top of it, on 29 August 1927, a ban on free movement within Turkey was imposed for Jewish people and a special travel document was required for whom wishing to travel (Bali, 2001, p. 119, 125-126).

The Turkification of minorities came to the forefront of the agenda again, when the incidents after the murder of an Elza Niyego were added to the already tense environment. The first step in the Turkification process was to increase the use of the Turkish language. Unity of language is always the most critical building block for nation-states because, as Strauss stated, language is the most basic way of internalizing a culture (1997, p. 175). Usage of other languages than Turkish languages among minorities caused everybody's eyebrows to raise, especially Jewish people. Their inability to speak Hebrew, which was considered their mother tongue, and speaking Ladino which is the language of lands where they were forced to emigrate, were perceived as ingratitude and a reaction against Turkification (Bali, 1998, p. 106-107). Istanbul University Faculty of Law students, formerly known as Dâr-ül-fünûn, had held a congress on January 13, 1928, and decided to launch a campaign called “*Citizen, Speak Turkish!*”⁷, which forces all minorities to speak Turkish, but the name of the

⁷ In Turkish, Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!

In the newspaper İkdâm dated January 14, 1928, there is a news that the students held a secret meeting and that a community was established to encourage speaking Turkish.

campaign sounded like threatening rather than advice, and it made impossible for two people to speak other than Turkish on the street, and caused them to get threatening glances when they spoke (Bali, 2001, p. 135-136). Speaking Turkish was perceived as being directly related to being Turkish, not only on the side of the state but also among the public. Because of that, Jews were accused of not adopting Turkish culture and not becoming Turkish (Aktar, 1996, p. 4-18). As a newly established nation-state, Turkey was extremely insistent on creating a homogeneous Turkish-speaking structure. As Bali stated that the campaign for the dissemination of the Turkish language had continued in a quite serious manner in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and Citizen Speak Turkish signboards were hung on public transport and in central places throughout the city (2001, p. 140)⁸. Through the Turkification process, the attitude of the state was harsh as well as hasty. A systematic and time-consuming form of the process might have given the desired result in future generations, but when the hasty and imposing attitude did not receive a harsh reaction, it subsequently caused anger, and of course, fear for those who confronted this attitude. The campaign Citizen Speak Turkish had started abruptly and ended abruptly as it continued (Bali, 2001, p. 147).

After the 1930s, anti-Semitic thoughts started to rise, especially in Germany, which corresponded to the mood of the tense atmosphere in Turkey, and the attitudes towards minorities seemed to have a leg to stand on. Towards the end of June 1934, a violent looting action started against the Jewish people living in Çanakkale firstly, followed by Edirne, Kırklareli, and Tekirdağ, and the Jewish population in the region had to leave their places (Bali, 2019, p. 20). Both the policies that were carried out by the state with strict attitudes, as well as the reactions from the people, made these incidents inevitable in Thrace. The press was also used effectively before the incidents, the anti-Semitic cartoons published in Germany were translated into Turkish and the Jews were described as stingy, utilitarian, and cheaters (Bali, 2019, p. 95-100, 140). 3rd of July was recorded as the night with the most violent cases, houses were looted, people were beaten, and some women were raped, and on July 4, there were almost no Jews left in Thrace, which had a Jewish population of around 15,000, since most of them

For more, 15 Kanunisanı 1928, İkdâm, p.1, no: 11040.

Many thanks to M. Tolga Uslu for helping to translate the newspaper from Ottoman Turkish.

⁸ When the 40s approached, the Turkish speaking crisis continues, and it also took place in the press. In the column published in the newspaper Cumhuriyet on March 5, 1937, it was reported that the citizens did not speak Turkish, and Beyoğlu, where Turkish was spoken less, was the subject of it.

For more, 5 March 1937, Cumhuriyet, p.3, no: 4599.

immigrated to Istanbul (Levi, 2010, p. 116-117). The fact that these incidents in Thrace occurred at the same time in Çanakkale, Edirne, Kırklareli, and Tekirdağ (Aktar, 2004, p. 77), and a train with more than fifteen wagons was unexpectedly waiting at the Kırklareli train station on July 4, are indicators that Thrace Incidents were not something ordinary (Bali, 2019, p. 235). While Thrace Incidents took part primarily in the foreign press, the first news in Turkey was published on 6 July and the seriousness of the cases had been not mentioned in any way (Bali, 2019, p. 299, 301, 371). It is obvious that Nazism and anti-Semitic thoughts had an impact on the cases in Thrace, and it is written as such in the sources discussing the period. The Thracian Incident took place four years before the Crystal Night, one of the most well-known pogroms in history. During this pogrom called Crystal Night⁹ took place lots of violent incidents against Jews in Nazi Germany, houses and shops belonging to Jews were looted, and Jewish life in the region was turned upside down from the night of November 9 to November 10. Considering those incidents and the four-year-gap between them, it would not be wrong to say that what have happened since the first years of the republic, Nazism can only be a cover for what happened. It can never be a reason where there was already anti-Semitism.

Discussions about speaking Turkish kept going until the beginning of World War II, and the Jewish community had been featured in humiliating and ridiculed positions in various magazines and newspapers. After a short time of the beginning of the war, in November 1939, minority citizens who had completed their mandatory military service were once again required to serve in the military but still, minorities would not receive weapons training and would only serve in support roles as clerks, office workers and servants to Turkish Army Officers (Bali, 1998, p. 4-5). Those minorities who were called up for military duties have been housed in poor environmental conditions and there had been many deaths (Bali, 1998, p. 11). During World War II, the dark picture that Nazi Germany drew for the Jews and these conditions created fear and great psychological pressure on the Jews of Turkey. These people, who were prevented from doing business by being removed from the cities they lived in and were called to

⁹ The Night of Broken Glass, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/tr/article/the-night-of-broken-glass, 02.11.2022.

military service to increase the number of Muslim Turks in the market, had been discharged on 27 July 1942 (Bali, 1998, p. 14-15).

Despite the fact that Turkey did not participate in World War II, the effects of the war were wearing for the country. Minority groups, for sure, were the ones who felt these negative effects the most. An application called Wealth Tax was introduced and minority groups were indebted with tax at high rates. Since the Jews were the group, which was involved with trade the most, the Jews of Turkey were the ones who suffered quite a lot from Wealth Tax. This law, called Wealth Tax, had been accepted to put into force on November 11, 1942, while World War II was going on, and in a little while, it was implemented until 1944 (Aktar, 2004, p. 135, 138). Even though the Turkification policies that were implemented from the first days of the Republic were carried out with great determination and without compromise, the desired result could not be achieved in 1942, especially in the area of economy, and the number of Jewish merchants in the market was still high. During the economic depression of World War II, a move had been made to introduce the Wealth Tax an important step for the Turkification of the economy. As of January 1943, those who were not able to pay their taxes were sent to a labor camp in Aşkale and were forced to work in heavy jobs such as snow shoveling and road construction in difficult conditions (Benbassa&Rodrigue, 2014, p. 377), and 21 people lost their lives in this labor camp held in Aşkale (Aktar, 2004, p. 151). Those people, who were mostly Jewish people, working in the camp were released at the end of 1943 (Bali, 2001, p. 474). Together with the crises of World War II and the fear of what happened to the Jews in Europe, the Wealth Tax had been a devastating economic and psychological blow for the Jews of Turkey, and that destruction has added a new one to the incidents in the dark places of their memories.

A rumor that arose among the Jews of Turkey explains well the feeling of the Jews of Turkey at that period. An oven was being built in Balat, the region with the highest Jewish population in Istanbul, and Jews thought that these ovens were built to destroy them (Bali, 1998, p. 11-17).

With the end of the war and the change of regime in Turkey, the Jews of Turkey also had the opportunity sigh of relief. Until this period, the Republican regime had followed the policies of both Turkifying the minorities and the economy, enacted the Wealth Tax order to transfer the economic dominance to the Turkish-Muslim people, and tried to

reduce the activities of the minorities in the economic and social field (Bali, 2003a, p. 44).

It was also in this post-war atmosphere that a new development took place for the Jewish people: Israel was established. The establishment of Israel in 1948 aroused excitement for many Jews and led to mass migrations. When it is being looked at the historical background, many social, political, and economic reasons caused this emigration from Turkey to Israel, but there is a consensus among the Jews of Turkey that it is those with poor economic status who decided to emigrate to Israel (Bali, 2003a, p. 24). After the emigration movement from Turkey to Israel started, in 1948, Jews were blocked to have passports, they were taken out of the country as tourists, restrictions were placed on the goods they could take with them, and even emigration to Israel was prohibited (Bali, 2003a, p. 130-169). The Jews faced obstacles even when they wanted to leave the lands where they had lived for centuries after all kinds of incidents had happened to them. As Shaw stated that the Turkish Jewish population in Israel, which was 10,701 in 1948, increased to 41,605 in 1951 as a result of mass emigration (2008, p. 418).

Over time, the Turkification efforts, and pressures, of course, continued. On September 6-7, 1955, the properties of minorities, being in the first place Istanbul, were attacked, and the reason was associated with two news in the media; the Greeks in Cyprus were preparing an attack against the Turks, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's house in Thessaloniki was attacked (Güven, 2017, p. 13-14). At the center of that incident, the desire for the Turkification of the economy which was lasting from previous decades existed. It was aimed to reduce the influence of minorities in economic life and to be replaced by people from the Turkish-Muslim environment. This incident led to the re-emergence of anti-Semitic contents for Jews. Anti-Jewish leaflets were distributed in Çanakkale, swastikas were drawn on the doors of houses where Jews lived in Istanbul (Güven, 2017, p. 45). With the 6-7 September Incidents, it is also seen that minorities would not be considered as a part of this country. This situation accelerated the emigration movements and increased the emigration of Jews from Turkey to Israel (Güven, 2017, p. 173, 178).

The mass migration movements came to an end in time, however, the mobility for the Jewish community never ended. Despite all those tough historical processes, some Jews

have stayed in Turkey where they have been living for centuries, but those who chose to stay, have preferred to be invisible among the society and organized around the idea of *kayades*¹⁰.

Thirty-one years after the 6-7 September Incidents, on the same day, 6th September 1986, Palestinian supporters attacked Neve Şalom, the largest synagogue in Istanbul, and caused 21 people to pass away (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 28). Shortly after this incident, in the summer of 1989, the 500th Year Foundation was established in order to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Jewish emigration from Spain and Portugal to the Ottoman Empire (Shaw, 2008, p. 437). After the foundation has been established, projects for 1992 which was the year of the 500th anniversary of migration, were designed. The first project was an academic one on the history of Sephardic Jews, in the second a document called Jewish Heritage Sites of Turkey was published to promote tourism as well, and finally, a museum known as the Jewish Museum of Turkey was established in early 2000 (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 37-43). Another attack on Neve Şalom was attempted in 1992 but it was prevented. After the attack in 1986, security precautions started to increase by means of metal detectors, highly secure walls, and trained security staff (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 85). Through the establishment of the foundation and the opening of the museum, the Jews of Turkey took a step towards becoming more visible and promoting their culture. However, because of the attacks in 2003, these attempts have taken a major blow again. On November 15, 2003, attacks were made on Neve Şalom and Şişli Synagogue in Istanbul two minutes apart and 23 people passed away¹¹. When it is being taken into consideration the past Turkish Jews, clearly it is seen that they have experienced something periodically and they have been made targets. Twelve years ago, due to Mavi Marmara Incidents, they were exposed to many hate speeches and had tense days. Mavi Marmara, which departed from Turkey and was allegedly carrying aid to Gaza, encountered the intervention of Israeli soldiers in international waters. This conflict caused tension between the two countries and the reaction of the conservative people towards Israel was also reflected in the Jews.

Turkish Jews have also been affected by the phases that the community and Turkey have entered in the past years, they have made moves to reduce these effects, and they

¹⁰ Ladino idiom used to mean not to be seen, be low profile, www.avlaremoz.com/biz-kimiz/, 31.07.2022.

¹¹ Terrorist Attacks, www.nevesalom.org/teror.html, 31.07.2022.

have continued to live in the lands where they have lived for centuries. Considering all these historical and social events, the research aimed to shed a light on today's Jewish youth.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. The Journey of the Research

The spark of my interest in the topic goes back to 2014, on a rainy day in Berlin. That was my first trip to Berlin, and I was hanging around in Kreuzberg and conducting a fieldwork with Turkish people for my undergraduate thesis which was something entirely different from this topic. Whenever I had a chance, I was killing the time by exploring the city and on that pretty rainy and gloomy day, I decided to visit the Jewish Memorial and walked there unaware that this experience would lead me to write this thesis.

After a soaking wet and cold walk, all I saw was gray when I arrived at the memorial. A warning got my attention on the floor, between my feet, which was recommending visiting the memorial alone. I took out my camera and made a quick entrance to the memorial all alone. However, leaving was not going to be that quick. After a while, I thought that I had spent quite a long time there and decided to leave the memorial, but I was lost! I had no idea where I came from and where I can go to leave the place. I saw nothing but only tall and short columns of gray concrete. That was the time that my visit turned into an experience. For a while, I thought I could get out of here if I could see the sun, but everything I saw around me was gray, even the sky. I sought a small sign to make it easier to get out, a voice, maybe. I focused and listened to my surroundings, a dead silence was broken by the intense rain patter. That voice, rain patter, was making me feel like I must run away and someone coming after me. Because in the movies where I saw concentration camps, there was always a scene with intense rain, full of gray plans and the scene was ending with the shooting of the person who tried to escape and unfortunately failed. I hurried up and did my best to leave. It took a long time to get out of that labyrinth and while I was looking for the exit, I felt the sorrow and desperation of the Holocaust in my bones, however, I also knew that what I felt was far away from being comparable.

This extraordinary experience was an inspiration to me and in time turned into a burning curiosity about Holocaust and antisemitism. I have to admit that until then, Holocaust was a piece of history that I knew through only movies, documentaries and as much as my father, who grew up in Berlin, told me. Unfortunately, World War II and the

following period were something that could be learned through a special interest because history education ended by mentioning the early period of the Republic in the high school curriculum, for me and previous generations. Therefore, it was up to us to learn about that process and most critically its reflections in Turkey. Nevertheless, I was lucky because, after this experience, I started to read and research those topics and learned that Turkey is a country where antisemitism and hate speech caused many incidents in the past, and they still continue to be seen frequently today and I realized that what I know about minorities in Turkey was very limited. Accordingly, I have dived into readings and gone much deeper and deeper. I managed to keep my curiosity flame alive, and besides Judaism also became an area of interest for me. Like Holocaust, Judaism was also something I did not know much about. The first stories I heard about Judaism were my mother's memories. She used to tell me about weddings with stylishly dressed people and pleasant music in a synagogue which she watched from the balcony of their house in Ortaköy. As for me, I grew up in a neighborhood with almost as many churches as mosques and I had the opportunity to listen to many old stories with Armenian and Greek characters from my grandmother and learned about their culture and cuisine. Judaism did not cross my mind when the topic of minorities was discussed around me because I was only exposed to these cultures, until the heartbreaking attacks which included two synagogues in 2003. Like many others, I realized that I did not have enough knowledge about Judaism.

After I completed my undergraduate degree in anthropology, my path crossed with SEHAK (Civil and Ecological Rights Association) where I am currently a member of the board. I started working as part of their Media Monitoring and Memory Walk team on the project of teaching fundamental rights and democratic values through the life story of Anne Frank. During this journey that I started as a volunteer, I had the opportunity to have a deeper knowledge of the Holocaust, antisemitism, and Jewish history in Turkey. Through Media Monitoring, I have seen the different discourses of antisemitism, and thanks to the Memory Walks, I visited lots of cities and saw what was left of Jewish cultural heritage in Turkey.

As the days went by, my bag where I placed all my questions was getting bigger, and heavier, and I knew that there were plenty of questions waiting to be answered. This situation became more than a curiosity for me because I did not only want to read more

on the topic but also contribute to my research: I wanted to ask my questions to the interlocutors myself and reflect upon the findings. For this reason, I decided to work on this topic for my master's thesis. Deciding on the subject I wanted to work on brought up another question “*Whom would I be working with?*”. When I asked this question to myself, I realized that today's generation's voice could not be heard. There were many sources on Jewish history in Turkey, Thrace Incidents, Wealth Tax, Citizen Speak Turkish Campaign and September 6-7 Incidents, etc. Although it was quite enlightening to read all these remarkable sources, there was no source that I could hear the voice of the Jewish Youth. For me, Rıfat Bali's book¹², which he compiled from the essays of a group of Jewish youth, was very instructive. I felt very excited when I saw the blurry photos of young Jewish people who contributed to the book with their essays on the cover of the book, but I must admit that when I read it, I was still full of questions and wanted to read more. There was only one platform that focused on making the Jewish youth's voice louder, and that was Avlaremoz. Avlaremoz is an online platform, that was founded by a group of Jewish and non-Jewish young people by saying *avlaremoz*¹³ against *kayades*¹⁴ which was a common discourse of previous generations. They work to contribute to the visibility of the Jews and their history.

Even though it tempted me that the subject I was wondering about has not been studied much, I approached it with a somewhat *self-reflexive* instinct. As a young person, I wonder other young people around Turkey, what they think, feel, and complain about. Because of that, understanding Jewish youth's habitus and seeing what has changed from past generations to the present, how their everyday lives formed, and what changes in the memories according to generations became a purpose for me.

Living under the “same roof” brings us, all young people, together on common points, but there are many factors that make us different, and these factors and differences do not change the fact that we all struggle with similar issues. I was aware of all those differences and did not see them as obstacles. Even if they were, I believed that being from the same generation is a great key to sweep those differences away and establish a dialogue.

¹² Bali, R. N. (Ed.). (2017). “*Genciz, Türk'üz, Yahudi'yiz Yerli Yabancı Değiliz*”: *Türk Yahudi Gençleri Anlatıyor*, İstanbul: Libra.

¹³ In Ladino, to speak.

¹⁴ In Ladino, being silent and to not be visible.

2.2. Boundaries of the Research

In February 2020, my master's education started. I was so happy and excited to be back on campus. However, in a short time, all around Turkey, education turned into online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. That was so sad for me, and I was feeling something missing inside of me since I could not physically be on campus. Days were passing by, and the pandemic was not ending, and I was afraid that the pandemic conditions would hinder my fieldwork. Despite the fact that there have been certain changes in everyday life with the pandemic and online in-depth interview has become an option, I felt that they would not be in-depth as much as face-to-face. For a year, I lived with a huge question mark in my mind about whether I could realize my fieldwork or not.

That is why the biggest boundary was the pandemic, and it was a situation that I did not anticipate at all when I was preparing my thesis proposal. Getting acceptance and receiving the consent of the interlocutors was the first and the biggest boundary that I anticipated before I started my fieldwork because as far as I have read through the sources, the Jewish community has an introverted attitude and members of it are not lean towards talking. However, things have changed, and the pandemic situation became my biggest boundary. Getting acceptance was not the biggest issue I expected for my fieldwork because the pandemic overwhelmed everything. Of course, there was the effect of having important references, but I did not know exactly why, but we warmed up to each other with the people I interviewed quickly, and I never felt that acceptance issue.

Unfortunately, I could not overcome the limitations of the pandemic process and I could not conduct the fieldwork that I dreamed of in terms of participant observations. In the beginning, while I was thinking of my research, I was planning to attend religious and celebrating ceremonies, weddings, and so on. However, due to the pandemic restrictions, it was not possible for me to attend those ceremonies in closed areas. I conducted my interviews and also spent time with my interviewees as much as I could, in order to reduce the negative effect of pandemic restrictions.

My three interviews among all were conducted via Zoom because one of my interviewees did not want to meet in crowded places and the other two preferred online since it is easier for them. For the first one, I thought an online interview would not be

as effective as a face-to-face interview, but I was wrong. The first and third online interviews were quite problem-free and as if we were chatting face-to-face. The second online interview might have not been what I expected if my reference was not trustworthy enough, because she was a close-mouthed person, and it could be difficult to break through barriers in online interviews.

Even though I could not realize the fieldwork I dreamed of in terms of participant observation, because of the Pandemic situation, I am sure that the friends I became during my fieldwork will ensure those opportunities, whenever I need when things are good.

2.3. Following the Footsteps of Jewish Youth

Undoubtedly, Istanbul, the most crowded city in Turkey, was the only option for me to conduct this research, because of the fact that it is the city with the largest Jewish population in Turkey¹⁵. When the summer came, I was ready to start my research with everything and I knew that a difficult time was waiting for me. The pandemic process had been very difficult, and the summer months had become a time for everyone to look forward to. I was afraid of not being able to reach anyone and not being able to start my research during the summer months. I did not want to waste time and my anxiety was doubled since I could not help thinking about it. Furthermore, I have to confess that I was already anxious, because there were only Jews around me, whom I knew through professional relations, and I did not have a Jewish friend whom I could ask to tell me a personal story which was a big misfortune. Due to that, one of my greatest wishes was to be able to make some Jewish friends during my research.

The months of June and July were full of anxiety, and I could do nothing for research. This situation got bigger inside me, and the only thing I could think about was: “*How would I find young Jewish people?*”. It was the end of July and a very close friend of mine had a wedding. I was very happy for him, and this wedding was going to be a break for me. At least for one night, I was not going to deal with that question, but it did not work as I thought it fun concerns about the research and bothering everyone

¹⁵ According to the recent data, total population is around 14.500 and the greatest majority of it live in Istanbul and Izmir is the second biggest community with 1.500 population, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/turkey-virtual-jewish-history-tour, 02.12.2022.

who came to the wedding for fun, until I moved into a deep conversation with Cansin, my lifesaver friend. Cansin told me that she has a Jewish friend who can help me and with the speed of our generation, she texted my first-to-be interviewee to let him know about my research. In minutes, I had my first interviewee's number, and it was only one call away. After I had the number, I visited the bar in order to make the deal between me and Cansin clear. It was a win-win situation, a hard drink in return for an interviewee. My happiness was undefinable and that was the time that finally the fun starting for me at the wedding.

In the following days, I called N, my first interviewee, and we arranged a day to conduct the interview. I was invited to his office. That was a bit nervous for me because I thought I should pay attention to my appearance. Nevertheless, I wore shorts since it was too hot, and I was very relieved when I saw that he was also wearing shorts in the office. As a first interview, it was quite good, but since my questionnaire is long, we could not complete it, and we made an appointment for a Zoom meeting, because he was about to go on a long holiday, and I wanted the time between the interviews to not be too long.

Unfortunately, my first interviewee could not help me to find another. As a result of a long effort, a person among my sister's friends agreed to meet with me. On the first week of September 2021, I met with her around Bomonti. After the interview, she took me for a walk around Bomonti, the neighborhood where Jews lived in the past and still live. Thus, I made a journey to her childhood and had the opportunity to listen to her memories in the neighborhood where she grew up, where the former youth association was located.

I was stuck with these two interviews, and I was thinking that some stressful days awaits me. However, in those days, through my SEHAK network, I found my key person. Ordinarily, fieldwork or interviews start by means of a key person, but I found my key person after I started the interviews and realized this way is also possible. My key person, also another interviewee to me, was a young-adult and well-known person who is especially loved and respected by the youth in the Jewish community. His youth

network is quite wide since he was a peer educator¹⁶ in the youth associations. My key person told me that he would be happy to help me, but I might not have much opportunity to conduct interviews in September, since it was full of special and religious days, like *Rosh Hashanah*¹⁷, *Simchat Torah*¹⁸, *Yom Kippur*¹⁹, and *Sukkot*²⁰.

Starting with October, I continued to interview the people my key person found for me. I met most of the interviewees more than once, and not only for an interview, but also to hang out, have a drink. With one of them, I watched a live stand-up show and met with her friends. In this way, the snowball technique became functional for me, and I broadened my network and met new people for interviews.

November, I had a chance to do voluntary work on the exhibition “*Jewish Identity Engraved in Stones*” which was arranged by the Jewish Museum of Turkey. When this opportunity came to me, I accepted it without any hesitation. I was very happy that I would benefit, and it would allow me to integrate into the field more by establishing a bond of the heart. Moreover, during the time that I was conducting my research came across to Hanukkah Celebration and in Balat. On the last day of *Hanukkah*²¹, a public ceremony was held to light the last candle of Hanukkah²². This ceremony, which has been open to the public since 2015, had been held in Ortaköy, Galata, and Beyoğlu in previous years.

On the first day of Hanukkah, while I was texting some Hanukkah celebrations to my interviewees, one of them invited me to the ceremony. Even though it was a public

¹⁶ As D stated, these educators, whose men are called Madri and women are Madriha, are several years older than the participants in the cultural groups and are in charge of maintaining and moderating the discussions. Among the interviewees who participated in the research, there are those who have been and are still teaching as Madri or Madriha.

¹⁷ It is the beginning of the new year according to the Hebrew calendar and coincides with the months of September-October in the Gregorian calendar (Bali, 2001, p. 559).

¹⁸ Cycle of Torah. Torah consists of 54 chapters, and they are being read for a year. Every year on the day of Simchat Torah, this cycle ends and starts again, www.salom.com.tr/arsiv/haber/88435/simhat-tora-26-eylul, 28.11.2022.

¹⁹ Day of fasting and penance. During the day of Kippur, people fast and pray (Bali, 2001, p. 560).

²⁰ Pergola Festing, It lasts for 8 days and during this time, people gather in pergolas or open areas and perform their everyday life activities such as eating and drinking, www.sevivon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1369:sukot-un-abc-si&catid=26:sukot-semeni-atseret-simhat-tora-nedir&Itemid=210, 28.11.2022.

²¹ After Jerusalem was taken back under control by the Jews, the menorah (a candelabra with seven candles) was intended to be lit, but there was not enough oil for more than one day. A miracle had happened, and candles lit for eight days. In order to commemorate it, candles are lit for eight days every year, www.sevivon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1372:hanuka-nin-abc-si&catid=31:hanuka-nedir&Itemid=213, 28.11.2022.

²² Special candelabra for Hanukkah with nine candles.

ceremony which everyone could attend, I was very pleased to get a special invitation. Quickly, we set a place and time to meet. On the day of the celebration, we met in Balat earlier than the ceremony time. After taking a little tour of Balat, we started to walk to the ceremony place nearby Or-Ahayim Hospital. As we got closer, the Ladino tunes in our ears became clearer. Those Ladino songs were also familiar to me because I heard them in *the Club*²³ series which was released on Netflix in those days. Many people were familiar with the songs and tunes but were not or could not sing along. After the songs, it was time to light the candles. Those who came to the ceremony were praying in harmony and candles were being lit. Young ones were using their phones in order to keep up with the prayer since they did not know it by heart.

Thereafter, I kept conducting the interviews and I had the chance to represent SEHAK in a project runned by the Hrant Dink Foundation. At the end of the project, a short video about minority youth was going to be filmed, and I had to contact a Jewish youth who might be involved in the video. After a few phone calls, I met one of the young columnists of Şalom's Plus Eighteen²⁴ team, who is living in abroad for her master's degree. In a short time, this person introduced me to a friend who agreed to be included in the video, but more significantly, I met an important person (Z is going to be used) for my thesis research. Our conversation progressed very quickly when Z heard of my research topic, and we decided to meet when Z is going to visit Turkey for *Passover*²⁵. After meeting and mingling, I was invited to an event where all members of Şalom Plus Eighteen team would gather around. This was great news for me because I had the chance to meet and socialize with many young Jews.

This Şalom Plus Eighteen team event was held as open, and I was not the only outsider to the Jewish community, even though it was an event with a majority of youth from the community. Şalom Plus Eighteen previously organized a small competition and the winner was entitled to participate in this event. Except for me, the winner of the competition, and one person's girlfriend, all the rest of the participants were members of the community. On the day of the event, I woke up, texted Z immediately, and asked

²³ Netflix series produced in 2021, set in Istanbul in the 1950s, shedding light on the lives of other minorities, especially Jews, and the politics and historical face of the period.

²⁴ It is the special section of the Şalom newspaper, which is directed by young people, where they make news about popular culture, music, literature, and the agenda, www.salom.com.tr/haberler/50/artionsekiz.

²⁵ It is the salvation of the Jews from slavery by escaping from Egypt. It lasts 8 days, and the consumption of yeasty foods on these days is prohibited (Bali, 2001, p. 559).

whether there is a dress code or not. I was a bit nervous and excited and of course, did not want to be late. I went to the place a little earlier than the start time because it is easier to meet people and start a conversation when you go early. When I got there, I was one of the firsts and Z welcomed me quite warmly, then left me there to take care of the organization things. I first met a few people from the team. They welcomed me very warmly and started chatting with me while they were making their preparations. While we deepened the conversation, the place was getting more crowded. Close friends, people who not seeing each other for a long time, meeting for the first time, everyone came together at this event. These people first retreated into a corner in small groups, but it did not last long. Z gathered us together for a welcome speech, and then we all briefly introduced ourselves. This phase was not equally easy for some because not everyone had the same social skills: there were those who had difficulty speaking in the crowd and those who were hesitant to speak. After the introduction, we split into groups of 4-5 and played a quiz game asking questions about Jewish culture. Since the majority were from the community, it was a surprise to them that I answered a few questions correctly. Once the quiz game was over, we moved to a large table reserved for us to have dinner. Meanwhile, I took a little risk and sat in a far place from Z. This event was giving me an opportunity for participant observation, so I needed to be alone because I wanted to get to know people myself and chat with them to learn what they talk about, what they laugh at, what they like, what they talk about among themselves. The conversations began before the dinner started and deepened with a few drinks. I did not talk about my thesis during the conversations, and I never asked questions about my research. Then, unfortunately, I realized it was not possible to talk about anything other than the thesis. First, I started a conversation with a person who made *aliyah*²⁶ to Israel, and she told me about her life in Israel. As we continued the conversation in a corner of the table and our laughter began to scatter on the table, the general interest at the table began to turn towards our conversation. I started to get the advantage of going early here because the first people who came to us were the first people I met. These two people were the most social among the others. Those, who were shy when introducing themselves, were those who could not expand the boundaries of the conversation and ended the night early. Our conversation topics were quite diverse, we

²⁶ It is the return of Jews living in the diaspora, that is, outside of Israel, to the promised land of Israel (Bali, 2003a, p. 29).

talked about the TV series we watched, the music we listened to, and of course Turkey. Then, since one of the members Şalom Eighteen Plus is going to enlist in the military soon, we talked about military service for a while. We also talked about the fact that Ramadan, Passover, and Easters coincide in the same month and the posters made by Kahve Dünyası²⁷. When it comes to Ramadan and Passover, pide and matza became the two prominent conversation elements. When I said that I was always looking for matza but could not find it, the phones were picked up immediately and places, where I could order matza online, were suggested. Z said that when Ramadan comes, they buy pide at home, and they love it. At that moment, I thought, I wish I could find matza with the same ease when it is Passover.

I also realized that the group that I have been chatting with likes offensive humor and does not hesitate to make Jewish jokes among themselves, and they laugh a lot. Although I, personally, love offensive humor, I felt nervous a bit, due to the fact that they said they do not like when a non-Jew makes a Jewish joke, and I did not want to make a blunder. However, they told me to feel relaxed, and that they would not be offended if I made a joke. That was a good sign for me because in a short time I have accomplished gaining their trust. This event was generally what I expected, and I managed to make good friends when the night was over, two people asked for my phone number before I left.

During my research, we became friends with a few of my interviewees, and I gained both friends with whom I could ask my questions about Jewish culture. I was sending congratulatory messages to the people I met and interviewed throughout my research on all special and holy days. For some, these days were quite important, while others realized that it was a special day only when I sent a message. However, all of them were quite happy to receive those messages and the reason for this was actually to be remembered, not celebrated or congratulated. When the Passover has come, something different happened. On the first day of Passover, after I had my breakfast, I picked up my phone to send congratulatory messages, but one of my interviewees had sent a congratulatory message to me for Passover. I was very surprised and joyful. I was

²⁷ Kahve Dünyası posted a celebration message on social media about the intersection of Ramadan, Passover and Easter in April and hung posters in its stores.
 Ramadan, Passover and Easter Celebrations from Kahve Dünyası,
www.avlaremnoz.com/2022/04/06/kahve-dunyasindan-ramazan-pesah-ve-paskalya-kutlamasi/,
 23.11.2022.

surprised because for the first time I was receiving a congratulatory message for Passover; I was happy because it was one of the most critical indicators that I was doing the right things throughout the field.

2.4. From Geertz's Path

Since I am an anthropologist, I designed my research by considering an ethnographic framework and decided to use the ethnographic interview as part of the qualitative method, because I was believing that it is the best way. My research question was quite complex and unique, and it could only be possible with the ethnographic research method. One of the pioneers of the ethnographic research, Geertz suggested that ethnographic research does establishing rapports, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, and keeping diaries (1973, p. 6) and throughout my fieldwork, I fulfilled all the requirements he suggested. I selected my informants in order to provide diversity; I kept a diary in order to not forget critical points and write my observations, and I transcribed my all interviews. Geertz argues that “*doing ethnography is like trying to read manuscript*” (1973, p. 10) and this is absolutely what I would aim to do since my research aims to understand the habitus of Jewish youth. The concept of habitus is very complex, and it is something resembling a manuscript that gets deeper the more it is being read and gives more hints all of which have different meanings and backgrounds. Because of that, I had to be careful from the beginning to the end of my research and gather all the details throughout my fieldwork. Following Geertz, for studying the concept of habitus, the thick description becomes inevitable. Since studying the concept of habitus requires exceedingly detailed fieldwork, thick description is what needs to be done. Geertz defined thick description as a detailed and microscopic perspective to understand the behaviors with their context and reasons (1973, p. 3-32). The qualitative method was the only way that I could achieve it and ethnographic interviews are the best way to discover the people. In this type of interview, besides the answers given to the questions, the reactions during the answers and the observations of the moods are also well-connected.

For the research, I interviewed 12 Jewish young people, different ages between the ages of 19-35. Youth is mostly defined as between the ages of 15-24 by various institutions (Neyzi, 2013, p. 106). However, like everything that changes today, the meanings and

representations of ages are changing. Even though it is difficult to write it by giving a source, but the 30s are the new 20s discourse, which is widely used in social media, is a useful example. The discourse brings the role of age for youth closer to Bourdieu's perspective. Bourdieu stated that “*youth is just a word*”, and the concept of youth is socially constructed (1993, p. 94-102). Today, as in western societies, the age range expressed by youth has also changed in Turkey. The most important reason for this is the lack of economic freedom, unemployment, etc., as well as the fact that young people adopt a lifestyle outside the system, that is, it is preferential (Firat, 2013, p. 51). Considering these perspectives, the lower limit for the participants of the research was determined as 18, which is the age that childhood ends according to the Turkish Penal Code; the upper limit was determined as 35 according to both social conditions and the population of the Jewish community.

2.5. My Jew Friends

Before starting the fieldwork, one of my biggest wishes of mine was to be able to establish good relationships and become friends with the people I met during my fieldwork. These interviews should not be the only one time we meet and have conversations with each other. I could not be an anthropologist who did not make friends and relationships while conducting the fieldwork. This would be against the nature of my work, and I would have made the wrong choice to reach my goal.

I have never had any difficulties in making friends in any part of my life, and even though I felt nervous, I never hesitated to enter crowded environments all alone. When the metal bands that I loved came to perform in my teenage time, I would go alone and meet new people there. We used to add each other on Facebook, the popular social media platform of the time. But until I came to the edge of starting my fieldwork, I met only people in environments where we had common tastes, through this easiness we met and became good friends. Throughout my life, I have always been in multicultural places and made friends with people from different cultures. I, however, have never had Jew friends or knew them as Jews. In a city like Istanbul, it was really strange that I was a young person with a wide circle of friends and had no Jewish friends. I have to admit, that was another reason why I wanted to make friends.

During the fieldwork I conducted, I made 12 friends, and of course, I had more intimate friendships with some of them than the rest. However, none of them were just interviewees to me. It is true that in the following part of the research, I will refer to them as the interviewee, which is an unemotional term, and even as the interviewee R, A, B with the letters I chose for them. Therefore, I had the urge to write this chapter and introduce my friends, albeit briefly.

These people who helped me throughout my fieldwork were doing something quite different from their past generations because talking was taboo for past generations. Keeping the information of these people confidential within the scope of the research was not only due to an ethical concern. In the projects, I worked with SEHAK and through the readings I have done realized that being a Jew in Turkey was not easy and I had to protect them. So, I randomly chose letters in my friends' names to identify them.

I will introduce my friends in the order of interviews. N was the very first person that I conducted an interview. N is male and 35 years, a director, and married. My friend Cansin introduced me to him. He studied in Jewish Schools then he went to another city for his university education. Before he left Istanbul for university, he was a peer educator in the youth association. It went very well for the first meeting. He hosted me in his office, and we talked for over two hours, but I could not complete my questions. This was exactly what I expected, and I was sure it is going to happen in future interviews. Since N was going on a long vacation soon, we decided to complete the rest of the meeting via Zoom. I left his office with a big smile on my face, and I was feeling very cool despite the hot weather. I had officially made my first meeting and now I had put my first step on the field. Within two weeks, we also met via Zoom; and completed the meeting.

My second interview was with my sister's friend K. She is 35 years, divorced, and has a girl. K studied in Jewish Schools and graduated from a private university in Istanbul, nowadays K runs her family business. K was out of the city for summer vacation when my sister told her about my research and ask help. She was very excited to contribute to such research. Before the interview, we had a short meeting with K via Zoom in order to get acquainted and to explain the research in more detail. We agreed to meet when she comes to Istanbul. However, since one of K's family elders passed away, our meeting was not as easy as we agreed, and I could not contact her for a long time. But

in the end, we made an appointment with K. We met in Bomonti to have lunch together and meanwhile to conduct the interview. Then, we went on a short tour of Bomonti, the streets where she spent her childhood. This tour was quite enlightening, I learned how the streets which I walked many times used to be, and who owned the shops I passed in the past.

When I started having difficulties in reaching Jewish youth, I decided to activate my SEHAK network, and I received a response in a short time. S and I spoke on the phone first, and I told her about my research. We made an appointment and when the day came, we met at a coffee shop near her house. S came to the meeting with a friend who is not a Jew. Her friend sat and listened to us throughout the interview. S is 25 years old and studied in Jewish Schools and at a private university in Istanbul. This meeting also went quite well, and S told me that she was thinking of what to say for interviews while she was walking from home. After my third interview, a period of pause had begun. This was causing me tremendous stress. In this case, I was saved by D, whom I contacted again thanks to my SEHAK network. D had both agreed to interview me and said he could introduce me to a few people. When I said that I was stuck at the same number of times for a while, he said that religious days are consecutive in September, and therefore it is difficult to reach people. D is 35 years old and works as a sales manager. He is married and has a boy. We agreed with D to meet after work on a weekday. I went to the meeting place a little early. I ordered myself a beer and started repeating what I would ask during the interview. Not long after, D came in, and he ordered a beer too. D is someone who is loved and respected in the community, especially by young people. He has been a peer educator in associations before and is still very active in the community. D started by stating that I do something valuable for him. We started the interview without losing time. But because it would take a long time, we split it into two and made another appointment to meet again a week later. As we were leaving the place, he said he wanted to pay the bill himself and added with a laugh that *"I want to prove that we are not stingy"*. When we met for the second interview, he gave me the phone numbers of three more people and said that they accepted to be part of the research and waiting to get in touch. D became my key person whom I met after I started the field. Gaining his friendship was important to me because he is an emergency person that I could call if I was stuck.

I immediately contacted the 3 people whose phone numbers were given to me by D, but it took some time to make an appointment with them. Meanwhile, I got a call from my younger cousin Mert. He said that his Jew friend from high school, who went to Israel in order to study, has returned to Turkey. Mert asked me if I want, he can get in touch with him and ask for an interview. There was a mobilization around me, and I was getting support from the eldest to the youngest in my family. B, a friend of my cousin, had accepted the interview, and in a short I had his phone number. We had a very warm conversation on the phone, and he said he would love to be a part of it. B is the youngest one that I met on through my research. He was born into a mixed marriage. That's why I thought he could have something to say for both sides. B started his education in Jewish Schools but pursued in another mixed private school. B went to Israel to finish high school and recently returned to Turkey. He is 19 years old and grew up by seeing both cultures, so he had a critical point of view and has no hesitation to speak. The interview with him was very outspoken. Another good thing about that interview is that my cousin Mert and B, who are friends from high school, have the opportunity to meet after a long time. Seeing two friends hugging was a win-win situation for me.

I had made four interviews in total, and it was the time for D's contacts. I called R first. She is 25 years old, single, and works as a data analyst. She studied in Jewish School and graduated from a private university. R is a member of well-known family and is a peer educator in one of the clubs of the Chief Rabbinal. R was most curious about what the interview would be like. After explaining it on the phone call, we made an appointment with her, but the first appointment was canceled due to her job. Our meeting with R had taken a really long time and was not over. I asked her everything I was curious about, and she explained everything without any hesitation. We agreed on the second interview for a week later, and in the meantime, I finished the transcript of the audio recording and went to the second interview with new questions. The second meeting was also long, although it did not take as long as the first one. My interviews with R were very productive both in terms of research and friendship. After a week, we met with R and went to see a stand-up show. R introduced me to A there and mentioned my research. A, on the other hand, said that he would like to join immediately before he met me properly and gave me his number. I wanted to interview A because through

his profession he breaks all taboos that community has but I never expected it to happen so fast.

The pool that I have was getting bigger and bigger. My next interview would be with V, and she was another contact that D find for me. She is 29 years old, a psychologist and single. V studied in Jewish Schools and graduated from a private university in Istanbul, also completed her master's degree at another private university in Istanbul. V said that she does not go out much due to Covid, and she would be happier if we did it via Zoom. Even though my first choice is always face-to-face, I accepted this offer without offending her and I did not regret it. It was quite a long interview, and I was as if I had been a guest at her home. We drank our teas together and talked for a long time. We even continued to chat for a while after completing the interview. There were no disadvantages having a Zoom call, and I thought it might not even be as good and enjoyable if we met somewhere outside.

I was the last person that I met thanks to D. When I first contacted him, I waited for his return as he was abroad. We got in touch again shortly after returning and made an appointment on a weekday after work. We were going to meet at a place where he often hangs out and close to where he works. Again, I went a little early, sat, and waited for İ. When İ entered the venue, he first came to me and then went to his friends and had a short chat with them. Besides, introduced me to them and mentioned what I was doing. One of them was also Jew and was very interested in the research. He said that if I needed, I could get his number from İ and call him. İ is 27 years old, works as a sales manager, single. He studied in a French high school and state university in Istanbul and is a former peer educator in the association and was a well-known person in the community. Not only that, but he explained everything openly, and sometimes he was surprised that I know about their culture. Unfortunately, it took a long time to set up the second interview with İ. My grandmother passed away and İ's father got covid. We were able to set the second interview up almost 2-3 months after the first one. But when we met, I realized that it was as if not that much time had passed. We met at the same place, the people I saw and met at the first meeting were there. They asked me how my research was going, and they joked with me about İ. It was as if I knew those people for a long time. Before we started the interview with İ, we talked a little bit about football. Since we are both Fenerbahçe fans, this conversation had the potential to last

a long time, and he was wearing a Hufflepuff scarf, and we started having a deep Harry Potter conversation with him. After Fenerbahçe and Harry Potter, it was difficult to start the interview, but it was successfully done.

It took some time for me to meet with A because of both his work and my interview schedule. A and I met in the morning, and we started interviewing while having breakfast. A is 28 years old, a comedian, and single. He studied in private primary and high school, then at a private university in Istanbul. He was not very attached to the community, but he joined three times in Maccabiah²⁸. Beyond any doubt, the funniest interview was with A. We had only one meeting with A, but it was quite enough. I had to equate the number of men to women in interviews. I immediately mentioned this situation to R, and at that moment she texted her cousin and mentioned me. Her cousin, O, said she could accept since she trusts R. I got her number and called her a few days later. She wanted to interview on Zoom because she was preparing for marriage at that time, and she said she could spend more time if we interview via Zoom. I accepted it because my first Zoom interview went very well. O is 25 years old, works as a graphic designer, engaged. She studied in a state high school and also went to another city for her university education. It had been a good meeting, but the most important part of it was that R referenced me. With this interview, I reached 10 interviews in total. Around this time, I met Z, a Turkish Jew living in Germany. She was also very interested in my research and introduced me to two more people. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to interview a Jew from different a group, since the population of Sephardic Jews in Istanbul is high. Z handled this situation and introduced me to G of Van origin. G is 35 years old, runs his own business, and is married. He is the only one who is a not Sephardic Jew. G studied in Jewish Schools and at a state university in Istanbul. First, I spoke with him on the phone, and even that it was a long conversation to get to know each other. He accepted my ask for an interview very warmly. We also met with G twice, as the interview took a long time, and he asked many times if I needed more interviews. Another interviewee Z introduced me to was M. She had helped me on a project I was working on and additionally agreed to interview for research. However, it took me a long time to set up a meeting with M. But in the end, we were able to meet with M as well. M is 25 years old, a biologist and single. The meeting went very

²⁸ Sports event attended by Jewish athletes from around the world.

smoothly as we had the opportunity to meet and chat a few times before the interview. Apart from equalizing the numbers of men and women, another reason for including M and O in the research was that they had studied high school and university in mixed schools. So, both interviews had been quite rich.

I had completed the field with the last interview, I had 12 interviews and 12 friends. I felt like I had come a long way back. They all told me everything I would like to know, and they were all extremely precious to me. Besides, I have to admit I had heard a lot of gossips too. On the one hand, I wanted to write them all down and tell about them, on the other hand, I wanted to keep all they told me because very few outsiders knew all those things and it made me feel very special. When I consider my fieldwork, I have learned and discovered a lot and I have to admit what I wrote here is just a part.

3. JEWISH YOUTH: HABITUS, GENERATIONS, AND THE YOUTH

3.1. Jewish Habitus: A Tradition

The population of Sephardic Jews is dominant in Istanbul and even in Turkey in general, and besides, when Judaism is mentioned, Sephardic Jews are the first thing that comes to mind. For this reason, the interviews, within the scope of the research, were conducted with 11 Sephardic Jews and one Jew from Van.

Homogeneity is only a myth for any society, and it is not a case that can be talked about for Jewish youth in Istanbul, even though they are members of a minority or a community that is dwindling away. At this point, the concept of habitus is highly functional in order to understand the Jewish youth, the subject of the research. The concept of habitus is one of the most significant concepts of Bourdieu's sociology because it starts with a reflexive context and approaches all concepts, theories, and phenomena through a critical point of view through a cause-effect relationship. Therefore, through the contributions of Bourdieu, the concept of habitus has taken an essential place in social sciences literature, and it has presented a critical perspective with its collective structure, historicity, contextuality, and cause-effect relationship. Considering all these aspects, this research uses the habitus concept to understand and identify the Jewish youth living in Istanbul.

Even though habitus, as a concept, has gained its popularity after Bourdieu and his contributions, its history dates back to Aristotle and his concept of hexis, and the concept of habitus was used by Scholastic thinkers to define the concept of hexis (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 86). In the ongoing history of social sciences, the concept of habitus has been used by many different names, such as Hegel, Husserl, Weber, and Pierce who had discussed the concept from a close perspective to Bourdieu. They focused on the individual and effects of structure on the individual by avoiding the philosophy of both the subject and the structure, but Bourdieu's basic difference was *habitude*, so he was using practical ability (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2014, p. 111). In the French sociological school, Bourdieu is not the first one who used the concept, Durkheim and Mauss also used the concept. Durkheim used the concept in his work, entitled *The Pedagogical Evolution in France*, while talking about the attempt of Christian education to create a

habitus against pagan belief and the problems it caused; Mauss referred to the concept of habitus in his work on body techniques (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 86).

The concept of habitus is one of the most comprehensive concepts in academic literature and it is not possible to explain the concept with a single definition. If this is done, an aspect of this very inclusive and collective concept will definitely fall outside of that explanation. As a concept, habitus is not exactly an individual construct (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2014, p. 27), and it is not a purely social construct as well. It is the product of a process in which the individual is at the center of a discussion where one establishes a cause-effect relationship with all factors that can affect the habitus, and this product can develop and change depending on the historicity. Judaism is the most authoritative factor that is effective in shaping the habitus of the interviewees, accompanies the individual in this process, and establishes the cause-effect relationship.

Judaism among the youth is shaped as tradition rather than a religious belief. Even though some people in the interviews have expressed that they are believers, they approached it very rationally and made their own Judaism statement through a perception of traditionalism. The concept of habitus is considered as internalized and externalized practices (Etil & Demir, 2018, p. 339), and since the traditions are set of practices, they can be directly informed about habitus. The participants, who expressed themselves as believers among the others, added that they are not blindly religious, and also, they do not like being religious and religious people who tell someone what is right and what is wrong. However, according to a study conducted by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation in 2006, 60 percent of the people in Turkey defined themselves as very religious, but what Brink-Danan saw in her research among Jewish youth in Istanbul was that the participants are mostly secular (as cited 2012, p. 20). This data, which is not specific to young people, is similar today when it is being looked at with a youth focus. Today, there is a Jewish youth where there is not much religiosity, and Judaism is a tradition among them. Interviewee D, who likened his approach to tradition to the intro music of *Fiddler on the Roof* and stated that this concept occupies a very important place in his life, said that the number of religious people in the community is quite low, and atheists and deist approaches are common. Other interviewees mentioned that even if they are believers, their ties with Judaism are

mostly based on a perception of tradition as well. Interviewee I emphasized that being a minority influences the perception of tradition and strengthens the ties with tradition.

“One of my favorite movies, maybe you know, Fiddler on the Roof, has an intro music, starts as tradition and I often resemble myself to it. Tradition is very important to my life at most points, and it is a sentence said in the movie, where did this tradition come from, I have no idea. My father was doing it, my grandfather was doing it, then I must continue it. Of course, as I said, since I am a person who is interested in learning, I often try to learn its religious foundations and cultural background. But even if some of them seem a little unnecessary, I take care to continue it as a tradition (...)” (D, 35).

“If you ask where Judaism in my life is, Judaism is generally present in my life with traditions. I care about them. There are some traditions that I would like to carry on in my own family to pass these on to the future. I attach great importance to the concept of family; I believe that it holds the family together” (S, 25).

“I believe in god, I have faith in god. But I consider Judaism more as a tradition. This is perhaps the aspect of being a minority. Because if I wasn't a minority, I wouldn't care this much about tradition. Like 60 to 40. 60 percent comes as a tradition because if my family had not taught me these, I don't know whether I would have done these things or whether I would have known or wanted them. 60 percent is tradition, of course, as much as my family taught me, I don't come from a very religious family. I grew up in a liberal family. To tell the truth, I don't like religiousness very much. But we can state 60 to 40 percent, or even 65 to 35” (I, 27).

“I am not a religious person at all. Like a kafir. But I care about my traditions. Traditionally, we make every celebration, feast, as a family” (K, 35).

While the general point of view for Judaism was stressing upon the tradition, interviewee R stated Judaism is a lifestyle. This way of seeing Judaism as a lifestyle is quite reasonable since it is a religion and is also very compatible with the concept of habitus because as a concept it is a “structuring structure” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 170) and it regulates people's everyday life practices.

“Someone told me this, I didn't come up with it myself, "Judaism is a way of life". I'm not really saying it in the concept of doing all the things blindly, but I can really say it's a lifestyle because it's a religion that touches a lot of things like your living, behavior, and eating, etc. I am not a very religious person. However, my family is religious, but in the difference between the religious and the religionist, they are on the religious side, depending on their traditions” (R, 25).

Judaism, like all other religions, is a formation that puts the individual into certain manners and movements in line with a structure. However, the vast majority of the participants consider the things to be fulfilled as tradition and live their lives according to the traditions, but not following the prohibitions. Recent research that focuses on

Jewish youth, argued that traditions have lost their effects on youth and underlined the generational difference (Yıldız, 2013, p. 212). It is certain that there are generational differences, but an argument could be made that this does not mean as traditions had lost their effects. In the scope of this research, there are interviewees who are very loyal to their traditions with a culturally conservative perspective. The fact that to preserve the existence of Judaism as a tradition rather than a religion shows the change when it is transferred from one generation to the next. Among the participants, there were those who did not pay any attention to the traditions and even did not know the time of those days on the calendar. The concept of family, however, emerged as a structure identified with tradition. Those concepts, tradition and, family, in fact, go parallel with each other, since traditions bring the family together and they are being recalled with the family. That gives a critical role to families in transferring, protecting, and acquiring the values of habitus. In spite of the fact that the values continue to exist by becoming sparse or changing during the transfer, families have a great influence on their practice.

Approaches to traditionalism also differ, among the interviewees, and even though the interviewees express that they live Judaism in the context of a tradition, their perceptions of tradition are different from one to another. Some of the interviewees stated that they did not practice the rituals because of the fact that they see them as religious, while some of the interviewees took the tradition and the ritual as a whole and tried to practice it completely. Interviewees V and O consider the traditions as a whole and try to practice them with their rituals, and they attach importance to them because they are traditions. Interviewee G, in addition to that, practices the traditions and rituals as a whole and stated that this was also a sign of respect for both the tradition itself and the family structure. Interviewee N, on the other hand, approaches rituals from a slightly more religious perspective but takes care to practice when he is with his father and extended family. Interviewees B and A, in contrast, have a point of view that is distant from the others. Interviewee B stated that he only attends the meals because he likes food and the elders of the family; interviewee A does not even follow those days, although he defined himself through traditional Judaism.

“Candles are lit in Hanukkah. Passover requirements are fulfilled, yeasty is not eaten on Passover. On Kippur, we set Kippur food, but I can't fast because I have hypoglycaemia. Otherwise, I would, but I can't” (V, 29).

“Whether it's Kippur, Hanukkah or Passover, I practice them all. I don't eat yeasty on Passover. I'm lighting a Hanukkah candle and also fasting on Kippur” (O, 25).

“Candles are lit on Hanukkah. We don't eat yeasty on Passover. That's respect for tradition and also for family structures. Of course, I fast in Kippur” (G, 35).

“I sometimes fast with my father, but not for the last two or three years. For the last ten years, I have lit one candle a week on Hanukkah. My father has a character who likes to live more religiously and does not like to question them. Lighting a Hanukkah candle with him won't make a difference to me, but I know my father enjoys it. It's nice to go to my cousins' and sit at a table for 20 people on Passover. Because I only see my cousins twice a year” (N, 35).

“I love food in general. I don't like lighting candles. I visit my grandparents for family dinners, there is no other religious reason. It is nice to see them during those days, they feel happy. I'm visiting them and joining the family dinners to make them happy” (B, 19).

“I never fasted, never knew which day Hanukkah was. Those are not the days I follow” (A, 28).

For this reason, even though the family fulfills all traditions, there may be a situation where the person does not want to do it, or the person may stop doing what the one has done in the past. This may show that habitus can change over time and habitus is like an organism that lives with the individual. The time in which a person lives and the possibilities, that one has, are quite important because the habitus changes depending on new experiences (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 208-213).

The trio of Rosh Hashana, Hanukkah, and Passover are special days that cannot be missed among the participant and the same situation can be seen in Özgür Kaymak's comprehensive research that Jewish people stated that those days cannot be skipped (2018, p. 220). *Tu Bishvat*²⁹, *Sukkot*, and *Purim*³⁰ also emerged as other special days that some participants expressed that they celebrated. In addition to *Rosh Hashana*, *Hanukkah*, and *Passover*, *Kippur* is also a day when the majority of participants take care and even fast. On the days covered by the three most important religious days, tables are set where families come together, and specific meals are cooked for those days. Care is taken to not eat yeasty on Passover, and even participants who do not

²⁹ According to Jewish tradition, awakening of the nature, www.sevivon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1523:tu-bisvat-in-abc-si&catid=37:tu-bisvat-nedir&Itemid=218, 28.11.2022.

³⁰ It is the festing that celebrates the liberation of the Jews in the Persian Empire. According to the Gregorian calendar, it coincides with the months of February-March (Bali, 2001, p. 558).

follow the *kosher*³¹ rules, follow them during Passover. There is a situation when specific meals are eaten during Passover, and the kosher rules are also adhered to. Since the meals are mostly only cooked at that time of the year, people eat those meals as part of the tradition.

“Every year, the same foods are on that table. Kippur table, Passover table, none of these changes. This is something good and connects the family each other” (V, 29).

“I follow the kosher rules on Passover. When you eat Passover food during those days, it suits kosher rules. You shouldn't eat meat and milk together, I eat kosher meat, I don't eat meat outside. I follow those rules for only eight days in Passover. This is my belief. I've been doing this for two or three years, I don't have much difficulty” (İ, 27).

As it is aforementioned, participants live by giving importance to their traditions, not by following the prohibitions. As a matter of fact, they practice Judaism by implementing things that are fun, easy, and not difficult. Kippur is seen as an exceptional case for some participants. Even though fasting is seen as a difficult thing, there are participants who fast since they consider it lasts one day.

“The fun parts are liked more. Why should someone love Kippur, you have to fast, it is a difficult activity. You don't do anything in Rosh Hashanah, you just celebrate the feast” (M, 25).

“Kippur is next week, we have to fast. I don't care, I won't do it. Forget fasting, I don't even cook its foods” (K, 35).

The kosher practice is a set of rules that have significant sanctions in Judaism and directly affect a person's daily life. Like the lifestyle concept emphasized by interviewee R, it is one of the rules that form a lifestyle in Judaism. There is a common view on Kosher rules, as it is the consensus on tradition. The majority of the participants either do not apply these rules or practice the rules which suit to them. Among the participants, only interviewee R cares about the kosher rules more than others, but she thinks that she does not apply the rules fully because the rules are extremely restrictive if fully implemented. Some of the participants do not eat pork; some take care to buy the meat from a kosher butcher; some of them do not eat meat and dairy products

³¹ Rules that determine what can and cannot be eaten. For instance, pork and seafood cannot be eaten, meat and dairy products cannot be consumed together. Animal slaughtering must be done by adhering to certain rules (Bali, 2001, p. 558).

together. Even though those participants do not fully follow the kosher rules, they fulfill one kosher rule in different ways.

Both those who apply and those who do not apply kosher rules approach these rules critically, and therefore those, who apply the rules, apply them in ways that suit them. Interviewee R applies kosher rules more than the other interviewees and does not consume meat and dairy products together and prefers kosher meat products. However, Interviewee R emphasized that there are even more kosher rules, and it is very difficult to follow them. Interviewee V stated that she does not follow kosher rules, she eats everything that does not comply with kosher rules except pork. Interviewee G used to apply kosher rules until the age of 19, however, when his university education began, his environment started to change, and it became difficult to apply the rules, so he quit. Interviewees B and İ stated that they do not apply kosher rules and the rules limit the person and are not compatible with today's world.

“I do follow the kosher rules, but I also go to kebab places with my friends. I can find food in everywhere I go, so yes, it is a lifestyle, but it is not something that prevents or restricts me from doing other things. I don't eat meat. I do follow the kosher rules, but I also go to kebab places with my friends. If a plan was made to go to a place that day, I do not spoil it, my friends are extremely sensitive anyway, I am very lucky. (...) For me, the way of butchering, and which butcher it comes from are important. I don't eat meat with dairy products. These are important. But the things that can happen to pizza beforehand, if you want to follow all rules, your lifestyle must be accordingly. My lifestyle is not like that. If you want to live like this, you have to live in a Jewish country or in a Jewish ghetto. You have to live in such a place, or you will not eat anything” (R, 25).

“We do not eat pork. We don't follow the kosher rules. Our problem is with pork meat. Stuffed mussels, kokoreç, they are all edibles, but pork is creeping us out, that's why we don't eat” (V, 29).

“I don't follow the kosher rules right now. I was doing it between the ages of 12-19, until the first year of university” (G, 35).

“I'm not a guy who follows the kosher rules and care about Shabbat day. I live my life the way I want because I only live once. I don't want to let a religion restrict me” (B, 19).

“I eat what a regular European eats. No problem. I'm not pushing myself. I eat shrimps, squids. I even eat pork. I am very fond of eating. The slug, the octopus, the pig... they exist in the world, and I think those things that I will eat are more important than my religion. It might give me some experience. No need to have blinders and don't try to rule me in 2021 with rules written 5700 years ago. Not only me, don't try to rule anyone. Kosher rules might have been true then, people eat meat and milk at the same time, that produce gas in stomach, it's okay. Men

ate raw meat, it's normal for such things to happen. It has changed a lot now!"
(İ, 27).

According to the participants' statements, *Shabbath*³² is the most difficult part of Judaism. Only interviewee R, among the participants, had a time that was close to observing the Shabbath in past years. When the participant visited the biggest of the Princes Islands, Büyük Ada in Turkish, with family members, the activities in the family were so entertaining that interviewee R was not interested in anything else, such as using a mobile phone and the internet. This was an exceptional situation for her as well because she does not observe the Shabbath in everyday life and thinks that it is far from today's world. As a Shabbath tradition, she only attends family dinner and does not plan anything for Friday evening at the same time with dinner, but for later, there is no problem to make any plans for her. Observing the Shabbath is not a practice that any of the participants implement and in addition to that they all approach to Shabbath with a critical perspective. Although interviewee D expressed that he likes Shabbath as a concept, he stated that it is difficult to apply with the example he gave and said that the majority of the Jewish population around the world does not observe Shabbath. As a matter of fact, despite the critical approaches and all the difficulties, Shabbath is still preserved as a part of the Jewish tradition and most of the participants attach importance to this tradition. The majority of the participants make sure to be with their family at the Shabbath meal on Friday evenings, and if they have a plan, they join it after dinner. But of course, there are those who think otherwise and prefer to be with their family only occasionally at Shabbat meals and not every week.

"My grandmother, grandfather, and uncles observe the Shabbath. But I don't. I never did. Because, for me, creating does not mean watching TV, or for example, when I was younger, if I wanted to go out with my friends on Saturday evening or Sunday, I had to do my homework even if it was Shabbath. Shabbath is actually something far from the 21st century, (...), we were visiting Büyük Ada with whole family, grandparents, uncles, and Shabbath was very different there because I didn't wake up and go to prayer on Saturdays. We were having meals together and after that, everyone disperses to own areas, some read a book, some read the newspaper. We were always playing games with my uncle, who was a teacher, such as uno and stuff, and it was a lot of fun. Actually, we weren't breaking the Shabbath rules and I didn't need to look at my phone since, I was having fun. But if my uncles were not there and I had to apply the Shabbath rules, then it would have been more difficult for me. (...) My father doesn't limit in

³² For the Hebrew Calendar, last day of the week. It starts on Friday evening and finishes on Saturday evening. Throughout this time, working and using electricity, touching electric devices are prohibited (Bali, 2001, p. 559).

terms of coming home and leaving home, but he says don't make any plan for Friday evening" (R, 25).

"(...) People were working in a slavery system in Egypt and Rome. None of them even dreamed of taking a one-day holiday a week. Today, in the modern world, we take a two-day holiday, we have even exceeded it. Because of that, the concept of a one-day holiday is an important and valuable concept in my opinion. But, dedicating a day, entirely, to your family and god, it's still difficult. I believe it is very necessary for the souls of people though. For example, I live on the tenth floor, and on the Shabbath, I should not use the elevator. So, what am I going to do, do I go down ten floors and go up? Not possible! Is it possible? Yes. But that is not possible. Am I clear? It's real torture, but on the other hand, you can say, don't leave the house then or don't live in an apartment on the tenth floor, go and live on the first floor. These are achievable things. Today, 30 or 40 percent of the world's Jews can apply the Shabbath rules" (D, 35).

"I don't observe the Shabbath, but I have dinner with my family on Friday evenings. I do my plans for later" (S, 25).

"Not every Friday, but once a month I attend Shabbath dinners" (M, 25).

"We don't observe the Shabbath. Some of the families are having the Shabbath dinner more frequently. We don't do that much. If I am at home on Friday evening, my father says let's have Shabbat dinner together, we eat, but there is no such thing as being at home, especially on Friday. I don't have a sensitivity like I can't make a plan on Friday evening. Usually, my friends have it, but I don't have that much. Shabbat is not so extreme for us" (V, 29).

Despite the fact that Shabbath and kosher rules are significant to Judaism, they have not been able to protect themselves as a full tradition. Nevertheless, people pursue to keep these rules alive by revising and those rules are practiced independently of what the rules suggest. Therefore, it is understood that the practice that are easy to implement, fun, and do not hinder everyday life are continued as tradition, and the challenging and restrictive ones continue to be performed with their easy aspects. External factors and conditions are critical in shaping a habitus, so different conditions produce different habitus (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 170). The continuation of some of the traditions and the change of others is an indication that the conditions have changed between the generations. It also sheds light on the conflict between them. The generation phenomenon is, in fact, nothing but a *"historical-social process"*, and generations are determined by the tendency to exist during the transmission of a certain experience and thought pattern (Mannheim, 1998, p. 292). What is decisive in these tendencies of existence is the conditions presented by the epoch itself. Some interviewees have already emphasized that the tough rules are no longer fit the present situation, that is, the epoch, which is a proof that the conditions differ between generations. The concept

of habitus, in which historicity is at the forefront, is open to changes and developments depending on people's new experiences (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 151, 161). For this reason, habitus is open to being affected as long as it exists. As a minority group, Jewish youth also adapt to influences and interactions. This may be why the rules such as kosher and Shabbath have changed. When it is being taken a look, kosher is a set of rules with a lot of sanctions; Shabbath, on the other hand, is a concept which is liked, but the time is not suitable with its requirements. The Jewish habitus practiced and revealed by the youth also varies according to the conditions, time, and experiences since all generations constitute their own entelechy, which is the innate way they take in order to experience the life and world (Mannheim, 1998, p. 283).

“If the purpose is to continue it, it is necessary to reform a little. My work starts at eight o'clock and I leave at six in the evening. It's 7 o'clock with the time I spent on my way home. It's hard for me. If I lived in Israel, it would be easy to observe the Shabbath and apply the kosher rules, it'd be easy to have religious holidays, but it's very difficult to live in Turkey and follow them” (M, 25).

“Kosher is not at all suitable for Turkish cuisine. I had a lot of friends who observed Shabbat when I was little, and they don't anymore. It's like torture with Turkish cuisine. A person in Italy observes, of course, they have pasta, they eat pasta. Let them come here and tell them they shouldn't eat iskender and the manti. That's why you are affected by the characteristics of the environment you live in” (R, 25).

“I'm not at the point of not touching the electricity, not getting in the car on the Shabbath. I have friends who do it and I have tried it once, but it is not something that can be done in Turkey anyway” (G, 35).

Habitus is a system of capitals that consists of the cultural, social, symbolic, and economic capitals of an individual, which determines the tendencies and choices of the people and includes culturally defined information and social actions. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2014, p. 103-133), so language can be considered as a part of cultural capital, and it would not be wrong to say that it is a prominent part of it. When it comes to the Jews and language in Turkey, the Ladino language comes to mind first because of the influence of the Sephardic Jews. While language is an integral part of cultural capital and habitus as well, it has been consciously removed from cultural capital. In spite of the fact that families provide critical contributions into cultural capitals, habitus, as it is emphasized, is a concept that is shaped by external factors, and state policies which were implemented in the past on language, also caused the language to be consciously removed from the cultural capital. Following Ladino, Hebrew is another

language in question. Nonetheless, the Hebrew language is not very common among the Jews of Turkey throughout the generations. As a matter of fact, it came to the fore with the state policies put into force.

As discussed earlier after the proclamation of the Republic, Turkification policies were put into effect immediately, due to the fact that the newly established structure was a nation-state. One of the first of these was the Turkification policies implemented in education. Schools have strategic importance to any state because as an *Ideological State Apparatus*³³, schools are mechanisms that convey the ideas reflected by the state to the individual. With the law enacted in 1924, a compulsory curriculum was introduced in education, and the Ministry of Education recommended Hebrew as the education language to the Jews in their schools, since the government accepted it as the mother tongue, but Turkish Jews who knew Hebrew were very few at that time (Benbassa & Rodrigue, 2014, p. 243). This situation actually created a hard challenge for the Jews whose mother tongue was Ladino and they had to agree to teach Turkish in their schools. After that, while Ladino has become an asset that can only be earned from the family, with the campaign of Citizen Speak Turkish launched in 1928, the state also had impeded the transfer from the family. Nowadays, the Ladino language can only be spoken by the first and second generations based on the post-republican period (Kaymak, 2018, p. 221). Ladino knowledge of the interviewees is limited to a few words and when their families are hiding something from them, they prefer to talk in Ladino. A similar situation is also valid for the interviewee G, who is a Jew of Van origin. The language, which is spoken among the first and second generations of the family, called Nashtidan shares the same unfortunate features with Ladino.

“My grandmother didn't speak Turkish, she was from the generation that started learning Turkish with the campaign of Citizen Speak Turkish. Think about you have a 500-year-old Ladino culture and with from my grandparents' generation you start to speak Turkish. My fathers' generation can speak both Turkish and Ladino very well, but our generation cannot speak Ladino. I don't know at all, I can't speak a word” (N, 35).

“My grandmother tries to speak Ladino to me without exception, and every time I say grandmother, I don't understand, and switch her into Turkish” (R, 25).

“I don't speak Ladino. I know a saying, el geminiko yanaşıyendo dö la iskele. This is actually quite Turkish” (A, 28).

³³ The institutions that reflect and ensure to reproduce the ideology of the ruling class, such as schools, political parties, mass medias (Althusser, 2014, p. 242-246).

“There is a language that our family uses, called nashtidan. The origin of that language is actually the beginning of Hebrew. It was spoken at home, we didn't learn. Things that were hidden from us were always spoken in Nashtidan” (G, 35).

“I can't speak technically, I can just read the alphabet. For me, Ladino used to be something that was spoken so that we wouldn't understand at home. They would switch to Ladino so the children would not understand” (O, 25).

Current Jewish youth does not feel very enthusiastic when it comes to learn Ladino language. Some interviewees approach this situation quite pragmatically and they think that the Ladino language will not create an opportunity for them in their everyday lives. One of the interviewees attends a Hebrew course and thinks that this language can create an opportunity in business life. Jewish young people who want to learn Hebrew make up for this by taking an external course. Only interviewee B can speak Hebrew since he completed his high school education in Israel. Among the interviewees, even those who graduated from Jewish Schools stated that they could not speak Hebrew. Due to the fact that there is no Ladino education at the school, the current young generation reveals a Jewish habitus that speaks neither Ladino nor Hebrew. It is also seen in Özgür Kaymak's research, which she revealed through interviews from different age groups, that the number of Hebrew speakers among the Jews of Istanbul is quite low, except for those who went to Israel and lived there for a while (2018, p. 239). Most of the interviewees agree with each other on the thought that Jewish Community in Turkey is the only one in which Jewish people cannot speak Hebrew.

“I am involved with the things that can create opportunities in the future for me, and since I don't think that Ladino would do it for me, I don't think that giving my time will add much to me” (V, 29).

“Our official language is Hebrew, there is no Ladino at school. Everyone needs to speak Hebrew. I think it's very strange, we are the only country in the world where Jews don't speak Hebrew or Ladino. I think it's miserable! Russian Jews, Polish Jews... Everyone speaks Hebrew. I graduated from Jewish Schools, I couldn't speak when I graduated” (K, 35).

“I went to summer camp at Brandeis University in Boston. I took lessons for a month. Everyone was Jewish, there were people from all over Russia, Serbia, Morocco, and all over America. Everyone speaks Hebrew, and sang the same song on the Shabbath and I was like, why don't I know that? I wish I knew” (S, 25).

“The fact that people in Turkey don't speak English, in general, is the same as that we don't speak Hebrew. Think of an Italian Jew or a French Jew, they speak

fluent Hebrew. In Turkey, speaking Hebrew can be counted on the fingers of one hand. I've been offended a few times by this thing, and I was like, my God, how do they know? I am learning Hebrew now, and my goal is not if I move to Israel one day. By speaking one more language I would be more qualified out there. Yes, we are living in a very anti-Israeli, anti-Semitic country, but we also trade enormously. I may also work in this field" (R, 25).

"I learned Hebrew there in prep school. People say in Turkey, I understand English, but I cannot speak it. Exactly the same story for Jews and Hebrew. When I went to Israel, it took four months to completely learn Hebrew. A huge language, a new alphabet. When you mingle with the Israelis, when you speak Hebrew with them, you start to speak. There is no one here to speak Hebrew. You can't expect them to speak Hebrew among themselves. Unless it's spoken at home or if you're not a kid of a rabbi, you understand but you can't speak" (B, 19).

Education also occupies an essential place in the capital network of habitus, and it ensures that the reproduction and sharing of cultural capital become continuous (Aktay, 2014, p. 480). However, Jewish Schools, which have the status of a minority school, has a very low contribution to the development of the individuals' Jewish habitus. The effect of compulsory curriculum practices is quite high in this situation. When this is the case, it does not occur much between those who studied in Jewish Schools and those who do not. Süheyla Yıldız, in her own study which she conducted with Jewish youth, stated that she observed the awareness of Judaism decreased among the Jewish youth and she asserted that the reason is to not study in Jewish Schools, because of the fact that Yıldız thinks that education language is Ladino in Jewish School (2013, p. 213). In the research with the Jewish community in Istanbul conducted by Brink-Danan shows that Jewish Schools are not religious or cultural school and has adopted a modern education model and also, she stated, through her observations, Judaism in the school was always restricted by expectations of Turkish Laïcité. (2012, p. 137, 140). Besides, the education language was never determined as Ladino, not even a selective language course in Jewish Schools. The Turkish language has been an official educational language and since the government accepted Hebrew as the mother tongue for the Jewish community, Hebrew is one of the selective language courses in Jewish Schools. This is quite simple information which can be found in literature review. Among the interviewees, those who have studied in Jewish Schools stated that their schools provide an education which follow the curriculum letter by letter, without any focus on Judaism.

"All subjects are the same with the MEB curriculum, there are two exceptional things. One religion course was taught as the History of Jewish Religion, other religions were not. And two hours of Hebrew lessons per week. There is no

course on Jewish Culture. Actually, I think it's a deficiency, I think some hours of the week should be reserved for Jewish culture. The school was very strict with the curriculum" (N, 35).

"Completely normal education, except foreign language and religion course. Same logic, the extra thing is Hebrew. It's not taught a lot, you can't learn it at school" (G, 35).

3.2. The Youth

Youth has been a popular concept in Turkey recently; both in terms of their political tendencies and their propensity to live abroad (Şentürk, p. 2022: 9). The Jewish youth which was focused during this research shows many similar aspects and characteristics to the average youth being evaluated in researchs with wider scopes. Looking at the TÜİK data for 2021, 15.3% of Turkey's population is between the ages of 15-24³⁴. For this research, interviews were conducted with Jewish young people and young adults between the ages of 18-35 as explained in detail in the *Methodology* section.

Three different approaches in the sociological literature come to the fore: structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. The symbolic interactionist approach is also compatible with the topic (Baran, 2013, p. 14) and the subject of this research since young people become individuals by adding their own interpretations to Judaism.

Lüküslü (2015) argues the existence of a “*myth of youth*” in the political culture of modern Turkey targeting to create a homogenous and ideal youth; even though this myth is still in use in the political culture, it had become almost impossible to create a homogenous ideal youth since it is a very wide and heterogeneous category. In addition to that, Yıldırım Şentürk argued that young people are tried to be portrayed as a homogeneous structure (2022, p. 9). However, in today's Turkey, where the 20th year of AKP rule is completed, the economic difficulties that the country is trying to cope with, and the social problems caused by them gather many young people from different segments of Turkey under a common roof. Thus, despite their differences, young people are gathered under an inclusive and homogenizing concept, and in fact, becomes homogenized. Herbert Marcuse, who has a different perspective, also considers the

³⁴ Youth with Statistics, data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistiklerle-Genclik-2021-45634, 12.10.2022.

concept of youth as homogeneous masses (as cited Lüküslü, 2015, p. 217). While the interviewees were talking about youth and being young, they first talked about being young in Turkey by emphasizing inclusiveness. The increasingly difficult economic conditions cause great concern for the youth in Turkey³⁵. The interviewees also expressed their concerns and reasons.

“In my opinion, there is not a big difference between being a Jewish young person and being a normal young person in Turkey right now. Because we all suffer from the same things, economy, conditions, etc. Doing something for yourself is difficult for any young person here” (O, 25).

“Being young has nothing to do with being Jewish. The biggest problem with being young right now isn't that I'm Jewish. The problem is being young in Turkey. We agree with that. What is it, the concern for the future, the economy, government policies etc. In short Turkey? As a Jewish young person, I do not experience anything different from you” (İ, 27).

When it comes to youth, the participants first started speaking as young individuals, regardless of whether they are Jewish. The participants emphasized that being young in Turkey today is a highly anxiety-provoking phenomenon. Increasing economic difficulties, not being able to foresee the future, and not being young in a social sense are the common points interviewees put forward, and as the youth is considered a homogeneous structure, these concerns and problems are the common points of all young people living in Turkey. Although Bourdieu argues that young people define themselves as those who have the future, those who define the future (1993, p. 100), young people currently living in Turkey claim that they do not feel that way. The future anxiety experienced by young people makes them think that they do not have a future in Turkey.

“Fiasco! If not, it's misery. Nothing is promised to the youth here. Because of the government, young people cannot live the life they want. Because there is governing that fits the mindset of people in the 60s and 70s, and fits the mindset of very religious, conservative people. I follow these surveys and stuff. Generation Z will vote next year, one out of every five voters is my age. I am 19 years old, between the ages of 18 and 23. That's why it needs to change now” (B, 19).

“Am I living like 25? No. How many countries can I travel to, how many times can I go to Europe in a year, how many discoveries can I make, and how many concerts can I go to? The youth are anxious and hopeless. Though, we are people who have seen their good times again. Whether it's festivals or anything, everything ends at 12 o'clock, at night now and this has become very normal.

³⁵ aposto.com/s/genclik-krizi, 05.10.2022.

What I'm afraid of in the future, people will say at some point, I wouldn't drink much anyway, I wouldn't go out that much" (S, 25)

"Being young in Turkey right now is a worrying and depressing thing. I guess it's because of not being able to see the future" (V,29).

"Will I be fine here in the future? Even though I'm not Jewish, other young people are also thinking about whether I can be fine, and will I be able to live freely. Where the country is going, will I be able to drink, will the bars be closed, will everything be over, etc" (A 28).

Habitus refers to the relationship between "us" and "the life around us" and it is shaped by the socialization within the family, the education system, and the circle of friends. (Yel, 2014, p. 565). The concept of habitus has an active form, and it is not something that a person has but rather a person oneself (Tucker, 1998, p. 70). For this reason, like a person, habitus is also affected by the things that affect a person. And similar to a person, habitus also changes over time. The Jewish youth's habitus has also changed depending on the place, time, and conditions. While closing this section, R's following words summarize the situation of a young Jewish individual in Turkey very well:

"Other things take my time a lot, consume my energy, and break my motivation so much that I cannot pass to Judaism. I think this is the biggest problem. The old people understand it that we are not interested. But it's not like that, it's no time. This my opinion. But if we had lived in a slightly different Turkey, I think we could have been in it, a little bit more. Now, you're already working eight to five, if you want to meet with a friend, if you want to do something, all are energy, time. These are like packages; I don't think there is a single reason" (R, 25).

3.3. Bar/Bat Mitzvah: A sign of economic capital or a rite of passage?

The ceremonies, called Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah, are rites of passage for boys and girls that take their first steps into adulthood. Bar Mitzvah is obligatory for boys who turn 13, and with a ceremony held in the morning, the child wears *tefillin*³⁶ and *tallit*³⁷ for the first time, reads a section from the Torah, and takes an oath³⁸; Bat Mitzvah, on the other hand, is a non-compulsory ceremony for girls who are 12 years old and

³⁶ Tefillin is a wrapper that, consisting of two black square boxes made of leather and fastened together with flat leather strips, containing four separate chapters from the Torah, www.sevivon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15:tefillin&catid=79&Itemid=123, 17.10.2022.

³⁷ The tallit is shaped as rectangular and used to cover the head while praying, www.sevivon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18:tallit&catid=79&Itemid=123, 17.10.2022.

³⁸ Bar Mitzvah, www.turkyahudileri.com/index.php/tr/yahudilik/100-bar-mitzva, 17.10.2022

performed collectively, where girls come together to sing songs and prayers³⁹. After these rites of passage, a step into adulthood is taken and the process of fulfilling (religious) responsibilities begins. Bar Mitzvah was held for all male interviewees; among women, only one person did not want Bat Mitzvah.

“This is how my father used to tell us, he used to say that all your sins and good deeds are written in your father's book until your Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah. But when you do the Bar Mitzvah, the Bat Mitzvah, it's your own responsibility, it's written in your own book. It's like you come of age in terms of religion and since the prayers and so on, which men are obliged to do, are different, the Bar Mitzvah is sharper” (R, 25).

There are courses that prepare children for these rites of passage, differently designed for boys and girls affiliated with the Chief Rabbinate. Bar Mitzvah courses are somewhat more comprehensive in content, as they are mandatory. During the Bat Mitzvah course, the girls learn the prayers to be read and the songs to be sung at the ceremony. In addition, the concept of Shabbat, and what needs to be done on the Shabbat day. Unlike the other, Bat Mitzvah is not mandatory. Bar Mitzvah, on the other hand, is very important, and the day to start the process is determined by circumcision on the eighth day after birth. As part of this process, boys learn how to wrap *tefillin*, wear *tallit*, and pray in Hebrew. First, a ceremony is held and the *tefillin* are wrapped for the first time, followed by a ceremony in front of people, and the boy reads the Torah chapter that corresponds to that week. My interviewees were discussing these ceremonies as follows:

“You're taking a Bat Mitzvah class. You are taught some values, Shabbath, why women light candles at home, she reads the prayer, why she reads, she is the one who guards the house, it is the mother. They teach these kinds of things. Bat Mitzvah is performed collectively in the March-May period of that year. From September until then, you come every weekend and learn songs and stuff. Actually, I don't remember what I learned now” (S, 25).

“This day is determined on the day of circumcision. On circumcision day, they tell you on what day to do your Bar Mitzvah. It's a very important day. You mark that day on your calendar. There are a few basic concepts that need to be done. One of them is to wrap tefillin for the first time. Wrapping tefillin is a very simple thing. You can wear this for the first time after doing a Bar Mitzvah and it will now be your start. It's something you can learn in a day, you wrap it up, you read the blessing prayer and then you start. This is a weekday ceremony, and it coincides with a day when Torah scrolls are read. After that, on the following Saturday, you recite a few basic prayers

³⁹ Bat Mitzvah, www.turkyahudileri.com/index.php/tr/yahudilik/101-bat-mitzva, 17.10.2022

in front of all the people gathered in the synagogue. As the ending, a small piece from the episode corresponding to that week” (D, 35).

It is possible to discuss these ceremonies as rites of passage, symbolizing the transition from childhood to adulthood. Gennep (1960) defines rites of passages as ceremonies changing the statuses, positions, and places of the people. Both Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah can be classified under this definition. Bar Mitzvah is, however, more appropriate, and closer to the definition since without a Bar Mitzvah, the boy cannot become an adult and begin to fulfill religious obligations. It is thus mandatory and directly attributes a status. According to Gennep, rites of passage consist of three stages which are separation, margin, and aggregation. All three stages can be studied under the Bar Mitzvah. In the first stage of separation, the boy is separated from the social and cultural structure; in the second stage which is margin, the boys enter a cultural process with Bar Mitzvah training where they are neither children nor adults; in the third stage of aggregation, the transition process is completed with the ceremonies, that is, the wrapping of the tefillin and the prayer in front of the community (1960, p. 189-194).

It has been revealed in the interviews that the meanings attributed to Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah differ from person to person. As it can be expected, it is possible to see the ceremonies as a tradition. Nevertheless, there are also interviewees who attach importance to these ceremonies because of their meaning. Having a personal celebration was also a feature that attracted the participants as they were children. On the other hand, the fact that these ceremonies are held by other children in the same age group and the emergence of an atmosphere of competition and showing off is one of the reasons why the interviewees wanted to perform the ceremonies when they were children.

“Bars are not skipped. You're already 13 years old, you don't have much of a say. Mine was in Büyük Ada, then we had breakfast, it was a summer day. Like Fenerbahçe is yellow and dark blue, there is no such thing as not doing that Bar Mitzvah. I didn't ask or question. Really, what's the point of not doing it? There's no harm, I'm glad I did. It was a tradition for me too. My parents were happy that day, photos were taken, and my grandparents saw them and were proud. If I have a child, I will do it one day. This is a tradition, a very nice tradition, but I didn't feel like I became a man, but it was very beautiful. Songs were sung, prayers were said” (İ, 27).

“Am I happy that I did it, that is, I may have been happy not because I did something religious, but because it was a special ceremony for me. It was fascinating, it had something mystical, but I didn't realize it at that age” (R, 25).

“It was a very happy day for me because the most important part of the Bar Mitzvah is being able to stand out in front of all the people in the Synagogue and say, I have grown up today, I have become a man today, I have become a responsible individual, rather than those fun and big celebrations. It was one of the most important days of my life. One of my biggest dreams is when my father can see my son's Bar Mitzvah” (D, 35).

“My Bat Mitzvah, and let me be honest, it was just a show-off, so there was nothing else. I wish I hadn't. That's all, we efforted for nothing. At that time, I was very envious of those things, it happens in a hotel, and at the age of 11-12, it's a big thing. In Bat Mitzvahs a dance was prepared with the girls. A dance teacher was hired, and she was preparing a dance for you with your four or five closest friends. You're doing a show or something. I was all about the fun part of the event, the party I could have with my schoolmates and all. I mean, at that time, I didn't have that perception that I'm growing up” (V, 29).

In addition to the meaning it carries, the celebrations after the religious ceremony bring these rites of passage to the fore. The budget spent on these celebrations have overshadowed the meaning of rites of passage and turned them into families' indicators of economic capital. Since habitus is a system of capitals, economic capital also plays a significant role in the system. Bourdieu took the concept of capital out of its economic meaning, by emphasizing its cultural and symbolic aspects, and made it an inclusive concept that provides a better understanding of the social structure, but economic capital is the money and material possessions of individuals (Yel, 2014, p. 566-570). The interviewees also stated that these celebrations were for show off and glamorous celebrations can sometimes even overshadowed the child who was the subject of that day. Families sometimes suggest an international trip with the family instead of making these celebrations, and even this example of suggestion is enough to predict the budget for the celebrations. But children are also affected by this environment, and it causes a race for popularity among them, and because of that become a part of the competition.

“You're doing this at 13, okay, it's a nice ritual, it's written in the book, okay, let's do it. When I was 13 years old, I went to other countries, I asked if this was exaggerated as in Turkey, so there was none. There has never been such a big party in Israel or something. It changed into, who is the richest, and this changed into showing off to each other, and the child actually suffers a little there. You don't realize it as a kid. Oh, how nice, I want it too, it should be done to me too because it puts you in competition with other children, you feel lame when yours is done worse. Are we poor, mine was made worse, we are richer than them, it puts the child in a strange competition with other children” (A, 28).

“It was a pissing contest at that time, actually, a very strange thing and a pissing contest with money that isn't yours. You say that his Bar Mitzvah was beautiful, drinks are drunk, dances are made, things are done at night. Well, you want your Bar Mitzvah to be like that too. You don't want to experience anything missing” (N, 35).

“There is a cliché, families come and say my daughter, should we go on vacation, like America, for 15 days, or should we do this? No one says let's go on vacation” (S, 25).

“My family said let's not do a Bat Mitzvah, let's take you on vacation, let's spend the budget we would spend there. I certainly did not accept this view. I was also in the Jewish School, growing up. We have a party every weekend, someone has a Bar Mitzvah, or a Bat Mitzvah. On some weekends, we had to choose people. Everyone goes to the popular, but I would be very upset because no one goes to the loser child” (R, 35).

“I don't know, it's something high-toned. You see it in your family, they throw a party for someone else, everyone is a fan of it, you want it too. For that age, it's a small wedding. But it's actually the satisfaction of the families. If the situation is good, they throw a party in a nice hotel, invite guests. Children play there, families can socialize with their friends. Show off is when you actually look. It has changed a lot, I actually told you about present time. It used to be child focus. So now there is no child focus” (G, 35).

Bourdieu discussed economic capital from a Marxist perspective and saw it as a factor that create inequality (Göker, 2014, p. 282). Those celebrations after these rites of passage which mostly associated with the Bar Mitzvah are also shaped according to budgets of each family. While some families organize a breakfast or brunch after the ceremony; some prefer to celebrate it with extravagant banquettes at luxury hotels such as Ritz Carlton, Çırağan Palace, Swiss Hotel, and Four Seasons.

“It is done in Çırağan Palace! Mine was also done in a luxury hotel. There is an ego attributed to you at the age of 13. You say, how good are we, everything is done for me, 400 people came for me. Nobody came for you, your parents did something, and everyone is going to each other anyway. There is nothing for you there. Now when I look back and think about it, I was going out there when I was 13 and saying something, then the cake comes, the dancers come out, something that breaks the psychology at the age of 13 is actually not good, on the contrary, it's a bad thing. I understand nothing. Drinks are given, I don't drink, but other people do. There is a strange thing going on here that seems to have been done to me, but actually, people are showing off to each other” (A, 28).

“Of course, Bar Mitzvah may vary according to the economic situations of the people. Some may have very big celebrations. For example, my family's economic situation was never very bright, so we organized something like brunch. After a Saturday morning prayer, a breakfast table was set up, a small cake was cut” (D, 35).

“We had no enough budget to do it at night. There was an activity during the day because I wanted it so much. For example, it wasn't done for my brother, only Tefillin was made for him. First of all, there is something called Tefillin, it is a religious necessity. Then the party is done. It is held in synagogues in Israel, there is no such pomp. The Jews of Turkey are not like that, but the Jews of Turkey have a somewhat American, Italian family prototype, something very close to the one we are used to see. They have adopted a lot of showing off. In front of the community, they feel compelled to pretend that we are not that bad. It is known by other Jewish families if a family doesn't do Bar Mitzvah, it is because they have no enough budget” (N, 35).

Interviewee G's Bar Mitzvah ceremony had been held in Israel. He was seriously ill due to a congenital blood disorder, and his father made a vow to make the Bar Mitzvah in Israel in case he recovered, and when he came of age, the Bar Mitzvah ceremony was held in Israel. Interviewee G expressed that the Bar Mitzvah ceremonies held there are very different from the ceremonies here. Besides he can easily make a comparison since he experienced the Bar Mitzvah in Israel and also has seen the versions in Turkey. During Bar Mitzvah ceremony held in Israel, the boy is more the center of attention than the ones in Turkey, interviewees claim. As it is mentioned above, in Turkey, not the rites of passage, their celebrations, are on the agenda.

“I have a congenital disorder in my blood. I had jaundice and had to go for a blood exchange because it was so severe. It took 15-20 days to stay in the hospital. Doctors said that the situation is difficult. Then my father made a vow so that if my son lives, I will do the Bar Mitzvah in Israel, at the Wailing wall. I wrapped tefillin there. This ceremony takes place on Mondays and Thursdays, and on Saturday there is a ceremony where the boy is prayed for the first time. It was very special for me, I'm glad I did. If I have a son in the future, I would like to make him experience something like this. I would like to do it in Israel. For example, an unknown man takes you shoulder, people I don't know carry you around from shoulder to shoulder, prayers are said, interesting things. What is it here, the boy has grown, okay, let him read a prayer, let it be over. Since I saw both sides, the ceremony held there had an extra effect on me. I don't know how to describe it with words, but it had an effect. It's been many years, but it was great to experience that excitement” (G, 35.)

All male interviewees did Bar Mitzvahs. Only one of the female interviewees did not want to perform the Bat Mitzvah ceremony. The interviewee M did not want to hold this ceremony because of the fact that she did not like crowded environments. In addition, since it is not compulsory for girls religiously, she had no pressure from her family. The interviewee M thinks that those celebrations are being organized in order to show off and she did not want to be involved in that competition, as she did not like that atmosphere.

“It wasn't done because I didn't want it. I don't like crowded environments, so I'm not a very friendly person. Do I find it very necessary from a religious point of view, I don't. Because it is not a task that is given to us normally. It's something that's given to boys. If it was mandatory for us as much as the boys, my family would probably want me to do it. But since it's not that compulsory for girls, they didn't push too hard either. I didn't like those environments anyway, since I don't have many Jewish friends. I didn't say I wish I had. I still agree. Since I am also against things like weddings and such, this seems like an unnecessary show to me. So, I don't think it's necessary. I never saw it as a religious thing. I just don't like getting into that competition. I don't like that show-off part” (M, 25).

These rites of passage, Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah are still preserved as traditions, in spite of the fact that they have lost their strong influence in terms of meaning from the past to the present and even new meanings have been attributed to them. Families play a very significant role in these ceremonies, as in other traditions. The contrary to what those rites of passage represent, interviewees do not see them as a transition to adulthood, but they want to perform and are willing to perform them as part of the tradition.

4. THE PERCEPTION OF THE IDENTITIES

4.1. Intersection of the Cultures: Turkish Jew

The Republic of Turkey was founded on the ruins of a multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious structure as the Ottoman Empire. The Republic of Turkey, which was established as a nation-state, was founded on a singular language and identity in a contrast to multiple structures in the past, and this singularity was provided by the Turkish-speaking Muslim origin population (Neyzi, 2003, p. 8). The desire to provide the ideal homogeneous structure brought with it many sanctions and Turkish society has shaped it as an “*art of repression*” (Robins, 2003, p. 68). This structure of singularity was formed around being Muslim, Sunni, and Turkish, and forced people from different ethnicities to assimilate (Neyzi, 2003, p. 117). This perception has continued to be effective and today still on, and if one of these three factors is missing, individuals may face problems. Among the interviews, there were also people who drew attention to this issue and while the youngest interviewee B stated that it was wrong to associate being Turkish with Islam; another interviewee expressed that the perception of identity in Turkey was shaped through the concepts of Turkish, Muslim, and Sunni, and when any one of those is excluded, the person is faced with othering.

“What you call a Turk is a Muslim! There is such an opinion in the country. No such thing. I can enumerate all the pre-Islamic Turkish states. There is even a Jewish Turkish state” (B, 19).

“There is a triangle in Turkey and if you are outside of it, you will have difficulties. The triangle consists of Turkish, Muslim, Sunni. It says that if you are not Turkish and you are a Sunni Muslim, for example, if you are a Kurd, you will have trouble. If you are Turkish and Muslim, but not Sunni, if you are Alevi, you will have problems in this country. If you are not Muslim, you will have problems if you are non-Muslim, so you have to be in this triangle. Turkey is a difficult country for you. This applies to everyone, it doesn't matter to a Kurdish, an Alevi, or a Jew. So, what's hard? Society marginalizes you. No matter how much you say I am an important part of this society, I am in it, the society doesn't want to see you as an individual and makes you experience this in every environment” (D, 35).

For many years, identity has been seen as a problem and continues to be seen as if today. Although Bauman agrees that identity is perceived as a problem, this problem is not the construction and stable attitude of identity as in modernity; he argued that the problem in question is a postmodern one on avoiding fixing the identity and keeping the options open (2003, p. 18). With the post-modern movement, the concept of identity

had disposed of the single form created by modernity, and by transforming into a plural structure, became a concept that was completely controlled and shaped by the individual. Through the increase of feminist movements and ethnic struggle, identity studies became more popular, and multicultural and pluralist approaches of postmodernism multiplied the concept of identities (Eagleton, 2000, p. 20, 41).

The interviewees identify themselves as Turks, as well as Jews. Both of these factors are coming together under a single roof. It shows that identities are not single, but pluralistic structures, that is to say, they are multiple structures that can combine the features of different singular identity definitions. The interviewees relate to being Turkish in terms of culture, not ethnicity. Jewish youth establish the bond of being Turkish with the culture of where they were born and witnessed while growing up with it and their families' past since their families live in this part of the world for generations.

“Just as I consider Judaism as a culture, don't internalize it too much, I also consider it as a culture. I am very attached to Turkish culture. Turkish cuisine is something that I feel more belonging to than Jewish cuisine and Jewish food. In other words, when Turkishness is mentioned, it seems like a race is being mentioned, and it disinclines me a bit” (V, 29).

“I think a guy who drinks tea and is extremely hospitable, who stops and answers when someone asks, "Excuse me, how can I go there" on the way, is Turkish for me. Someone who drinks tea morning, noon and evening is Turkish. In this context, I feel Turkish” (R, 25).

“How can I say, I love the food here, my mother tongue is Turkish, I know the way, the tricks here and I know the kindness of this place. If someone really asks me, what is your nationality, I say Turkish. I can't express it as anything else, it's not about whether I like Turkey or not. It's a fact. In this fact, I am Turkish. I express myself as Turkish” (İ, 27).

Considering being Turkish from a cultural perspective and establishing a connection through culture is also one of the findings of Kaymak's research (2018, p. 218). When it comes to identity, common values and sharing are very effective because of the fact that identities are built through the recognition of common and shared characteristics (Hall, 2003, p. 2). Cultures are semiotic structures and a network of meanings that surrounds the individual (Geertz, 1973, p. 6). As a matter of fact, cultures are a set of meanings and these meanings connote the same thing to everyone who shares them and makes individuals a part of something, and it, of course, affects identities.

“But we are Turkish. There are traditions, I have a lot of friends who live in Israel, and the hardest point for them is hospitality. For example, the people there, they live within themselves, no one does anything for you. You have your greengrocer here, the butcher is here, you greet people when you out, this is the culture” (S, 25).

“I feel like a Turk. I can call it culturally, too. To be honest, I love the culture and geography we live in. Geography gives us a lot” (O, 25).

“I am Turkish. I grew up here, learned everything here. I ate the bread, drank the water of this land, and I consider myself a Turk. Also, I am very devoted to my nation, homeland, and Atatürk” (B, 19).

Exceptions were also encountered during the fieldwork, since identity is a problematic concept, and the problem continues to somehow extent today. The fact that identities are under the control of the individuals can also give them the option of not connecting with anything because, as it is stated, the postmodern discussion deals with keeping the options open. Interviewee A stated that both the expressions of being Turkish and Turkish Jew do not make much sense and could not establish a bond.

“My feelings are not that extreme, I'm Turkish or something like that. I consider myself somewhat independent. But if I were anywhere else, I wouldn't say for that place either. It has nothing to do with Turkey, it is more about me. I don't like feeling too attached to things. It can be in a house sometimes; it can be in a relationship. The feeling of being too attached bothers me” (A, 28).

Brink-Danan claimed that the Jews in Turkey present a double identity (2012, p. 86). While this has been the case for past generations, it had changed at present. Today's identities are pluralistic, blending identities that emerge under the influence of different structures, and cultures. This points to a process that shows how the individual positions oneself with the structures and interacts with them. Hall stated that identities are “*a process of articulation*” and are never singular but plural, often intersecting structures (2003, p. 3-4). The Turkish Jew⁴⁰ discourse, which was used by the generations after the Republic in order to define the identities (Kaymak, 2018, p. 218), was also discussed in the interviews conducted within the scope of the research. Despite of the fact that it is a discourse that past generations used, Jewish youth is also using it in order to define themselves today. And it actually fits the postmodernist's identity definition since it has a pluralist structure. The discourse and the identity have emerged with the articulation of two cultures. That composes a network which is formed by different meanings in a

⁴⁰ This discourse has been studied from a different perspective in the article by Hakan Yücel and Süheyla Yıldız (2015, p. 575-582).

harmonic way and surrounds the individual. It is definitely pluralistic. It is an expression that directly describes the ties and interactions that people establish, in short, the person oneself. Even though this discourse of expression appears as an articulation, it is actually formed by the combination of different percentages. In this context, while a person can express oneself neither fully Jewish nor fully Turkish, Turkish Jew becomes a savior and the most powerful expression.

“I am indeed a Turkish Jew. Turkish doesn't actually mean Muslim, and since my roots have been here longer than most people in Turkey, I'm actually Turkish, but not Muslim” (R, 25).

“This is my home. I grew up with the culture of the land. Okay, I'm Jewish, I have my own culture, but the two are mixed for me right now. Because I grew up with both. I feel Turkish because I grew up in the Turkish Republic and grew up with that society. So, I'm a Turkish Jew” (O, 25).

“Being Turkish definitely has a place. But something that goes with Judaism, you know. Something whole, like a Turkish Jew” (V, 29).

“At the point of defining myself, I cannot define myself neither as one hundred percent Jewish nor as one hundred percent Turkish. But yes, I can identify as a Turkish Jew” (N, 35).

In spite of the fact there are exceptions for the expression Turkish Jew, interviewees G and M said the expression of Turkish Jew is not what they use, nevertheless, this intersectional discourse emerges as a result of what they have stated in order to identify themselves.

“I don't know if it's Turkish Jew, or should we say a Jew Turkish. This is something that doesn't appeal to me much. Okay, what I said reflects that. Turkishness should be seen as one thing, religion as another. This is what I stand for in my life. Today, if I call someone a Turkish Muslim, they scoff at me for what I say. Nobody should say anything to anybody, neither a Turkish Jew nor a Turkish Muslim” (G, 35).

“Turkish Jew is not a discourse I use a lot. It's not something I use in my daily life. We use Turkish and Jewish separately, but the Turkish Jew is not for me. It doesn't mean anything to me” (M, 25).

The concept of identity has become a “*prisma*” that helps to understand all aspects of social life (Bauman, 2008, p. 140). Despite the fact that this point of view brings the concept of identity closer to habitus, the concept of habitus provides a more detailed perspective to understand multiple identities and the factors in their formations, because people can make the same identity definitions with different habitus. Contrary to what modernity envisions, identities today are not formative and fixed structures; they are

structures that are open to all kinds of possibilities and open to changes throughout their existence. Identities, rather than being something, are related to the use of factors such as history, language, and culture in the process of becoming (Hall, 2003, p. 4). As it is emphasized that it is a becoming process, today's identity issue cannot be thought of and studied as a confusion. This becoming process is open for all types of developments and proceeds with a quite fragmental attitude.

4.2. Citizenship Transformed into Identity

Some of the interviewees make their ties with being Turkish through citizenship as well as culture. Although the concept of citizenship refers to membership in the state, Donald asserted that it has mixed with national identity, and they cannot be removed from each other (2003, p. 173). However, the interviewees underline that this is a right when establishing an identity connection through citizenship, because according to Article 66 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey⁴¹, those who were born in Turkey are considered Turkish, and according to the interviewees if it is being told otherwise, it means their constitutional right is violated. In modern discourse, despite the same usage of the concepts of national identity and nationality with citizenship (Kadıoğlu, 2012, p. 32), the highlighted thing here is the right, and it might be a part of the identity of a person who lives in Turkey, but not something that puts a person an identity.

“Ethnically I am not Turkish, there is such a fact. But there is also the fact that being Turkish is my constitutional right. The concept that Atatürk's Republic of Turkey provides us, is that every person connected to the Republic of Turkey by citizenship is Turkish. Naturally, this is my constitutional right. When someone tells me you are not Turkish, they are violating my constitutional right and I am angry about this. No, my friend, I am Turkish, I am a Turkish Jew. This is my constitutional right. If you are asking me, is your blood Turkish, do you come from Oğuz, Altay tribe? No, I don't. But you don't either, probably. In the Anatolian geography, since 1071, in the last thousand years, how many societies have you mixed with? It is not possible that your blood is also Turkish. But I'm not hurting you, you know yourself like that, I'm not like that, but this is my constitutional right. You can't keep me from this” (D, 35).

An identity bond established through citizenship also gives the person the opportunity to establish a connection in terms of political identity. The fact that Turkey is a *laïc* state can convey this aspect to the person through citizenship because, in modern

⁴¹ www.icisleri.gov.tr/kurumlar/icisleri.gov.tr/IcSite/illeridaresi/Mevzuat/Kanunlar/Anayasa.pdf, 14.10.2022.

societies, citizenship is seen as membership in a political community, a nation-state (Gerard, 2003, p. 480).

“I am hundred percent in agreement with the saying of those who say I am a happy Turk. I am a Turkish citizen. I am no different from you before the law. Really, especially when we were growing up, I always felt like, I'm a really laïc man, I really separate religion and state affairs. My religion is Jewish, and I see myself as a Turkish citizen. Since Turkey is already a laïc country, it doesn't matter what I am. This is how I feel. I am not Turkish by race. But I am a citizen of Turkey” (İ, 27).

The bond of citizenship and the expression of being Turkish, as presented in the Constitution, is actually a definition of being Turkish. This identity, which comes to the forefront through citizenship, should not cause a sub-identity/super-identity debate, because citizenship is also a common value shared with everyone else. In other words, it is an affecting factor in the process of becoming.

“After all, we live in a republic, we are all Turkish citizens” (R, 25).

The post-modernization and globalization processes that Turkey has been through in recent years have enabled the development of the identity-citizenship relationship by incorporating the concepts of difference and otherness into individual-based perceptions of freedom and justice (Keyman, 2012, p. 226).

4.3. The Effect of Place on Identity: Istanbul

Another factor that is important in the formation of the identity of the interviewees is being from Istanbul, and for some, it is even equivalent to being Turkish. The Jewish community has been living in this part of the world for many years and Istanbul is one of the first cities that the Jewish community has settled years ago. Istanbul is of great importance for Jewish culture with its high Jewish population and cultural heritage which dates back centuries ago.

When a person in Istanbul says that *“I am from Istanbul”*, that person is immediately asked, *“Where is your father from?”*. A pedigree questioning is made to that person, and it is decided whether the person is a true Istanbulite or not. If one of the previous generations is not from Istanbul, then the person is being said that *“You are not really from Istanbul”*. While such a thing is not in question for any other city in Turkey, Istanbul also reveals its difference in this regard. Since the families of Jewish youth

have lived in these lands for hundreds of years and there is such an inquiry specific to Istanbul, they put being an Istanbulite in a special place for their identities.

“I am Turkish and from Istanbul. I am more Istanbulite than many Istanbulites, we are from Istanbul for seven generations. We have been from Istanbul for a long time, my grandparents, grand grandparents are from here. We are from Istanbul from the Ottoman Empire” (K, 35).

“My mother's side, I look it up from e-devlet platform, is only Istanbul, Beyoğlu. They have been in Anatolia since pre-Ottoman times. That's why I'm more Turkish than many people” (R, 25).

Istanbul, a common meaning and value, plays an important role both for the Turkish Jew, which is an intersecting identity expression and for being Turkish. They think that they have been in these lands for many years in the place where they are not seen as Turkish due to their ethnic origins and that those who question this should actually question where they are from.

“I've been here, you came later. My mother is Romaniote, so for about two thousand years, she has been here; my father, Sephardic, has been in these lands for more than five hundred years. Let's stop someone from the street, his grandparents are not from Istanbul. Then I want to ask where you are coming from?” (D, 35).

4.4. Youth Associations and their Effects to Identity

In the previous section, while Jewish Schools were discussed, it was mentioned that it did not provide education on Judaism since it follows a curriculum determined by the Ministry of Education. Under this section, youth associations that provide cultural education will be discussed. These associations are the structures where Jewish children and teenagers can go and get socialization activities and receive cultural knowledge from the time they step into youth. These organizations, which are only referred to as “association” or “club” within the community, were actually established to offer a Jewish space to the youth in the community (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 74). In these places, those who join events are separated into groups according to their age. The groups are named “culture groups” in the community and they are where cultural education is given through discussions and thought-provocative chats.

“I did not learn the cultural side of Judaism at school, I learned it in associations. Associations and culture groups close that gap. A friend of mine who didn't join the culture group didn't learn what I learned. You actually get your Jewishness from there anyway. I went to the synagogue, okay; I learned to

read Hebrew, okay; I learned how to read prayers, but I didn't learn anything other than that. But on the other hand, the cultural side is coming from what we call an association, a structure established to teach cultural things" (G, 35).

"We meet on weekends and cultural lessons given. In fact, the topics that are not covered in the school. Maybe that's why the school didn't have a concern about it. The vast majority of the community goes to associations" (N, 35).

"I don't think it (cultural education) should be in schools anyway. Associations are ideal for that" (V,29).

Families have a critical influence on youth involvement to associations. In most of the cases, young individuals are introduced to the associations with their parents' encouragement. Sometimes, families not only encouraged, but also spent the effort of bringing their kids to association's events and picking them up afterwards. As a matter of fact, the attitude of the family is that they want their children to gain the intersection of their identities with Judaism by enabling them to acquire cultural knowledge and spend time in a Jewish area. Even though families are effective in taking a step, the major factor that makes the association permanent is the friendship that are gained there.

"My family encouraged me to join the association. I also have an older brother; he went to all of them before me. So, nothing new happened in my life. It was something I saw all the time because of my older brother. I really liked it when I saw him very into it. Because he is in a community and shares something with people. You learn about the culture, you share something, and you socialize. That's a nice thing. That's why I joined willingly and lovingly" (O, 25).

"It was because of my mother's effort of taking me there. Friends were also important to me, but if I wanted to go a lot and my mother didn't take me, I couldn't go when I was little. That's why the two of them are together, but after a certain age, when you go out on your own, the reason is friends" (R, 25).

"The beginning is always by means of families. The family says go make friends, that's always the case. But the thing that keeps you there is the friends. By the way, you may or may not meet one or two people there. If you meet them, you will continue with them. But the beginning is with family, friends who ensure permanence" (D, 35).

Among the interviewees, those who consider that the activities of the association and the time spent there have an impact on the identity are the majority. In order to raise cultural consciousness, meeting and discussions are done through cultural groups where young people from the same age group come together under the supervision of a peer educator; not only Judaism but also the fact that these discussions make the participants ready for life is one of the most influential factors on identity.

“In the association, festivity activities are held during those days, religious days are taught. People are lived the same style, after all, it is a bubble. There are also more meaningful conversations after a certain age, after getting older. Thought-provoking, visionary. Because it was not only related to Judaism but also connected with us as a view of life” (R, 25).

“It affects enormously! You join as a 14-year-old teenager and leave at 22. Those are the time to write something in your head. Culturally, Ideologically and also belonging. So, it affected me a lot” (İ, 27).

“People in the same age group, let's say the 13-year-old group, that 13-year-old group is being trained by people in the 16-17 age group. It is effective because it gives you some information. It's also about how people get information” (N, 35).

Among the activities of the association, apart from cultural education, there are also different social activities such as dance, theater, and sports. Young people within the scope of the association can also benefit from these, and they even have shows and competitions throughout the year. The interviewees stated that spending time with people with similar lifestyles through the association and knowing that being part of a group also has an impact on their identities. This can be associated with being a minority and a community. For Bauman, Community means sameness, and where everyone is the same, there is no other (2001, p. 115). In a place of sameness, all people think alike and do similar things. Interacting and sharing with such people, definitely has an impact on identity. This situation can be examined with Victor Turner's concept of *communitas*. According to Turner, “*communitas is a relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals*” (Turner, 1991, p. 131). This definition is also compatible with the situation of being similar and a community. Undoubtedly, participating in association activities, spending time in a Jewish-only space and sharing affect the process of identity.

“It has a hundred percent influence on the formation of my Jewish identity. In fact, I think that identity is strengthened by the ties you establish with the community and the people around you. Living with the association and connecting all activities to a common denominator, then you don't feel that you are spending your time for nothing. I don't know how true it is, I was going to say with people like myself to spend time, but it's a bit discriminating, it's not nice. I think it is very nice to share these activities with people who trust each other” (V, 29).

“I think that when you are in the Jewish association, acting together with the group, feeling that you are a part of the group, knowing that the festivity is being celebrated at your friend's house while you are celebrating it, and being together in the association can shape your identity. So, it had an effect on my identity” (D, 35).

Despite the fact that the majority of the interviewees stated that the activities of the association affected the identity process, there were also those who said the opposite. Interviewee M thought that the time that she spent in association did not contribute to her identity because her family gave her the necessary religious and cultural education. Interviewee K, on the other hand, stated that if enough information is obtained from the family, the activities of the association will not be very effective, but the activities of the association will be beneficial for someone who, in her own words, is “lost”.

“Cultural groups or something didn't affect my identity. Because they don't teach you a lot of religion there. It's like they're repeating things you see in the family. My family is a family that teaches religion and culture. Maybe if I were the child of a family that never taught religion and culture, it could have improved me. But it didn't have much effect on my identity” (M, 25).

“Of course, it shapes, and we were training there. So, it is something that is very good for the person who is lost because it gives that person a goal and a purpose. But if you're already a full person and your family feeds you in some way, it's not like that” (K, 35).

As it can be seen, the activities of the associations both provide an educational aspect and a social environment that affect the identities of Jewish youth, in different ways. While some are influenced by the discussions and cultural information in Jewish youth cultural groups; some young people are also affected by the environment offered by the association.

5. YOUTH'S EVERYDAY LIFE

5.1. Controlled *Kayades*

After the proclamation of the Republic and the Turkification movement started, the Jews of Turkey have experienced many traumatic incidents. As a result of those incidents, a security concern has emerged and community people have adopted the Ladino discourse, *Kayades*⁴² which means silence, as a lifestyle. After decades, when the year of 1992 came, the community had the wish to establish a foundation, which is the Quincentennial Foundation, both in order to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Sephardic Jews' migration to Anatolia and make the Jews more visible in social life (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 35-37). Despite the projects that had been designed to make those wishes possible, with the synagogue explosions in 2003⁴³, the Jewish community took another major blow. Nevertheless, efforts have been made to become more visible in the following years. For the first time in 2015, the commemoration⁴⁴ of the people who passed away in Struma⁴⁵ and the celebration of Hanukkah⁴⁶ were held in public in Istanbul. While the Struma commemoration is held on the day of each year; Hanukkah was also publicly celebrated in different places of Istanbul, such as Ortaköy, Beyoğlu, Galata, and Balat.

Today, the community still exists in invisibility and closed manner (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 100), and security measures are followed uncompromisingly in all Jewish institutions. However, the concept of *kayades*, which previous generations adopted as a lifestyle and shaped their everyday life practices around it, is not known by today's generation. Even though many interviewees know a few words of Ladino, *kayades* is not one of those words. *Kayades* has sometimes emerged as a word that has never been

⁴² Ladino term means being silent, quiet, or being low profile (as cited Danan, 2012, p. 88).

⁴³ Bali, R. N. (2021). *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Devlet'in Örnek Yurttaşları*. İstanbul: Libra.

⁴⁴ First commemoration for the Struma disaster, www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/10682/struma-faciiasi-icin-ilk-resmi-anma, 21.11.2022.

⁴⁵ During World War II, in December 1941, 767 Jews departed from Romania with a boat named Struma to Istanbul in order to apply for Palestine visas. The boat arrived in Istanbul after four days of departure despite engine problems. However, passengers were not accepted into Turkey and Struma waited on the Bosphorus for more than two months. On February 23 in 1942, the boat was towed to open sea and left, on the next day, Struma sank and only one passenger survived, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/voyage-of-the-struma, 24.11.2022.

⁴⁶ Hanukkah celebrated in public for the first time, www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/hanuka-bayrami-ilk-kez-halka-acik-olarak-kutlandi-447655, 21.11.2022.

heard or despite the interviewees had heard the word, they do not seem to know the meaning of it. Interviewee R understood the word, that she had not heard before, as she speaks Spanish, and connoted from there. R stated that people in her family must have known about it, but she had not heard of it before. Only Interviewee D knew what the concept of *kayades* was, while the other interviewees' answers were close to each other. D expressed that it is quite normal that *kayades*, which he referred to as “*low profile*”, are not known because it is an act rather than discourse.

“I don't know what Kayades is” (V, 29).

“I don't know it” (K, 35).

“This is not a discourse, this is an act so, you can't really understand it. There's no way you can see it. The only way you can see it is if someone warns you” (D, 35).

When it has been considered on the beginning of the post-republican period, the first and second generations lived with a more introverted and invisible attitude compared to today's youth (Kaymak, 2018, p. 304). Nowadays, youth are quite conscious and understanding about the lifestyle that is shaped by the past, but they are unwilling to live in the shadow of that attitude and have no worries about not being visible as much as past generations have. According to Lefebvre, there is a relationship between the everyday and life in the context of the subconscious and desire (2020, p. 139). The *kayades* attitude, which extends from previous generations to the present, is the product of the subconscious that emerged after the traumas; the fact that today's young people are eager to go out of it, is an indication of their desires. Despite the fact that their desire is to have an everyday life without the question of visibility, they still act by paying attention to the situation of the environment and the attitudes of people. Therefore, it is possible to say that their visibility is controlled, but they do not tend to limit their public existence as strict as previous generations.

“You know, you can understand the thing about going low profile that fear it gives you in those times. But on a personal basis, not everyone is like that. But you can understand why it's such a social act” (A, 28).

“I don't have such concerns, to be honest, I act like a normal Turkish citizen. I don't have a feeling like I shouldn't be noticed, no questions asked to me. I tell everything when it is asked. I'm like an open book” (B, 19).

“There are some times when I have a problem with being invisible. It changes a lot depending on the place, so it's about feeling the risk. Sometimes you can feel

that risk before it comes. You say to yourself this will be a problem, there is something dirty here, there are moments when you say you don't want to take that risk” (D, 35).

“We need to understand past generations. My grandfather was alive on the wealth tax, he lived through it. My other grandfather is a man who lived through the Thrace Incidents and was expelled from Edirne. That's why he was saying to his children, don't say you're Jewish” (İ, 27).

Families' approach to being invisible varies, but there is a fact that the approach of families is stimulating, not oppressive, compared to previous generations. While the approach varies from family to family, such a change can also be found within the family. Even though interviewee V does receive any criticism about being visible and receives support from her father in the family, her mother thinks the opposite and she warns Interviewee V in particular occasions. The families of the interviewees, whose high school life was in public schools, warned them more than others to be careful; however, the families of the interviewees who studied in Jewish Schools or private schools and spend time in a more isolated environment often made that warning in mixed environments. Families, most of the time, warned the interviewees about the Jewish charms that they wear as an accessory. These charms, which are popular gifts of the Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah periods, are willingly used by many interviewees. In spite of the fact that they have no problem with being visible, some of the interviewees prefer to have the visibility situation under their own control and feel the need to hide that charm in crowded environments, while others have to hide it or take it off once a warning was issued by their families. An identical situation emerged in Brink-Danan's research, where young people said that although they wanted to wear those charms, their families reacted extremely harshly (2012, p. 90). Even if the interviewees are open-minded about visibility, they make their decisions according to the environment they enter, and if there is a situation that they are uneasy about, they often try not to enter such environments while following a way of not being visible.

“My mother doesn't want me to wear the Star of David necklace anymore, actually for the 15 years or so. While we were hanging out more, I got on the minibus, my mother used to say, hide it, even take it off” (V, 29).

“Until a certain age, my family had warnings to shut up and stuff. After a while, I realized that, right now, for example, I am working in a super-religious institution, and I say why am I hiding that I am Jewish. While those people were making it so obvious that they are Muslims, I said why am I hiding or what do I have to lose? But I wouldn't say it in an environment that would make me worry too much” (M, 25).

“Between the ages of 13-18, during the Bar Mitzvah periods, there were gold charms, stars, and stuff. I loved to wear them, as an accessory. It wasn't about tradition, everyone wore it back then, and you do too. I didn't wear that charm when I was in university” (N, 35).

Interviewee A is most visible because of his profession and is not hesitated to say he is Jewish while performing it. This attitude is a feature that distinguishes him from both previous generations and his own generation. Again, similar to his generation, he experiences the anxiety of an insecure environment, but he eliminates risks by not entering into those spaces. While interviewee A stated that many people in the community had an opinion about his profession, there were also reactions to his mother since he talks that much in public areas. A's father also shared his uneasiness and doubts with interviewee A. In Turkey, Can Bonomo and the Sefarad the Band are known for being Jewish and they express it in front of the public, but there is one feature that distinguishes A from them, which is that A talks about not only his Judaism but also the community and sometimes by criticizing it when he takes the stage.

“Everyone has an opinion about me and what I'm doing. But it's not their business, it's not really something that affects them. This is what I am, after all. If I don't say this, I won't be protected from something because I didn't say it. I will say it elsewhere, I will say it where I think it is safe” (A, 28).

Although the past generations' everyday lives emerged from traumatic reasons, according to Lefebvre, everyday life is political and contains public and social consciousness (2020, p. 97). The fact that young people today have the awareness and desire to go outside is strictly political. Since everyday life contains information about how individuals experience the world they live in, it cannot be studied as a homogeneous structure (Bennet, 2005, p. 4). This experience will vary from generation to generation and due to that, it is quite normal that there will be changes in the lifestyle that has been adopted in the past, because of the fact that all individuals living in a community determine an everyday life in line with their experiences.

5.2. Other Side of the Visibility: Social Media

In the past decades, social media has become such great power. It started as a communication and sharing network, it brought a great speed to personal communication and even played a big role in the Occupy movements (Fuchs, 2020, p. 343-348), and eventually, it has become a significant part of daily life today. The use

of social media is very common, especially among young people, and all of the people interviewed within the scope of the research are familiar with social media platforms, and they regularly use those communication tools.

This situation has brought a new factor to the sensitivity of being visible. Because of the fact that with the power it has gained, social media has brought a space to the lives of Jewish youth that did not exist in the lives of previous generations, and this new space has brought its own visibility dilemmas.

Social media platforms actually provide the opportunity to be invisible to the user very easily, with the security and data protection options it offers. If users choose to use private profiles, they also have control over who can access their profiles and interact with them. Except for Interviewee A, all the rest of the interviewees exist on social media platforms, using private profiles. Apart from using their profiles privately, the interviewees have one more thing in common which is they use their profiles privately, not only because they are Jews but as personal preferences. The interviewees are unwilling the sharing to show their lives to public.

“My profile is private. It is not the inn that people come and go, so it is my profile” (B, 19).

“I use a private profile, but it has nothing to do with Judaism. It's more about not opening up my life to the outside” (V, 29).

“My profile is private, but it's not because of kayades” (R, 25).

Although the social media usage styles of the interviewees are similar, there are differences in their content sharing habits. While some of the interviewees share posts that reveal they were Jewish, others do not prefer to share such posts. For example, interviewee S does not share such posts because it is not her style; interviewee N had never shared such posts before, but this was not due to a concern about being invisible.

Interviewee M does not share contents that she was Jewish in order to avoid the reaction of those people since she follows each other with people from different sections of society. In particular, she does not share anything about being Jewish or secular, as there are conservatives among the people she followed. She thought that if people are disturbed, they could disturb her.

Since interviewee A used an open profile and stated that he is Jew while performing his profession, he could sometimes receive abusive messages. Interviewee O, on the other hand, has a social media account under her own name, where she shares only her drawings and designs, and many people thought that her name is a nickname.

The visibility attitudes of the interviewees on social media are similar to each other. In spite of the fact that the interviewees do not have any concerns over Judaism, they are unwilling to be seen by everyone on the platforms they share personal information with.

5.3. The Spelling Bee: Names

Names are an important factor that creates distinction in public spaces. In Turkey, after people ask a person's name if that name is something they rarely hear, they immediately ask where they are coming from. Sometimes this conversation is prolonged, sometimes it is kept quite short. Some of the interviewees throughout the research have experienced and continue to experience it many times because names are the words that individuals use most in everyday lives and they are like a clue that can give a lot of information to about their lives. The other interviewees are far away to experience it since they have only Turkish names or double names.

The first thing the interviewees who have only Jewish names said was that their names are not understood since they are rarely heard, and their everyday life had turned into a spelling bee contest because they had to spell their names to people, they meet all the time. The spelling bee contest analogy has been used by interviewee R in order to explain the awkward situation of Jewish youth experience in their everyday lives. This situation has become something boring for all the interviewees and because of that when they are being asked their names while such as ordering a coffee, they prefer to say familiar, ordinary names that assert no ethnic-religious identity. Besides, the interviewees are also exhausted of saying the city names that their initials are compatible with the letter in their names. A similar situation was encountered in Brink-Danan's research, and one of the interviewees coded her name, "*Lusi, as L as is Lüleburgaz, U as in Urfa, S as in Samsun, I as in Istanbul*" (2012, p. 65). This situation also caused funny moments such as writing the cities used for coding instead of names when making a reservation. They apply that method not only for themselves but also for the names of their family members during phone calls to banks etc. when they asked.

In this research, these codings were not included because the information of the interviewees was kept confidential.

“You hit me in my vital spot. It's something I'm having a lot of trouble with. It's always in my mind, the cities. This is how I spend my life” (K, 35).

“They're making spelling bees in America, I can be champion. My father's name on the ID is a bit long and rare and I am spelling it to banks one by one” (R, 25).

According to Danan's research, Turkish Jew families found the method of giving two names to their children, one for use in the community and the other for use in daily life (2012, p. 72). Thus, these people will be able to use the advantage of having two names and make a choice according to the environment they enter and continue their lives without being visible. However, this situation has changed a little in the last decade, that no one except interviewee D has a double name, but there are participants with only Turkish names. Since the people interviewed throughout the research are from different age groups the changing of the double naming situation can be observed. Interviewee D's age is closer to the generation of Marcy's research group that is with the double name. However, the number of those with only Jewish names in younger age groups is high. This points to a small change in the last decade, but of course, there are exceptions.

“My father has already given me a second name so that I don't have difficulty. He had given me a Turkish name” (D, 35).

“I have only one name. My family was going to give me İlker, but my father said, what is this, are we Muslims, then they gave my name” (İ, 27).

The double naming and other protection moves to assure invisibility are described as an identity strategy by Kaymak and Yıldız (2018, p. 307, 2013, p. 197). However, Michel de Certeau defined the concept of strategy as *“calculation of power relationships”* and stated that parties should have power and will in order to ensure the relationship (1988, p. 35-36). Therefore, De Certeau also developed a concept of tactics and defined it as *“calculated action”* and emphasized it as *“art of the weak”* (1988, p. 36). For this reason, it is more appropriate to call all the moves like double naming and other protection moves done for not being visible as tactics, and when it is called tactics, it is possible to see the power relations between them, because *“the space of a tactic is the space of the others”* (De Certeau, 1988, p. 36). There are also those who use different tactics among the interviewees. However, they are not based on impulses that

are similar to those of past generations. The interviewees are quite bored and fed up with the questions that follow after they say their names. That's why they do not always express their names and that they are Jewish. Those with Turkish names, on the other hand, tried not to start the question-answer phase by applying the same tactics when they were understood by their surnames.

“The taxi driver asks for my name, so what's it to you? He asks, I say İzzet. I am registered as İzzet in BiTaksi. He will not understand my own name anyway, I cannot explain it for hours” (İ, 27).

“It is not very clear from my first name, but it can be understood from my surname” (S, 25).

Interviewee D uses his other name or surname as his first name since they are both Turkish origins when he is unwilling to deal with people. This can be considered as a tactic, but it can also be discussed from Goffman's point of view, so using a Turkish name in a non-Jewish place can be seen as a “*dramatic realization*” and according to that, a person reflects a different personality or assumes a role that determined over the public space they are about enter, or engage in conversations within (1959, p. 30-34). Another tactic that was expressed is mentioning they were of Spanish or Portuguese descent. Some of the interviewees said that they indicate they were Spanish or Portuguese descent when they do not want to say they are Jewish or when they do not want to engage in the conversation that would follow. When the interviewee R is asked why her name is different, she uses the same tactic, but when she said it, she always states that she is Jewish.

“It's usually understood from my last name, and I say I have a Spanish origin” (M, 25).

Even though interviewee M has only one name, which is Turkish, there is also a Jewish name that is not in the Population Registration but is in the community registration. M thought that this was also a tactic used by her family to prevent her from having difficulties.

“Actually, I have a Jewish name, but it is not written in the registration, to not have any difficulties” (M, 25).

The interviewees that participate to the research use a controlled attitude and some tactics not to say their names and these are due to the fact that they do not want to deal

with it, unlike previous generations. Since it is tiring to explain themselves, the interviewees do not prefer to explain it in every environment.

5.4. Ghetto Out, *Bubble* In

In the past, when the Jews were not concerned about visibility, they lived in certain places in Istanbul, and these places were known as the Jewish quarters among the people. In spite of the fact that places such as Beyoğlu, Hasköy, Balat, Galata, Ortaköy, Kuzguncuk were settlements with the Jewish population in former times (Kaymak, 2018, p. 121), it is not possible to talk about such a particular place today. Of course, there are areas where they are dense in numbers, but in terms of visibility, it cannot be compared with the past.

In societies where multicultural groups live together, ghettos are likely to form where minority groups live together in a certain district. Although ghettos are sometimes seen as a stigma and create a bad perception of that particular group in the eyes of a wider public, according to Wacquant (1998), they are actually regions where closure is seen in terms of both place and society. Considering the attitude of invisibility that the Jewish community has historically lived through and as a result they adopted, it is not possible to have a Jewish ghetto today, since ghettos are the structures that are visible and well-known by other people. There is, however, a discourse that has been rising recently and is frequently used by the participants which is a bubble. The discourse of bubble fits quite well into this discussion. What is meant by a bubble is to live an everyday life of privacy and secrecy without being in front of others.

Jewish Schools are the place where the bubble discourse is most compatible and comes to the fore. While the interviewees who studied in Jewish Schools stated that they always lived in a bubble; those who studied at different schools can look at that bubble discourse a little more from the outside. Both interviewee D who studied in a public school and interviewee N who studied in Jewish Schools compared Jewish Schools to an aquarium and stated that those who study there always receive education with people like them. Besides, since the association activities are preferred for social activities, most of the Jewish youth growing up in a very isolated environment, that is to say, in a bubble. When this is the case, those who did not study in mixed-education schools stay

and socialize in the bubble until university and experience a great stuntedness when they enter the university environment.

“Some of my close kinships were teachers at school, that's the beauty of that bubble. Nothing would happen to me at school. If the world were destroyed, I would be saved. Because I was at school, and I had kinships. Then, I went to university. on the first day, my God, I felt like an anchovy in the ocean. It was the first time I was in a place where I came regularly and had no bubbles. It was too scary, too weird. If you ask me how many times have I seen my kinships at school because I don't like seeing them because I was automatically tidying myself up” (R, 25).

“That's why people coming out of Jewish Schools look like fish out of water” (A, 28).

The concept of the bubble is not a concrete one like the ghetto, it is an abstract structure and is known only to its own community. Bubbles were built around the concern of safety and risk, and it still carries that. It embodies this duo, which is why it is abstract and hidden. So, bubbles attribute everyday life since the concept of risks expresses what should not be done, rather than what should be (Beck, 2005, p. 47), as an integral part of the bubbles. According to the interviewees, the security at the school and all other institutions were quite tight. Entrances to the school are made through heavy security measures, where it is surrounded by thick walls, and according to Interviewee R, the security measures in the school can increase even higher with the slightest political tension. In addition, great attention is paid to the entrance and exit of the synagogues. For example, after an event in the synagogue, people are let leave the synagogue gradually so as not to attract attention. The bubble that emerged around this security and risk also attributes everyday life to the people who are a part of it and determines what they can and cannot do.

“You have seen this from birth, you have grown up in an aquarium. Every Jew is raised in it for security reasons” (I, 27).

“The thing that hurt me the most was getting in and out of school, but it's always said don't leave at the same time. How bad, how sad. I don't know how much it affects my everyday life. Because I've already been living in a bubble for years, the things you do are clear, the places you go are clear. There are three iron gates at the school where I study. You are searched, you cannot enter, your identity is controlled. We enter secretly, we do not leave at the same time, leave and disperse in small groups. Synagogue exit is like this, wedding exits are like this, wedding entrances are like that too. There is a special card for each invitation, otherwise, you cannot enter” (S, 25).

“Being a Turkish Jew youth is a bit like you have to live in the bubble, there is a perception that you cannot go out of it. To feel more secure. That's why it's actually much more worrying and accepting that the environment is full of dangers, narrowing your own limits and being obliged to live within those limits” (V, 29).

Starting university is a significant breaking point in the lives of the interviewees, and the most important factor that brings a mixed form to their circle of friends, if they did not receive a mixed education until university. However, some of them have more Jewish friends with the effect of the bubble, as they establish a large number of friendships and bonds in the bubble, until they begin their university educations. At this point, the interviewees who did not study in Jewish Schools are quite happy to make such a decision because they see themselves as more advantageous in life and a little outside of that bubble. They can predict what they will encounter when they start to study at university or in life.

“When my friends got into university, they realized that life doesn't revolve around Jews. I have a group of friends from the high school crew that I play football with, and when I hang out with just Jews, they are like my antidote. I'm having a lot of fun. The chat of the guys is very different, very different. I'm laughing so much” (İ, 27).

“Yes, I have a mixed circle of friends. Closed circuit until the end of high school. After high school, I had my friends through university and work networks. But we still have the first crew from childhood. Because of this minority psychology in us, friendships from high school and primary school are strong. Okay, you have friends from university, but the friends you have family contact with and have constant conversations with are usually your friends from the community” (G, 35).

This concept of the bubble is a quite substantial structure in the everyday lives of the people who are a part of it, and it is even their everyday life. Confidentiality is essential for the bubble, which creates a second-world closed to the outside, and the security of the bubble, which is seen as the second-world, is provided by privacy (Simmel, 2019, p. 24). Although it is a second-world, the bubble takes the first-world position for people with its strong effect and leaves them unprepared for the outside. This is what Jewish youth today also experience, the lifestyle they call the bubble plays an important role in their lives for certain reasons. However, those who cannot get out of it until they go to university falter in their social life, while those who go out at an early age are more advantageous.

5.5. Jew or Musevi?

In every part of the world, a Jew is a Jew, and there is only one word to describe it, except Turkey. In Turkey, two different words are used for description which are Jew and Musevi. The reason for it is based on a long process that started in the early republican period. After the proclamation of the Republic, Turkification efforts continued at great speed. The Jews faced great oppression and tried to adapt to it with the leaders of the community, but both the regime and the public expected the Jews to become Turkish immediately (Bali, 2001, p. 526-527). The leading newspapers and magazines of the period began to portray a bad image of the Jews (Bali, 2003b, p. 403-404), and the anti-Semitic environment emerged because of the World War II increased the pressure on the Jews of Turkey. Since the Turkification project that started in this period took place on a cultural and linguistic basis, the word Musevi was started to be used instead of Jew which represents an ethnic belonging. Nevertheless, there is no distinction between the words in terms of religion and society, and the meanings of both words overlap; in fact, the term Musevi is Turkish and means those who believe the religion of the prophet Moses⁴⁷. Interviewee N also stated that the two concepts are not different from each other, and after the proclamation of the republic, a Turkish word was created in order to describe the Jews of Turkey.

“With the nationalist point of view of that time, it is the product of that point of view or work, like you are a Turkish Jew and you should be named Musevi” (N, 35).

Despite the fact that the community accepted and started to use the word Musevi over time, the debate about whether using of Jew or Musevi came to the fore in the past, with the youth movements of the 80s. Silvyo Ovadya, the former head of the community, stated in an interview in 2009 that the management of the newspaper Şalom fell into the hands of young people in 1984 and the word Jew was persistently used at that time⁴⁸.

The words Jew and Musevi are compatible with the same meaning, but they may be perceived and used in different ways. Therefore, its use in the community changes as well. While the word Musevi is sometimes a safer and unobtrusive word; the word Jew

⁴⁷ For more information, www.avlaremaz.com/2019/11/19/yahudi-mi-musevi-mi-dani-baran-betsy-penso/, 28.10.2022.

⁴⁸ For more information, t24.com.tr/haber/ovadya-hosgoru-degil-esitlik-isteriz,27338, 28.11.2022.

is not like that and is even used as an insult by some people⁴⁹. Since this difference is also known among young people, there may be changes in the expressions. Interviewee R started to use the word Jew absolutely after the institutional name of the community changed, and she has to be in a very unsettling environment for her to use the word Musevi now. Interviewee O, on the other hand, have had always been confronted with the phrase “*you are Musevi*” when she heard people's bad words while she was at school and when she said that she is one of them.

“After the Mavi Marmara, they wrote on a wall in our place: Let the Jews die and the Musevis live. There is such a perception, yes” (R, 25).

The change in the institutional name of the community increased the use of the word Jew in daily usage and was an encouraging move for many. Interviewee İ also started to use the word Jew directly after that name change made by the community, but he still continued to use the word Musevi in government offices because of the fact that it is written Musevi on his identity card.

It seems a little safer to use Musevi due to its perception. Since confidentiality and security are priority concepts within the community, the attitude of families may also be towards the use of the word Musevi. However, using Musevi has recently lost its prevalence. Despite that, interviewee G still uses Musevi because he said that this was coded in his mind due to Musevi-Jew perception. He uses the word Musevi in general, although he was aware that the use of the word Jew has increased recently.

“I am using the Jew, Musevi seems very contrived to me. As a child, I was taught to be called Musevi. That's why I used to use it like that, but when I grew up, I was like what is Musevi or something. I use Jew. Jew is a safe enough word for me. Because those who hate, hate both. There isn't much difference between them. I never say it, if I'm going to say it, I say I'm a Jew” (M, 25).

“If the conversation goes on, in the version of Yeni Akit, Yeni Şafak, of course, you're turning it into saying that we are already mixed with Musevi. But if there is someone who knows the difference between Judaism and Musevism, you can talk about it” (N, 35).

Even though the use of the word Musevi is a transfer from the past, the change of the name of the community has been a very significant step in this regard and has encouraged the young people who are already using the word Jew to change the

⁴⁹ www.avlaremaz.com/2019/05/26/turkiyede-antisemitizm-bir-kufur-cesidi-olarak-yahudi-betsy-penso/, 28.10.2022.

discourse. At present, while the word Jew is used as an insult by certain groups, a hostile perception came into fruition. For this reason, until recently, it was not preferred to be used in non-community environments due to security concerns.



6. A COMPLICATED DILEMMA: MARRIAGE

6.1. The Perspective toward Mixed Marriage

The fact that the Jewish community has a dwindling population causes the members of the group to interact more with the rest of the society in their everyday lives. With the rise of mixed marriages in the last few decades, this has become the most critical problem that the community faces. During the 1960s, mixed marriages were very low and rare, but in 1992, Brink-Danan asserted that the rate of mixed marriage has reached to 42 percent, and it doubled in the following decade (2012, p. 100). Both decrease of the population and acceleration of the assimilation have rendered the situation more of an issue. Mixed marriages have become a common situation today and gained the attention of social sciences due to the fact that it has the potential for cultural change (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 397), but the number of studies on the subject in Turkey is quite few (Beylunioğlu and Kaymak, 2020, p. 14).

Marriage is a hot topic for Jews, and it caused a pressure on the lives of the community's youth. The gradual decrease in the population of the community, the low number of young people and the growth of young people by getting to know each other in a bubble are among the reasons that make the in-marriage difficult and put pressure on young people. The fact that everyone in the community knows each other, the person being liked has been with someone from your circle of friends before, feeling worries since the families know each other, and the pressure of marriage when a person starts a relationship with someone from the same community are negative factors that affect to beginning the relationships or transition to marriage (Beylunioğlu and Kaymak, 2020, p. 197). Interviewees D and N who are at the same age and both have mixed marriages mentioned this issue and stated that they knew all the people who were likely to marry when they reached the age of 18.

“I can say something about being a Jewish youth in Turkey, I am in a very small and decreasing community. (...). At least ten or fifteen percent of the girls that I have the potential to marry are beautiful or rich enough to dislike me; at least ten percent or fifteen of them would be beautiful and rich, etc. that I would not like them. After eliminating these, I am a minority youth who grew up under the pressure of choosing a future wife among the handful of people my friends dated, my cousins were with, those who met and got married before me” (D, 35).

“When I turned 18, I knew almost all the girls I could marry in Turkey. This is very strange. I can't say all of them, of course, but I knew almost everyone whose potential can be up to 5-year-old difference. We are talking about 20 thousand people, very little and some of the 20 thousand people are already in Izmir. The remaining people are in the Akatlar, Ulus, Nişantaşı, Jewish High School, and Büyük Ada, there are already 5 thousand people in your hands, do the age breakdown, here you eliminated those who are older than you, you eliminated the ones with boyfriends. The number of people you have left is so small that you know them too” (N, 35).

12 people interviewed within the scope of the research have different civil statuses. Among the interviewees, there is one divorced, one engaged, three married (two mixed marriage, one in-marriage⁵⁰), and seven singles. The approaches and thoughts of these people to the concept of mixed marriage are pretty different. Before moving on to people's thoughts and preferences, the concept of mixed marriage will be explained.

The concept means the marriage between two individuals from dissimilar linguistic, religious, ethnicity, or nations (Breger and Hill, 2020, p. 7). There are different terms in the literature that have the same meaning as this concept, but the notion of mixed marriage has a more comprehensive meaning that emphasizes cultural factors more. It is also the concept used by interviewees during the fieldwork and most of them used the concept in English as “*mix marriage*”. The concept is also used in the comprehensive study, *Kısmet Tabi*, which focuses on mixed marriages in minorities living in Istanbul, but the dictionary definition of it is used there in order to explain the concept (2020, p. 30-31). Even though that definition gives a close meaning, the concept of race is being used in the definition and since race is a negative concept in social sciences, the definition is also overwhelmed and seems insufficient.

Approaches to the concept of mixed marriage or marriage, generally differ among the interviewees. Interviewees B and K have similar opinions to each other. Interviewee B's mother and father were mixed marriages (mother is Muslim, father is Jew) and interviewee K has divorced her Jewish husband and has a child. Both interviewees think that the most important factor in marriage is love between two people and they are not interested in other factors. Love plays a big role in today's marriages, and it is seen as the main determining factor for marriage (Beylunioğlu and Kaymak, 2020, p. 24). The

⁵⁰ or Endogamy is the marriage of a person from within one's own communal group (Emiroğlu and Aydın, 2003, p. 411).

perspectives of both interviewees fit this approach and the first factor they foresee in marriage is love.

“For me, it's quite normal. If two people love each other, let them get married, no matter who or what they believe” (B, 19).

“At the end of the day, everyone wants to love and be loved. I don't care whether the religion passes from me or not” (K, 35).

Some of the interviewees also prefer a Jewish spouse. Those interviewees explain this situation with cultural similarity and the interviewees think that they could get along better with Jewish people and thus have a problem-free relationship. At this point, Judaism plays an active role in traditional terms rather than being a religion. Having similar everyday life practices and knowing those practices constitute the ideal spouse preferences of the interviewees. Cultural similarities encourage people to engage in long-term relationships which prepare them for marriage to establish a common life (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 399-400). Besides, R and Ī are unwilling to explain themselves and their culture to someone from the scratches, so they would like to choose a Jewish spouse. In addition, R thinks that she may need to make an explanation in any Israeli incident and you-us duality may emerge involuntarily and that marriage may turn into a problematic structure. This situation coincides with Bourdieu's concept of taste. Bourdieu (1996) argued that people's perceptions of taste and preferences are related to their habitus and cultural capital. This perception constitutes the primary decision-making mechanism for in-marriage and individuals have a tendency to meet and marry people who are similar to them, not one from different lifestyles (Jenkins, 1992, p. 90).

“I get along much easier with a Jewish person. Everyone wants their ideal. What is the ideal, for two Jews to marry each other. Because they get along much more easily. Ninety percent come from the same cultural background. Even more, ideally, A Sephardi should marry to another Sephardi, An Arab to an Arab, A Gurci to a Gurci. Everyone can marry anyone, but my preference is that perfect one in quotes” (M, 25).

“My first choice would not be mixed marriage, but if I fall in love with someone, I would marry. No one can interfere with this. Why I don't prefer it, it's too long to explain all the culture and family structure to someone, who will say what when a crisis between Israel and Palestine. So, I can't handle it. It's hard! We invited my girlfriend, we had the Shabbath meal, she came when it was Passover, no hassle, nothing. If I had a girlfriend from the wider society, I couldn't tell her that I wouldn't be able to leave home early on Friday evening. I attend association's events, I can't explain. I have a hard time in some things. I'm not religious, but I can't describe my traditionalism, but someone who has lived it can understand” (Ī, 27).

“I don't think it's religion, it's tradition and habit, I look at it in my marriage, our tradition is the same” (G, 35).

“I already make statements in every part of my life. I don't want to explain to my boyfriend either. When an Israeli-Jewish incident occurs, an extra explanation for him, I don't want them. That's my thing with mixed marriages, a lot of problems come up. At the end of the day, a perception of us-you emerges and it bothers me a lot, it happens unavoidably. I can't be on the same frequency with him. I don't want to explain why we go through steel doors when entering the school, or the synagogue. I want someone who already knows about this life. I don't want to explain why I'm at home at dinner time on a Friday evening. I want us to know about our lives in general” (R, 25).

In spite of the fact that the interviewee O, like R and İ, consider that it is a difficult process to explain all the culture and tradition, Nevertheless, she stated that this process started before the decision to marriage was made and the decision of marriage is made when the person accepted the culture and traditions.

“You start the process of explaining your own culture before making the decision to marry. First, he says okay, then you make other decisions” (O, 25).

Interviewee D is the only one among the other interviewees who expressed a negative opinion about mixed marriage. D, who has a mixed marriage and one child, has had more rigid opinions on mixed marriage in the past. However, he still sees it as a problem facing the community today because of the fact that it causes assimilation.

“When a person is young, becomes more wild-blooded (delikanlı), the blood flows more madly and can be daring. But as you reach a certain maturity, those things fade. That greed is fading. I've never been very sharply anti-mix-marriage, I've never been too sharp. But today I am still a person who believes that it runs our society out. I still agree with this today. (...) This means that according to official numbers in 1923, Jews in Turkey were in the range of 85-100 thousand. It is not 15 thousand today. One of the main reasons for this is assimilation in mix-marriages” (D, 35).

In mixed marriages, the child has both a conflict-creating and conflict-solving role. The conflict in which culture is brought up causes problems in marriage and can create differences of opinion. Interviewee R stated that in mixed marriages, the child is born into a conflict. She thinks that all stages, starting from the child's name to the culture the child wants to be grown in, have the potential to create a problem. In addition, it is thought that it can cause a confusion for the child and conflicts between families, which may negatively affect marriages (Beylunioğlu and Kaymak, 2020, p. 135). In Judaism, the religious status of the newborn child comes from the mother (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 136), and this creates a problem in mixed marriages. Due to the fact that if the father

is Jewish and the mother is not and if the child was to be raised as Jewish, a long education process is a necessity before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony⁵¹. However, Interviewee D said that wherever the child goes in the world, there is a document called *Kethuba*⁵² that the parents have, proving that the child is Jewish, and if the parents have this document, the child is also considered Jewish. Interviewee R's opinion is that the child creates a conflict, while interviewee D's situation is in a conflict-solving position. Even though Interviewee D does not lean towards mixed marriages, the concept of mixed marriage has ceased to be a problem for him, as he will raise his child as a Jew. Interviewee S, on the other hand, is in the middle of R and D's views and a balancing position. Interviewee S considers that mixed marriages have increased recently, and she is not against it in any way, however, the culture can continue so that it should be transferred, and the decision should be left to the child.

“From circumcision to naming ceremony, from Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah, which school the child will go to, what will be the religion of the child. The mother is Jewish, but the surname comes from the father, the child will have a Turkish surname, but the child is actually Jewish. What will the child do, who will explain this to the child, and how, and the child may also feel in dilemma” (R, 25).

“When you go anywhere around the world, they ask for your parents' marriage certificate. If your parents have it, you're Jewish, or you're not. This is the simplest method. I also have a document with my wife” (D, 35).

“Some say, I don't want this, it's such an empty conversation. I respect them. At a time when mixed marriages have increased so much, I'm not saying that this shouldn't happen, I support it. One cannot choose whom to love. The tradition must continue. Let the Jew marry a Jew, those are past conversations. If there will be mixed marriages, the traditions should be told to the child, both. Then the child will decide whether do it or not. But those traditions should be passed and shared” (S, 25).

Interviewee V also emphasized that mixed marriages have increased in the last 20 years. Nowadays, mixed marriages have become more acceptable among the community members and V stated that she supports it and sees nothing wrong with mixed marriages. In addition, Interviewee V said that she would disregard external factors,

⁵¹ Interviewer B told that he received this long-term training during his interview. The training took about three years and ended with the Bar Mitzvah ceremony.

⁵² The marriage contract signed by the groom and delivered to the bride after the religious wedding, www.sevivon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=16:ketuba&catid=79&Itemid=123, 15.11.2022.

and if she falls in love and sets her mind on doing it, she might also have a mixed marriage.

“Mixed marriages are much more common in the past 15-20 years and are also acceptable. By acceptable, I mean that it can get approval from the community. My point of view is the same. Of course, there is something among the community members, it is more acceptable to marry someone from the community, but nowadays, it is actually a little more changed. I think that's what it should be. If I were in such a situation, if I put my mind to it, I do it, I don't care at all” (V, 29).

Interviewee N also has a mixed marriage, despite the fact that he thinks that it is difficult to have a problem-free relationship in mixed marriages where different cultures interact. Since the marriage of N and his wife coincided with Coronavirus pandemic (2019-2022), there was no large celebration and his wife's family lives in another city, so the meetings were always individual. The two families did not come together around a table. The marriage process of interviewee N and his wife where the families are out of the marriage process shows how families may be effective in marriage. Because if the opposite of that scenario came true, there would be a possibility of having problems.

“Getting along is easier for the people of the same culture, so this is not a strange situation. Making the right relationship out of a multicultural situation is a much more difficult task. Since our marriage coincided with the pandemic, it was not a very festive environment. The meeting of the families also coincided with the pandemic, they met a month or two before the wedding. My wife's family does not live in Istanbul, so it had an impact. My wife used to come to us for dinner, for example, when there was a Friday dinner or when we got together as a family. When her family came, I was going to her for dinner. But they were all individuals, families as a whole never sat at a table and exchanged great ideas, and there were no great conversations. Because there was no such environment, cultures did not collide” (N, 35).

Unlike the others, Interviewee A said that he does not wish to get married and that he does not want to marry a Jewish person if he gets married one day. He considers that because women occupied an important place in Judaism, it reflected in the behavior of women in the community. For this reason, the interviewee stated that he does not want to marry a Jewish person, but on the other hand, he does not want someone who was brought up under pressure in the Muslim culture. A asserted that if he ever got married, he could marry someone in between.

“Ever since I was little, I had a consideration that she would not be Jewish. Women are exalted, so it is in the book. In the family structure, it is the same, my mother is more dominant and what I see in most of the families is the woman is more dominant. That's why girls are more spoiled. On the other hand, there is a

type of Muslim girl who was brought up with pressure. You are searching for someone between them. This example is constantly trying to serve you. Other is a type who says not to do anything, puts everything on you. I don't want to be served either. That's weird as well because I've never seen it before. I'm not going to get married anyway, let's say I got married, it would be better someone in between, but of course, this person can be Jewish or not" (A, 28).

Marriage is an issue that cannot be ignored in general, and it is very intersecting with concepts of habitus and everyday life. The main reason why marriage is such a hot topic is the increasing number of mixed marriages in recent years and the struggle for existence in the Jewish community. Mixed marriages are seen as a process that accelerates assimilation in an environment where the continuity of traditions and culture is under peril, and therefore it is one of the most critical problems faced that the community faces. Even though the seriousness of the situation is accepted by young people, approaches to mixed marriage are also different from each other. Nowadays, love and affection have become important factors and some young people want to realize their marriages within this framework. However, some young people think that they can get along better with people from the same culture since mixed marriages are a structure that interacts with different cultures mixed marriages themselves might bring a variety of problems. Another important subject under discussion in mixed marriages is the child. Because for cultural continuity, a child is seen as a key point. Yet, raising the child might be a focal cultural conflict point, and therefore mixed marriages might cause problems in that aspect as well.

6.2. Families in Mixed Marriages

When it comes to mixed marriages, families and their opinions are also included in the discussion. Some families approach the mixed marriages with ease, while some do not. The first reason why families come to the fore about marriage in general, not only for mixed marriages, is that marriage in this part of the world means not only a relationship between individuals but also a relationship between families (Beylunioğlu and Kaymak, 2020, p. 134). When this is the case, the attitudes of families and their relations with each other gain importance in mixed marriages. Interviewee G also drew attention to this situation and stated that marriage means that families also get married and there are problems when traditions do not match and even emphasized that cultural conflicts among Jews cause problems.

“Marriage is actually the marriage of families. When the traditions of the families do not match, problems arise not only in Jewish and Muslim marriages, but also in other marriages between Sephardi and another Jew” (G, 35).

None of the interviewees was exposed to pressure from their families directly or had a negative experience for mixed marriage or relationship. In general, all interviewees are aware of the attitudes of their families. According to the interviewees, the first request of the families is that the interviewees choose a Jewish spouse for themselves. Among the families, there are families who would accept mixed marriage, while there are families who would not or who could accept it at the end of the persuasion process. Kaymak and Beylinoğlu, quoting from Xantvliet, suggested that the perspectives of families on mixed marriages change according to their education level, so that, those with higher education levels are more positive and parents with lower education levels have negative attitudes towards about mixed marriages (2020, p. 70). However, although the families of the interviewees have different education levels, their attitudes are independent of the education level. The parents may be against mixed marriages due to other factors such as cultural affiliation and position in the community regardless of having a high level of education.

Initial attitudes of families towards mixed marriage are also based on culture and traditions. The families of the interviewees want their children to have the values they see and pursue to practice. Interviewee İ stated that although his mother and father are open-minded about mixed marriage, they would not want him to have mixed marriage due to their commitment to their traditions. Interviewee İ asserted that his parents would like to see their grandchildren's Bar Mitzvah or *Vijola*⁵³ ceremony and stated that her grandmother would not like it very much in case he commits to a mixed marriage. Despite the fact that the families of the interviewees may be open-minded, their previous generations are more conservative about mixed marriages. Interviewee A also refers to a situation he experienced with his grandmother. In one instance, interviewee A invited his girlfriend to his house and his grandmother liked her very much, but when A's grandmother learned her name, she responded horridly.

“My mother and father don't want me to choose mixed marriage either. My family is also traditional. My father wants to see his grandson's Bar Mitzvah or

⁵³ Naming ceremony for baby girls,
www.sevivon.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7:vijola&catid=78&Itemid=122,
 18.11.2022.

Vijola. But if I marry to a vedre⁵⁴ too, he won't say anything. They are open-minded about it. My grandmother doesn't like it, but my mother's and father's first choice would of course be a Judeo⁵⁵ girl. My mother says, for example, that would I organize not a wedding in Neve Şalom to you?" (İ, 27)

"I feel it on my grandmother's side. Her mode was, for example, you marry to a Jewish girl, but that Jewish girl may be Argentinean. But you can't marry our neighbor's daughter. You know your neighbors for 45 years, actually, you know them better. Maybe the father of the girl in Argentina is a scammer, you don't know. You feel it there, as long as being a Jewish, she is from us. A girl came to the house, I was hanging out with, my grandmother liked her very much. Let's get her to you, she's very nice. My grandmother asked what's her name, I said Ayşe. My grandmother was like, 'Do you find them on the street? It took a moment for her to transition to racism" (A, 28).

Among the families of the interviewees, there are also some who prioritize the happiness of their children and encourage the interviewees for that. Interviewees V and K's families always told them that the most significant thing was to be happy and stated that their choices were not so important. Two interviewees generally said that their families' approaches differ from other families. V stated that her friends, whose families are conservative, faced harsh reactions; K, on the other hand, stated that most of her friends hid their relationships from their families in the past.

"What my own family tells me is that you should always be happy and be with someone who would love you and make you happy. But even if this is not talked about, I think they would be happier if I have a marriage to a Jewish person. They didn't tell me in anyway. I can say that the general perception is not like my family. My Jewish friends, who are more conservative, say that this is a very serious problem and families intervene and say things like we don't accept, no, when they were about 15-16 years old. I mean, nothing like that has ever happened to me. I've had Jewish boyfriends and non-Jews, and I've never had a reaction from my family" (V, 29).

"For example, my father used to say that you should be happy, no matter who you are with, instead of having a Jewish boyfriend when I was a teenager. This is a very important thing, in those times, there were hardly any families among my friends' families who said this. Everyone was against it, you couldn't do it, if you did, you would hide it" (K, 35).

The position of families in the community affects their children's perspectives on mixed marriage decisions as well. Interviewee R stated that her mother would want her to marry a Jew, but there would be no problem if she does not, while her father's side would not accept a mixed marriage due to their lifestyle and position in the community. For families, culture and traditions are at an extremely divisive point. In the past, this

⁵⁴ Ladino idiom using for Muslim people, and it actually means green (Brink-Danan, 2012, p. 140).

⁵⁵ Ladino idiom using for Sephardic Jewish people in Turkey.

situation led to harsh reactions even in marriages between the groups that made up the community. In the 1930s-40s, when the Jewish population was high, marriages between Sephardic and Ashkenazic groups, which formed the community, were also adversely regarded as mixed marriages due to cultural differences (Kaymak, 2018, p. 337, 338). Interviewee M also expressed that her family would not want a mixed marriage for her, and they would even want a Sephardic-Sephardic match, which is a perfect combination.

“Of course, my mother's side wants me to marry a Jew, but they are not the people who will make a scene because I didn't marry a Jew. But my father's side is not like that. Because of their position in the community, and my grandmother is really a very traditional person. It can cause a big problem on my father's side. On my mother's side, my grandmother is upset, but it is not an exclusion or not being included in the family. But my father's side is not like that. My father's side probably doesn't accept because of their jobs or lifestyles” (R, 25).

“My family doesn't want it. Even among the Jews, they want that perfect combination, Sephardi, because we are Sephardi. If they are Ashkenaz, they will be higher than us, if they are Arabs, they will be lower than us. He has typical judgments. Being a Muslim is not a conceivable scenario for them. They don't say you can never go and get married, but you have to fight a lot” (M, 25).

Even if the reactions of families are sometimes as harsh as those of past generations, families' opinions can change over time. Interviewee O's family was not taking kindly to the issue of mixed marriage, but after she introduced her boyfriend (currently engaged with him) to her family, they did not have any persuasive talks with her family. Interviewee S also emphasized the harsh attitudes of families on this issue and said that her own family would not want a mixed marriage, either.

“My family was a little more reactive. But they saw it with their own eyes, there was no need for persuasion. When there was mutual recognition, they accepted themselves. It's what it should be... Technically, this was the reaction I didn't expect” (O, 25).

“Too tough, too tough... parents are too tough! Most of the families are like that, some say they can do whatever they want, like an American movie. For the first two years of my best friend's four-year relationship, her family didn't know. There are lots of them, it's very sad, but this is a fact. My family would not want it. I don't know, my father would have accepted as a result of very long conversations, I don't know. But he wouldn't” (S, 25).

In spite of the fact that the situation seems as a religious difference, the problematic environment in marriages is entirely due to cultural differences and conflicts. The fact that Sephardic-Ashkenazi marriages faced great reactions in the past is a significant

indicator of that. Since marriage also initiates a relationship between families, they are also involved in the process. Families may be against mixed marriages for different reasons, especially cultural ones. However, as can be seen, there are families that think differently. Today, having a gradually decreasing population of the Jewish community is an important factor that brings mixed marriages to the agenda, but in the opposite scenario, mixed marriages would still be on the agenda of society, because culture is one of the most integral part of the people and plays an effective role in their lives.



7. A JOURNEY TO THE MEMORIES

7.1. Unspoken Past

The Jewish community of Turkey has faced many traumatic incidents in the past, such as Thracian Incidents, Wealth Tax, and 6-7 September Incidents. The last of such incidents was the attacks on two synagogues in Istanbul which are Neve Şalom and Bet Israel in 2003. Despite the fact that the research is focused on youth, those traumatic incidents have been one of the subjects of the interviews and it suggests the memories of those incidents have been transferred to the younger members of the families by the elders because although memory is individual, it is a structure that belongs the whole community (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 22-44).

It has been revealed that families have always played a significant role in every cultural aspect this research has attempted to address. As for memory, families also have an important role as well, but the effect of families on this issue is more negative than others, that is, an ineffective effect. In the interviews, more than half of the interviewees stated that their families did not talk about the incidents past generations have lived through. Interviewee D said that his family and family elders adopted an attitude of not talking about the past; Interviewee B expressed that he had never heard of these issues from his family and family elders, and he never asked them because they might be upset, and his father asked him not to ask to especially grandparents. Both interviewees emphasized that those incidents are never addressed in the family circles, due to the general belief that these conversations might cause further grief and sorrow.

“My father and grandfather have an approach of not talking about sad incidents related to their memories. Because talking about sad things does not give us anything in the end. It has an attitude of remembering talking for good things and times” (D, 35).

“None. They'll be upset when they tell, that's why I didn't want to ask. I didn't ask by thinking one step forward. I asked my father, he said that they did some things during those times. He said don't ask your grandmother much. This was kind of confirmation for what I thought” (B, 19).

Just as remembering is a part of the memory, forgetting, being silent and the severity of being silent are associated with memory too (Goertz, 1998, p. 33-38). The choice of silence adopted by many families is related to the severity of the past. Everyone knows and remembers what happened in the past but staying silent has become a part of

memory just like all incidents. The interviewee S and V stated that every member of their families knew very well what people lived through in the past, but it was never talked about in family gatherings.

“Never. Such things are unspeakable, everyone knows, and it is not so much discussed” (S, 25).

“They aren't talked about much in the family. Everyone knows very well what happened, but things that are talked about at family meetings and dining tables are not usually the case” (V, 29).

Some of the interviewees asserted that previous generations are unwilling to talk about past memories because these stories were ignored. Kaymak also stated that these memories, which form social memory, are passed over and not spoken (2018, p. 48). Interviewee N expressed that he does not recall ever discussing these issues with his family. In spite of the fact it was rarely discussed, his family always overlooked it and made a fait accompli.

“Our family was not a family that talked about those matters. Such incidents in the family were rarely mentioned. I don't remember any mention of the attack on Neve Şalom in 1986 in the family. Campaign of Citizen Speak Turkish was not something that was talked about” (N, 35).

While all these past issues are not talked about in most of the families of the participants, there are of course exceptions. Interviewees R and İ stated that all the past that other families do not mention about are talked by their own families. Even though R said that she understood those who do not want to talk about what happened, she stated that it is spoken in her own family, and she even asks questions to her grandfather. In İ's family, past experiences are always talked about and never hidden. İ's great grandfather was in the group sent to Aşkale in the labor camp for the Wealth Tax application and passed away there. This was the most important reason for them to be talked about and remembered in their families. Assmann claimed that remembering is concrete as much as thought is abstract (2011, p. 23), and the fact that İ and his family remember the past through a strong and deep-seated memory and the conversations show remembering is something concrete.

“It is talked about a lot because my father's grandfather died in the time of Wealth Tax, unfortunately. During the Wealth Tax application, he was sent to the Aşkale, where he got sick and died of bronchitis. Therefore, my father always told us. It isn't even told us, don't talk or anything. I think it's a bit of self-deception. So, you have to know the facts, your past” (İ, 27).

Interviewee M said that her family is unwilling to talk about past issues, nevertheless, her families tell some part of it when it is asked. It still did not change the fact that she learned many things by researching herself. Most of the time, M told that she listened to the memory of the oven that was built in Balat by her grandfather. During World War II, an oven was built in Balat, which gave rise to rumors among the Jews that the furnace was built to destroy them. According to M, this incident was a trauma for her grandfather and even though he does not talk much about other issues, whenever he talks about the past, he mentions about the oven in Balat.

“There are things that are not talked about but are told when asked. The things that I really learned by researching are not the things that are told too much in the family. But when asked, for example, when I ask my mother what we went through during the Wealth Tax, she tells it. Other than that, no one wants to tell, about those sad memories” (M, 25).

Past incidents, which few families talk about, are an important part of the memory of the Jews of Turkey and constitute a whole history. Memory is a structure that attributes to the whole community because even though remembering takes place personally, it connects with an entire set of thoughts that others possess (Connerton, 2009, p. 36). While some of the groups that form the society have this structure better, some groups tend have less. One of the reasons for it is the fact that families have no urge to talk about past incidents and it prevents transfer, while another reason is the difference between generations, the memory is based on a lived history (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 57) and it is actually not transitional.

7.2. Memory of the New Age

While closing the previous section, it was emphasized that although memory is individual, it is attributed to the whole society. However, the individual impact on memory is much greater than attributing it to the whole society. Because experience plays a very important role in memory. Throughout the fieldwork, the synagogue explosions that occurred in 2003 were the first ones when the word came to mind with the effect of the experience.

The experience effect directly connects memory to the generations. The concept of communicative memory developed by Assmann, who studies memory types, is coherent with the memory issue between Jewish youth and their families.

Communicative memory is a generation-specific memory type (Assmann, 2011, p. 36). From this point of view, it is reasonable for Jewish youth, who are the subjects of the research, to see the incidents of their generation as part of their memories. It is possible to access the same conclusion when studying the previous generations with this memory type. Individuals primarily remember what they have experienced in their own generation.

Even though the interviewees stated that they went through a period of fear in 2003 and had shocking memories, they do not hesitate to talk about them like the previous generations. The interviewees stated that 2003 was a severe trauma for them and community as well. Interviewee V was 11 years old at that time and recalled that when she went to school after the explosions, the advisory teacher attended the classes and encouraged them to talk and ask them to draw something. Another interviewee, K, stated that what happened in 2003 was a great trauma, but he was able to get over it because of the fact that she thinks she is not a traumatized person. In addition, K stated that her cousin was on the security commission⁵⁶ on the day of the explosion and she had experienced the incident deeply since Yoel who passed away was a friend of hers.

“Since I was 10-11 years old at that time, I remember that day and the news. After that, when we went to school, I remember that the lessons were not held, and that day, the advisory teachers tried to make us talk and asked us to draw something about the incidents” (V, 29).

“I’m not a traumatized person anyway. But we experienced it very deeply because my cousin was in security commission and one of my friends died, Yoel Ülçer” (K, 35).

Interviewee R was heavily affected by the 2003 explosions. The process was shocking for both her and her family, as there were people from her family in both synagogues and her uncle was seriously injured. These incidents were the most important parts of R's memory. Interviewee N's father was also in one of the synagogues, but for them, the attack's shocking effect was not as long termed as R and her family. Like other incidents in the past, the explosions in 2003 took their place among the issues that were not talked about and passed over in N's family.

⁵⁶ As interviewer D stated that it is a volunteer structure of well-known people in the community to assist security and police officers at events.

“Likewise, the stories about the synagogue bombings in 2003 were passed off by saying ‘it’s all over, my dear’” (N, 35).

Interviewee D stated that what happened in 2003, unlike past incidents, was his memory, not just past generations. He does not have an attitude of not talking like other members of his family and he does not hesitate to talk about what happened. D was on the security commission at the Neve Şalom synagogue in 2003 and experienced the explosion at ground zero. He was just behind the iron gate in front of the synagogue at the moment of the explosion. The iron gate completely collapsed, but D luckily received no physical harm. After that, D immediately went to the area where the people had gathered prior to the attack, and they all went towards the emergency exit. His cousin was seriously injured and underwent a long-term of treatment.

“(...) It happened at five or six past nine o’clock. First to Bet Israel Synagogue, then to Neve Şalom Synagogue. Both attacks took place in two minutes. Trucks, which we knew were loaded with one ton of explosives, exploded on the streets. I was behind the iron door in the front at that moment, I was not physically harmed (...)” (D,35).

While talking about the events in 2003, Yoel, who passed away in the explosions, is the most mentioned name. Since the community is small and people of the same age groups usually know each other, the interviewees who are over 30 years were acquainted with Yoel and had spent time with him. Since G was familiar to Yoel, he was deeply affected by his death. However, G did not realize what had happened with the shock of the explosions for a while. On the day of Yoel's funeral, he had received a nasty blow. This type of funeral and commemoration events are effective on memory. Commemoration ceremonies play a mnemonic role by drawing a picture of the past, where memory can be found (Connerton, 2009, p. 71-72). Interviewee R said that she went to commemoration ceremonies with her family. Sometimes commemorations are not made in the form of a known ceremony and the name of the person to be commemorated is kept alive. Interviewee S stated that award ceremonies were organized, and funds were opened in the name of Yoel Ülçer within the community. In this way, it is ensured that both the person and the incidents are not forgotten.

“In the attacks of 2003, how old am I then, I was in high school, I was 16. Our new life was just settling. Yoel was a very close friend of my cousin and someone I know from Büyük Ada. We had time together, we know his family as well, his passing affected me a lot. I can say it. I remember I was at the funeral. It was raining a lot, families were crying, it was a very different environment and of course, there is a traumatic part in my life. I did not understand the incidents

very much until the funeral ceremonies. I was 16 years old, and I was like ‘what's going on?’. I felt like I had been slapped” (G, 35).

These incidents, which have a place in the memory, affect and shape the everyday lives of individuals since they create traumatic effects on them. Assmann also stated that memory shapes one's everyday life practices both in the present and in the future (Assmann, 2018, p. 50). Starting from here, memory constitutes a frame that determines the everyday life practices of the individual. This frame serves as a mechanism for people to understand and describe what is going on around them, and the people determine their practices according to that frame (Goffman, 1986, p. 560-577). After the explosions in 2003, the everyday lives of the interviewees were also affected. According to the interviewees, especially the entrances and exits to the synagogue have become more sensitive and security precautions have been increased. The interviewee G stated that it was not the case before the explosions and after 2003, both synagogues and associations entered and exited in small groups. Since the participants were younger at that time and generally socialize in the associations and at school, the sudden increase in the security measures had a striking effect on them. Interviewee R also said that as someone who attended the commemoration with her family, people were very nervous because the 10th anniversary commemoration was held in public.

“There is a synagogue in Caddebostan, and there was no such thing for entering and exiting until 2003. It is the same for associations too. After that, reinforcements were made. In the past, when there was an event in the association, leaving the building was okay, there was security again, and warned us to disperse immediately. Now, they check the streets, whether there is a car coming or not, and make us leave in small groups” (G, 35).

“Our security system had changed for entrances at the school. You get used to security and expect that security. You would be surprised when it wasn't there” (V, 29).

When it comes to memory, Mavi Marmara was also part of the discussion, but the interviewees never mentioned even though it indirectly affected the Jews of Turkey at the time it was on the agenda. The interviewees said that the Mavi Marmara never came to their minds in this regard and although that incident affected the Jews in Turkey, it was not the case of the Jews of Turkey, but a purely political thing. However, when it was on the agenda, it affected the everyday lives of the Jews of Turkey. According to interviewee R, due to the association of Israel and Jews, Turkish Jews also entered a process where they were hidden in their everyday lives, and families started to warn

about them for this issue. Interviewee İ also stated that he started to hide his Magen David charm, which he always wears around his neck when he gets on public transport, but he never takes it off despite the pressures of his family.

“I wouldn't remember Mavi Marmara if you didn't tell me. It's an affair between Israel and Turkey. It's not about the Jews of Turkey like other ones. Yes, we did have tension, but we know that it is because of the association of Israel with Judaism” (R, 25).

“Mavi Marmara affected us. I have a Magen David charm and my parents asked me to take it off, I didn't. But I covered it in public transport” (İ, 27).

It has been tried to show that memory is a cumulative one by attributing it to the community. Since the memory works collectively, it also survives and continues to evolve as long as the community exists. For this reason, generations play a significant role in memory: it influences remembering and possessing a memory. With the influence of generations, individuals that form the community are divided into small groups, and in this way, they become more prone to remember what happened in their generation with the effect of their experiences. Consequently, it cannot be expected from an individual, who is a member of the community, to have full command of the memory, which is a great structure attributed to the whole community. Since this is the case, it is perfectly reasonable to see differences between generations in everyday life practices.

8. CONCLUSION: END OF THE STORY

I started to write my thesis by following a *self-reflexive* way. I talked about how I decided to study this subject with an eye on my own story. Now, I have come to the last chapter of my thesis and also the last chapter of my own story. Even though I used academic language in which the first-person singular is not used in the majority, I would like to finish it as self-reflexive as I started.

I am experiencing a mix of emotions. On the one hand, I am glad because the days of rest, that I will have, are approaching and I can no longer stand the burning in my eyes and the pain on my back kills me. In addition, it is truly an invaluable feeling to produce something after sleepless nights with stomachaches and nausea. On the other hand, I cannot explain how sad I am because of the fact that I have come to the end of a period in my life. What I have been thinking about and spending time and effort on for a long time, namely my story, is coming to an end. After graduating from university, I decided to study this subject for my master's degree, and I started to improve myself and read on the subject. While I was writing my thesis, at the same time, I was reviewing the books that I have read in the past years, and I found the notes that I left for myself. I must confess that those notes helped me a lot and sometimes made it easier for me. However, the biggest effect of the notes on me was that I realized how this research is a part of my life. For a long time, I prepared myself to conduct this research and write the thesis. On that account, I am so sad and feeling extremely emotional because I do not want to end something that I am so devoted to. Despite the fact that I am talking about the physical difficulties I have just suffered, I really enjoy this profession and I understand better the anthropologists who did not return from their fieldwork and started to live with the people they conducted research with. In fact, my story does not end, I am only putting a comma because I think I will continue it so throughout my dreamed academic career. Nevertheless, I have to admit that for a while, a big gap will open in my life.

The first thing I did when I was designing my research was to start by learning the history of the Jews of Turkey. I thought this was an essential start for understanding the Jewish youth who were the subjects of the research. Thus, I did deep reading, and wanted to include it in the introduction of my thesis. The Jews who have lived in these

lands for thousands of years have been involved a difficult historical process after the proclamation of the Republic. All the traumatic incidents they went through affected both those who lived at that time and future generations. These incidents, both social and power pressures and sanctions have affected the habitus, identities, everyday lives, and memories of the Jews living at that time. Today, when it is being looked at the young generation, sometimes intersecting and sometimes different situations emerged. The change of the world we live in, the time itself, in other words, perceptions, and attitudes specific to the generation such as *zeitgeist* and *entelechy* (Mannheim, 1998, p. 280-286) are the most significant factors in the emergence of change.

Within the scope of the research, it was revealed that for Jewish youth, Judaism maintains itself in the form of culture and tradition; seen as a lifestyle. The existence of tough rules and sanctions in Judaism has caused it to be reformed to be more contemporary and today it is culturally practiced by the youth. Beylunioğlu and Kaymak claimed that the majority of the Jews living in Istanbul have a life that they do not practice religious and cultural practices (2020, p. 289), however, in the research I conducted in Istanbul and specifically with Jewish youth, the opposite result was obtained in terms of cultural practices. In spite of the fact that there are different approaches since the youth is not a homogeneous structure, young people are sensitive to the traditions. Families are important factors in this regard, and because traditions bring the family together, it causes it to be something they practice or involve in the process. This cultural awareness that young people have is an integral part of their habitus and shapes their identities, everyday lives, and tastes.

Youth discussions have been on the agenda in Turkey lately. Therefore, although my research focuses only on Jewish youth, it is also important due to the fact that it carries patterns of today's youth. Because when it comes to youth, ethnic and cultural differences remain in the background. Interviews with the Jewish youth revealed that it is difficult to be a young person in Turkey, regardless of other variables, because of the difficulty of living standards in Turkey.

Today, the Sephardic Jew population is dominant among the Jews of Turkey, and it has been understood that other groups have also become Sephardic in time, both in the literature review and in the interviews. Ladino, the language of Sephardic Jews, survives today in a few words that were acquired by hearing among Jewish youth. The

Citizen Speak Turkish campaign was carried out in the past, Ladino was forbidden to teach in Jewish Schools since Hebrew considered as mother tongue for Jews, and the families did not speak Ladino with Jewish youth, so nowadays Ladino is one of the languages that are being forgotten. Speakers of the Ladino language are dwindling today, and during my field research, I have not encountered a young Jew who can speak Ladino. As this is not the case, there is no identity shaped around language among young people. In fact, it was a funny moment and a vivid example for me to understand the situation when the person I interviewed said to me that he can speak Ladino as much as I do. Besides, among Jewish youth, Ladino has no effect to form an identity, that is to say, as an integral part of the culture, being forgotten the language has no negative effect towards to Jewish youth. Claiming that because of the absence of Ladino, Jewish youth will be affected in terms of identity would be to approach identities with an extremely rigid perspective.

Jewish culture, which is of great importance for Jewish youth, also plays a significant role in their identity. However, Jewish youth also express themselves as Turks, and they do it from a cultural perspective, just like Judaism. In addition, they are annoyed with the exclusionary approach of being a Muslim associated with being a Turk. As Jews who were born and raised in Turkey express their identity with the Turkish Jew, which is an influential and intersecting discourse of both cultures. This intersection shows that identities are not actually assigned structures, but rather multiple structures that are formed as a result of a process, open to interaction and change.

Traumatic incidents experienced in the past have taken a place in the memory of the Jews of Turkey and shaped their everyday lives. According to that, the older generations adopted the attitude of the kayades which is to be invisible and silent they created, the next generations were brought up according to this attitude, and the community as a whole became closed and invisible. However, today this attitude has begun to lose its effect among Jewish youth. Kayades, which are the legacy of older generations, continue to exist in a controlled manner today. Jewish youth can blend in without hiding what they are, but they are careful not to be visible if they sense a security problem. Nowadays, memory studies are decent guides in order to understand the reasons for everyday life practices. In other words, memory is the history of everyday life. The attitude towards sensing an unreliable situation among Jewish youth is mainly due to

the remaining scars left by the synagogue explosions in 2003 and other traumatic incidents in history, which are deeply penetrated in their own memories. Nevertheless, Jewish youth today live a much more open life compared to previous generations and they are willing to continue it. However, despite this desire, Jewish youth growing up in a bubble where they hang out and socialize only with people from their Jewish community. Few of these young people got out of the bubble by studying in a public school and making contact with the rest of society at an early age. Except for these few, they grow up almost without contact with non-community people until their university education.

Mixed marriages have been an issue on the community's agenda in recent years. However, the ones that make marriage a problem are both the habitus itself and the love factor that plays an important role in marriages. The young Jewish habitus, where culture has a great dominancy, intersects with identity, and memory shapes everyday life practices, and affects every aspect of individuals' lives. Some prefer to make their choice in accordance with their habitus since they think that this type of marriage can be more problem-free and get along better personally, but there are those who think otherwise and think that love eliminates differences.

As a concept, habitus is a whole that surrounds the life of the individual like a web, changes and develops over time, provides a scale of taste for the individual, guides and enables the one to evaluate the options that come one's way. "*Habitus is not destiny*" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 189). The Jewish youth, who are the subject of my research, has created a young Jewish habitus by trying to break the stereotypes without being in the shadow of the past, and they have proven that habitus is not destiny.

If I should end with self-criticism and a suggestion for the continuation of this kind of research, I have to admit that I could not conduct the fieldwork I dreamed of because of the fact that the pandemic hindered it. I would love to be able to carry out fieldwork where I could spend more time with the interviewees and attend celebrations and ceremonies.

I consider that the continuation of this culture is a responsibility for social scientists as well as young people with the culture, due to that it should be well documented and detailed fieldwork should be conducted. Of course, these interviews do not reflect the

whole community and the number of people should be increased so that all representatives can take part in the research. However, in the communities with dwindling populations, this is becoming an increasingly difficult situation, as the time goes on...



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